

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

Julie Vanessa Blake

Homerton College

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

For schools in England and Wales, the 1988 Education Reform Act established the foundation for a national curriculum and a new type of public examination for all pupils at the end of their compulsory schooling. In the statutory orders for English in the national curriculum and the new GCSE qualifications in English and English literature, the study of poetry was made mandatory. My object of enquiry is the poetry selected and prescribed as material for the GCSE English literature examination between 1988 and 2018. Configuring these poems, poets and collections in an original database underpins a “scalable reading” method derived from Digital Humanities. This method uses quantitative data and close reading to track the effect of policy on the poetry set text. That effect is striking: in 1988 there was a combined GCSE corpus of 6,903 poems by 1,039 poets, in 2018 there were 119 poems by 73 poets. This study explores the shifting pattern of government prescription and professional contestation over 30 years.

By tracking the relationship between poets named in the national curriculum and those featured in six series of GCSE anthologies, I show the dynamics by which the pedagogical canon was reshaped. Through close reading of the most salient poems I demonstrate how this process operated within a longer historical stewardship of the pedagogical canon rooted in the poetry of Victorian mass schooling. Quantitative analysis allowed me to model the process of real-time canon formation I observed using a theoretical framework derived from anthology studies, literary reception history and period studies. This contributes a case study to debate about how schooling shapes public taste and understanding of poetry. I argue that the possibilities of poetry as encountered by young people at school have been diminished, in part the consequence of a depletion of the state’s processes and infrastructure for principled expert curriculum review. I conclude that it is timely for a less polarised debate about the place of poetry in the English curriculum, more securely grounded in the empirical evidence of subject history.

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List of abbreviations

A Level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools
ITA	Initial Teaching Alphabet
LEAG	London and East Anglia Examining Group
MEG	Midlands Examining Group
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NEA	Northern Examining Association
NEAB	Northern Examinations and Assessment Board
O Level	General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
OCR	Oxford Cambridge & RSA Examinations
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PEE	Point Evidence Explanation (a formulaic paragraph structure)
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SEG	Southern Examining Group
UK	United Kingdom
ULEAC	University of London Examinations and Assessment Council
USA	United States of America
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

Poem A: 'Preface to an Anthology' by Roy Fuller

Poem about anthologies, anthologists and the consequences of their inclusions and omissions removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is John Fuller.

In Finn (1961), *The Albemarle Book of Modern Verse 2*

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

1. In living memory: schooling, curriculum and social class

In the first chapter I establish the conceptual axes of this thesis. The first axis is a fiercely contested debate about the proper balance between the professional autonomy of teachers and political control of state education. This debate was initiated by James Callaghan's 'Great Debate' speech at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1976 and has continued with differing degrees of intensity for more than forty years. The second axis is the prescription in legislation enacted in 1988 of a national curriculum and a new qualification, the General Certificate of Secondary Education, to assess pupils' attainment at the end of their compulsory schooling, aged 16. I then introduce poetry as the object whose trajectory through this plane the rest of this study will trace. The Cartesian metaphor is not an assumption of objectivity; in this chapter I also present my personal investment in this study by describing how a longer family history of schooling, curriculum and social class has shaped the way I understand this research.

In the early 1970s when I was a teacher, it was possible (hard to credit now) to believe that there was nothing more important that one could be doing than working in schools. It wasn't just me. The staffrooms of inner-city schools in 1973 and for a few years after that were increasingly inhabited by people who urgently wanted to work with children, who believed they were diamonds, all of them, potentially, and saw it as their job to fight with or ignore the institutions in order to make new forms of education happen.

Jenny Diski, 2009

We spend £6 billion a year on education, so there will be discussion. But let it be rational. If everything is reduced to such phrases as 'educational freedom' versus 'state control', we shall get nowhere.

James Callaghan, 1976

We believe children will flourish if we challenge them, but *The Blob*, in thrall to Sixties ideologies, wants to continue the devaluation of the exam system.

Michael Gove, 2013

Photograph of the author and other 'diamonds' at Hounslow Manor School, c.1981-2 removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is Jay Nicholson.

Figure 1.1: The author (front right) and other 'diamonds' at Hounslow Manor School, c.1981-2. Photo credit: Jay Nicholson via Facebook group Hounslow Manor School 1973-1986.

For a little over 40 years, the education of children in England has operated in a fiercely contested space that the three epigraphs to this chapter bring into focus. In the first epigraph, the writer Jenny Diski looked back to her classroom career in the early 1970s and observed the excitement of teaching in “inner city” schools at this time. She described politically committed teachers fighting “the institutions” for “new forms of education”, better suited to the “diamonds” being taught (Diski 2009). “Inner city” and “diamonds” are marked social class terms: Diski is referring to her experience of teaching working class children in disadvantaged London schools. She taught English in a period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s that Simon Gibbons has defined as “the age of invention” (Gibbons 2017:3). The stimulus of this “age of invention” was the progressive reformulation of the English curriculum articulated by the Dartmouth Seminar in the late summer of 1966.

The Dartmouth Seminar was a month-long conference at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, convened to address critical questions about the future of English as a curriculum subject (Dixon 1967). A historic ‘skills’ model which attended to the development of basic reading and writing, and a more recent ‘cultural heritage’ model which inducted pupils into great works of the established literary canon were both rejected, as was the ‘practical criticism’ model Leavis proselytised through the undergraduate education at Cambridge of potential future English teachers (Ellis 2013, Mullan 2013). Instead, the seminar participants sought to establish the best principles by which a new model might develop which attended more closely to learning processes and individual meaning-making (Dixon, 1967:1-2). This ‘personal growth’ model valued talk and drama, exploratory writing and personal experience. Through the gradual accumulation of a shared experience of language, the pupil would learn “to use language to build his own representational world” and work “to make this fit reality as he experiences it” (Dixon, 1967:13). Literary genres were no more or less important than film and television narrative, and real life observed by the student or documented in written and spoken sources: “only in a classroom where talk explores experience is literature drawn into the dialogue – otherwise it has no place” (Dixon, 1967:60). This influential debate about school English was part of a wider professional interest in what might constitute a progressive education in relation to what is now commonly referred to as social justice.

Determining the curriculum was considered by many teachers, teacher organisations and trade unions to be a matter for their professional deliberation, not a matter for politicians. In October 1976 the Labour prime minister, James Callaghan, challenged this position. In the opening remarks of a speech about the future of state education given at Ruskin College, Oxford he argued that “some people would wish that the subject matter and purpose of education should

not have public attention focused on it”, and identified the teaching profession as something of a closed priesthood in adding “nor that profane hands should be allowed to touch it” (Callaghan 1976). He listed public and political concerns about state education including “the methods and aims of informal instruction”, whether there should be a “so-called ‘core curriculum’ of basic knowledge”, the examination system, how best to monitor and maintain “a proper national standard of performance” and the school inspectorate’s role in this, and a perceived need to “improve relations between industry and education”. Callaghan then called for a “Great Debate” to resolve these issues, maintaining balance between a broad general education and equipping children with skills for future employment, between respect for the teaching profession’s expertise and calls for “a basic curriculum with universal standards”, and between the state’s provision of resources and the measurement of performance. Warning that “if everything is reduced to such phrases as ‘educational freedom’ versus ‘state control’, we shall get nowhere” (Callaghan 1976), he appealed to the stakeholders to avoid divided rhetorical positions.

The debate that ensued was fiercely contested for over a decade but sufficient parliamentary agreement developed in favour of greater political control of the curriculum that legislation introduced by Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government was passed. For schools in England and Wales, the 1988 Education Reform Act established the foundation for a national curriculum and a new type of public examination for all pupils at the end of their compulsory schooling, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). In the battle between educational freedom and state control, Callaghan’s ‘Great Debate’ did get somewhere. Thirty years later, the major curriculum and assessment reforms initiated by the Education Reform Act are still in place.

Technically, the 72 per cent of state secondary schools that now have academy status (National Audit Office 2018) are exempt from implementing the national curriculum. In practice, because GCSE examinations are still required to assess pupil achievement of national curriculum standards, and school performance is measured by pupil attainment in particular GCSE subjects, the Act is still a powerful instrument shaping what happens in schools.

Professional contestation of statutory prescription continued with each change made to the statutory orders to amend the national curriculum and its assessment during the period Gibbons has defined as “the age of intervention” from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, and in a third period from the mid-2000s to the present in which intervention is “less overtly direct” and characterised by a legacy of “profound deprofessionalisation” (Gibbons, 2017:3). Gibbons seems to suggest, as does Diski’s nostalgic aside “(hard to credit now)”, that the battle for professional control of education was lost, but this would not seem to be how Michael Gove, the Conservative education secretary from 2010-2014, evaluated the situation. Writing in the *Mail*

Online, he compared the teaching profession with the people-eating alien amoeba of a 1958 science fiction horror film: “We believe children will flourish if we challenge them, but *The Blob*, in thrall to Sixties ideologies, wants to continue the devaluation of the exam system” (Gove 2013). This discrediting of a segment of perceived professional opinion was used to justify a rapid and wide-ranging programme of change to the content of national curriculum subjects and the modes of assessment available within GCSEs.

The rational consensus about education that James Callaghan called for at the start of the ‘Great Debate’ has rarely characterised the tenor of the debate. However, once the national curriculum was implemented the content of the curriculum changed surprisingly little as it passed through different political administrations, until the recent reforms. The overall pattern is one of major disruption that took time to settle, a long period of stability with minor variation, and a new disruption. I will detail that process of change in chapter 4, as it pertained to the curriculum for English for 14 to 16 year old pupils, but for now I will turn briefly to how the national curriculum and the new system of GCSE examination emerged from the Act.

Implementing a new national curriculum and examination system

The Education Reform Act 1988 began a 30 year period of defining and redefining what was to be taught in schools in England¹ and how pupils’ learning was to be assessed. The Act contained no specific curriculum information – that followed in subsequent statutory orders – but it is the foundation legislation that brought a national curriculum into being. It specified English as one of three core subjects, alongside mathematics and science (four with Welsh in Wales) and established four key stages of compulsory schooling². It set out three instruments by which the national curriculum would operate: attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements. It conferred upon the education secretary (then Kenneth Baker) two duties: first, “to establish a complete National Curriculum as soon as is reasonably practicable” with English as a core subject and one of the first to be determined, and second, “to revise the Curriculum whenever he considers it necessary or expedient to do so” (Education Reform Act, 1988).

Working groups were commissioned by the education secretary to define the curriculum for the three core subjects and for seven additional ‘foundation’ subjects: technology, history, geography, art, music, physical education and, for secondary school pupils, a modern foreign

¹ Statutory responsibility for education in the United Kingdom lies with the devolved governments of each of the four constituent nations – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This study attends to statutory curriculum and assessment requirements that applied to schools in England.

² Key stage 1, years 1-2, age 5-7; key stage 2, years 3-6, age 7-11; key stage 3, years 7-9, age 11-14; key stage 4, years 10-11, age 12-13. By analogy, though as it is beyond statutory school leaving age it does not form part of the national curriculum, there is also key stage 5, years 12-13, age 16-18.

language³. The English Working Group was required to report its advice by the end of May 1989 (Cox 1991:3-4), and the final version of the English programmes of study and attainment targets were published in 1990 for phased implementation. Since this initial definition, the English attainment targets and programmes of study have been revised four times. English literature has been a mandatory component throughout this period, with fiction, drama and poetry all required in teaching and assessment of pupil attainment at age 16, in the parallel policy implementation of the new GCSE.

The new GCSE qualification was designed to end an examination system that reproduced socially divisive patterns of inequality. From 1965 to 1987, some pupils sat higher prestige General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (O Level) examinations and others sat lower prestige Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) examinations. Achieving a CSE grade one in a subject gave pupils a qualification deemed broadly equivalent to a 'pass' at O Level, but with different curriculum content and an equivalence calibrated at O Level grade C, it provided a more limited and lower status progression route to employment, further and higher education. This examination system had evolved from an even more divisive system by which children were selected for different types of state schooling on the basis of their performance at age 11 in an examination known as 'the 11-plus'⁴. Children who passed the 11-plus would be allocated a place at an academically oriented state-funded grammar school for an education that would lead to O Levels, preparing pupils for the possibility of General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels (A Levels) and university admission. Children who did not pass the 11-plus would be allocated a place at a secondary modern school for a general education that was more likely to lead to CSEs. The 15-25 per cent of children attending state grammar schools in any area were more likely to be from middle class families (University of Cambridge 2018), those who attended secondary modern schools were more likely to be from working class families, but it was also the case that children from the same family were divided by their schooling and it is no surprise, therefore, that the 11-plus was deeply unpopular with the public.

In 1965 the Labour education secretary, Anthony Crosland, asked local education authorities to start replacing the divisive system of grammar and secondary modern schools with non-selective comprehensive schools⁵. Comprehensive schools determined which curriculum and assessment

³ Prior to the national curriculum only religious education had been compulsory and this continued as part of the mandatory curriculum.

⁴ Michael Rosen's blogpost on his experience of taking the 11-plus examination is illuminating, available at <https://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.com/2012/07/schools-in-1950s.html>

⁵ Anthony Crosland's Wikipedia entry reports that "In her biography published in 1982, Susan Crosland said her husband had told her 'If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to destroy every fucking grammar school in England. And

path their pupils would follow, sometimes giving no choice but CSEs, sometimes allocating specific classes to O Level or CSE, sometimes determining examination entries for each pupil on a subject by subject basis. In harmonising O Level and CSE qualifications into a single GCSE qualification, another dimension of the old divisive system ended.

These policy changes were hard won and flawed but it remains possible to recover their foundation in thinking about inequality. Though different political priorities shaped it over time, one of the ideals of the national curriculum was fairer entitlement to education through the provision of a single curriculum and a unified examination system for all state school pupils, irrespective of social class or any other factor. Thirty years on, the ideal is somewhat tarnished. The national curriculum no longer has a statutory status in academies; the powers of the education secretary have been extended so far that democratic accountability is challenged; pressure on examination results is so great that ‘off-rolling’ pupils⁶ is sufficiently prevalent to have a name; demonstrable increases in social inequality and family poverty, and real term decreases in educational spending⁷ all undermine the vision of a more equitable education system. Yet the original debate about the national curriculum also addressed a fundamental question about the rightful role of the state in education. Estelle Morris, Labour Minister of State for Schools 1998-2001 and education secretary 2001-2, has argued that in a democratic state with deeply divided views on how best to educate children, it is a government’s rightful business to negotiate the competing agendas in the best interests of its citizens (Morris 2012). James Callaghan’s challenge to the education profession was founded on this sense of democratic negotiation between polarised positions, and calls in recent years for a new ‘Great Debate’ (ACSL 2013, Berliner 2013) invite us to remember him better.

This reminder of the original vision matters because the consequences of education policy and practice live long in the memory of working class families and their lives bear the brunt of its inequitable opportunities. Like Jonathan Rose I consider that the content of a nation’s schooling contributes to the shaping of our public intellectual life (Rose 2001), and I consider that the quality and equality of access to this public intellectual life is important to the common weal. I next show how the living memories of educational inequality in my own family have shaped this

Wales and Northern Ireland.” There are still 163 state funded grammar schools in England, some of which have been allowed to expand under the current Conservative government.

⁶ A method by which students whose GCSE results might disadvantage their school’s status are excluded from examination entry.

⁷ Including spending on support for pupils with special educational needs, the abolition of Educational Maintenance Awards to support pupils from poorer families to stay in education after the statutory minimum age of 16, and the introduction of university tuition fees. These decisions have a disproportionate effect on working class children’s lives.

perspective. After that, I will explain why I am interested in the relationship schooling constructs between poetry and public life.

In living memory

The three grandparents I knew all had a limited education because universal free secondary education had not yet been introduced in England and they came from poor families. The raising of the school leaving age in 1922 meant they were able to stay at school until the age of 14, but then they left for a world of work. My London-born grandmother first worked as a seamstress making silk underwear for wealthy women and later as a parlour maid. My Perthshire grandfather eschewed his father's occupation as a shepherd, dreamed of being a violinist at the cinema and started work as an apprentice barber before moving to Ayr in this work and then south to London. My Yorkshire grandmother worked in her uncle's fish and chip shop. Their school education was over but they had aspirations which saw them seizing opportunities that arose as a consequence of the Second World War. My Yorkshire grandmother joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, moved to London for training and rarely returned; she may have fabricated a matriculation certificate she had not been able to stay at school long enough to achieve, found work in a betting shop and later developed a stable, long-term occupation as a clerk. My Scottish grandfather survived the D-Day landings and subsequent fighting in Normandy and by the end of the war, he and my London-born grandmother had saved enough money to set up their own barber's shop which they ran until they retired. These were aspirational working class people, successful on their own terms and within the parameters their state education afforded them. The passing of the Education Act 1944, implemented after the Second World War as a key component of social reforms that came to be known as the 'post-war consensus', should have meant that their children had an easier path to higher status education and employment.

The Education Act 1944⁸ ensured that my parents, born in 1943 and 1946, were entitled to a free education to at least the age of 15. However, it also established the tripartite system of grammar, secondary modern and secondary technical schools my parents would be selected for on the basis of '11-plus' examination performance. My father passed and attended Hampton Grammar School, an august institution endowed for the free elementary education of local children in 1556/7, a state grammar school from 1910 and a private fee-paying school from 1975. I know very little about his experience there but my mother's description brings vividly to life a

⁸ Also known as the Butler Act after the education secretary, R.A. Butler, who introduced it.

combination of academic intensity, corporal punishment and a boy from a working class family whose mother did not understand the brutal effects of small marks of social distinction:

Hampton Grammar when he was there was a tough school, lots of homework and cane used frequently. Your dad bunked off school for about a month when he was 14ish and spent his time at Feltham marshalling yards until the school inspector came looking for him. His dad beat him and then he was beaten again at school so although he showed off a lot about the school - cream of the borough etc - I think he actually hated every minute of it. And apart from that, instead of buying him the blazer from the school shop with the embroidered badge already sewn on, [his mum] bought him a catalogue blazer and bought a badge to sew on. She said you could buy the badge so why not - the proper school blazer was much more expensive but they could have afforded it.⁹

My father left Hampton Grammar at age 16 with four O Levels and a contempt for formal education that bordered on rage which erupted at key points during my schooling.

My mother failed the 11-plus and attended Spring Grove Central School, a secondary modern school in Isleworth. 'Failed' is a marked term. There were fewer grammar school places available for girls in some areas, such that some local authorities applied different pass rates for boys and girls¹⁰. It was also marked because her eldest sister had passed, setting a family benchmark against which her 'failure' and that of her other older sister were judged by her parents. My mother's description of her school attainment is vivid for its mixture of pride and lack of clarity about its significance by comparison with her recognition of my father's O Levels. It also conveys the hurt she still carries about having been regarded as a failure and made by her parents to leave school too soon.

I left school at 15 with a School Leavers Certificate issued by the school/Hounslow Borough (although I think at that time it was still the Borough of Heston & Isleworth). The way that worked was that we took our end of term exams at school and all subjects where the marks were over 50% (that doesn't sound much - maybe it was higher) were listed on the certificate. I think I had about 8 subjects listed on mine which was probably all of them. [My second sister] thinks they were equivalent to the CSEs that came in later but I don't know if that's true. In addition, I had RSA stage 1 in Typewriting and RSA Stage

⁹ Personal email communication 3/9/18

¹⁰ Referenced via BBC Radio 4 by Michael Rosen in his blogpost – see footnote 5.

I and II in English. My English teacher put me in for Stage II because he thought I was leaving school too early (and he was right!).¹¹

My mother started work immediately after leaving school in a typing pool and continued some vocational training in the evenings, achieving RSA stage II qualifications in shorthand and typing that built the foundations of a long and successful secretarial career. Though neither of my parents talked much about their schooling, as a child I understood that examinations were not the only measure of intelligence, school qualifications were of less value than useful vocational skills, and your worth as a person would be measured by your ability to secure and get on in a job. Their mixed feelings about schooling, predicated on a structural experience of social injustice, would play out in complicated ways in the educational histories of my brother and me.

In their own ways, my parents were as mobile and as aspirational as my grandparents to do better than the options afforded by their limited educations. By the time I was nine I had lived in five homes, two in West London and three in Northamptonshire, as my young parents sought to establish their adult lives, including my father setting up his own mortgage and insurance business in his twenties. This mobility meant I changed schools often and each time had to adapt to very different ideas about teaching. At the first school, I could not make sense of books I was expected to read in the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA)¹² as I had already begun to read at home. I remember nothing about the second school but a morning break when the bottles of school milk were frozen. The third was a very traditional former Victorian board school, with hymn singing every morning, rows of wooden desks with inkwells and a traditional curriculum that prioritised reading, writing and arithmetic. I was always first or second in class tests, relished mental arithmetic lessons and enjoyed poetry so much that I persuaded my parents to let me have the money to order *A Puffin Book of Verse* (Graham 1953, 1973) from the school's Puffin Book Club¹³. In the context of the 1973-75 recession and its impact upon my father's fledgling business, this was not a trivial matter and just before my tenth birthday he declared bankruptcy with catastrophic effect.

My father's bankruptcy unravelled my family's life very rapidly. Every family possession was sequestered by the Inland Revenue. My father was tried for fraud in a complex case that was expected to end in his imprisonment. My mother was instructed by social workers to prepare my

¹¹ Personal email communication 3/9/18

¹² ITA was an alternative writing system designed to make learning to read easier than standard English orthography. For more, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Initial_Teaching_Alphabet

¹³ For an anecdotal account of this experience, see <http://www.childofthe1980s.com/2009/04/30/the-puffin-book-club/>

brother and me for admission into the care system, as they did not believe she would be able to support us in this eventuality. He was acquitted but we were homeless and my parents needed to find work. We moved back to west London to live with my Yorkshire grandmother, her partner and four cats, in overcrowded conditions in a small terraced house that exacerbated the extreme stress of the situation. My parents found clerical and secretarial jobs and began paying a substantial part of their salaries to the Inland Revenue, a matter that went on for 10 years and caused much of my childhood to be characterised by poverty and its effects. This concatenation of events also meant I started my fourth primary school.

Sparrow Farm Junior School in Feltham could not have been more different to the one I had left only a few weeks previously. We sat at group tables where we selected 'topic cards' to work on together, we sang Cat Stevens, Bob Dylan and some calypsos, and when there was English and maths I worked on my own from textbooks, a consequence of my father arguing with my teachers about the inadequate challenge of the school's progressive curriculum. I was lonely and miserable and from the first week I was persistently bullied. Life at home was little better: there were constant arguments, my father left a number of times and my mother was assaulted by my grandmother's partner. It promised to improve when my parents' application for council housing was accepted, though on the day before we moved into an empty flat on a barren estate, with almost no furniture, my one new friend was killed in a road accident. At least I did not have to sit an 11-plus examination amid this turmoil, as I would have done had the London Borough of Hounslow not at last abolished it. All state grammar schools in the borough now had to become comprehensive schools and, as a result of a national change five years previously, secondary education was required for all children to the age of 16. Key components of the divisive and limited state education system my parents experienced had been dismantled.

My grandparents had very little say in where my parents went to school: their school places had been allocated on the basis of their 11-plus results. In Hounslow in 1977, parents were entitled to nominate three preferences of any of the borough's schools. The council provided a free bus pass if the child's home to school journey was more than three miles so that family poverty was not a factor in the decision. My parents were pleased to exercise this right and visited a number of schools in order to make their choice. They considered the nearest, Longford Community School¹⁴, too rough, dominated by aggressive boys from the estate. They looked at its antithesis, The Green School in Isleworth, two bus journeys away but the nearest girls' school. Founded in 1796 and about to turn from grammar to comprehensive, my parents bridled at its traditional

¹⁴ Now Rivers Academy West London, Feltham, London Borough of Hounslow

formality and at the head teacher's dismissive insistence that as the school had survived the blitz, it would survive becoming comprehensive. They chose instead Hounslow Manor School¹⁵, a large, progressive mixed-sex school that had already been comprehensive for some years. I benefited from a free bus pass, committed and caring teachers and a broad curriculum that included a lot of sport, arts and school trips out of London. It offered a pragmatic approach to assessment with mostly mixed ability teaching and entry for CSE or O Level examinations decided on a pupil by pupil and subject by subject basis, and it offered an education to age 18 for those wishing to take A Levels. I thrived there. For all the improvements to the education system, however, structural inequality continued to divide children, because once teachers had determined which assessment trajectory a child was on the future possibilities of their lives changed. As the educational histories of my brother and me show, how a child's aptitudes for a more or less 'academic' trajectory presented at school might have little to do with their intelligence or ability.

Our life at home was difficult, marked by often acute poverty and compounded by my father's sense of failure and shame at his bankruptcy. His depression and irascibility fluctuated unpredictably, flaring into violent arguments with my mother, periodic departures and suicidal threats. During my adolescence he descended into alcoholism that would gradually lead to divorce, unemployment, alienation from his children, homelessness and early death. As I was increasingly presented to him as an academically capable child, his old contempt for formal education erupted into a rage that was manifested in acts of verbal humiliation, designed to teach me the superior value of learning at 'the school of hard knocks'. This conflict caused considerable personal and family stress, and when I passed eight O Levels, it took a determined set of teachers to ensure I progressed to and completed A Levels. I had their support because this large, jostling London comprehensive school had long been a sanctuary from home.

My brother, four years younger, started at the same school knowing that theirs were not the rules to play by if you wanted your father's respect. He chose 'the school of hard knocks' instead and was constantly held up to me as an example of virtue, a topsy-turvy valuing I struggled to understand. As my brother reached the point where his assessment paths were chosen, he responded to the daily acts of intense verbal aggression I endured throughout my A Levels by doing little schoolwork and frequently missing lessons in order to work in a men's clothes shop. He was entered mostly for CSEs and achieved a set of mostly low grades. To my father's delight,

¹⁵ Now Kingsley Academy, Hounslow, London Borough of Hounslow - memorably described by a former headteacher, Lesley Kirby, in defence of the school's performance as "not a basket case". Kingsley Academy now has a new building on the site and the old Hounslow Manor School is nothing but hardcore and memories.

he left school and started full-time work at the shop while I was still at university. All this was a long time ago. My brother would be the first to point out that he has always earned more than me, and my life is not more interesting or successful because I have had a higher status education. Nonetheless, in a socially divided system of value-laden curriculum and assessment, the choices we have had during our lives were symbolically determined at a young age by factors beyond our control as children.

When I qualified as an English teacher a little later, in 1993, the national curriculum had been legislated for five years previously. The GCSE qualification was operational. My new colleagues were both working out the new curriculum in practice and contesting it. They were angered by the forced termination of 100 per cent assessment by coursework and of the Language In the National Curriculum project¹⁶ (Carter 1990). Despite this turbulence, I entered the profession at a point in history where every child at least had eleven years of compulsory education, access to a common curriculum and the same qualifications in schools with a better structural equivalence, with free education through to degree level for those able to pursue it. The national curriculum was freighted with difficulties from the start but then and now I see it as part of a long story of working class children slowly gaining access to fairer education. In taking the long view that justice will prevail, I hold firm to the fundamentally democratic ideal of a national curriculum. From this perspective, the constitution of the curriculum matters as it is the vehicle by which working class children are most likely to be given access to public intellectual life. This thesis attends to a very specific component of that curriculum, poetry, for reasons outlined next.

Why poetry, why now?

I have no memory of what sparked the interest in poetry that led me to covet a copy of *A Puffin Book of Verse*. No-one in my family was interested in poetry, though when we lived with my Yorkshire grandmother, she gave me an illustrated copy of *Little Ann and Other Poems* (Taylor & Taylor n.d. first published 1883) that she had as a child, and my father's love of folk and country music gave me an early masterclass in the ballad form. My access to poetry came primarily through enjoying it at school, particularly, in my early years of secondary school, a series of memorable poetry lessons that included William Blake's 'Tyger, Tyger', Ted Hughes's 'Jaguar', e.e.cummings's 'anyone lived in a pretty how town' and 'maggie and milly and molly and may', and Seamus Heaney's 'Tollund Man'. Both the "shell that sang" and the photograph of the

¹⁶ LINC was a government funded in-service teacher education programme designed to address the limited prior education of most teachers in English language. The government of the day decided it paid insufficient attention to formal grammar and standard English, and placed an embargo on official publication of its extensive package of materials. For more, see <http://clie.org.uk/linc/>.

unearthed bog-man printed next to Heaney's poem have inhabited my imagination since, but these lessons also triggered my memory of losing *A Puffin Book of Verse*, taken by the bailiffs as part of my father's bankruptcy proceedings, and considerable distress. Soon afterwards, my mother found *The Faber Book of Children's Verse* (Smith 1953, 1973) in a remaindered selection being sold at the dye factory where she worked, and she bought it for me. I found most of the poems impenetrable but in a house with almost no books, I owned it: the anthology, and poetry itself. They were mine.

If some lessons at school fostered my enjoyment of poetry, my experience at O Level nearly destroyed it. Mostly in English lessons we practised précis and reading comprehension tasks while our teacher entertained us with stories of bands he had reviewed for *New Musical Express*. There was not a lot of poetry until shortly before the examinations when suddenly we copied notes from the blackboard about three poets in the *Poets of Our Time* anthology (Finn 1965): Norman Nicholson, Clifford Dymont and Laurie Lee. I enjoyed neither the poems nor the copying, and had no plans to continue English literature at A Level. That changed when I learned I would be expected to read novels for French A Level. My father had always supported my learning of languages at school on the grounds of their utility for future employment, but after his angry insistence that reading novels in French would be a fanciful waste of time I changed to English Literature. This hardly resolved the argument about the value of my schooling but by changing to English I had the fortune to be taught for two years by teacher-poet Paul McLoughlin.

Paul McLoughlin's belief that working class children are as entitled to poetry in all its variety as anybody else built on the sense I already had that poetry was mine. In his A Level classes the set texts were Chaucer's General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, odes and narrative poems by John Keats and a recently published selection of Roy Fuller's poetry (Fuller & Lee, 1982). As preparation for the Practical Criticism examination I remember 'Menelaus and Helen', 'Journey of the Magi' and 'Leda and the Swan' as well as Frances Horowitz's haunting 'Rain, Birdswald' and poems from major competitions and recent poetry magazines. He got us to write poetry to understand form, and when I showed some interest in this activity, he told me to find the poetry section in my local public library and read everything. The poetry section of my council estate library was small and so low I had to lie on the floor to browse it, but what they had I borrowed over and over again, especially Philip Larkin's *The Whitsun Weddings* and Adrienne Rich's *Twenty-One Love Poems*. The encouragement to roam freely, to feel entitled to poetry, enabled me to read for a degree in English mostly by trawling the well-stocked poetry shelves of Philip Larkin's Brynmor Jones library at the University of Hull, and when I became a teacher I had no issue with teaching a wide range of poetry in mixed ability settings. I passed my probationary lesson observation

teaching Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' to a group of working class boys taking a GCSE English 'resit' class. This was a matter of some remark (and delight) to my head of department at a time of deep professional antipathy to poetry. This conviction that poetry belongs to everyone is also part of the bedrock of this thesis.

When the national curriculum was introduced, it ensured that every child, irrespective of social class background or family reading habits, had an entitlement to poetry on the same terms from the age of 5 through to assessment on equal terms at age 16. Making poetry mandatory in the English curriculum was also an intervention on a mass scale in the nation's cultural life, at a time when poetry was commonly devalued as 'elitist' in wider popular culture (McKeone and O'Brien 1996). On average, over half a million pupils a year take GCSE English literature examinations¹⁷, notionally constituting a body of 15 million people who have had a similar encounter with poetry in a population of 55 million¹⁸. In recent years, the national media has reported a new public enthusiasm for poetry and 'spoken word' (for example, English 2016, Walker 2017, Bradbury 2018), and in January 2018 generated a high profile public debate of an essay in the specialist poetry magazine *PN Review* (Watts 2018) about the artistic value (or otherwise) of three poets enjoying popular public success, Rupi Kaur, Hollie McNish and Kate Tempest. There will be multiple factors in this apparent shift, but this study's investigation of the poets and poems that have been valued for GCSE English literature will provide an evidence base for more nuanced thinking about what schooling contributes to the public understanding and reception of poetry in particular, and to public intellectual life more broadly.

The requirements of a national curriculum and awarding body specifications cannot illuminate what happened in classrooms, in terms of actual text selections from the legitimate options, pedagogic practices or the affective quality of the experience for teachers or pupils. This thesis has a different concern: to make visible in a way that has not been attempted before which poets and poems had curriculum value by being specified or recommended in relation to the national curriculum for GCSE English literature examinations. In so doing, it seeks to map for the first time the landscape of state-sanctioned options and to contribute to debate about the future of the English curriculum. This debate matters because the direction of curriculum policy-making has shifted. In the context of the national curriculum's reduced role for schools with academy

¹⁷ Based on government statistical data for GCSE English literature entries from 2005 to 2018. The average number of entries per year over this 14 year period is 505,282. By extrapolation over 30 years, there have been some 15 million entries. There will be some repeat entries and additional pupils not entered for examinations; this figure is merely indicative of the scale of this curriculum intervention.

¹⁸ The Office of National Statistics reported on 28 June 2018 an estimated mid-year population for England (ie not Great Britain or the United Kingdom) for 2017 of 55,619,400.

status, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Amanda Spielman, has signalled that school inspections will question how well the locally determined curriculum is suited to its pupils, beyond the narrow channel of GCSE examination preparation (Henshaw 2018). Additionally, assessment changes implemented in the latest national curriculum review mean that more English examinations now include an 'unseen poetry' element, which notionally gives teachers greater flexibility to choose what poetry their pupils study. It is therefore timely and significant to step back and look at the evidence of how the contested dynamics of curriculum change played out in poetry over 30 years, in order to better inform a rational debate about what happens next.

This thesis focuses on poetry for reasons of lifelong personal interest and professional commitment: as well as serving as an English teacher in comprehensive sixth form colleges for 13 years, I have worked as a teacher educator, as Education Director of the Poetry Archive and most recently as co-founder and Director of Poetry By Heart, the national schools poetry recitation competition. It also focuses on poetry because prior to the national curriculum making it mandatory, part of the professional English teaching discourse regarded poetry as "bourgeois frippery" (Harrison and Gordon 1983:266) of little value in a working class education. As I have shown, that was always at odds with my experience. The long legacy of that professional perspective will be explored in detail in the next chapter as part of discussion of a 30 year identification in the literature of a 'problem with poetry'.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

2. Finding a better anchor: the problem with “the problem with poetry”

This thesis makes its primary contribution to the field of English in Education, defined as a complete life cycle of English studies, from the beginning of compulsory schooling through to specialised postgraduate study in English and Education. My concern is specifically with GCSE English literature, the pivot which provides access to A Level English subjects, which provide access to undergraduate degrees in English, which in turn provide access to higher qualifications, including the Post Graduate Certificate in Education by which teachers qualify for professional practice and replicate the life cycle. In this chapter I discuss how English in Education research of the last 40 years has construed poetry education as a problem evident in teacher antipathy and anxiety, with major questions about how to value poetry in the English curriculum and about which poems and poets are most relevant. I then draw on work in cultural anthropology to identify the problem with “the problem with poetry” and to argue for an approach which attends more fully to the particular dynamics of the curriculum history which constituted it.

It is my contention that the subsequent [20th century] histories of the university's and the school's differentiated modes of literary study are intimately and somewhat fractiously related; to use evolutionary terms, one might say that the simultaneous but particular developments of these two forms were profoundly influenced by their ecological proximity. Explorations of the different phases of this relationship, I suggest, would yield a more nuanced understanding of how the creation of two specific kinds of reading communities effected a series of schisms of which we are today the inevitable heirs.

Catherine Robson 2012

If this book has suggested some ways of solving some of the problems that beset poetry – whether they are to do with teaching methods, attitudes, understanding of poetic forms, or realignments of priorities in our view of poetry – it will have been of some use. But the ‘solutions’ are far less satisfying and interesting than the problems – or the poems themselves.

Richard Andrews 1991

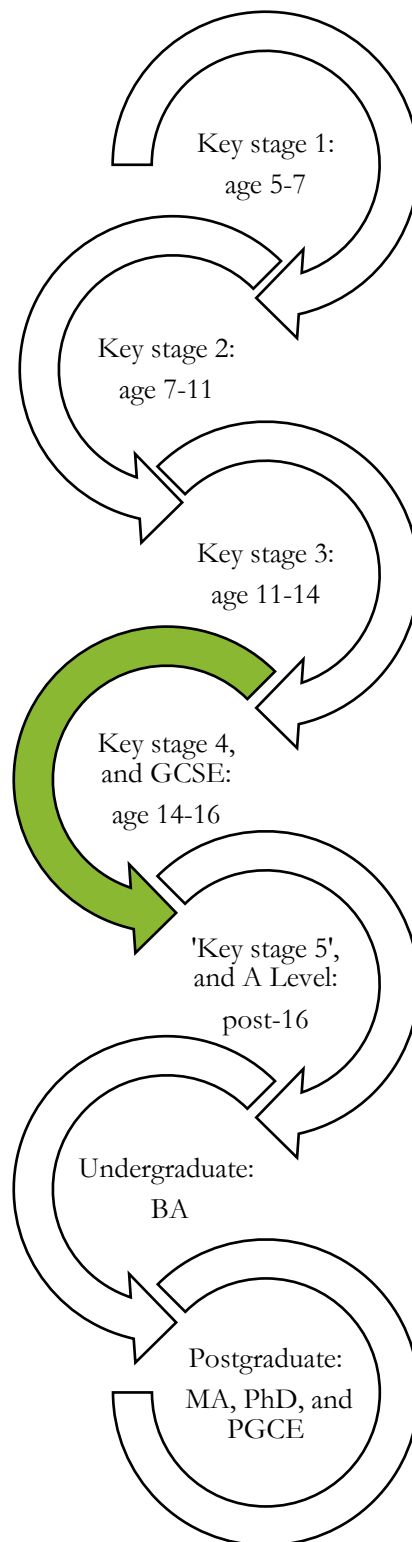


Figure 2.1: The life cycle of English in Education with GCSE as the central pivot.

The research about poetry education that is presented in this thesis is situated in the field of English in Education. This field is concerned with improving the teaching of English in any setting and with learners of all ages, focusing on such matters as educational policy and classroom practice, the shaping of the subject in relation to theoretical perspectives, the subject's past history and its potential futures. Figure 2.1 illustrates the central position of English GCSE, the object of my enquiry, in the fuller 'life cycle' of English in Education. It is both the last phase of education in which the study of English is mandatory, and therefore the end point in the formation of most people's schooled understanding of literature, and it is the basic foundation for further study in the subject which will eventually lead some people back into the classroom as qualified English teachers. This mass encounter with poetry, made visible by its specification for GCSE assessment, is an opportunity to respond to Catherine Robson's call for scholarship to explore "different phases of this relationship" in order to understand how literature gets constituted in "everyday life" as well as in the university (Robson 2012:20).

In school, 'English' has traditionally encompassed the development of literacy and learning about English language and literature, but considerable theoretical development in recent decades has challenged how those domains are to be understood. 'Literacy' has been challenged by a re-theorising of communication as intrinsically multimodal (Kress 2010, Kress, Jewitt, Bourne, Franks, Hardcastle, Jones & Reid 2005), including in relation to the emergence of new literacy practices in a rapidly changing, global technological environment (e.g. Kress 2003). There has also been thinking about literacy as an ideological rather than autonomous matter (e.g. Street and Lefstein 2007) and as a social practice (e.g. Barton 2007). 'English language' has long been subject to debate about the appropriate place in teaching for explicit knowledge about language, including 'grammar', language acquisition, variation and change, and learning about spoken as well as written language (Great Britain 1988, Carter 1990, Clark 2001). Debate about 'literature' has centred on questions of cultural valuing and the appropriate balance between a language-specific literary heritage of 'great' writers and a greater diversity of literary forms, languages and authors (Eaglestone 2000, Atherton, Green and Snapper 2013). Subject boundaries have been further tested by questions about the relative places of film narrative; the study of non-fiction, media and new media texts; and the productive modes of drama, creative writing and multimodal creativities in subject English.

This changing conception of what English is as a curriculum subject gave rise to a dynamic period of curriculum development that, at the secondary level saw new GCSE and A Level qualifications and new components of existing qualifications. For example, a new Spoken Language component was innovated within GCSE English language and at A Level there was a

new award in Creative Writing¹⁹. School English teachers and those involved in their formation developed expertise to teach content from a wide range of domains including applied linguistics, children's literature, communication studies, creative writing, drama and theatre studies, English language, English literature, film studies and media studies. This new content for school English was developed according to professional logic, which is not the same as the logic of Higher Education English despite similarities. This disjuncture is illuminated by Gary Snapper's study of the difficulties of student transition from school to university study of literature (Snapper 2007, 2008) and in Catherine Robson's contention that the "ecological proximity" in which the modes of literary study developed in these two settings led to an "intimate" but also "fractious" relationship (Robson 2012:20).

This disjuncture between what is valued in school English and university English makes it a little difficult in practice to regard English in Education as a unified field. It also means that despite the majority of English teachers having English degrees, poetry has still been reported as an area of subject knowledge with significant challenge for the preparation of new English teachers (Blake, Shortis & CLIE 2010). This common perception means that despite poetry teaching being a small part of professional practice in the broad ecology of what counts as school English, it has commanded a great deal of research attention. The "problem with poetry" has been discussed in the research literature of at least the last 40 years. Drawing on research from a broad range of English in Education contexts, I next attend to the specific dimensions of this discourse in order to demonstrate how and why the research reported in this thesis took its particular shape. I start with how the "problem with poetry" has been broadly framed in relation to teacher anxiety and antipathy, and then discuss two more particular concerns in the literature - how to value poetry in the curriculum and what categories of poets and poems might be most relevant for young people.

The "problem with poetry"

Four works published between 1979/80 and 2014 have been very influential in framing the "problem with poetry", drawing explicit attention to the problem in their titles. Margaret Mathieson's article "The Problem of Poetry" (Mathieson 1979/80) was published in the subject association journal *The Use of English* and it identified multiple problems of pupil "frustration and hostility", over-attention to analysis at the expense of the experience of poetry, lack of teacher confidence in reading poetry aloud, and teacher unwillingness to intervene in pupils' creative

¹⁹ The study of Spoken Language was withdrawn as part of the reform of GCSEs from 2013 and the new A Level in Creative Writing was withdrawn in 2015.

writing. These themes were amplified and added to in a book length treatment a little over a decade later, Richard Andrews's *The Problem With Poetry* (Andrews 1991), the title of which alludes to Mathieson's earlier work. In this, Andrews set out in detail a series of teacher and pupil "prejudices, antipathies and genuine difficulties" and explored how these developed and some ways of overcoming them. Andrews defined "the problem" as a multifaceted one, with problems inherent in definitions of what poetry is; cultural devaluing of the genre and perceptions of its distance from everyday life; the challenges of form, poetic language, the technical language of poetry and the language of rhythm; issues with the range of poetry selected for school purposes, with an aesthetic orientation to the self, feeling, reflection and imagination not thought, action or reason; a pedagogy that "disowns" young people from their own authentic engagement with the text; the inappropriate use of poetry in formal assessment and its ambiguous status in major curriculum recommendations. It is a formidable list that gives credence to Andrews's closing assertion, cited as the second epigraph to this chapter, that attempts to find solutions to such a complex and diverse configuration of issues might be less satisfying than the process of coming to understand the problems.

This framing of the "problem with poetry" in relation to teacher antipathy to poetry and anxiety about teaching it built on previous observation of these phenomena and gave rise to new research in different contexts. Ten years before the introduction of the national curriculum, Peter Benton made a stark assessment of the situation, "Poetry is a problem area in school, mainly because many teachers either dislike it or feel ill-at-ease with it" (Benton 1978:114). Benton subsequently built an empirical case for this claim in two studies tracking teacher attitudes to poetry over a period of 20 years. In his first survey started in 1982, 175 teachers were surveyed from 43 schools in a single shire county; of these, 153 teachers identified 94 separate anxieties about teaching poetry including pupil hostility to poetry, feeling pressure to provide "correct" interpretations and perceptions of an "alien" language and style for poetry (Benton 1984). Wade and Sidaway added to this observation their own survey of 40 teachers in six middle schools, 28 of whom listed problems and anxieties with poetry, especially teacher lack of confidence and subject knowledge (Wade & Sidaway 1990). Even where teachers had relatively benign orientations to poetry, Wade and Sidaway identified a disjuncture between this and their anxieties about teaching it, a situation also documented in recent work on poetry writing and teacher conceptualizations of creativity (Wade & Sidaway 1990, Myhill & Wilson 2013). Wade and Sidaway also reported anxiety about poetry teaching in the context of examinations, and Benton echoed this in the second of his surveys where a new anxiety emerged about teaching poetry within a prescribed curriculum (Benton 1999). A decade on from that, a survey and

interviews with teacher educators reported trainee anxiety about teaching poetry as one of the main challenges for secondary English Initial Teacher Education (Blake, Shortis & CLIE, 2010).

Teacher anxiety about teaching poetry is not limited to schools in England. A small-scale study of Australian teachers documented three key areas of apprehension: professional ostracism for teaching poetry in a context where this is unusual, a fear of student inability to understand the genre, and teachers' insufficient knowledge of poetry (Weaven & Clark 2013). Daniel Xerri's work with teachers in Malta has demonstrated student and teacher anxiety about poetry and its assessment, as well as attitudes that construct poetry as "a genre set apart from all others" with an inflated cachet derived from practices that emphasise its difficulty (Xerri 2013). What happens in these countries is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the publication of these studies in the research journal of the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), *English in Education*, means they have contributed a degree of universality to the idea that teacher antipathy and anxiety are normal.

Significant studies of teacher attitudes to poetry in the primary sector develop a sense that antipathy and anxiety are normal across all phases of schooling. The likely correlation with teachers' personal reading practices was probed in a major survey of 1,200 primary teachers' knowledge of children's literature (Cremin, Mottram, Bearne & Goodwin 2008). 22 per cent of respondents could name no poets, while a notional threshold of being able to name six poets was achieved by ten per cent and most respondents could name only one or two. Few of the poets mentioned were women or poets from other cultures. This provided a detailed response to an Ofsted report that primary teachers did not know enough poetry and were offering pupils a limited range of poems, and a focus for Ofsted's subsequent attention to poetry subject knowledge (Ofsted 2007, 2012). The commonly patterned findings of cohort perception surveys (Ray 1999) have recently been given more textured detail in case study research showing how the "learning journeys" of undergraduate student teachers from childhood through to classroom practice are inextricably tangled in the anxiety discourse, "a multidimensional intersection of knowledge and attitudes towards poetry and its teaching" (Collins & Kelly 2013:30). This study documented the significant challenge faced by student teachers, including those with positive attitudes to poetry and poetry teaching, in working against the "hegemonic tentacles of each individual class teacher's underlying ideology about the teaching of poetry" and their "powerfully felt affective concerns" (Collins & Kelly 2013:30). There are no parallel studies of secondary teachers' knowledge of poetry, although it is tempting to think it may underlie anxiety about the recent shift in GCSE English to 'unseen poetry' as an examination component (Lockney &

Proudfoot 2013) despite the fact that the majority of secondary English subject specialists have an English degree.

Over 40 years, this strong framing of poetry as a problem has generated much imaginative research-led design and exemplification of pedagogical approaches that might help to mitigate its effects. The research conducted by Teresa Cremin and her team informed the development of a subsequent large-scale *Reading for Pleasure* professional development programme run by the National Literacy Trust for teachers of literacy in key stages 1 to 3. The response to research expressions of teacher anxiety and antipathy to poetry in secondary English has more commonly been treated as a problem of attending to a richer understanding of the nature of poetry and how this might become part of an enhanced pedagogical repertoire. Investigations have included teaching aesthetic instead of efferent reading practices for poetry (Pike 2000); attending to the sounds of poetry (Gordon 2004); exploring the links between poetry and orality, listening and ‘enperformancing’ (Alexander 2008, 2013); the value of performing poetry (Pullinger & Whitley 2013); demonstration of and advocacy for an autoethnographic approach (Gardner 2014); choral reading (Cliff Hodges 2016); applying Text-World-Theory (Giovannelli 2017, Cushing 2018) and in higher education English, attention to greater affective engagement of pupils with poems (Rumbold & Simecek 2016). A number of well regarded teacher handbooks have drawn on English in Education research and poetry practitioner expertise to develop substantial thinking about pedagogies for poetry likely to engage students and reassure teachers (Yates 1999, Dymoke 2003, Naylor & Wood 2012, Gordon 2014). The tacit premise of this kind of work would seem to be that if the encounter with poetry can be made more enjoyable and meaningful for young people, teacher anxiety and antipathy will be relieved.

Twenty years later, however, the problem showed no sign of abating. In 2011-2012, Sue Dymoke, Andrew Lambirth and Anthony Wilson brought together a new generation of poetry researchers, teachers and activists²⁰ under the auspices of a four part seminar series supported by the Economic and Social Research Council. The seminar series facilitated the presentation of research and good practice, and the proposal of interventions to resolve the long-standing problem. This resulted in a major new framing of the problem in two highly regarded books. *Making Poetry Matter* (Dymoke, Lambirth & Wilson 2013) was an edited collection of the international research papers presented in the seminar series; *Making Poetry Happen* (Dymoke, Barrs, Lambirth & Wilson 2014) focused on case studies of transformative practice developed by participants. Some of the problems examined again included unhelpful teacher attitudes and

²⁰ I participated in this seminar series as Education Director of The Poetry Archive.

student resistance, as well as newly focused themes of social justice and inclusive intercultural practice. There were many different voices, perspectives and proposed solutions in these books, but they were a continuation of the tenor and scope of the earlier framing of poetry as a problem, one that appears to have been impervious to intervention over 40 years. In the next section I move from this generally problematic tenor to its more particular construction as a question of how poetry should be valued in the school English curriculum.

Value

A small number of accounts of English teaching offer a historical perspective on what has been valued in the English curriculum at different times. One account documents its early history from the sixteenth century to 1870 (Michael 1987), focusing on the evidence from text books on “Reading, spelling and pronunciation”, literature including poetry anthologies, expression and performance, and linguistic control. Poetry was valued in the practice of memorised recitation; Catherine Robson’s monograph added a more detailed treatment of this valuing in mass schooling in the USA and UK in the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries (Robson 2012). Another two books cover English as a key subject in mass schooling from the beginning of the twentieth century through to the early 1970s (Shayer 1972, Mathieson 1975), with more recent book-length treatments focusing on defining moments, more specific locations and shorter historical periods. There are accounts of the influential Dartmouth seminar of 1966 (Dixon 1967) and the contested formation of the national curriculum (Cox 1991, Carter 1990, Clark 2001), while two recent monographs cover English teaching developed in London from 1947 to 1967 and nationally from the mid-1960s (Gibbons 2014, Gibbons 2017).

Simon Gibbons is especially concerned that teachers entering the English teaching profession should know their subject’s history in order to “inform and build a better future” (Gibbons 2017:4). His work historicises a progressive English teaching orthodoxy: the key players interviewed are those who have shaped the London Association for the Teaching of English (LATE) and the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), the second book is published by NATE and Gibbons is a former NATE chairperson. It is principled work and it is firmly rooted in the idea of an autonomous English teaching profession resisting less well-informed government imposition. It asserts as everyday professional practice a contested set of values derived in a particular context. A new publication contributes to the further assertion of this narrative by celebrating the Dartmouth Seminar’s fiftieth anniversary (Goodwyn, Durrant, Sawyer, Scherff, & Zancanella 2018).

The Dartmouth Seminar's influential outcome was a 'personal growth' model for English teaching. This emphasised the personal experience of pupils as the starting point of learning in English and its primary goal was the gradual development of self-knowledge. This freed teachers in the period preceding the national curriculum to devalue poetry in favour of other genres if they determined this was in the better interests of their pupils. This rejection went against the grain of a substantial Committee of Enquiry report to the government in 1975 which claimed a "great educative power" for poetry and concluded that "all pupils should experience poetry in circumstances which emphasise its enjoyment and its relevance to their lives and their interests" (Great Britain 1975:525). The Committee of Enquiry's report, titled *A Language for Life* but also known as *The Bullock Report*²¹, was the product of a comprehensive empirical enquiry featuring evidence from large surveys of school practice, written evidence requested from 66 individuals and 56 organisations and received from a public invitation to respond, the expertise of 21 committee members who visited 100 schools, 21 further education colleges and 6 reading or language centres, and comparison with the practice of other countries. It was a serious, evidence-led public enquiry.

Just under a decade after the Bullock report, however, its recommendations about poetry teaching appear to have had little impact by comparison with the valuing of the 'personal growth' agenda. One survey of what was taught in a single week in 18 comprehensive schools and a sixth form college in a northern local education authority found that on average slightly more than one per cent of the school week, or eight and a half per cent of English lessons, was allocated to poetry (Harrison & Gordon 1983). More detailed case studies confirmed the authors' initial hypothesis that "little authentic poetry was being taught in such schools, and that poetry as an art form was being neglected" (Harrison & Gordon 1983:272). A series of interviews with teachers in Northern Ireland led that author to a similar conclusion, that "the teaching of poetry is a relatively neglected art in schools" (O'Hara 1988:58). In the same period, Her Majesty's Inspectorate challenged this devaluing in a special pamphlet on the teaching of poetry in secondary schools: "Inspection of and visits to secondary schools indicate that there is in many of them very little poetry included regularly in the work in English", with poetry "frequently neglected and poorly provided for" (Great Britain 1987:4). It took another decade before teacher educator and poetry advocate Peter Benton found evidence, effected in his view by the introduction of the national curriculum, of a slightly improved valuing of poetry in schools (Benton 2000).

²¹ So named after the chairperson of the Committee of Enquiry, Sir Alan Bullock.

Where poetry found a place in the ‘personal growth’ English curriculum, it was valued for its capacity to develop ‘voice’, often through the release of individual emotion. Poet and educator Fred Sedgwick argued explicitly for this approach: “an education that lacked such a procedure would not be preparing children for their emotional lives, let alone the writing of poetry” (Sedgwick 1988). This perspective remained intact for a long time after the introduction of the national curriculum. In an earlier survey of teacher beliefs about poetry, Benton noted its valuing as a mode by which pupils “might tap the inner springs of their own consciousness” (Benton 1984:319); in a later survey, 11 per cent of teacher respondents noted poetry’s ability to generate sensitive emotional response (Benton 1999). This was seen to be threatened by the subsequent introduction by a Labour government of a National Literacy Strategy²² that required teaching particular poetic forms in the first three key stages of English, a move regarded as likely to “jeopardise children’s opportunities to express, value and communicate powerful feelings” (Kelly 2005:131). Though the National Literacy Strategy ended in 2011, Myhill and Wilson argued that the kinds of expressive poetry writing this valuing gave rise to in the classroom had since given way to “conformity” and “standardization” (Myhill & Wilson 2013:102).

This valuing of poetry as a vehicle primarily for emotional expression was contested by some poetry advocates in the profession. Richard Andrews agreed that “voice” was “a powerful political term” encompassing self, identity, individuality, rights and privileges to speech (and silence) but argued that it led to a limited classroom valuing of poetry in a spoken vernacular mode that prioritised emotional expressiveness at the expense of an understanding of genre or form (Andrews 1989). Similarly, Anthony Wilson argued that poetry writing at school has been concentrated for too long in the “content sphere” of emotion and experience, and for too little in the “rhetorical sphere” in which it is shaped (Wilson 2005). He noted the continuing pervasive influence of the “handbook literature” of poetry writing pedagogy²³, in promoting the benefits to young people of poetry writing as “power” and “release”. Both arguments proceed from the premise that writing poetry is good, a premise shared by Brian Cox, chairperson of the working group responsible for establishing English as a national curriculum subject. Cox reported that the working group believed “all children should have ample opportunities to write poetry” but excluded it from the subject’s assessment “because we do not feel that any pupil should be *required* to write a poem in order to achieve a particular level of attainment” (Great Britain 1989:37). This lack of connection between curriculum and assessment effectively ended poetry writing as a routine activity in key stage 4, where increasing pressure on GCSE examination

²² The National Literacy Strategy was a government intervention for key stages 1 to 3 which ran from 1997-2011

²³ Examples given by Wilson include handbooks written by Sandy Brownjohn and Michael Rosen.

results became a “dead hand” on creative modes of expression and poetry became “deadeningly linked with written response on terminal examination papers” (Dymoke 2002:85). Thus, the professional valuing of poetry as personal expression looked as though it had reached a dead end.

The professional discourse about the emotional value of poetry has proved more resilient than this, however. A developing body of work has directed its attention instead to the popular out of school practices of ‘spoken word’, ‘performance poetry’ and ‘slam poetry’ and its potential for a fresh valuing in schools of emotionally expressive articulation in poetic forms (Yanofsky, van Driel & Kass 1999, Hoyles & Hoyles 2003, Taylor 2014, Parton 2014, Ware 2015, Bearder 2015, Dymoke 2017, Xerri 2017, Williams 2018). This more performative style of poetry has its roots in black cultural forms and modes of speech, and a commitment to freedom of speech and social justice. Aligned with this orientation, some educators also advocated for poetry encountered at school to deal with “racial discrimination, hardship and poverty, resistance to what is seen as unfair authority” (Styles, 1984:40) and “tough themes such as tolerance, ethnicity and sexuality” (Yanofsky et al. 1999:340).

There is also a newly emerging discourse about a value for poetry in education related to well-being, evident in the publication of a number of articles exploring approaches that bridge to different degrees between pedagogy and counselling in the *Journal of Poetry Therapy* (Williams 2011, Xerri 2017, Bacon 2018). The *Poetry and Memory* research project²⁴ found that memorised poetry constituted for people who have learned even fragments of poems “a personal language capable of articulating deep emotional currents and subtle perceptions that cannot be communicated in any other form” (Pullinger & Whitley 2016). Evidence from research related to *The Reader* organisation’s work with people suffering from depression indicated that poetry “has a therapeutic effect” by offering “a holding-place... for experiences which are otherwise hard to hold or contemplate” (Davis & Billington 2016). Following a series of investigations, the *Uses of Poetry* research project concluded that poetry’s value resided in its “special capacity to connect parts of human experience that have hitherto been separated in its use in lifelong learning: intellect and emotion (cognition and affect); mind and body; immediate experience and long-term memory and identity” (Rumbold et al. 2014). This work currently lies beyond the school English curriculum but it has created a new and influential discourse about poetry that the Department for Education has acknowledged in its 2019 tender document for funding of a

²⁴ Funded by the Leverhulme Trust, conducted at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, by Principal Investigator David Whitley and Research Associate Debbie Pullinger.

national poetry recitation competition for school children. One of the required aims of the competition is “to help...improve pupils’ mental health and wellbeing” (DfE 2019).

More recently, the idea of ‘cultural capital’ has gathered momentum in questions of value in the English curriculum. The powerful status of this idea is articulated in the 2019 draft school inspection framework proposed by Ofsted. According to this, school performance will be judged in part by the extent to which the curriculum gives disadvantaged pupils “the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life” (Ofsted 2019:10). Barbara Bleiman has critiqued ill-informed applications of this idea to the English curriculum (Bleiman 2019), by which it is believed that teaching a traditional historical literary canon, including older forms of poetry, will solve the perceived ‘cultural capital’ deficit of some pupils. This valuing of literature has been contested for a decade. Ward and Connolly argued that the prescription of particular authors in the National Curriculum “stands in for confronting social and economic inequity” (Ward & Connolly 2008:302), while Jane Coles used evidence from classroom observation to argue that canonical literature excluded pupils and reproduced “existing socio-cultural differences” (Coles 2013:50). In the dominant discourse there is little recognition of the idea’s origin in Pierre Bourdieu’s work (Bourdieu 1977, 1984), or that Bourdieu amply demonstrated that the school as it has existed thus far is designed to replicate social inequality not to change it, and the distinctions of taste the school makes in the design of curriculum serve that purpose. There is no recognition either of John Guillory’s analysis of how ‘cultural capital’ might better be distributed in a literature curriculum than in lists of authors’ names (Guillory 1993). ‘Cultural capital’ is thus a thinly conceptualised re-valuing of an old ‘cultural heritage’ model of school English, one that accorded prestige value to particular poets on the basis of a normalised white, male, middle class tradition.

In chapter 4 I will discuss in detail the national curriculum’s valuing of poetry over 30 years. One of the problems with the long-term polarisation of the debate about the curriculum is that other ways of thinking about poetry have tended to be occluded. This occlusion includes a wide variety of approaches in school poetry anthologies that pre-date the national curriculum, comment by poets including successive poet laureates who have engaged seriously with the idea that poetry education matters, and the perspectives of young people and teachers who engage in the possibilities of poetry outside school. The professional debate has tended to be dominated by contestation of the national curriculum’s values or mitigation of the effects of those values. However, within the locus of this debate about how poetry might be valued, there was substantial discussion of the question of which poets and poems are ‘relevant’ for young people. I review this discussion next.

Relevance

The second strand in the “problem with poetry” discourse is the ‘relevance’, or lack of it, of particular poets and poems to young people at school. The Bullock report had called for experiences of poetry in school to emphasise “its relevance to their lives and interests” (Great Britain 1975:525). There was no particular definition of relevance but the proximity of this idea to progressive curriculum thinking supported poetry advocates within the profession in developing a body of literature that explored different ways of thinking about ‘relevant’ poets and poems. This discussion attended to two major issues: the ‘relevance’ of poetry from different eras and from different cultural contexts.

The first concern was with the ‘relevance’ of contemporary and twentieth century poetry by contrast with pre-twentieth century poetry. The Bullock report had noted in contemporary poetry “a voice to which a larger number of young people can more readily respond” but asserted that this should not be valued “at the expense of older poetry” (Great Britain 1975:137). Mark Pike showed why this assertion was felt necessary in his citation of a 1972 list made by teachers of the social issues they regarded as obstacles to young people finding pre-twentieth century poetry relevant: “fearing Hell, observing nature closely, dying of love, dying of consumption, dying of the pox, going to church and going to prostitutes” (Pike 2000). Alison Kelly illuminated this debate further in her linking of younger children’s dismissal of “old poetry” with an over-representation of poetry concerned with immediate issues of contemporary everyday life, “rows with siblings; incidents involving family pets; tension between friends and so on” (Kelly 2005). In the light of the recent removal from the national curriculum of poetry published before 1789, Amanda Naylor investigated young people’s positive responses to early modern poetry, and found relevance in its “challenging and enriching” nature (Naylor 2013:64).

Despite occasional recognition of the limitations of overlooking pre-twentieth century poetry, the resilience of a professional insistence on immediate contemporaneity as ‘relevance’ is evident in accounts of the design of the national curriculum. The chair of the English subject working group that developed it, Brian Cox, adopted a similar position to Bullock, asserting a need for a literature capable of engaging all pupils in a diverse society while also insisting on “the English cultural heritage” (Cox 1991:68). This statutory prescription of both contemporary and ‘heritage’ literature appeared to change teacher attitudes a little: in 1998, Peter Benton observed an increase in the positive naming of pre-twentieth century poetry as especially suitable for and successful with year 10 pupils from nine per cent in 1982 to 12.5 per cent, and for year 11 pupils from four

per cent to 15 per cent (Benton 2000). 15 per cent 'relevance' remains a very low figure, however.

The Committee of Enquiry that produced the Bullock report was subsequently commissioned by Margaret Thatcher, then education secretary, after the National Foundation for Educational Research found evidence to indicate that reading standards were falling. It considered how to improve English teaching and, critical in the re-shaping of educational discourse that would lead to the national curriculum, how to monitor attainment. Indications of relatively low levels of attainment were also the concern of a subsequent Committee of Inquiry - into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, which focused attention in its interim report on the children of migrants from the Caribbean (Great Britain 1981). The Interim report argued (amongst other issues) that examination and teaching materials needed to be reviewed to ensure they took full account of a multiracial society. The Committee's final report in 1985, *Education for All* (Great Britain 1985) added that this curriculum inclusiveness was as necessary for "all white schools" as it was for "multiracial schools". In determining English as a national curriculum subject, Cox followed these recommendations and specified the study of "literature from other cultures and traditions" in all the key stages.

This impetus towards a more inclusive and culturally 'relevant' literature curriculum also developed in the 1970s and 1980s through the work of teachers and their subject associations, especially in urban schools that had become increasingly diverse. Joan Goody, an English teacher in an East London school, was influential in this area of curriculum development (Gibbons 2017:42), working to promote texts and authors from other cultures, establishing a Caribbean Teachers' exchange and leading the work of NATE's multicultural committee which included publication of resources and examples of teachers' practices (e.g. Goody, Thomas, & NATE, 2000). From the middle of the 1980s there was also discussion of a 'relevant' role for poetry in articulating young people's experiences in contemporary multiracial urban British settings. There was advocacy for poetry from the Caribbean (Bloom & Bloom 1984, Alcorn 1987), for poems by black British poets (Styles 1984, Duckett 1995), for South Asian poems (Welch 1985), Arab World and African poems (Bennett 1987), and for poems by black performance poets (Hoyles & Hoyles 2003). There was a handbook on teaching black literature which included discussion of the way pupils responded to particular poems (Scafe 1989) and applied research for classroom practice in London and Jamaican schools (Bryan 1995).

The literature advocating a 'relevant' poetry for young people abated to some extent after the introduction of the national curriculum, although the Caribbean Poetry Project, a joint research

and teaching programme of Cambridge University and the University of the West Indies from 2010 to 2014, continued to do so in the interests of children in both the Caribbean and the UK. Its outputs included further classroom testing of particular poetry and pedagogical practices in London and Jamaican schools (Ware 2015, Spencer 2016) and in teacher education in Jamaica, the eastern Caribbean and the UK (Bryan, Horrell & Robinson 2014, Pollard & Whitley 2014). There has also been a new anthology of Caribbean poetry for young people (Horrell, Styles, Spencer, Nichols, & Ray 2014), and chapters in an edited collection that attended to ways of teaching a ‘relevant’ Caribbean poetry in relation to its language of resistance and rebellion (Spencer 2014), the region’s music (Spencer & Phillip 2014), its histories of “oppression, resistance and liberation” (Horrell 2014) and in relation to “diaspora consciousness” (Styles & Bryan 2014). This work was ethically committed to the ‘relevance’ of literature, including poetry, as a way of young people making sense of their local experience as individuals in a fast-changing society impacted by mass migration and wider forces of globalisation.

As classrooms became increasingly multilingual over the 30 year period, as well as multicultural and multi-dialectal, a smaller strand of the research and analytical commentary on ‘relevance’ attended to the needs of learners of English as an additional language in relation to poetry. This work investigated and developed models for effective intercultural and intertextual pedagogy, bridging between “poetry from different cultures” and pupils’ home languages and cultural identities (Cahnmann & Preston 2008, Kenner, Al-Azami, Gregory & Ruby 2008, Obied 2013, Macleroy 2014) in a space characterised as “the important nexus between poetry, culture and identity” (Rosowsky 2013:180). This space has also been shaped by mass electronic communication and another new approach has identified a ‘relevant’ role for digital multimodal poetry production as a method of engaging young people in articulating their super-diverse experiences of the world and local and global social issues that they are concerned about (Hughes 2008, Kajee 2011, Gregory 2013, Hughes 2013, Emert 2013).

The success of advocacy for a ‘relevant’ role for poetry has been critically evaluated by interested observers at different points over the 30 year period. In four articles published from 1987 to 1995, Robert Bush tracked the debate about the inclusion, more broadly, of literary texts “from other cultures and traditions” from the earliest discussions of a national curriculum through to its substantive implementation in the 1994 GCSE English specifications. Documenting the specified or recommended text choices in literature exam syllabuses in a way that this thesis builds upon, his concern moved from O Level awarding body conservatism in text choices to the resistance of white teachers in provincial areas to expand their literary horizons in GCSE

teacher-determined ‘coursework’ units²⁵ (Bush 1987, 1990, 1993, 1995). Bush was generally pessimistic and often exasperated. Peter Benton was more optimistic. Having asked what poetry teachers regarded as being “particularly suitable for and successful with” their pupils, Benton noted an increase in recent years in the popularity of poems from “other cultures and traditions” from two and a half per cent to nine per cent for teaching year 10 pupils, and from one per cent to 21 per cent for teaching year 11 pupils (Benton 2000). This shift is best explained in relation to the introduction in 1998 by the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board of a free poetry anthology for schools entering candidates for their GCSEs in English, which responded to debates about a ‘relevant’ poetry by including a cluster of 12 poems that had to be studied under the heading “Poems from other Cultures and Traditions”. This was a significant innovation in its time but more recently its premise has been questioned. Johnstone has argued that “other cultures and traditions” is an outdated category, not effectively reflecting “the way our country, culture and society are” or what the experience of authentic multiculturalism feels like, in which there are no such rigid boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘other’ (Johnstone 2011). Other challenges came in the form of warnings about the risk of a ‘relevant’ valuing of poetry leading to a “springboard” pedagogical approach that loses sight of the poem’s aesthetic integrity (Benton 1984, Wade and Siddaway 1990, Andrews 1991) and misconstrues the value of poetry in relation to ideas of efficacy (Wilson 2014:204).

Despite increasing recognition of the multilingual super-diverse demographics of many educational settings, English in Education research is still primarily concerned with monolingual approaches to literacy, language and literature in English. This means the field has tended to be dominated by concern with English as it was constituted as a curriculum subject and taught in the “Empire of English” (Morgan 1990, Green and Cormack 2008), in the United Kingdom and formerly colonised nations where English is a historically dominant language, especially the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. A developing body of research attends differently to the history of English as a colonial curriculum subject in education systems in countries and regions as diverse as Africa (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1986), Australia (Green and Cormack 2008), Canada and Ireland (Walsh 2007), India (Viswanathan 1990) and Trinidad and Tobago (London 2003). *Poetry for People*, a higher education English project founded by poet June Jordan at the University of California, Berkeley, situated its work within a discourse of “decolonial holistic pedagogy” committed to “the complexities of love, healing, and social

²⁵ ‘Coursework’ is a unit of work leading to an assessed task, determined and marked by the teacher within the parameters of awarding body criteria. In the 30 year period, ‘coursework’ has constituted up to 100 per cent of GCSE assessment, but since 1994 more usually about 40 per cent. There is currently no option for ‘coursework’ assessment.

change” in the interest of fostering “the conditions for a healthy, creative, and socially responsible society” (Rangel, 2016). This work attended directly to the historical and political specificity of the English curriculum, in particular its relationship with a colonial agenda for education constructed in the nineteenth century and perpetuated in what is taken for granted in subject disciplines, curriculum content and ways of knowing. With reading from a body of poetry that attends to the damage done to individuals by the power dynamics of societies still deeply rooted in their colonial histories, and a valuing of poetry as a way of knowing, through talk, performance and writing, this ongoing programme offers both dimensions. This is a part of an emerging research foundation with the potential to change the terms of the debate about ‘relevance’ in the English curriculum.

Finally, it is also germane to this discussion to consider how ‘relevance’ is regarded in the related discipline of children’s literature. This discourse has tended to pay more attention to fiction than poetry²⁶, and is less concerned with in-school pedagogical applications, but it has also articulated a clear sense of the importance of the relationship between children as readers of literature, with their own social histories and identities, and their inclusion in a global citizenship. As McCulloch argued in a blogpost summarising work of this kind, diverse children’s literature has the potential to provide “an aesthetic, cultural, geopolitical and cognitive poetics, engaging with contemporary concerns and challenges in order to navigate towards a trajectory of ethical possibilities” (McCulloch 2018). The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education’s recent research finding that only one per cent of the children’s books published in 2017 featured black and minority ethnic characters indicated the scale of the task to achieve more equitable publishing of children’s literature (CLPE 2018). The optimism about the potential for change in this discourse community is refreshing. It is harder to see how the school English curriculum might respond to this new imperative in the context of recent GCSE reform that withdrew “literature from other cultures” as a statutory requirement.

Although the period in which this anxiety and antipathy has been articulated has been characterised as one of intense teacher deprofessionalisation (Gibbons 2017:3), David Whitley finds sufficient evidence in the discourse about poetry education to weigh “declining confidence among teachers of poetry” and “increasing pressures to teach to the narrowly conceived objectives of examinations” against a more resilient narrative of “continued faith in the power of

²⁶ With the significant exception of the work directly accomplished by Morag Styles, Professor of Children’s Poetry at Cambridge University, via the spread of her influence in collaborative projects and publications nationally and internationally, in her teaching, her work with subject associations and the creation of the Homerton College/Faculty of Education Centre for Research in Children’s Literature in Cambridge.

poetry by those who come to understand it fully” and of “poetry’s enduring capacity to inspire and enable fresh connections, where teachers are supported adequately and the culture of classrooms made propitious” (Whitley 2013:42). The evidence of forty years of committed debate and principled pedagogical intervention would seem to suggest that although this optimism is important in strengthening the resolve of poetry’s advocates in English education, “the problem with poetry” is still curiously intractable. In the next section I discuss the theoretical means by which I have come to understand that intractability.

Conclusions

The discussion in this chapter has sought to characterise the contexts of debate within which selections of poems for GCSE English literature have taken place. I have drawn primarily on research literature that relates to the pragmatic professional interest in improving English teaching, but I have also drawn on research in the wider field of English in Education to try and see poetry in education from outside the limited and self-replicating concern with “the problem with poetry”. This was difficult to achieve and only partially successful, so I turn now to consider a theoretical idea for understanding why “the problem with poetry” appears to be so impervious.

In cultural anthropology, Michel-Ralph Trouillot developed the idea of a “cultural slot” to describe the apparent imperviousness in his own field to changing the pervasive “othering” of non-Western subjects (Trouillot 1991). This othering derives from a much older cultural construction of non-Western people as “savage” that has been rendered opaque to modern researchers. A “cultural slot” by his definition, then, is any enduring category of thought that replicates a set of values whose roots are obscure. Trouillot argued that by overlooking the historical acts of agency by which the cultural slot was constructed, anthropology had routinely replicated the construction of non-Western subjects as exceptional cases of humanity, not least because doing so had become the conventionalised route to participation in the research community. Trouillot recognised the difficulty of bringing about change. He argued that unless researchers attended to the “wider landscape” – historical, cultural and political - in which the idea developed, they would only be reading “the internal tropes” of the problem and they would thus contribute to “morosely preserving the empty slot itself” (Trouillot 1991:40).

I contend that “the problem with poetry” is another example of an empty “cultural slot”. I have demonstrated in this literature review how the idea has endured over forty years, replicating the construction of poetry as an exceptional case in literature education and providing fertile ground for English in Education research activity. As in Trouillot’s case, there has been little attention in English in Education to how poetry has been constructed as a problem in the “wider landscape”

of ideas within which education operates, or to the profession's agency in the historical processes by which poetry came to be constructed as a curriculum problem. As I have shown in this chapter, this has resulted in a similar tendency to morose preservation of "the problem with poetry". In a similar vein, Bill Green and Phil Cormack's challenge to "received notions of the English subject(s)" invoked Foucault's account of the process of problematisation, "a process which involves the hitching together of different concerns into a *problem* requiring attention to which various programmes of reform are articulated" (Green & Cormack 2008:260). Like Trouillot, they call for the subject to be "historicised, revisited and challenged" (Green & Cormack 2008:264). In an equally bracing critique of the English teaching profession's tendency to "endless repetition of the self-evident compliment that our discussions raise 'new questions' and 'challenging answers'", Shirley Brice Heath has demanded that we look beyond "common-sense truths that have entered the realm of folklore" (Heath 2007:206).

In responding to this literature review, I accepted all these injunctions to challenge received notions of "the problem with poetry" in the interests of helping to find a "better anchor" (Trouillot 2013:28) for poetry in education research and professional praxis. In the next chapter, I discuss how I shifted the methodological foundations to achieve this.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

3. Unsettling ways of seeing: a methodological challenge

In order to shift the focus of thinking about poetry in education, I developed a research question that attended not to “the problem with poetry” as discussed in the literature but to the evidence of what happened to poetry in the implementation, contestation and gradual accommodation of the national curriculum for English. To answer this question in an objective and authoritative manner, I aspired to a high level of empirical precision and comprehensiveness. At the same time, the study of poetry in school is constituted in its books of poems, encountered as artefacts for a particular form of literary appreciation, so I also wanted to adopt a respectful treatment of the epistemological basis of this curriculum component. These perspectives established three methodological principles for the study: to take the longer historical view, to work at scale and with number, and to attend to the aesthetic encounter and the material form. In this chapter I illustrate how these principles were applied in terms of data sources, the digital research instrument I built, a ‘scalable’ reading method that combines quantitative and qualitative data and analysis, and how the research design links a more detailed set of research questions to the chapters that follow in this thesis. I conclude the chapter with a short consideration of how this thesis contributes to methodological innovation in English in Education.

... what we really need is a little pact with the devil: we know how to read texts, now let's learn how *not* to read them. Distant reading: where distance ... *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more. If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor. But it's precisely this 'poverty' that makes it possible to handle them, and therefore to know. This is why less is actually more.

Franco Moretti, 2000

Sometimes, you want to look at a chart. Other times, you want to curl up with a good book. Welcome to history in our digital future. Why not try both?

Erez Aiden and Jean-Baptiste Michel, 2013

The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.

John Berger, 1972



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	30	Here Today	1963	General adult anthology				
	31	Ten Twentieth-Century Poets	1957	School anthology UK				
	32	Every Man Will Shout	1964	School anthology UK				
	33	The Albenmarle Book of Modern Verse 2	1961	School anthology UK				
	34	Anthology of Modern Poetry	1963	School anthology UK				
	35	Frontier of Going	1969	General adult anthology				
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	37	Let the Poet Choose	1973	General adult anthology				
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	39	One World Poets	1986	School anthology UK				
	40	The Penguin Book of Women Poets	1978	General adult anthology				
	41	Poets of Our Time	1965	School anthology UK				
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	44	Seven themes in modern verse	1968	School anthology UK				
	45	The New Oxford Book of English Verse	1972	General adult anthology				
	46	Selected Poems: GC	1985	Single poet selected poems				
	47	Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others	1973	Single poet selected poems				
	48	Selected Poems: UAF	1986	Single poet selected poems				
	49	Selected Poems 1965-1975	1980	Single poet selected poems				
	50	NEAB Key Stage 4/GCSE English/English Literat	1994	Awarding body anthology				
	51	Scars Upon My Heart	1981	General adult anthology				
	52	The Terrible Rain	1966	General adult anthology				
	53	Twentieth Century Narrative Poems	1954	General adult anthology				

Figure 3.1: Two ways of seeing school poetry anthologies: as a shelf of books and as data in a database.

The problematisation of poetry in English in Education that I presented in chapter two is typical of the pragmatic onto-epistemological orientation of researchers closely connected to professional practice. This world view sees education as a complex, contested and changing space that is nonetheless amenable to debate, thoughtful re-interpretation and intervention. The ‘problem’ is its primary epistemological mode, a mode capable of generating new knowledge about the nature of classroom reality, and designing and testing new pedagogical approaches for super-diverse and unpredictable social contexts. It is predicated on a theoretical perspective derived from John Dewey that teachers and teacher educators have a duty to engage continuously in the development of education as a profession, and to change what happens in the better interests of democracy and social justice. This orientation to socially principled change gives the pragmatic research paradigm a ‘whatever works’ approach to research methods, although in English in Education there has been a bias to qualitative research methods, especially interviews and surveys to elicit participant perspectives, classroom observations and evaluations of designed interventions. This research tradition has recently been extended by Simon Gibbons’s work using oral history methods (Gibbons 2014, 2017), by Teresa Cremin’s large scale *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers* research and design intervention programme (Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Safford 2014), and by Debra Myhill and her team’s use of Randomised Controlled Trials as part of a mixed methods study of the value of explicit grammar teaching to pupils’ writing development (Myhill, Jones, Lines & Watson 2012).

This study is equally concerned with socially motivated change. To meet the challenge of finding new ways to think about poetry education, I wanted to focus beyond the field’s established attention to questions of value, relevance and pedagogy and to discharge the intensity with which professional values have often been used to interpret English in Education research findings. I was interested to test whether a more objective research approach might help to change the conceptual dynamic. I therefore developed a research question amenable to the construction of a more objective data set: the poems, poets and poetry books named in the semi-public factual record constituted by the GCSE English literature specifications of the examination boards for schools in England. This corpus of set texts offered a documentary record of what poetry was made visible and accorded a high status on a national scale over the 30 year period, and a way of seeing the impact of the national curriculum at an unprecedented level of precision. The research question derived from this more objective empirical orientation was:

What is the nature of the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018?

This question shifted the focus of research attention so that the commonplace methodological assumptions of poetry education research were subject to critical scrutiny.

Empirical investigations of poetry education have tended to be small in scale and they have tended to focus on the immediate 'here and now' of particular moments. The work has a grounded quality, with thick descriptions of practice and close attention to contextual variations that shape classroom teaching and learning. Problems tackled at this scale find imaginative, textured and practical solutions for contemporaneous classrooms, and there is commonly an appropriate tentativeness about making any wider generalisations. This small-scale focus reflects both an ethical orientation to improving classroom practice and a context in which many English in Education researchers are teacher educators with limited institutional allocation of time and other resources for research. It results, however, in a curious perspective where a major national intervention in curriculum, implemented in changing ways over a 30 year period, can only be glimpsed through the window of a particular classroom at a particular time. I became interested in how a shift to a larger scale and a longer timescale might alter what can be observed.

The other methodological limitation has been a tendency to treat poetry as abstract curriculum material rather than as material aesthetic artefact. In this regard, English in Education research about poetry is usually more *Education* than it is *English*. From an Education perspective, poetry serves its purpose in relation to the major objectives of the school English curriculum: the development of skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. These four skills were enshrined in the national curriculum but as part of a longer tradition of English teaching they are such "common sense truths" (Heath 2007:206) that they warrant little discussion in the research. Though it appears axiomatic that poetry education researchers value the genre for its intrinsic aesthetic qualities²⁷, the pragmatic drive to improve what happens in the classroom means the dominant concern of empirical investigations is what helps or hinders skills development. "Poetry" from this perspective is primarily an assortment of poems more or less conducive to particular curriculum goals, rather than, say, a literary genre with a long history, a dynamic contemporary art form, or an encounter with ideas in a material form, whether written, printed or spoken. I was interested in how attention to the way in which pupils are presented with poetry as a material literary artefact, might make new thinking about poetry education possible.

In the next section I outline how my research question and its attendant need to find ways to shift existing perspectives resulted in three methodological principles which informed the research design. They provided the basis for methodological innovation by adapting ideas from

²⁷ Indeed, some poetry education researchers are also poets, e.g. Sue Dymoke, Anthony Wilson and Karen Lockney.

the related fields of digital literary studies, literary history and multimodality. The three methodological principles also established a basis for realising the redirection of focus to the wider landscape in which the ‘problem with poetry’ is situated, as advocated by Trouillot.

Three methodological principles

Take the longer historical view

Peter Benton’s successive surveys of teacher attitudes to teaching poetry were unusual in offering a diachronic perspective, the longer historical view of how an entity changes over time (Benton 1984, 1999). Though the negative tenor of his findings remained similar, the diachronic view allowed him to see small patterns of change in teacher attitudes. Over time, as the national curriculum was embedded in everyday professional practice, one of the focal points of “the problem with poetry” narrowed from a general concern with the value of teaching poetry to an anxiety about teaching specified poetry for examination purposes. For Benton, this reflected progress of a kind and was the empirical basis of his cautious “two cheers” for the national curriculum (Benton 2000). This diachronic approach also allows us to glimpse the rapid, flawed and contested implementation of the national curriculum being followed by a longer process of mitigation, negotiation and accommodation. This slower process is difficult to see in synchronic accounts of professional practice that have tended to characterise English in Education research.

My interest in seeing what happened to poetry as a consequence of the implementation of a national curriculum has a historical dimension in its attention to the years 1988 to 2018. This is not a long historical perspective but in seeking to understand change as a result of public policy, it is coherent and meaningful. My thinking was informed by studies in quantitative literary history such as Franco Moretti’s analysis of 7,000 titles of British novels in order to see patterns of change from 1740 to 1850 (Moretti 2013); and by the innovation of ‘culturomics’²⁸ by Erez Aiden and Jean-Baptiste Michel’s through their development of the Google n-gram viewer which allows users to plot the frequency over time of words in Google’s vast collection of digitised books (Aiden & Michel 2013). By attending to a diachronic perspective, I constructed a research design that proved capable of showing the hidden work of teacher-examiners and awarding body officers in making many positive and imaginative, professionally informed choices of poems and poets within the statutory framework, and to see how certain poems became ‘generational

²⁸ By Wikipedia’s definition, culturomics is “a form of computational lexicology that studies human behavior and cultural trends through the quantitative analysis of digitized texts. Researchers data mine large digital archives to investigate cultural phenomena reflected in language and word usage.”

gifts²⁹ over time. Restoring this professional agency to view allowed me to balance the frequently articulated “story of a deepening malaise” more objectively against the “story of resilience” (Whitley 2013) in a similar spirit of professional optimism.

Work at scale and with number

Debra Myhill and her research team’s use of Randomised Controlled Trials to investigate the effects of explicit grammar teaching on pupils’ writing quality is atypical in its scale and use of quantitative data analysis in a mixed methods research design (Myhill et al 2012). There is a caution about the potential for quantitative research to “miss the particular” (Myhill et al 2012:162), as well as recognition of its value in testing the efficacy of designed interventions. By scaling up a qualitative trial of a pedagogical initiative, paying closer attention to the number and nature of causal relationships and using statistical evidence to focus on the significance of particular relationships, the researchers developed a way of apprehending the complexity of the issue beyond the “simple cause–effect paradigms” (Myhill et al 2012:144) of previous studies and building more robust claims about the integrity of their findings.

Myhill’s study is linked by its orientation to Ben Goldacre’s appeal for educators to follow doctors of medicine in developing a system of professionally directed evidence based practice, based on robust testing, analysis and debate of solutions (Goldacre 2013:8). Education research is not resourced by society as medical research is and Myhill’s methodological development work is at present unique in English in Education. Nonetheless, Goldacre’s assertion that decision-making based on good quality, professionally-directed evidence represents “a truer form of professional independence than any senior figure barking out their opinions” (Goldacre 2013:8) resonated with my professional values and an informed sense that as a professional community we have not developed a robust enough warrant to substantiate our claims for the English curriculum. I therefore adopted scale and number as methodological principles for generating the most robust evidence I could.

This methodological orientation was strengthened by research in the humanities, including English literature, that has developed digital quantitative methods for looking at large bodies of texts. This type of research is exemplified by Franco Moretti’s ‘distant reading’ of bibliographic records to identify patterns in the innovation and decline of 44 sub-genres of the nineteenth century novel over 160 years (Moretti 2005); by Matthew Jockers’s comparison of semantic

²⁹ I heard Phil Gardner use this term at a BERA History of Education SIG’s Education Reform Act event at Roehampton University, July 2018. He was describing the relay of stories retiring teachers tell that function as “generational gifts” to strengthen and inspire other generations of teachers.

topics in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (Jockers 2013); and by Natalie Houston's "digital reading" of anthology tables of contents and library cataloguing records to explore the cultural field of Victorian poetry (Houston 2015). I particularly attended to the ideas articulated by Moretti, Aiden and Michel in the first two epigraphs to this chapter: that distance, affected by working at scale, allows the researcher to move between microscopic and macroscopic attention to the subject in order to generate new knowledge. Martin Mueller has since conceptualised digital approaches that allow the reader to pan more easily between text and context as "Scalable Reading" (Mueller 2012). This is exemplified by Melissa Terras's scalable reading of 289 English language illustrated children's books which feature representations of professors (Terras 2018), and Tom Mole's analysis of the representation of poems by Byron and Shelley in popular Victorian poetry anthologies (Mole 2017). By adopting scalable reading as a key methodological principle, I was able to combine the benefits of scale that come from 'distant reading' with the benefits of 'close reading' derived from detailed attention to the aesthetic and material nature of the literary texts being considered.

Attend to the aesthetic encounter and the material form

The foundation of my third methodological principle lies in a number of different sources. Drawing on Louise Rosenblatt's theorisation of reading (Rosenblatt 1978), Mark Pike explored the idea that understanding the difference between efferent and aesthetic modes of reading might help pupils to read poetry more effectively (Pike 2000). Although this research is about reading skill development, it offers an uncommon focus on poetry reading as an aesthetic encounter. Joy Alexander's thinking about the anthropologist Ruth Finnegan's concept of "en-performancing" as the primary mode through which all literature communicates its meanings adds to this perspective a sense that reading, even silent private reading, is always an embodied experience (Alexander 2013). Gunther Kress has demonstrated the value of thinking about texts as multimodal assemblages of semiotic resources (Kress 2010) and recent work by Richard Andrews has extended the range of this work by considering how ideas from multimodal theory might be applied to our understanding of poetry (Andrews 2018). These ideas collectively offer a nuanced way of seeing poetry as a curriculum object with multiple unpredictable layers of meaning-making potential in the writing, performing, reading, enperformancing, analysis and understanding of the poem. This perspective reminded me not to lose sight of my own aesthetic encounter with the poetry under consideration and resulted in a research design that included close reading of a set of poems.

Attending to material form shifted my attention from individual poems to the books in which poems specified or recommended for GCSE English literature were presented. With the exception of one or two unelaborated lists of poem titles, GCSE specifications of the last 30 years have always named poetry anthologies, most of them poetry anthologies created for school use and with sufficient particularity for them to constitute a literary genre in their own right. This methodological orientation was strengthened by research in English literature, namely George Bornstein's compelling account of the value of attending to the specific material properties of literary texts in their multiple versions (Bornstein 2001), and Anne Ferry's important monograph on the innovation and development of genre characteristics in the earliest English poetry anthologies (Ferry 2001). By attending to this material perspective, I constructed a research design that proved capable of showing how anthology editors, often expert teachers and teacher educators, developed school poetry anthologies as a genre in response to changing prescription of the curriculum and its assessment.

With these three methodological principles in mind, I developed a series of secondary research questions with which to work towards answering the overall question:

1. How did the national curriculum and its assessment establish and evolve the parameters for a (changing) corpus of GCSE English poetry?
2. Which books constituted this corpus of poetry? What were their material forms? What aesthetic encounter with poetry did they offer?
3. Which poets constituted this corpus of poetry? How did they compare with poet name lists in the national curriculum statutory orders?
4. Which poems constituted this corpus of poetry? Which were the most salient? What do the super-salient poems have to tell us about curriculum and pedagogic valuing?
5. To what extent did these dimensions change over the period 1988-2018?

In the next section I describe the data sources, research instrument and analytical methods used to develop answers to these questions. It is a mixed methods 'scalable reading' research design combining quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

Data sources

National curriculum statutory instruments and curriculum guidance documents

Answering question one *How did the national curriculum and its assessment establish and evolve the parameters for a (changing) corpus of GCSE English poetry?* entailed analysis of the legislation, statutory orders and official curriculum guidance documents shown in figure 3.2.

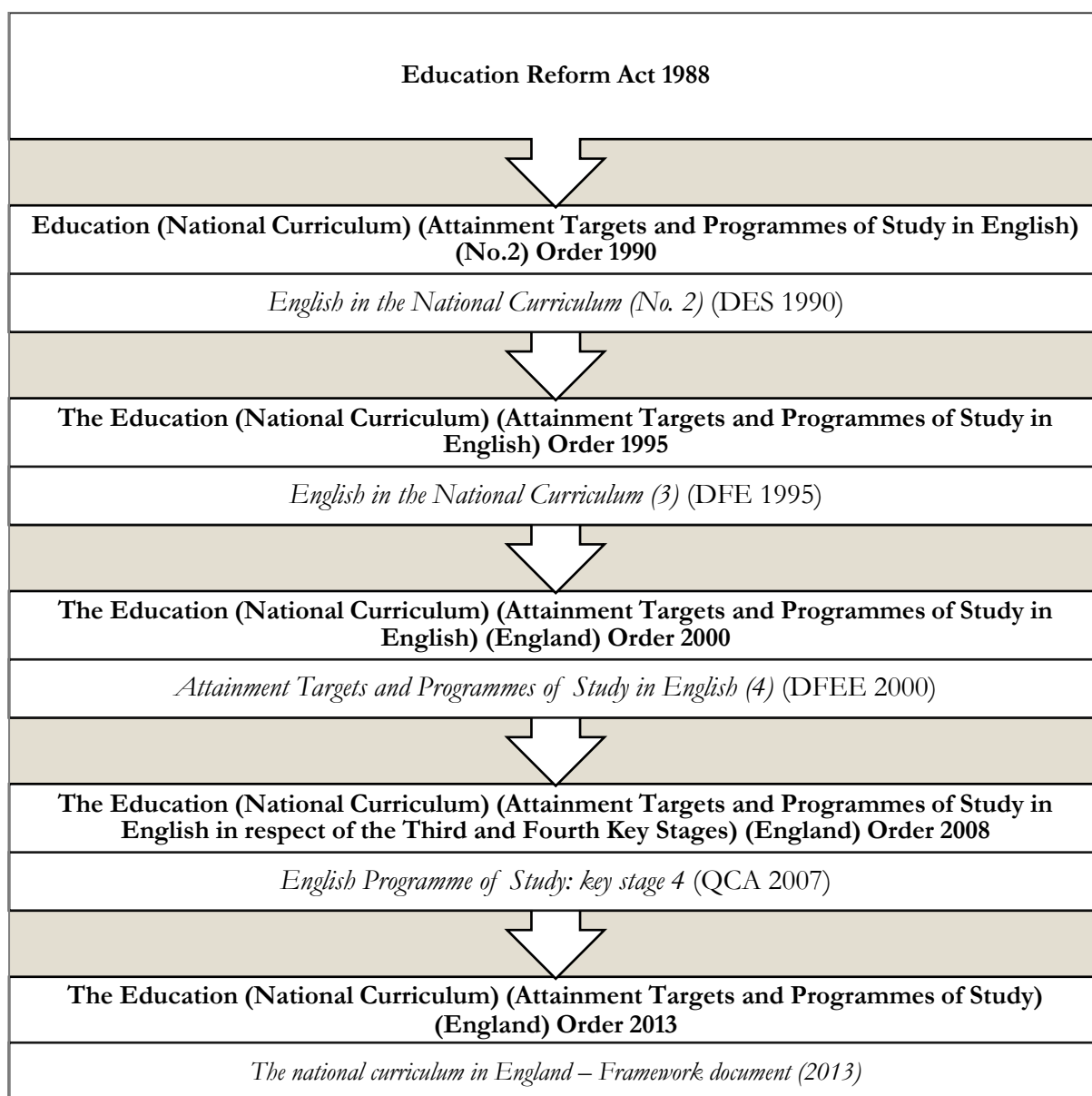


Figure 3.2: National curriculum statutory instruments and curriculum guidance documents analysed.

All the statutory orders were available online in digitised form through the National Archives but these are brief instruments of legal enactment that refer the reader to more detailed curriculum guidance documents. Earlier documents were relatively easy to obtain, supplementing absences in the Cambridge University Faculty of Education library's collection with copies available from Amazon used booksellers. Recent documents were more difficult because they were 'born digital', only available as digital documents online, and once they were superseded on the Department for Education website they were not easily available to the researcher. Fortunately my own digital repository of old backup files eventually furnished the material needed.

GCSE English literature specifications

Answering the other four research questions first entailed analysing GCSE English literature specifications³⁰ published by awarding bodies in the 30 year period. To identify the source archives for the specifications, I traced the history of the four current awarding bodies. In the process of implementing GCSEs, the government rationalised a diverse pattern of provision in which CSEs were offered by 12 regional awarding bodies and GCE O Levels were offered by five awarding bodies in different parts of England and Wales. Through a process of merger, GCSEs were initially offered by five awarding bodies: the Midland Examining Group (MEG), the London and East Anglia Examining Group (LEAG), the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), the Southern Examining Group (SEG) and the Northern Examining Association (NEA). In 1990 GCSE and A Level awarding bodies were subject to a further process of merger, followed over the next decade by mergers with vocational qualification awarding bodies. This resulted in four new awarding bodies: University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC) which was taken over by the Edexcel Foundation in 1996, WJEC, Oxford Cambridge & RSA Examinations (OCR), and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). Since 2003 there have been three further changes: the takeover of the Edexcel Foundation by Pearson in 2003, OCR's merger with Cambridge International Examinations, and the splitting of WJEC into two operating units in 2014, WJEC licensed by the newly devolved Welsh government to offer qualifications in Wales, and EDUQAS licensed by the English government to continue offering qualifications in England. There are now four GCSE awarding bodies operating in England: Edexcel (Pearson), EDUQAS (WJEC), AQA and OCR. Figure 3.3 presents this genealogy schematically as a key to understanding the corpus of specifications which follows.

³⁰ The term 'specification' refers to a published document setting out the curriculum content and modes of assessment that pupils seeking to gain a GCSE qualification in a subject are required to master. The term 'awarding body' refers to an organisation licensed by the government to award GCSE qualifications. This nomenclature has changed over the 30 year period: what is now a 'specification' was formerly a 'syllabus'; what is now an 'awarding body' was formerly an 'exam board'. I use the current terms for the sake of clarity.

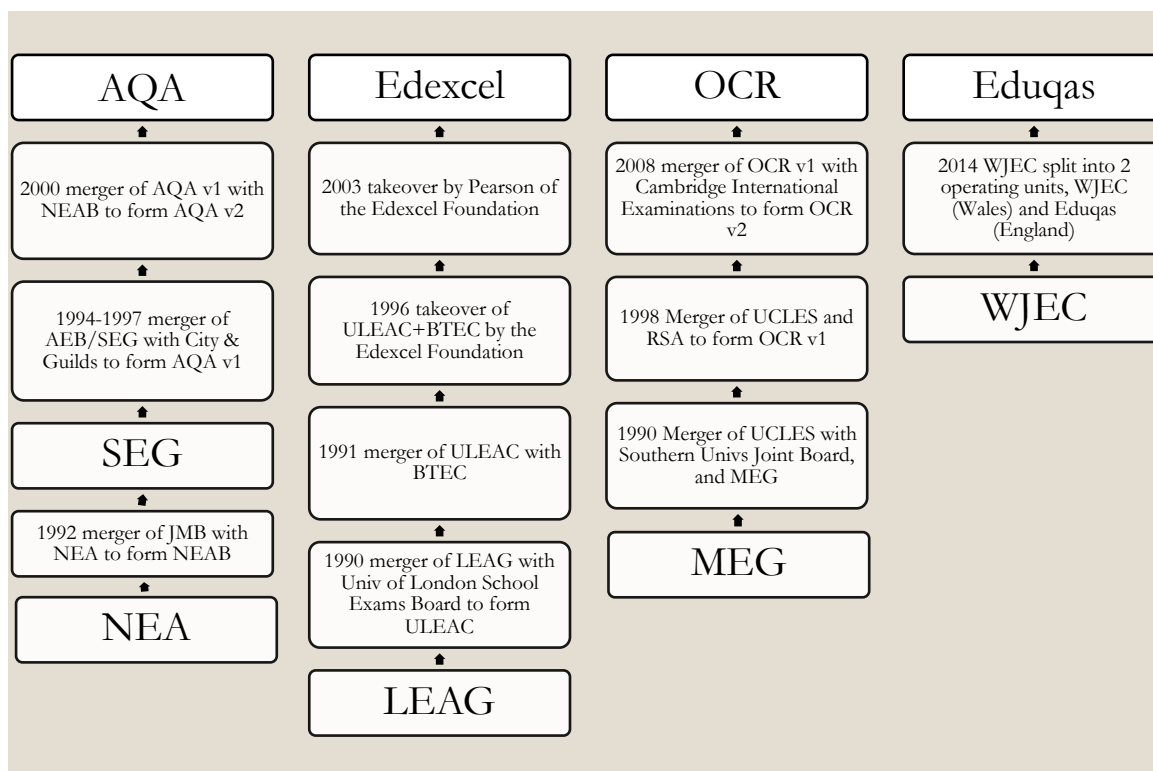


Figure 3.3: The genealogy of awarding bodies from first GCSEs in 1998 to 2018.

The four awarding bodies currently offer one GCSE English literature specification each. This has not always been the case. First, mergers of awarding bodies could result in transition periods where specifications from both the merged parties were offered to reflect their different curriculum traditions. Second, government regulation standardised assessment, reducing and then eliminating assessed coursework components, with the effect that awarding bodies could no longer offer different specifications with different assessment modes. Also eliminated was the idea that post-16 students and pupils not able to attend school might need different specifications better suited to their needs. For this study, I included in the corpus all specifications which featured named selections of poetry. Specifications were excluded which featured only ‘unseen’ poetry examinations or coursework assignments with no poetry recommended or specified for pupil preparation.

The size of the corpus of specifications is primarily a product of the number of revisions to the national curriculum for English between 1988 and 2018. After English was defined as a national curriculum subject, there were four further significant English curriculum revisions, in 1995, 2000, 2008 and 2013. Changes in examination specifications necessarily followed this pattern of statutory intervention, with an implementation time lag between statutory order and first assessment. This means that there are six series of GCSE English literature specifications over the 30 year period: 1988-1993, 1994-1997, 1998-2003, 2004-2011, 2012-2016, and 2017 to now

in 2018. Figure 3.4 shows the corpus of GCSE English literature specifications used in this study.

1988-1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAG 1210/1211/1212 • MEG 1502 scheme 1 and 2 • NEA 1321 syllabus A/B/P • SEG 2000/2001/2002/2003/2004 • WJEC 153
1994-1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEG 1512 syllabus A • NEAB 1614 • SEG 2495R and 2495T • ULEAC 1212 • WJEC 153
1998-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEG then OCR 1501 • NEAB 1121 • SEG 2495R and 2495T • ULEAC then Edexcel Foundation 1212 • WJEC 153 syllabus B
2004-2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQA 3711/3712 • EDEXCEL 1213 • OCR 1901 schemes A and B • WJEC 153 specification B
2012-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQA 4710/9710/9715 (different codes for a single spec) • EDEXCEL 2ET01 • OCR J360 • WJEC 4200
2017-(2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQA 8702 • EDEXCEL 1ET0 • OCR J352 • EDUQAS C720QS

Figure 3.4: GCSE English literature specifications constituting the corpus used in this study.

In each of the six series, I have listed the awarding bodies operating at that time and the qualification code pertaining to their GCSE English literature specifications. Thus, the first item, LEAG 1210/1211/1212, means that the London and East Anglian Examining Group offered three different specifications of GCSE English literature from 1988-1993, with qualification codes 1210, 1211 and 1212. In addition to the qualification codes, additional specifications are labelled using the terms “scheme” and “syllabus”. By this method of counting, this study documents the poetry content of 40 GCSE English literature specifications in 27 awarding body sets. It is now the case that poetry selections remain fixed for the duration of the qualification

but in earlier series they might be changed, sometimes annually. This variation made it necessary to consult the individual specification for each year, constituting a corpus of 220 individual specification documents.

Access to examination specifications was provided by archivists at AQA, OCR and WJEC, and special collection librarians at the University of London's Senate House Library. Attempts to access any similar archive held by Pearson Edexcel for the period 2000-2011 proved unsuccessful. The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine enabled me to find one Edexcel specification for the periods 2000-2003 and 2004-2011, but no more because access to resources on Edexcel's website in that period, including GCSE specifications, was password controlled. However, in this period Edexcel used self-published anthologies for the study of poetry and as these had the same shelf-life as the specification, I am confident that my data is comprehensive.

Poetry collections

Answering question two entailed examination of the 99 collections of poetry named in the specifications. Some of these collections were regular trade publications, for example Fleur Adcock's anthology *The Faber book of 20th century women's poetry*; some were published specifically for school audiences, for example the Bentons' *Touchstones 5*; many of these were available in the network of libraries at Cambridge University and Homerton College. However, 15 school poetry anthologies were not available in this way, including frequently specified volumes such as Hewett's *A Choice of Poets*. The practice of naming commercially published poetry anthologies was superseded over time by awarding bodies creating their own anthologies, engaging commercial publishers in their material production but not the editorial process. Although these anthologies are recognisable as books by their International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN), they are low status and ephemeral, cheaply produced as A4 booklets to be given out free to pupils for classroom annotation, and designed to have the shelf-life of one series of a GCSE English literature qualification. Only one of 22 such anthologies was available in any of the Cambridge libraries, indicating their low status as collection items. Three factors led me to build a complete collection of the 99 books: first, the principle of working at scale and over time impelled me to attempt comprehensive coverage; second, the principle of attending to the aesthetic encounter and material form made it important to see these books in their used forms, not only in the relatively pristine condition of first editions collected by university libraries; and third, so that the complete historical record of poetry in the GCSE English literature curriculum from 1988 to 2018 was preserved in the form of its material artefacts.

Research instrument: the GCSE poetry database

To answer my questions with comprehensive coverage of the large volume of data collected, I used the quantitative abstractions made possible by building a relational database. This consists of six data tables whose data fields can be queried in any combination. I have shown the design of the database and discussed how it works in this chapter, rather than in an appendix, because there is an important ethics of digital data transparency in the context of recent controversy about designed abuses by corporations.

Database design

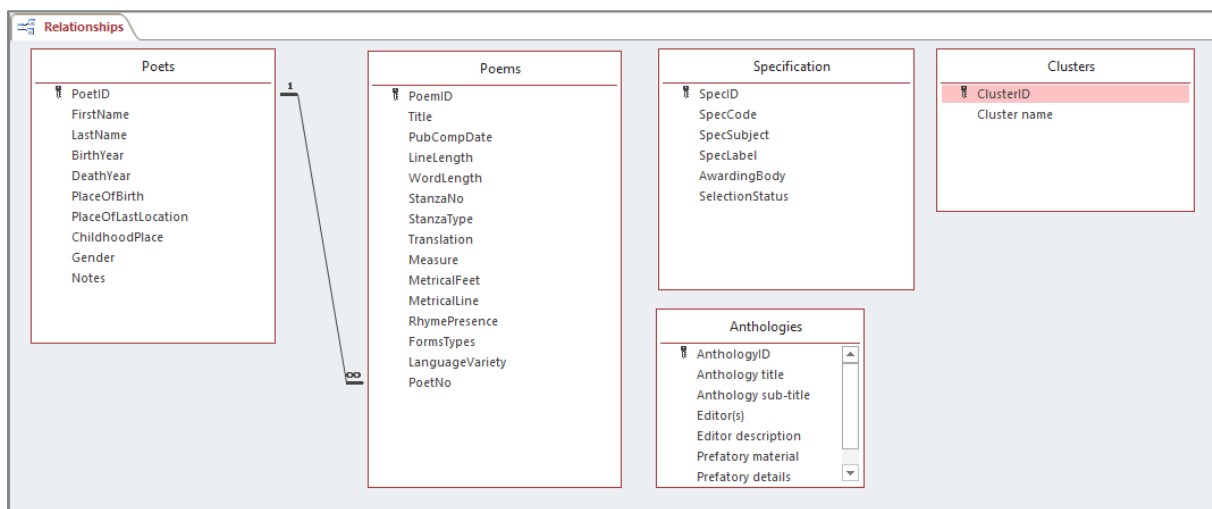


Figure 3.5: The database design showing the relationship between data tables.

The data base comprises five data tables: poets, poems, specifications, anthologies and clusters. Each table has a number of fields in which specific items of data can be entered. Each poet can be linked to many poems. There are more fields than I have needed as this study was developed by an iterative exploratory approach, working creatively with the data to develop and test different lines of enquiry to find out what would be most productive in addressing the overall research question. As the database may prove generative for many future types of enquiry I have left half-completed the fields that proved unnecessary for this study. In the discussion below, I focus my comment primarily on the fields that were used; this explanation accounts for some of the disparities readers might observe between the table design shown in figure 3.5 and some of the modified tables shown below.

The poets table

The poets table, shown as table 3.1 below, documents the 1,489 poets whose 6,903 poems appear in the corpus.

Table 3.1: The poets table showing poet name, date and place of birth, death date and poet gender fields.

PoetID	FirstName	LastName	BirthYear	DeathYear	PlaceOfBirth	Gender
1	Fleur	Adcock	1934		New Zealand	Female
2	Tatamkhulu	Afrika	1920	2002	Egypt	Male
3	John	Agard	1949		Guyana	Male
4	Moniza	Alvi	1954		Pakistan	Female
5	Simon	Armitage	1963		England	Male
6	Joanna	Baillie	1762	1851	Scotland	Female
7	Elizabeth Barrett	Browning	1806	1861	England	Female
8	Sujata	Bhatt	1956		India	Female
9	William	Blake	1757	1827	England	Male
10	Anne	Bronte	1820	1849	England	Female
11	Emily	Bronte	1818	1848	England	Female
12	Rupert	Brooke	1887	1915	England	Male
13	Robert	Browning	1812	1889	England	Male
14	George Gordon	Byron	1788	1824	England	Male
15	Ciaran	Carson	1948		Northern Ireland	Male
16	Mary	Casey	1915	1980	England	Female
17	Charles	Causley	1917	2003	England	Male
18	Kate	Clanchy	1965		Scotland	Female
19	Gillian	Clarke	1937		Wales	Female
20	John Cooper	Clarke	1949		England	Male
21	Wendy	Cope	1945		England	Female
22	John	Davidson	1858	1909	Scotland	Male
23	Cecil	Day-Lewis	1904	1972	Ireland	Male
24	Ingrid	De Kok	1951		South Africa	Female

This table documents the names, gender, birth and death dates of each poet, and place of birth. In this study I have not needed the dates, places and genders, but they are complete and available for future enquiry. The poets in the data set are very variable in the longevity of their reputations: some were difficult to trace but in doing so I had some lovely conversations with living poets who thought they had been forgotten by literary history. For this study I just needed poet names as they are linked to poems and specifications.

The poems table

The poems table, shown as table 3.2 below, documents the titles of 6,903 poems named in the 99 collections of poems, and links them to their 1,489 poets.

Table 3.2: The poems table showing poem title, first book publication or composition date, poet ID number.

	PoemID	Title	PubCompDate	PoetNo
+	83	An Arundel Tomb	1964	47
+	84	What Were They Like?	1967	48
+	85	I Wouldn't Thank You For A Valentine	1994	49
+	86	The Farmer's Bride	1916	50
+	87	Fin De Fete	1916	50
+	88	Singh Song!	2007	51
+	89	Hurricane Hits England	1996	52
+	90	My First Weeks	1996	53
+	91	Anthem For Doomed Youth	1917	54
+	92	Dulce Et Decorum Est	1917	54
+	93	Exposure	1918	54
+	94	Ode	1874	55
+	95	Morning Song	1968	56
+	96	You're	1968	56
+	97	Cousin Kate	1862	57
+	98	The Emigree	1993	58
+	99	War Photographer	1987	59
+	100	Nettles	1980	60

Where an anthology was recommended without further specification of clusters or poems, all of the poems were entered in the database; where specific clusters or poems were named, these particular selections were entered. In the pilot study, which documented the poems specified in the 2012-2016 and 2017-2018 GCSE series, I documented the publication or composition date of each poem. I did not extend this work across the whole data set, as it was not necessary to answering the final iteration of the research questions, but it was useful in creating two dispersion plots used in chapter 9. These plots allowed me to illustrate in a striking graphic form the effect of the latest curriculum change on the temporal range of the poems made available for GCSE English literature. Sometimes, older anthologised poems or excerpts of longer poems appeared with different titles: one title was selected and variants documented in a notes field. Also documented in this way were the line numbers of excerpts, as these could vary even when the same title was used.

The specifications table

The specifications table, shown as table 3.3 below, documents the GCSE series that a specification set is part of, the awarding body, and the qualification codes.

Table 3.3: The specifications table showing spec ID number and reference code, additional specification labels and the awarding body 'family' the specification is associated with.

SpecID	SpecCode	SpecLabel	AwardingBody
47 1_1988_LEAG_1210/11		Poss also 1212	Edexcel
13 1_1988_MEG_1502		Scheme 1 and 2	OCR
28 1_1988_NEA_1321		Syllabus A/B/P	AQA
58 1_1988_SEG_2000		2000/1/2/3/4	AQA
53 1_1988_WJEC_153			WJEC/Eduqas
12 2_1994_MEG_1512		Syllabus A	OCR
40 2_1994_NEAB_1614			AQA
59 2_1994_SEG_2495R/T			AQA
48 2_1994_ULEAC_1212			Edexcel
54 2_1994_WJEC_153			WJEC/Eduqas
11 3_1998_MEGtoOCR_1501		Papers 11/12/21/22	OCR
57 3_1998_NEAB_1121			AQA
61 3_1998_SEG_2495R/T		Version 1 and Version 1	AQA
51 3_1998_ULEACtoEDXf_1212			Edexcel
55 3_1998_WJEC_153		Syllabus B	WJEC/Eduqas
50 4_2004_AQA_3711/2			AQA

There are six GCSE series, each determined by changes to statutory curriculum regulations: 1988-1993, 1994-1997, 1998-2003, 2004-2011, 2012-2016 and 2017 ongoing at the time of writing. To make the data manageable, I worked with the 27 date-stamped awarding body sets of specifications, rather than the 40 syllabus variations or 220 individual specification documents. Other fields log syllabus variations like “syllabus B” and whether content was specified or recommended. This table’s main function is to make possible the analysis of changes in the corpus over time. Technically, this data would allow comparisons to be made between awarding bodies but as I explain in more detail further on, this was avoided for ethical reasons. My interest was solely in the collective position. The specification code works to this protocol: 3_1998_WJEC_153 is a specification in the third series of GCSE which begins in 1998, operated by the awarding body WJEC and the specification reference code is 153. Using these codes supported swifter data entry, aggregation and analysis.

The anthologies table

The anthologies table, shown as table 3.4 below, documents the basic bibliographic metadata.

Table 3.4: The anthologies table showing anthology ID and title, editor(s), first publication date and anthology type.

Anthologies					
AnthID	Anthology title	Editor(s)	Date	Anthology type	
8	Touched With Fire	Jack Hydes	1985	School anthology UK	
43	Touchstones 4	Michael and Peter Benton	1974	School anthology UK	
20	Touchstones 5	Michael and Peter Benton	1971	School anthology UK	
18	Towards A World Unknown		2014	Awarding body anthology	
63	Tracks		1996	Awarding body anthology	
65	Tracks 2		1998	Awarding body anthology	
58	Tunes on a Tin Whistle	Alan Crang	1967	School anthology UK	
53	Twentieth Century Narrative Poems	Maurice Wollman	1954	General adult anthology	
1	Up the Line to Death	Brian Gardner	1964	General adult anthology	
82	Visible Voices	Michael Jones	1994	School anthology UK	
56	Voices (1)	Geoffrey Summerfield	1968	School anthology UK	
55	Voices (2)	Geoffrey Summerfield	1968	School anthology UK	
23	Voices (3)	Geoffrey Summerfield	1968	School anthology UK	
87	War Poems	Christopher Martin	1990	School anthology UK	
99	West Indian Poetry	Kenneth Ramchand and Cecil Gray	1972	School anthology non-UK	
47	Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others	Dominic Hibberd	1973	Single poet selected poems	
72	WJEC EDUQAS GCSE Poetry Anthology		2015	Awarding body anthology	
71	WJEC GCSE Poetry Collection		2010	Awarding body anthology	
5	Worlds	Geoffrey Summerfield	1974	School anthology UK	

The fields shown document unique reference ID, title, editor(s), first publication date and one of seven types by a typology developed for this study and discussed further in *Chapter 5: Following the things*. Other fields not shown here include any sub-title used, a description of the editor(s) in terms of known professional role, the presence or absence of any prefatory material, and notes about types of prefatory material. In creating a timeline of the 99 anthologies also used in chapter 5 I developed further data relating to publisher and publication location; book dimensions and number of pages; and types of visual material included. These fields will be added to this table but they were not necessary for the quantitative element of this study.

The clusters table

The clusters table, shown as table 3.5 below, documents the internal organisation of the anthologies.

Table 3.5: The clusters table showing cluster ID and name.

Clusters	
ClusterID ↕	Cluster name ↕
+ 134	Section B: 'The light of setting suns'
+ 135	Section C: 'Songs of other lands'
+ 136	Section D: 'This changeful life'
+ 137	Section E: 'Fill all fruit with ripeness to the core'
+ 138	Section F: 'I have heard the mermaids singing'
+ 139	MEG1994 The Experience of Growing Up Selection 1
+ 140	MEG1994 The Experience of Growing Up Selection 2
+ 141	MEG1994 Conflict Selection 1
+ 142	MEG1994 Conflict Selection 2
+ 143	First Day at School
+ 144	He's Behind Yer
+ 145	Tide and Time
+ 146	Watchwords
+ 147	Being-In-Love
+ 148	A Cat, A Horse and the Sun
+ 149	Smithereens
+ 150	Landscapes
+ 151	Seascapes
+ 153	Childhood
+ 154	People
+ 155	War
+ 156	Mystery
+ 157	Reflections

The clusters sometimes represent work by a single poet; sometimes they have a relatively transparent thematic identity such as “Violent death and terrible disaster” (Halson 1982), sometimes a more opaque thematic relationship such as “Moonlongings” (Healy 1989). Occasionally the poems are clustered by form, genre or style such as “Narrative poems” (Ramchand and Gray 1972) and sometimes by prosaic national curriculum categorisations such as “Pre-1914 poetry bank” (AQA 2002). In earlier iterations I thought cluster labels would be useful in determining the prototypical topics of the corpus of poems but they proved so variable, vague and idiosyncratic that they were useless. This ‘failure’ led me to seek alternative methods and resulted in my experimentation with an algorithmic Digital Humanities technique, semantic topic modelling, although in the final iteration of this study I decided to explore what proved

more interesting, the thematic cohesion of the most salient poems, through close reading. This table's purpose now is simple documentation of anthology structure and specification selections of particular clusters from an anthology.

All Specification Poems table

The All Specifications Poems table, shown as table 3.6 below, is the main engine of the database, linking poems and their poets to specifications, anthologies and clusters.

Table 3.6: The All Specification Poems table linking data from the other tables together.

SpecID	PoemID	ClusterID	AnthologyID
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	The Fire of London	Machinery and Town Life	Rhyme and Reason
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	The Squire	People	Rhyme and Reason
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Unwilling Country Life	Country Life and the Seasons	Rhyme and Reason
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	William Taylor	Love Poetry	Rhyme and Reason
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Anthology	Communication	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	In a Sailplane	'The Age of Anxiety'	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Law, Like Love	Coming to Terms with People and Lif	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Loneliness	With People and Away from People	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Night of the Scorpion	Travel and Adventure	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Soap Suds	Personal Relationships	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	The Game	Work and Leisure	Seven themes in modern verse
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	A Cat, A Horse and the Sun	A Cat, A Horse and the Sun	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Being-in-Love	Being-In-Love	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	First Day At School	First Day at School	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	He's Behind Yer	He's Behind Yer	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Smithereens	Smithereens	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Tide and Time	Tide and Time	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Watchwords	Watchwords	Strictly Private
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	An Irish Airman foresees his Death	W.B. Yeats	Ten Twentieth-Century Poets
1_1988_LEAG_1210/11	Drummer Hodge	Thomas Hardy	Ten Twentieth-Century Poets

This table made it possible to interrogate which particular poems and poets were named, in which clusters and anthologies, in every specification, and to observe change over time. Some poems appear many times in different anthologies, and some anthologies appear many times in different specifications. This multiplicity is evident in this table: the 6,903 unique poems are iterated 12,742 times. To make other queries easier, I also created tables similar to this for each of the GCSE series.

Ethical considerations in building the database

This database is powerful and generative, in that far more questions might be asked of it. I have been attentive from the start to the ethical questions this raises about how the data could be used to differentiate the practices of different awarding bodies, for example in how each responded to the challenge of representing poetry from other cultures. Differential practices might attract negative evaluations. It has never been my intention to invite that scrutiny, and in answering my research questions, I have deliberately not looked at these variations. Awarding bodies have a difficult job mediating between government and teachers and their officers are drawn from the professional English teaching community. My interest is not in who did what when, but in the

broad landscape of poetry that has collectively been made available, and how that has changed over time in response to government intervention. Consequently, when I contacted awarding body archivists to request access to their material, I was explicit about the breadth of my intentions and my method of aggregating the data from all the awarding bodies.

Analytical methods

Document analysis

Analysis of the national curriculum documents pertaining to English at key stage 4 proceeded by a series of stages. In the first pass, I read to identify how the curriculum information was structured and I selected the national curriculum objectives for reading as the key focus of my analysis. A second pass enabled me to identify the six key principles that have defined poetry in the national curriculum over the 30 year period. In a third pass of the documents I noted any additional ‘one off’ features. I also considered assessment modes permissible by the government in the different series of GCSEs as these decisions shaped the degree of autonomy available to teachers to select poetry for their schools or classes. Question one *How did the national curriculum and its assessment establish and evolve the parameters for a (changing) corpus of GCSE English poetry?* was addressed through by this method; it is discussed in *Chapter 4: Parameters for poetry*.

Distant reading

I developed an innovative method of using quantitative data derived from database queries to examine the changing corpus of poets and poems. This developed iteratively and involved first calculating the raw frequencies of the appearance of the 1,489 poets, 6,903 unique poems and 12,742 poem-iterations. After this, a weighted factor was applied to allow for the dynamics of change over the six series of GCSE that were effected by changing statutory orders. This produced quantitative tables of poets and poems that were then used to identify profile patterns. Distant reading was combined with national curriculum document analysis to address question three *Which poets constituted this corpus of poetry? How did they compare with poet name lists in the national curriculum statutory orders?* and distant reading was used on its own to answer question five *To what extent did these dimensions change over the period 1988-2018?* The method is demonstrated with relevant data in the analytical chapters where it was used: *Chapter 6: Evidencing power and agency* and *Chapter 8: Observing canon formation*.

Scalable reading

Scalable reading was used to answer question five *Which books constituted this corpus of poetry? What were their material forms? What aesthetic encounter with poetry did they offer?*, combining quantitative and multimodal analyses. Focusing on the key sub-genre in the collection of books, I investigated the 66 multi-poet anthologies specifically designed for school use. I examined how the genre existed at the point at which these anthologies were first selected for the new GCSEs and how the genre changed in response to the requirements of the national curriculum. I looked for emerging and changing genre conventions, and identified groups of features for more detailed investigation. I photographed especially salient examples in order to develop an illustrated discussion in this thesis, attendant to the multimodal potentials of different aspects of the poem's presentation. This is presented in *Chapter 5: Following the things*.

Scalable reading was also used to answer question four *Which poems constituted this corpus of poetry? Which were the most salient? What do the super-salient poems have to tell us about curriculum and pedagogic valuing?* This work sought to build on the strengths of two studies of super-salient anthology poems. Catherine Robson's three chapter-length case studies of Felicia Hemans's 'Casabianca', Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' and Charles Wolfe's 'The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna' were inspirational in their depth and detail of close reading (Robson 2012). I also admired Anne Ferry's treatment of a range of poems in the chapter on widely anthologised "Elizabethan and seventeenth-century poems" and another on "public poems of 1770, 1867, 1955" for her ability to link poems together in an argument about the nature of anthology-pieces (Ferry 2001). I gave these approaches a more transparent empirical footing by first using quantitative methods to identify the 27 top-ranking poems of the GCSE English literature corpus, then applied close reading methods to identify thematic, tonal and formal patterns and set these within an argument about an adolescent poetry aesthetic. This is presented in *Chapter 7: Defining adolescent poetry*.

The research design

Figure 3.6 below shows the way the components of the research design work to address the research questions.

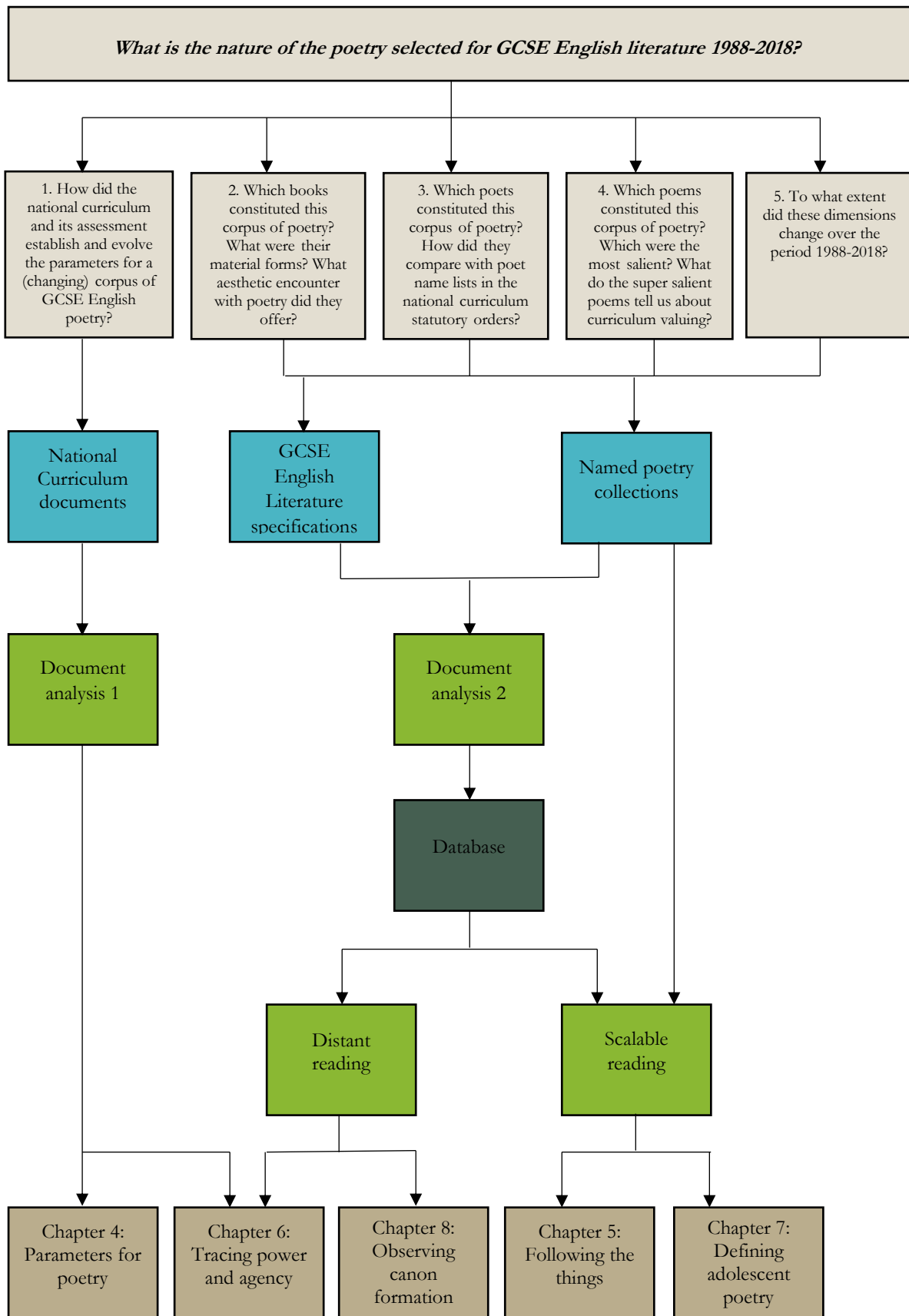


Figure 3.6: The research design.

At the top of figure 3.6, in a light brown colour, is the primary research question followed by the five secondary questions. Blue boxes represent the data types: national curriculum documents, GCSE English literature specifications and the poetry collections. Lime green boxes represent the analytical methods: document analysis, distant reading and scalable reading. The darker green box represents the digital research instrument, the relational database. The darker brown boxes at the bottom represent the five data analysis chapters of this thesis.

Conclusions

This thesis makes a methodological contribution to English in Education by responding to John Berger's reminder, used as this chapter's third epigraph, that the "relation between what we see and what we know is never settled". The ways of knowing about poetry in education had become conventionalised in a particular, narrow range of ways of seeing, and this methodological design deliberately unsettles that. It shows that it is possible to ask and answer different questions by designing studies with a wider range of methods. In particular, these methods have allowed the subject to be viewed at scale and over time, and in relation to its aesthetic and material identities. This study draws on established methods and particular research studies in cognate fields to enrich the mixture of possibilities for English in Education, and it especially attends to English literature and digital humanities. It mixes methods too, quantitative and qualitative, digital and material, long established and relatively new. It takes the different kinds of findings and integrates them in the discussion of the research questions. In this way, the ways of seeing and knowing are extended in a supported way such that their value might be recognised by English in Education researchers and practitioners. This study's conceptual and methodological approach has allowed me to show that beyond the "problem with poetry" and the evident narrowing of curriculum and assessment by government regulation, there are grounds for optimism in acts of professional agency and a long term stewardship of poetry for adolescents. In the next chapters I will discuss the detail of the data that supports this argument.

Poem B: 'Teaching *Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan*' by Karen Lockney

i. London E7

Walking to work from the tube,
the High Road rattles with metal shutters
rolling upwards. Pavements become coastlines
from elsewhere: boxes of plantains, dudhi, arvee;
hunks of watermelon piled in a crate.
Long rolls of sari cloth lean against shopfronts,
offcut squares in baskets. One day I buy one,
unfold it in class like a map, pass it round.
Its blue is that of schoolroom globes;
silver threads cross it like shipping lanes.
I ask about their aunts, their gifts
from Lagos, Ilford, Manila:
lifelines cast from somewhere to now.

ii. Cumbria

I drive to work down hedgerowed lanes,
recycling lesson plans in my head.
This morning, I found the fabric,
a fragment from a decade ago,
pressed in a ringbinder marked *Poems*.
Different pupils run it through their fingers.
I show them Googled images
of salwar kameez, Lahore.
We are answering questions –
Discuss. Compare and contrast.
I try to answer them, see myself,
then and now, staring through vertical blinds
in Year 10 English classrooms.

In *English in Education* Vol. 46 No. 3 2012, reproduced by permission of the poet and the publisher.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

4. Parameters for poetry: defining a national curriculum for English

In this chapter I examine how the parameters were set for poetry in GCSE English literature by the development over 30 years of a national curriculum for English. I start by identifying the values for poetry education evident in school poetry anthologies used for GCSE English literature before the implementation of a national curriculum for English caused them to change. Close documentary analysis of the statutory orders, government curriculum guidance documents and government reports pertaining to English enabled me to identify six principles of poetry education in the initial foundation of English as a national curriculum subject. The six principles were for pupils to: read poetry; to read anglophone literature from other countries; to be made aware of an English heritage through reading contemporary and pre-twentieth century poetry; to read poetry written for adults; to learn about language through the study of literature; and to be encouraged to write some poetry. Tracking these principles over time, as they were shaped and re-shaped by the work of different education secretaries, I observed a pattern of initial disruption, a long period of approximate consensus between different governments, and a more recent period of new disruption. The analysis in this chapter shows that the primary agenda for poetry education over 30 years, from a government perspective, has been the formation of a canon of poets considered best suited to the education of the nation's adolescents.

When my Report was submitted to Mr Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education and Science, he so much disliked it that he insisted that it should be printed back to front, starting with chapters 15 to 17, which included our recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study, and relegating the explanatory chapters one to 14, which he thought unnecessary, to a kind of appendix. The creation of a national curriculum in English was influenced by several bizarre incidents of this kind.

Brian Cox 1991










What we teach in our schools is one of the most important decisions we make as a nation. The knowledge passed on to the next generation, the skills and abilities that we think children will need when they become adults, the attitudes and values we wish to instil in them are all at the core of the curriculum and can shape our society, let alone our economy, for years. It is not unreasonable, then, to expect the government to debate the assumptions that will influence its decisions.

Estelle Morris 2012

...the national curriculum is surely one area of public policy where a government has an obligation to try to achieve political consensus and where the debate ought to rise above party politics. Instead, this venture [the 2010 National Curriculum Review] has been pursued in an aggressively party-political manner and both evidence and expertise have been viewed through an unashamedly ideological lens.

Robin Alexander 2012

Table 4.1: A timeline of education secretaries, Statutory Orders and GCSE English literature series.

Education secretaries and their tenures		Statutory Orders for national curriculum English	GCSE series
Margaret Thatcher 1970-1974			(Period before GCSEs - O Levels/CSEs)
Reginald Prentice 1974-1975			
Fred Mulley 1975-1976			
Shirley Williams 1976-1979			
Mark Carlisle 1979-1981	Image removed for copyright reasons		
Keith Joseph 1981-1986			
Kenneth Baker 1986-1989		Education Reform Act 1988	GCSE series 1 1988-1993
John MacGregor 1989-1990		Education (National Curriculum)(Attainment targets and programmes of study in English) Order 1990	
Ken Clarke 1990-1992			
John Patten 1992-1994	Image removed for copyright reasons		GCSE series 2 1994-1997
Gillian Shepherd 1994-1997		The Education (National Curriculum)(Attainment targets and programmes of study in English) Order 1995	










David Blunkett 1997-2001		The Education (National Curriculum)(Attainment targets and programmes of study in English)(England) Order 2000	GCSE series 3 1998-2003
Estelle Morris 2001-2002			
Charles Clarke 2002-2004			GCSE series 4 2004-2011
Ruth Kelly 2004-2006	Image removed for copyright reasons		
Alan Johnson 2006-2007			
Ed Balls 2007-2010		The Education (National Curriculum)(Attainment targets and programmes of study in English in respect of the third and fourth key stages)(England) Order 2008	
Michael Gove 2010-2014		The Education (National Curriculum)(Attainment targets and programmes of study in English)(England) Order 2013	GCSE series 5 2012-2016
Nicky Morgan 2014-2016			
Justine Greening 2016-2018			GCSE series 6 2017-
Damien Hinds 2018-			

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The Education Reform Act that created the legislative framework for the national curriculum was passed in July 1988. The Working Group for English reported its proposals in 1989 and, despite Kenneth Baker's displeasure as reported by Cox in the first epigraph to this chapter, the final version of the English programmes of study and attainment targets to be implemented by schools was published in 1990. It took time after this for awarding bodies to align their GCSE specifications with the new statutory requirements for key stage 4, and it then took time for teachers and pupils to prepare for the new assessment. So although GCSEs were introduced alongside the national curriculum, they were an amalgam of prior O Level and CSE practice, and the first new GCSEs to be shaped by the national curriculum were those first examined in 1994. In the poetry books named in awarding body specifications for GCSE English literature from 1988 to 1993, it is consequently possible to gain a partial view of what GCSE English poetry was like before the national curriculum³¹.

In the virtual English department stock cupboard of 1988, I am struck by the diversity of the 54 poetry books on the shelves in front of me, many piled up in class sets of 30 or more books. There are anthologies of Caribbean poetry, *Bluefoot Traveller* and *New Ships*, and other international poetry *Many People, Many Voices* and *One World Poets*; single poet *Selected Poems* by Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence and Wilfred Owen, and living poets Gillian Clarke, U.A. Fanthorpe and Seamus Heaney; there are women's poetry anthologies, *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Women's Poetry* and *The Penguin Book of Women Poets*; there are ballads and narrative verse, *English and Scottish Ballads*, *The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse* and *Twentieth Century Narrative Poems*; there are thematic collections of war poetry *Men Who March Away* and *Up the Line to Death*, space poetry *Frontier of Going* and multiple themes *Seven Themes in Modern Verse*; there is the O Level anthology I loathed at school *Poets Of Our Time*; there are anthologies that present a body of poems by selected poets, *A Choice of Poets*, *Hardy to Hughes*, *Let the Poet Choose*, *Nine Modern Poets*, *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Verse*, *Six Modern Poets*, *Ten Twentieth Century Poets* and *Worlds*; there are anthologies embellished with many art works *Voices 1-3*, *Dragonsteeth* and *Looking Glass*; there are 'teaching anthologies' which foreground the pedagogical framing *I See A Voice*, *Poetry Workshop*, *Touchstones 4 and 5* and *The Windmill Book of Poetry*; there are general school anthologies first published in the 1950s *Rhyme and Reason*, the 1960s *The Albemarle Book of Modern Verse 2*, *Iron Honey Gold*, *Every Man Will Shout*, and *Tunes on a Tin Whistle*, the 1970s *The New Dragon Book of*

³¹ It is a partial view due to GCSE specifications that allowed for 100 per cent assessment by a portfolio of school-devised coursework; a greater degree of variation was therefore possible than was visible in books named in the specifications. Nonetheless, the books named in GCSE specifications from 1988-1993 give a substantial view of the landscape of poetry intended by the awarding bodies.

Verse and *Here & Human*, and newer ones from the first half of the 1980s *Interactions*, *Poetry Alive*, *Touched with Fire*; there are anthologies edited by poets *Anthology of Modern Poetry* (John Wain), *Here Today* (Ted Hughes), *Strictly Private* (Roger McGough), *The Rattle Bag* (Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes); and the monumental traditional canon formulated in *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*. The initial bewildering impression is the licensing of maximum variety.

Awarding bodies did not seek to resolve competing ideas about poetry's place in the English curriculum: maximum variety of recommended poetry books allowed schools to make choices based on local curriculum priorities and teachers' evaluations of what would be best for their students. In the 1988 book cupboard pre-twentieth century and twentieth century poetry were both present though many anthologies contained only modern poetry, allowing this to be the only focus in some schools. Many of the books were long-standing stock cupboard staples, published in previous decades with a clear orientation to the idea of an established literary tradition; others proposed alternatives to redress perceived curriculum injustices, for example to "the ninety-nine per cent of kids who do not come top in English" (McGough 1981) and women, as evidenced by the inclusion of *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Women Poets*. Most of the anthologies selected for GCSE consisted of poems written for and by adults, but there was space too for poems written for children and by pupils at school. Most of the poetry was anglophone and most of the poets were British or American, but there were also some Caribbean and 'world' anthologies, and some especially influential anthologies included poems that were translated from Anglo-Saxon, Czech, "Eskimo"³², French, German, Japanese, Maori, Russian and classical Chinese. Most of the poems were written for print publication but there are also many poems from oral traditions: versions of ballads, children's rhymes, carols, song lyrics, and poems often unattributable to a named poet. The national curriculum Working Group for English was expected to resolve all these competing ideas in the interests of a single curriculum for all pupils. In practice they were often irreconcilable.

This chapter attends to my first research question, *how did the national curriculum and its assessment establish and evolve the parameters for a (changing) corpus of GCSE English poetry?* It examines how the national curriculum Working Group for English first defined the programmes of study and attainment targets for key stage 4. By close analysis of the subsequent statutory orders and associated curriculum documents, I then show how the parameters for poetry in GCSE English literature were changed over time.

³² The obsolete term "Eskimo" is used in the anthologies of the time to refer to poems written in Inuit languages.

Initial Conservative definitions: *English in the National Curriculum (1) and (2)*

On 26 April 1988, Brian Cox, Professor of English literature at the University of Manchester, was asked by then education secretary Kenneth Baker to chair the National Curriculum Working Group for English. Cox had previously served on the government's *Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language*, chaired by Sir John Kingman, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol. This had been required to report on an appropriate model of English language for school English teaching, and Baker directed Cox to build on that work in developing the national curriculum for English (Cox 1991:4) for all pupils aged 5 to 16. The Cox Report, submitted to the education secretary in June 1989, was a comprehensive document that included recommendations on standard English, linguistic terminology, knowledge about language, literature, drama, media and information technology, bilingual children, equal opportunities, special educational needs, English language and literature in schools in Wales, assessment, speaking and listening, reading and writing (DES/Welsh Office 1989).

Baker so disliked the explanatory chapters Cox felt were necessary to securing English teachers' good will that he insisted chapters 15-17 which set out the programmes of study and attainment targets were published at the front of the report on yellow paper, followed by chapters 1-14. The Cox Report was duly accepted by the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the programmes of study and attainment targets were published for consultation in June 1989 as *The National Curriculum for English (1)*. In March 1990 the statutory order pertaining to key stage 4 was passed by parliament as the *Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in English) (No.2) Order 1990*. This determined that the key stage 4 curriculum would come into force on 1 August 1992 for pupils in year 10. Curriculum detail was published alongside the Order as *English in the National Curriculum (No. 2)* (DES/Welsh Office 1990).

English in the National Curriculum (No. 2) was, then, the first definition of English as a national curriculum subject that schools were legally bound to implement, and it determined the nature of GCSEs from 1994. A single programme of study was specified for key stages 3 and 4; the reading and writing requirements established six key principles relating to poetry:

1. Pupils are required to read poetry.

"Teachers should encourage pupils to read a variety of genres, eg. autobiographies, letters, diaries or travel books, as well as short stories, novels, poetry and plays".

2. Anglophone literature from other countries should form part of this range of reading.

The literary genres in which pupils read “should include literature from different countries written in English”

3. Contemporary and pre-twentieth century literature are both required, and pupils are to be made aware of an English heritage.

“Pupils should be introduced to: the richness of contemporary writing; pre-20th century literature; some of the works which have been most influential in shaping and refining the English language and literature, eg. the Authorised Version of the Bible, Wordsworth’s poems, or the novels of Austen, the Brontës or Dickens; some of the works of Shakespeare.”

4. For the higher levels of attainment, pupils are to read literature written for adults.

In order to achieve level 7, pupils should read some texts written for adults, including pre-twentieth century fiction, poetry and drama, including Shakespeare. Pupils working towards levels 8 to 10 should be reading from a wide range of literature written for adults.

5. Knowledge about language is to be made explicit through the study of literature.

In order to achieve level 7... pupils should discuss a variety of works so as to bring out the range and effects of different types of sound patterning eg alliteration, assonance, rhymes, onomatopoeia, and of figures of speech eg similes, metaphors and personification. Pupils working towards levels 8 to 10... should be taught how to... distinguish between characteristics of different types of verse and poetry eg nursery rhymes, concrete poetry, haiku, limericks, ballads, sonnets, etc. In order to achieve level 9... pupils should be made aware of the subtler uses of language, and of the appropriate figures of speech. Pupils should discuss: the effects in context of different types of vocabulary, eg. archaic, literary, figurative, emotive, dialectal, colloquial, scientific, etc; grammatical features such as structural repetition eg in scripted speeches, advertisements, literary prose, poems, etc; ambiguity, either of vocabulary or

grammatical structure; the use of grammatical deviance for special effect eg in advertisements, slogans, poems, etc. In order to achieve level 10, pupils should discuss the possibility of multiple meanings in the texts studied and be taught how to recognise and describe some of them.

6. Poetry writing is encouraged but not required.

“Pupils should have opportunities to: write in a wider range of forms, including a number of the following: ... autobiography, poems, stories, playscripts;” and “select verse forms appropriate for their own choice of subject matter and purposes through experience of a wider range of poetry;”

The first of these principles, that pupils should read poetry, related back to the evidence from different sources, including the HMI report *Teaching poetry in the secondary school: an HMI view* (DES 1987) of infrequent teaching and inadequate resourcing of poetry in schools (DES 1987). Making poetry a required component of the national curriculum changed that at a structural level: it had to be done.

In his rationale for the Working Group’s recommendations, Cox explained at length the challenge of balancing the next two principles – anglophone literature from different countries, and contemporary and pre-twentieth century literature including influential literature from the past - and the controversies they attracted (Cox 1991: 67-85). As I have shown in chapter two, a substantial body of work in the previous decade had explored how to make the curriculum more inclusive for children of diverse cultural heritages, particularly the children of Caribbean migrants. It is evident in the anthologies in use for GCSE English before the national curriculum took effect that twentieth century and pre-twentieth century poetry were not necessarily brought together, and there were principled attempts to offer contemporary poems that might appeal more to a wider range of pupils. Cox understood that these issues were all politically charged, with teachers, higher education English academics, politicians and the public having strong opinions about where the balance should lie. According to his published account, the Working Group’s rationale was to offer an acceptable synthesis, on the one hand supporting the idea of a shared English language and literature heritage in the interests of “national unity”, and on the

other supporting a dynamic, contemporary and international literature in the interests of “racial tolerance”. Achieving any synthesis was a considerable achievement by comparison with the approaches of other European states with long histories of colonialism and large scale contemporary migration (Alonso 2018), but the rather thinly defined principle was contentious on both sides of the polarised debate and it came under immediate and increasing pressure of government prescription over the 30 year period.

The rationale for the fourth principle - literature written for adults – is less clearly articulated by Cox, by his account a matter of the Working Group assuming “that from the age of 14 able pupils could and should be reading from a range of books written for adults” (Cox 1991:81). Another agenda perhaps illuminates it more. In discussing the Working Group’s resistance to providing a list of prescribed texts or authors in the final report, Cox asserted the need for teachers to apply their professional judgement in text choices appropriate for their classes, with the proviso that those selected for detailed treatment “must be of sufficient substance and quality to merit serious consideration” (Cox 1991:84). There is not an explicit link between this and literature written for adults but it is implied and poets who primarily wrote for children or whose poems were commonly anthologised for children rarely featured in GCSE anthologies after the national curriculum was implemented.

The fifth principle – explicit knowledge about language – would appear to be the product of Kenneth Baker’s direction that the Cox Report should build on the work of the *Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language* chaired by Sir John Kingman. The reading programmes of study and attainment targets invite attention to specific aspects of literary language and introduce a detailed glossary of literary terminology and ‘devices’ that went on to dominate GCSE approaches to poetry teaching and examination throughout the 30 year period.

The sixth principle – no poetry writing required – had an unintended effect of devaluation. Cox had a positive orientation to creative writing, regarding it as valuable in its own right as well a method by which pupils might better “appreciate the achievements of writers of the past and take an informed interest in contemporary writing” (Cox 1991:79). He ensured that poetry writing was specified in the programmes of study for pupils of all ages, but the Working Group did not include it in the attainment targets on the grounds that “we did not feel that any pupil should be required to write a poem in order to achieve a particular level of attainment” (Cox 1991:147). By not including it in the attainment targets, in a system with increasing intensity of focus on examination results, poetry writing lost status as a GCSE assessment possibility and as a classroom activity for pupils on GCSE courses (Dymoke 2008).

The national curriculum for English was launched with these six principles for poetry in place and, with the necessary lead-times for development and implementation, new GCSEs in English literature were made available by the awarding bodies for first examination in 1994.

Conservative amendment: *English in the National Curriculum (3)*

Within a year of the 1990 Order being implemented, the National Curriculum Council³³ was called upon to review the requirements for English in response to right wing think tanks and pressure groups who considered that Brian Cox had paid insufficient attention to ‘English literary heritage’ (Jones 2016:146). To achieve their satisfaction, new education secretary Ken Clarke made a series of right wing political appointments which determined the nature of the review of English, as explained here (Parrinder 1993:5):

The NCC's chairman, David Pascall, is a former member of Margaret Thatcher's Downing Street Policy Unit. The former head of the Policy Unit, Lord Griffiths, now chairs the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) which will soon be merged with NCC. It just so happens that Lord Griffiths also chairs the right-wing Centre for Policy Studies. Two of his sub-chairmen at SEAC – John Marks, who chairs the Mathematics Committee, and John Marenbon who chairs the English Committee – are also closely identified with the Centre for Policy Studies. Dr Marks is secretary of its education study group, while Dr Marenbon is married to its deputy director. This tight little network of political appointees now controls the National Curriculum...

Pascall's report was published in April 1993 (DFE/Welsh Office 1993) but its implementation was complicated by another review conducted by Sir Ron Dearing in response to teacher discontent with a curriculum and assessment system they found cumbersome. Dearing's final report (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority 1994) recommended an urgent reduction in the prescribed content of programmes of study and a simplification of the attainment targets. This called for the statutory orders to be amended for all national curriculum subjects and Dearing recommended that Pascall's proposals should be used as the basis of the review of English (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority 1994:8). In January 1995 a new statutory order was passed by parliament as the *Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in English) Order 1995*. This determined that the revised key stage 4 curriculum

³³ The National Curriculum Council was responsible for keeping the curriculum of state schools under review, advising the education secretary on national curriculum matters and carrying out research into issues arising.

would come into force on 1 August 1996 for pupils in year 10, with new GCSEs in place by the summer of 1998, just four years after the last changes. The curriculum detail related to the Order is published as *English in the National Curriculum (3)* (DFE 1995).

English in the National Curriculum (No. 3) was the second legally binding attempt to define school English. It was based on Pascall's review but went further in the extent to which it named a 'literary heritage' of poets. The reading programme of study for key stages 3 and 4 was more expansive about the purpose of reading in the English curriculum, its emphasis placed on "the encouragement of wider reading in order to develop independent, responsive and enthusiastic readers" (DFE 1995:19). Key stages 3 and 4 continued to be defined together but there was more guidance for teachers about content, with some elements strengthened and some loosened. I will consider the changes made to each of the six foundation principles.

1. Pupils are required to read poetry.

The number of literary genres indicated for study was reduced to three: plays, novels and short stories, and "poetry and the work of individual poets". It was specified that pupils must study "poems of high quality" by four "major poets, whose works were published before 1900" and by four "major poets with well-established critical reputations, whose works were published after 1900" (DfE 1995:20). In a different vein, though it is unclear how this might have been enacted, there was an acknowledgement of the validity of work drawn from oral as well as literary traditions, and a new description of the purpose of poetry, namely to "extend pupils' ideas and their moral and emotional understanding" (DfE 1995:19).

2. Anglophone literature from other countries should form part of this range of reading.

The earlier component described as "literature from different countries written in English" was renamed "texts from other cultures and traditions" and its 'otherness' made explicit by reference to text selections with "distinctive voices and forms" and "varied perspectives and subject matter" (DfE 1995:19). No black and minority ethnic poets were included in the named lists of "major poets", creating a representation of literature in which all the named white poets counted as major figures of the English literary heritage, whereas black poets of greater global stature such as Derek Walcott (a Nobel laureate for literature) were not named, rendering them invisible in the curriculum specification³⁴. In practice the GCSE awarding bodies had responded positively to the idea of a more inclusive literature curriculum, building on pioneering professional practice by teachers, and the selections made became a valued element of awarding body anthologies.

³⁴ In Walcott's case this is especially curious as he had in fact been named in Pascall's list of recommended poets.

3. Contemporary and pre-twentieth century literature are both required, and pupils are to be made aware of an English heritage.

The curriculum components previously referred to as “pre-20th century literature” and “works that were influential in shaping and refining the English language and literature” were renamed explicitly as “the English literary heritage”. The definition of approved writers, all white and either born or primarily located in Great Britain (mostly England), and the continued separation of “texts from other cultures and traditions” served to strengthen the idea that this was a unique and distinctive tradition of native English greatness. In addition, where teachers had previously been directed to select from among “the richness of contemporary literature”, there was a new insistence that this “richness” should also be “works of high quality”. The two lists of approved “major poets” for reading during key stages 3 and 4 were as follows:

poems of high quality by four major poets, whose work was published before 1900, drawn from those by: Matthew Arnold, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, William Blake, Emily Brontë, Robert Browning, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Clare, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Donne, John Dryden, Thomas Gray, George Herbert, Robert Herrick, Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Keats, Andrew Marvell, John Milton, Alexander Pope, Christina Rossetti, Shakespeare (sonnets), Percy Bysshe Shelley, Edmund Spenser, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Henry Vaughan, William Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Wyatt

and

poems of high quality by four major poets with well established critical reputations, whose works were published after 1900, eg T.S. Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Philip Larkin, R.S. Thomas, W.B. Yeats

The list of pre-twentieth century poets was longer than Pascall’s recommended list; the underlined names were the additions. The second list of twentieth century poets was indicative rather than prescriptive; it added two names, as underlined, and omitted 12 poets named by Pascall, for example Emily Dickinson, Wilfred Owen and Sylvia Plath. Most of these poets would be added in later curriculum revisions; the primary concern of this version was to define a ‘Great Tradition’ of pre-twentieth century poetry.

Brian Cox had strongly resisted this listing of approved poets, in part because of an earlier media controversy about his omission of Enid Blyton's work from a list suggested as suitable for a primary school library. It was also in part an intention to "leave teachers free to use their professional judgment in selecting texts suitable to the needs of their own pupils" (Cox 1991:68). This intention was over-ruled and name lists formed the conceptual design of the English curriculum for two decades to follow.

4. For the higher levels of attainment, pupils are to read literature written for adults.

No changes were made to this principle but it was reinforced by name lists dominated by poets who wrote primarily for adults.

5. Knowledge about language is to be made explicit through the study of literature.

The initial attention paid to precise knowledge about (literary) language was loosened a little in the second iteration of the national curriculum for English. The expectation that pupils should study the "structural characteristics" of different verse forms was replaced by "poems that feature a range of forms and styles" (DfE 1995:19). The itemisation of particular linguistic techniques was replaced by a broader directive to select poems that "use language in imaginative, precise and original ways" (DfE 1995:19) and to teach pupils "about the main characteristics of literary language, including figures of speech and sound patterning" (DfE 1995:22). This slight loosening of prescription did not, however, change the focus in GCSE assessment criteria, where poetry continued to function as a method for assessing a pupil's knowledge about language.

6. Poetry writing is encouraged but not required.

It remained the case that poetry writing was not formally assessed, but stronger encouragement was given to teachers to maintain its place in the curriculum. A more detailed description was provided of the opportunities that pupils should have to "develop their ability to write poetry" through encouragement to "draw upon their experience of a range of poetic forms; develop their use of poetic devices; write poetry closely related to the poems they read, in their own distinctive style, and also poetry based on their own experience" (DfE 1995:23).

By the end of this period of Conservative government in 1997, the national curriculum for English looked substantially different to its original definition in 1989; in poetry this difference mostly resided in the introduction of lists of 'literary heritage' poets.

Labour revision: *Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in English (4)*

After four consecutive Conservative terms in office, Labour won the 1997 general election. In 1999, amid increasing professional concern with the clarity of purpose of the national curriculum, education secretary David Blunkett instructed the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority³⁵ to review it. Labour retained the overall vision for English, their bigger priority being to expand the National Literacy Strategy piloted by the Conservative administration. Nonetheless a new Order was needed to legislate for the amendments Labour did want to make and to reflect the restriction of the education secretary's powers to England following the passage into law of Welsh devolution. In June 2000 parliament passed a new statutory order as the *Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in English) (England) Order 2000*. This determined that the revised curriculum would come into force on 1 August 2000, with new GCSEs in place for examination in the summer of 2004. The curriculum detail related to the Order is referred to as *Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in English (4)* but was published as *English: Key Stages 1-4: The National Curriculum for England* (DFEE 1999).

English: Key Stages 1-4: The National Curriculum for England communicated the new Labour government's vision for the curriculum. The document's stylish visual presentation signalled a break with the previous administration although the structure of the national curriculum was retained and English still defined as Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing. Labour's revised national curriculum would be criticised by the Conservative Opposition for being over-specified and unwieldy, but Labour in fact reduced the description of the programmes of study and attainment targets from 32 pages to 24. Another criticism was that Labour prioritised skills at the expense of knowledge but it is difficult to see how that opinion might have been substantiated with regard to the English curriculum document. There was a recognisable continuity with the previous document, including repetition of some of the same clauses in the same language, and substantially longer lists of authors.

1. Pupils are required to read poetry.

This remained the case. In its simplest articulation to date, pupils were required to “read and appreciate the scope and richness of complete novels, plays and poems”.

2. Anglophone literature from other countries should form part of this range of reading.

The “texts from other cultures and traditions” component was renamed “texts from different cultures and traditions”. This implied a recognition of the problem in the previous version of the

³⁵ QCA was the successor to the National Curriculum Council and two associated agencies.

curriculum with ‘othering’ although as the writers remained in a category outside the prestige “English literary heritage”, it remained problematic. Valued writers were however made visible in the curriculum document this time, in a new list of approved examples which also referred to these writers as “major”, giving them parity of esteem with writers listed in other categories. The list of examples of poets in this category was as follows:

Examples of ... poetry by major writers from different cultures and traditions: E.K. Brathwaite, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Robert Lowell, Les Murray, Rabindranath Tagore and Derek Walcott.

The presence here of four white American and Australian writers in a list of seven poets marked an important shift. The absence of named poets in the 1995 curriculum left it to awarding bodies to determine what “texts from other cultures and traditions” meant but Cox’s intention had been that this component would help to address the educational justice issues for black and minority ethnic pupils that were identified in the *Education For All* report (Great Britain 1985). This list intensified the structural problem in the curriculum that “texts from different cultures and traditions” was presented in contradistinction to “English literary heritage” by making the latter category not only an exclusively white writers’ category but now also indigenous to the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the fact that the list included two Americans who lived in London (Eliot and Plath), and two Irishmen who lived on the island of Ireland (Yeats and Heaney). Meanwhile the Caribbean-born poets Grace Nichols and James Berry appeared in the separate category “recent and contemporary drama, fiction and poetry”, both poets very distinctively drawing on the rhythms, sounds, history and experience of Caribbean life in their work as well as on the experience of being migrants to Britain. This perhaps represented anxiety about judging the quality of contemporary writing, or allowing English teachers to, whereas the international reputations of Walcott and Brathwaite as “major writers” were by this point very well established. Nonetheless, the rationale for this curriculum component became more opaque.

3. Contemporary and pre-twentieth century literature are both required, and pupils are to be made aware of an English heritage.

As before, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 were required to study four major ‘heritage’ poets, now defined as having been published before 1914 rather than 1900 (no explanation is given for this change), and four major modern poets published after 1914. The list of named ‘heritage’ poets was identical; the list of named modern poets was expanded to include W.H. Auden, Gillian

Clarke, Keith Douglas, U.A. Fanthorpe, Elizabeth Jennings, Wilfred Owen, Sylvia Plath, Stevie Smith and Edward Thomas. This list gave substantially more attention to female poets than previous lists, though the opacity of rationale observed above was also evident here.

The innovation of this version of the English curriculum was to separate modern “major poets” from “recent and contemporary poetry”, and to provide a new list of example authors for the latter category, which follows below:

Examples of recent and contemporary ... poetry: Simon Armitage, James Berry, Douglas Dunn, Liz Lochhead, Adrian Mitchell, Edwin Muir, Grace Nichols and Jo Shapcott.

The list was less “recent and contemporary” than the label suggested. Armitage and Shapcott were new additions, and aged 36 then, Simon Armitage was also a relatively young poet; the other poets already had significant profiles in the anthologies specified or recommended for GCSE English in the previous decade, and Edwin Muir had been dead for 40 years. Nonetheless, this list added to the variety of poetry validated and made visible by the curriculum.

4. For the higher levels of attainment, pupils are to read literature written for adults.

This principle was loosened: in the programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 “recent and contemporary drama, fiction and poetry” was newly specified as including work written “for young people and adults”. This specification was curious. It excluded work written for children with the implication that pupils in key stage 3 (aged 11-14) are “young people”. It asserted that literature written for young people was valid but presented in the various lists very few writers who only or primarily wrote for this audience. Furthermore, though schools and publishing houses had long understood the value of ‘young adult’ fiction, there was less overt evidence of an equivalent for poetry that was neither children’s poetry nor adult poetry³⁶. I return to consider this issue in more detail in *Chapter 7: Defining adolescent poetry*.

5. Knowledge about language is to be made explicit through the study of literature.

Knowledge about language was renamed “Understanding the author’s craft” but the category was similar to the previous document’s looser focus, with attention to such matters as “how

³⁶ There are two examples in the corpus of anthologies collected for this study: Roger McGough’s *Strictly Private*, published in Penguin’s “Puffin Plus” young adult series that was mostly fiction; and Jeni Couzyn’s *Singing Down the Bones* categorised as “Teenage poetry” for the Livewire series of The Women’s Press.

language is used in imaginative, original and diverse ways” and “how techniques, structure, forms and styles vary” (DfEE 1999:34). This focus was to be applied to all types of text, literary and non-literary. The attainment targets for the higher levels associated with grades A*-C at GCSE (now an eight point scale instead of ten) still stipulated understanding of structural and linguistic “features” at level 7 and “devices” at level 8 (DfEE 1999: reading attainment targets fold-out after page 56).

6. Poetry writing is encouraged but not required.

Poetry writing continued to be supported in the Writing programmes for key stages 3 and 4. Pupils were to be taught to “draw on their experience of... different poetic forms” when composing their writing; the range of purposes for that writing should include “creative, aesthetic and literary uses of language” and the range of forms should include “different kinds of ...poems”. There was, however, less specific direction about poetry writing than before and greater attention to non-literary modes of writing, with detailed definition of other modes of writing: “Writing to inform, explain, describe”, “Writing to persuade, argue, advise”, “Writing to analyse, review, comment”. Although poetry can encompass all of these modes, this curriculum document classified poetry writing as “Writing to imagine, explore, entertain”. Under pressure from the Opposition to demonstrate Labour’s commitment to traditional prescriptive standards in English, far more attention was paid to punctuation, spelling and handwriting than to poetry.

Labour won a second term in office at the general election of 2001 and the national curriculum for English, as established by the 2000 statutory order, remained in place for the life of that parliament.

Labour amendment: *English Programme of Study: key stage 4*

In 2005, Labour won a third term but with a significantly reduced majority. In 2007 a leadership election resulted in Gordon Brown replacing Tony Blair as prime minister and Ed Balls becoming education secretary for the reorganised department with responsibility for schooling, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). During 2007, the government undertook consultation on a new secondary curriculum, an outcome of which was legislation in the form of the *Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in English in respect of the Third and Fourth Key Stages) (England) Order 2008*. This was implemented from September 2008 with new GCSEs in place for first assessment in 2012. The curriculum detail related to the Order was published as *English Programme of Study: key stage 4* (QCA 2007).

For the first time in the national curriculum for English, there were separate programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4. The key stage 4 programme of study was divided into four major sections. The first section, “Key concepts”, defined the purpose of the English curriculum in four terms: “competence”, “creativity”, “cultural understanding” and “critical understanding”, providing a new conceptual focus to earlier assumptions and generalised statements of purpose. There were two new sections: “competence” attended to functional literacy, the formal assessment of which would become integral to the new GCSEs, and “curriculum opportunities” outlined opportunities such as writer visits that were to be encouraged. The section previously called “Knowledge, skills and understanding” became “Key processes”, and “Breadth of study” became “Range and content”. The criteria for text selection were not new but they were presented in a more elaborated form: texts were to be “high quality”, of a type that has “influenced culture and thinking”; they must help students to “explore their present situation”, including aspects of their own identity and “common experiences in different and unfamiliar contexts (time, place and culture)”, and help pupils to “make connections across texts”. This version of the national curriculum for English was lucid in its rationale for the different subject components and coherent in the way it articulated its objectives.

1. Pupils are required to read poetry.

Poetry continued to be specified as one of three genres – “stories, poetry and drama” - in the same four categories as before: pre-twentieth century “English literary heritage” (the change back to a 1900 threshold was unaccounted for), twentieth century “English literary heritage” (a renaming of the previous “major modern poets” category), “Contemporary” and “Different cultures and traditions”. The number of poets whose work was to be studied was no longer specified.

2. Anglophone literature from other countries should form part of this range of reading.

It is important to note the longevity of this category. Though it remained problematic conceptually, it had been a specified mainstay of the English curriculum for almost 20 years by this point, and it would continue for another six years. The list of poets was expanded to include John Agard, Moniza Alvi, Maya Angelou and Benjamin Zephaniah. James Berry and Grace Nichols moved from “contemporary” in the 1999 curriculum document to “different cultures and traditions” in this one, resolving the curious anomaly of their separation from Walcott and Brathwaite but again ‘othering’ two people now living permanently in Britain. Also ‘othered’ by this process was Benjamin Zephaniah, a poet born and raised in Britain and writing about the experience of being a black person in Britain. If black British culture is to be regarded as a separate cultural entity (rather than an inextricable part of British culture) then Zephaniah meets

the more particular criteria of being so familiar with a different “culture or country” that he represents it, but it is less clear why he was in this category and Jackie Kay and (novelist) Zadie Smith in “Contemporary”. Cox’s original intention that a global literature in English should be represented was losing its way. White American and Australian poets remained in this category although Robert Frost and Robert Lowell were dropped, as was Rabindranath Tagore, and Walt Whitman added. The ‘new’ contemporary poets named in this document had all previously appeared in school poetry anthologies set for GCSE, John Agard and Maya Angelou since 1988, Benjamin Zephaniah first in 1994 and Moniza Alvi since 1998.

3. Contemporary and pre-twentieth century literature are both required, and pupils are to be made aware of an English heritage.

The list of pre-twentieth century poets was revised in this version of the English programmes of study. No rationale for the changes was provided. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Burns, Thomas Gray, Christina Rossetti and William Shakespeare (sonnets) were removed. Emily Brontë was the only female, previously “major”, pre-twentieth century poet remaining. A single list now included writers in all three major literary genres, whereas before there were three separate lists. This new approach notionally added Charlotte Brontë, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Hardy, Christopher Marlowe, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jonathan Swift to the list of poets, although all had formerly been approved as novelists or playwrights and it is likely that this was what was intended. It is unclear why the three genres were encompassed in a single list.

In the twentieth century “English literary heritage” category, 12 of the 16 poets named in the 1999 curriculum re-appeared: W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Elizabeth Jennings, Philip Larkin, Wilfred Owen, Sylvia Plath, Stevie Smith, Edward Thomas, R.S. Thomas and W.B. Yeats. Three of their number were transferred to the “contemporary” category: Gillian Clarke, Keith Douglas and U.A. Fanthorpe (again, what counts as contemporary is unclear, Keith Douglas having died 64 years previously), and Thomas Hardy was removed. Four poets were added. The American poet Robert Frost (but not Emily Dickinson) was moved into “English literary heritage” from “different cultures and tradition”; there were new additions in Siegfried Sassoon and Dylan Thomas, and D.H. Lawrence appeared in the combined genres list whereas before he was only named as a novelist. As before, the ‘new’ poets were long-standing staples of school poetry anthologies.

The “contemporary” category continued to be a curious assembly of poets and now a larger one. Simon Armitage, Liz Lochhead and Jo Shapcott were included again, joined by Gillian Clarke, Keith Douglas and U.A. Fanthorpe from the previous list of “major poets” of the twentieth

century. James Berry and Grace Nichols were moved out of this category into “different cultures and traditions”, while Douglas Dunn, Adrian Mitchell and Edwin Muir were removed in favour of Fleur Adcock, Carol Ann Duffy, Tony Harrison, Jackie Kay, Peter Porter and perhaps Laurie Lee, previously only named as a novelist. Again, the ‘new’ poets had all previously appeared in school poetry anthologies named for GCSE.

4. For the higher levels of attainment, pupils are to read literature written for adults.

This version of the national curriculum for English included explanatory notes to amplify and define certain ideas. The “Contemporary” explanatory note refers to texts written “for young people as well as adults” in line with the previous version of the curriculum.

5. Knowledge about language is to be made explicit through the study of literature.

The “author’s craft” section again shifted further away from Cox’s attention to linguistic detail. It still required that pupils understand “how texts are crafted” and how writers “structure and organise ideas”, but the explanatory notes focused on how these aspects were expected to be realised in traditional and multimodal prose texts rather than in poetry. A trace of the older objective linking poetry and linguistic knowledge was retained in the writing programme of study, with pupils to be encouraged to draw on their literary and linguistic knowledge when writing which “could include using particular forms for writing poetry”. Nonetheless, this was not changed in mark schemes for the higher grades of GCSE English literature.

6. Poetry writing is encouraged but not required.

Poetry writing continued to be supported at a basic level, with “poems” included in the list of suitable forms for writing.

This national curriculum document for English was slimmer than the previous version and more coherent. Looking now at what changed between the versions of the English curriculum, it seems surprising that the report published by the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee in April 2009 concluded that the programmes of study for the new secondary curriculum were “overly complex and lack clear and concise statements on what should be taught” (House of Commons 2009:23), and that the nature and management of the national curriculum as a whole was “in urgent need of significant reform” (House of Commons 2009:19). Achieving this “significant reform” was one of the main aims of Michael Gove who became education secretary in the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government that was formed after an inconclusive general election in 2010.

Coalition “Significant reform”: *English programmes of study: key stage 4*

As education secretary at the re-named Department for Education, Michael Gove introduced changes at all levels of the education system with a pace and intensity described by critics and supporters alike as “messianic zeal”³⁷. Within six months of taking office, his department had published *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010), a wide-ranging ‘White Paper’ policy document paving the way for future legislative changes. It promised to “review and reform the National Curriculum to focus on essential knowledge and concepts” (DfE 2010:47), arguing that the national curriculum had been “overprescriptive”, included “material that is not essential” and specified “teaching method rather than core knowledge”. This could have provided a foundation for thoughtful review of poetry in the national curriculum, after decades in which the same framework of “essential knowledge and concepts” had been used, dominated by lists of poet names as I have shown, but this kind of review was precluded by the speed of change and the process by which the decisions were made.

Until this point, curriculum reform had been conducted at the level of detailed specification by a non-departmental body with a remit to maintain, develop and monitor the curriculum. During the life of the national curriculum, the configuration of this body was changed several times.³⁸ By 2012, Michael Gove had abolished its latest configuration, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and made curriculum review and reform the work of his department, supported by an expert panel³⁹. The role of right wing think tanks and Special Advisors as the real engine of Michael Gove’s education policies has also been documented (Millar 2013). The expert panel warned of the risks entailed in proceeding with change at the pace intended by the government (DfE 2011:55) but these were not heeded and its serious research-informed recommendations were largely ignored (DfE 2011). In September 2013 *The Education Act (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study) (England) Order* was passed, bringing this iteration of the national curriculum into law with new GCSEs in place for first assessment in 2017.

³⁷ For a supportive use of this phrase see *Standpoint* editor Daniel Johnson’s defence of Michael Gove after his removal from office as education secretary, published in the *Daily Mail* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2693678/DANIEL-JOHNSON-His-sin-wanting-make-children-learn.html> retrieved on 6/1/18. For a pejorative use see teacher Stan Labovitch’s criticism of Michael Gove published in the *Times Educational Supplement* <https://www.tes.com/news/goves-decision-deserves-some-credit> retrieved on 6/1/18.

³⁸ From the National Curriculum Council (NCC, 1988-1993) to the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA, 1993-1997) to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 1997-2008) before this body was split in 2008 to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) for curriculum and Ofqual for assessment.

³⁹ This expert panel comprised four people: Tim Oates of Cambridge Assessment, University of Cambridge Professor Mary James, Professor Andrew Pollard of University of Bristol and Institute of Education, and Professor Dylan Wiliam, Institute of Education.

The final version of *The national curriculum in England – Framework document* was published in December 2014 (DfE 2014). The programmes of study for English at key stage 4 were just seven pages long now. They foregrounded three priorities for pupils: a “strong command of the spoken and written word”, a “love of literature”, and knowledge of “the correct grammatical terms in English” (DfE 2014). Twenty-five years of debate about English in the national curriculum had already demonstrated that a “love of literature” was both a commonly accepted principle and a deeply contested one. Whose literature and on what terms is illuminated by a final consideration of how the parameters established for poetry in the early days of the national curriculum were now to be understood.

1. Pupils are required to read poetry.

Poetry continued to be specified as a required genre, alongside a play by Shakespeare and “works” from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries.

2. Anglophone literature from other countries should form part of this range of reading.

For the first time since the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988, there was no requirement to teach literature “from different cultures and traditions”. This did not preclude the study of poetry from “different cultures and traditions” but in the context of Michael Gove’s assessment that “there was still much to be done to break the influence of progressive educational ideas” (Jones 2016:195) its intent was clear. Awarding bodies continued to include diverse poems in their revised anthologies but the greater pressure exerted by a new specification of ‘English heritage’ meant that a mostly settled consensus about the appropriate balance between the longer and more recent histories of literature in English became marginal.

3. Contemporary and pre-twentieth century literature are both required, and pupils are to be made aware of an English heritage.

There was now a single category of literature “the English literary heritage” as constituted by “high-quality, challenging, classic literature”. This was to include “at least one play by Shakespeare; works from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries; poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry”. There were no longer any lists of recommended authors or texts in the national curriculum document although awarding bodies were subject to formal approval of their anthology selections of poems for GCSE English literature. The primary considerations for poetry were a new start date of 1789 and the specific prescription of “representative Romantic poetry”. In earlier consultations there had also been a prescription of First World War poetry but this was not included in the final version.

No rationale was provided in the document for the introduction of a specific date at which the representation of poetry was to begin. The long tradition in English teaching and assessment of including some medieval and early modern poetry in anthology selections was disrupted by this prescription. As I will show in detail in *Chapter 6: Tracing power and agency*, many poets who had previously been named as possibilities in the national curriculum could from this point no longer be selected for GCSE English literature. Although not all of these poets were either popular or selected, under the auspices of the national curriculum many millions of pupils had encountered poems such as Andrew Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress' and Thomas Wyatt's 'They flee from me that sometime did me seek'. No detail was provided about what might constitute a "representative" Romantic poetry; this was left to awarding body interpretation.

3. For the higher levels of attainment, pupils are to read literature written for adults.

References in the previous two iterations of the national curriculum for English to literature written for young people were removed. This possibility had not been applied to the selection of poetry during that time, perhaps because there had been no explicit definition of what poetry written for young people was, so its removal went unremarked.

4. Knowledge about language is to be made explicit through the study of literature.

This continued in the looser form articulated in the last three versions of the national curriculum for English with pupils able to "understand and critically evaluate texts" by "analysing a writer's choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features" (DfE 2014:5). In the non-statutory glossary that accompanies the programmes of study there was no literary terminology. In this respect, the last trace of the attempts Cox made to link poetry to the Kingman report on language in the national curriculum disappeared. It was not replaced by an alternative conception of poetry as an object of curriculum study.

5. Poetry writing is encouraged but not required.

For the first time, there was no reference to poems as a possible form for writing. Though it was not precluded by the intention that pupils "write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information", the emphasis was on an analytical mode of writing that involved "facts and key points... evidence... details and quotation" (DfE 2014:6). Poetry writing had always been marginalised by Cox's original exclusion of it from the attainment targets for English, so this change made little practical difference; however its removal marked a symbolic shift to a formal academic mode of writing that is only one way of making meaning in the world.

The educational purpose of these changes was not established in the document but media headlines at the time of the announcement of the new GCSEs for English provide a useful

commentary. The *Daily Mail* celebrated a perceived new rigour, “Romantic poets put rigour back in GCSEs in exams shake-up” (Harris and 2013) and *The Telegraph* attended to the new Anglicisation of the curriculum “More British writers in new English literature GCSEs” (Paton 2014). This characteristic was reported differently by *The Guardian* as “Michael Gove’s monocultural version of the English literature curriculum” (Okolosie 2013) and by *The Independent* as “Pupils face literary diet of ‘dead white men’” (Garner 2013). The 1789 rule was little commented upon. In 2014, Michael Gove was replaced as education secretary by Nicky Morgan. To his opponents in the teaching profession he had been regarded, as Ken Jones has explained, as “a politician of uniquely repellent qualities” but also one whose speeches and articles “repeated the cadences, vocabulary and preoccupations of these earlier generations⁴⁰ and pursued the causes they had taken up” (Jones 2016:194). In this way, the most recent changes to poetry in the national curriculum might be seen as both a radical new disruption of a settled pattern and as unfinished business from the earlier period of Conservative administration of the national curriculum.

Conclusions

Investigation of the national curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets for English does not attend to the extensive consultation debates; it shows the final outcome rather than the process of contestation and compromise by which each version was produced; and it does not have the textured overlay of comparison with GCSE assessment criteria and mark schemes. That would be a different doctorate. My concern has been to cut through the divided debates to consider what actually happened. By establishing the key parameters for poetry in the English curriculum, I have been able to trace a pattern of initial disruption, then a long period of approximate consensus, and a more recent disruption.

Some broader observations can also be made about how poetry has been envisioned in the curriculum over the last 30 years. First, by far the main priority for poetry education has been the analytical reading of poems. Writing has been a marginal activity, and the speaking and listening programmes of study and attainment targets have not explored the potential of poetry for recitation or performance⁴¹. Research cited in chapter two suggested the benefit of these modes to creativity and well-being, while their potential as a kind of embodied literary criticism (Fuller

⁴⁰ Earlier generations of “Conservative activists of a particular sort – strongly committed ideologically, deeply opposed to dialogue with educational interests, traditionalist in their conception of teaching and learning, market-focused in their policy orientations.” (Jones 2016:194).

⁴¹ This is a potential that has been demonstrated by Poetry By Heart, the annual national schools poetry recitation competition I established in 2012 with Sir Andrew Motion, and by the Leverhulme Trust funded Poetry and Memory research programme undertaken at the University of Cambridge 2014-2016.

2011) has been noted by teachers who engage their pupils in the Poetry By Heart recitation competition (Blake & Shortis 2018). These more inclusive possibilities for pupil *enjoyment* of poetry were not attended to in the formal specification of the English curriculum.

The second major concern of the national curriculum for English has been the explicit formation of a canon of poetry for schools. This attended closely to concerns about quality by naming approved poets and providing a temporal structure, in its categorisations of literature as “pre-20th century”, “20th century” and “contemporary”. This canon-building concern extended to literature “from different cultures and traditions” although the separate categorisation ‘othered’ this poetry and kept its conceptual root in the educational inclusion of migrant populations to England rather than in ideas about an “English literary tradition” that has arisen globally as a result of England’s colonial history. Other curricula have attended to other possibilities: for example, the historical survey of poetry favoured by the Cambridge iGCSE anthology (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate 2005), the anthology chosen for the WJEC GCSE specification for schools in Wales (Stephens 2007) or the Poetry By Heart anthology (Blake, Dixon, Motion and Sprackland 2014); exploration of how poetry works in its different forms as in the former National Literary Strategy for key stage 3, or in ‘teaching anthologies’ such as *The Making of a Poem* (Strand and Boland 2000); or integrating global and local poetries through thematic lenses as in the anthology for the Caribbean Examinations Council (McWatt and Simmons-McDonald 2017) or earlier anthologies for GCSE such as *Many People Many Voices* (Hidden and Hollins 1978). The attention expended on poet name lists has prevented innovation or variation in thinking about poetry in the national curriculum for English.

In 2018 the national curriculum has an uncertain future. Successive governments have pursued a policy of breaking up networks of local education authority schools into autonomous academies and free schools funded directly by the government. Academies and free schools are at liberty to devise their own curriculum, according to the values of the head teacher and governing body (though still subject to Ofsted’s evaluation of its quality). Soon, it might seem, there will cease to be a point in government defining a national curriculum. However, the teaching profession will still need to make decisions about what to teach and awarding bodies will still need to decide what needs to be covered for assessment purposes. Teachers and examiners always had more say in this than is commonly represented in the debate about the national curriculum, and in the chapters that follow I will attend to the manner of their agency. The next chapters document how the corpus of poems and poets for key stage 4 pupils evolved as a result of the national curriculum, through its realisation in selections of poetry books for GCSE English literature.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

5. Following the things: the hybridisation of school poetry anthologies.

In this chapter I have adopted cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's argument that the meaning of "things" is best understood by following them through the trajectory of human "transactions and calculations" of value in which they function. The "things" in this study are the 99 poetry books named by awarding bodies for use as assessment material for GCSE English literature. Their meaning and exchange value is a function of key stage 4 assessment, regulated by government under the terms of the Education Reform Act of 1988. The chapter therefore starts by presenting features of the assessment framework which shaped the selection and production of poetry books for GCSE English literature: the size of the market for this qualification, the level of competition between awarding bodies, the changing nature of the national curriculum for English, and the assessment modes licensed by government. The research question *Which poetry books constituted this corpus of poetry?* is addressed in a timeline visualisation of the 99 books. Quantitative analysis showed a decreasing number of books, increasing standardisation of the types of books, and a shift from longevity to ephemerality of book production. The effects of the competitive environment of key stage 4 assessment on the materiality of the books were observed by attending to the question *What were their material forms?* These effects included standardised book formats, greater foregrounding of corporate branding, more functional titling and the erasure of editorial agency. The third question *What aesthetic encounter did they offer?* attended to evidence of a shift from a multimodal visual, auditory and dialogic representation of poetry to a monomodal textual one. This analysis confirmed pessimistic public evaluation of what happened to school poetry anthologies over the 30 year period, although I conclude this chapter with recognition of positive achievements in school poetry anthology-making in the face of considerable assessment pressure and some modest grounds of optimism for its future.

“By the late 1990s the NEAB (as it was then) did a radical thing and published an anthology to be given free to all GCSE students... Yes, in an ideal world school libraries and English teaching rooms would be overflowing with collections that everyone could choose from. In the real world it’s not like that. For every young person to be given his or her own anthology is a big shift in thinking... Publishers talk about getting poetry into people’s hands. This anthology, with its total print run in millions, has achieved this with spectacular success.”

Simon Powell, 2009

“...we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.”

Arjun Appadurai, 1986



On the Life of Man

What is our life? a play of passion,
Our mirth the music of division,
Our mother's wombs the tiring houses be,
Where we are dressed for this short Comedy.
5 Heaven the Judicious sharp spectator is,
That sits and marks still who doth act amiss,
Our graves that hide us from the searching Sun,
Are like drawn curtains when the play is done,
Thus march we playing to our latest rest,
10 Only we die in earnest, that's no Jest.

Sir Walter Raleigh

- = rhetorical question
- = alliteration.
- = repetition
- = rhyme
- = interesting vocab
- = metaphor

1 stanza
 1st person talking to the audience.

Figure 5.1: The things: school poetry anthologies outside and inside.

At the annual NATE conference in June 2017, the poet Simon Armitage gave a keynote lecture about his experience of studying poetry as a 16 year-old at the comprehensive school he attended in West Yorkshire. He projected onto the conference hall screen an image of an anthology, *Worlds*, a 1974 collection of poems by seven poets edited by Geoffrey Summerfield. Armitage spoke about the immediate appeal of its black and white photographs of poets doing everyday things in the sorts of places he recognised and his enjoyment of each poet's vivid personal introduction to their poetry and its relationship to their life. He enjoyed the poems too, by Charles Causley, Thom Gunn, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Norman MacCaig, Adrian Mitchell and Edwin Morgan, all living contemporary poets at this time. Armitage then spoke about his 16 year-old daughter's school poetry anthology: a thin A4 booklet produced by one of the GCSE awarding bodies with none of the rich surround to the poems that captured his imagination as a teenager. Armitage concluded with a plea to teachers, awarding bodies and publishers to revisit the idea of school poetry anthologies as books that offer a rich aesthetic encounter with poetry.

A different perspective is offered in the first epigraph to this chapter, a quotation from an article by Simon Powell, founder of *Poetry Live*.⁴² His point concerns the moment the shift began from the type of anthology Simon Armitage experienced at school to the type of anthology his daughter studied. This was the introduction in 1996 by the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB) of a new kind of anthology, one edited and shaped by the awarding body rather than by a commercial publisher. Simon Powell regarded this as a radical innovation which brought great benefits to pupils and schools and had a significant impact on the cultural life of the nation. These perspectives seem contradictory but both authors were concerned with how poetry was made available to young people at school in a form likely to maximise lasting enjoyment and engagement. For Armitage the answer was aesthetic and material; for Powell it was about a democracy of ownership, what he called "a 'my first LP' thing" (Powell, 2009:10). Together, these insights serve to illuminate some of the competing ambitions for the material presentation of poetry in the examined curriculum and the significance of the school poetry anthology as a vehicle for its delivery, but they are also partial, in the twin senses of being incomplete and being derived from particular positions in relation to poetry education.

To better understand what effect the national curriculum had on the books that were selected for assessment purposes, Arjun Appadurai's invitation to cultural anthropologists to "follow the things" is more useful (Appadurai 1986, cited as the second epigraph to this chapter). This

⁴² Poetry Live is an established annual series of live readings by poets in venues across the UK designed to support GCSE pupils in their study of poetry; it was founded more than 20 years ago by the late Simon Powell.

approach is predicated on the idea that the meaning of objects is socially determined and can be interpreted by considering them as commodities with an exchange value in social interaction. By following these “human transactions and calculations”, we can see more clearly how their meaning becomes inscribed in “their forms, their uses, their trajectories” (Appadurai 1986:5). The “things” in my case are the 99 poetry books named by awarding bodies for GCSE English literature from 1988 to 2018, mostly poetry anthologies produced specifically for curriculum purposes. As well as being objects of aesthetic value, as Armitage argued, and objects of democratic value, as Powell argued, I will show in this chapter how they can also be regarded as commodities in the system of public examinations related to the national curriculum. To follow the things in this system of value exchange, I analyse the changing form of school poetry anthologies, the uses to which they were put for GCSE English literature assessment purposes, and their trajectory through the period 1988-2018. I begin with analysis of how government policy on the assessment of the national curriculum changed the exchange value of poetry books.

GCSE English literature assessment

Educators might prefer to discuss poetry books selected for the curriculum as resources of intrinsic educational worth rather than as commodities, but a market-oriented focus brings into view powerful dynamics that have shaped their form and function. This orientation was not introduced by the national curriculum: before 1988, commercial publishers competed to supply schools with popular poetry books that would be reprinted many times, providing publishers with rewarding sales figures over a long period. The long-lasting success of anthologies such as *Worlds* and *Touchstones* was as much a testament to their publishers’ judgment of the educational market as it was to the editorial skill of Geoffrey Summerfield and Peter Benton. Nonetheless, the 1988 Education Reform Act changed some significant features of the market, and ongoing government concern with school performance since then has worked to change its competitive dynamics. These changes were played out in the form and function of school poetry books for GCSE English literature.

The first dynamic is the size of the market for English literature examinations. This size has always been a product of the population of 15 to 16 year olds in school and the degree of requirement they have been under to pursue this qualification. Since the school year 2004-5, the population has been slowly declining with a current annual average of 625,000 pupils aged 15 to 16⁴³, and a range between 585,377 in 2017-18 and 655,146 in 2006-7 (National Statistics 2011,

⁴³ Changes in the way school populations were reported as part of school performance statistics for key stage 4/GCSE and difficulty accessing archived material mean I have data for 2004/5 onwards only.

2017, 2018). The potential market has therefore decreased by 69,769 over this period but the degree of requirement has changed. From 1988, unless they had a formal exception, all pupils in England were required to have their key stage 4 attainment in English assessed via their performance in GCSE English. Continuing the existing practice for GCE O level and CSE, there were two GCSE English qualifications, one in English language and one in English literature. Traditionally, these had been distinct with English language addressing skills in reading and writing, such as comprehension, creative and functional writing, and English literature addressing the study of literary set texts, although in many schools they were taught in an integrated way. In this system, it had been possible for pupils to be entered for one or both subjects, each in either GCE O Level or CSE. The national curriculum changed that because it mandated the study of language and literature for all pupils in key stage 4. This meant that the new GCSEs in English language had to include a literature component in order that they met two imperatives: from the government, that pupil attainment in all components of key stage 4 English be assessed; from schools, that there should be an option to enter pupils for only one GCSE English qualification if that were appropriate to pupil needs. This meant that the number of pupils entered for GCSE English literature assessment was always lower than the number of pupils entered for GCSE English language, although the majority continued to be entered for both. In 2016, for example, there were 459,750 entries for GCSE English language and 371,700 entries for GCSE English literature (National Statistics 2017).

There was an additional benefit to schools of this ‘double award’ practice: with government measures of school performance based on the proportion of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at grade A-C including English and Maths, entering most students for GCSE English language and GCSE English literature could help to secure two of the five essential grades. Consequently, the number of pupils entered for GCSE English literature remained relatively high. However, in 2017, further government prescription of school performance measures saw entries for GCSE English literature increase significantly. School performance was to be measured by the proportion of pupils achieving a newly defined ‘English Baccalaureate’: higher grades in five specified GCSE subjects including ‘English’, now constituting GCSEs in both English language and English literature. GCSE English literature entries consequently rose from 371,700 in 2016 to 551,050 in 2017. This is a large market in a total school population of 16 year olds of 585,377⁴⁴. It is also a valuable market. In 2018-19 the entry fee for one pupil taking GCSE English literature with one of the awarding bodies was £35.40. An entry of 551,050 pupils is

⁴⁴ It should be noted that GCSE entry numbers will include a number of pupils re-taking the qualification to improve their grade, and some older pupils taking the qualification in further education.

worth over £19.5 million in examination entry fees, and each of these pupils requires access to the literary materials - poetry books, novels, plays - required for study of the qualification. Knowing the monetary value of the market illuminates the economic dynamic involved in the production of poetry anthologies selected for GCSE English literature.

The second dynamic of the assessment framework is the level of competition between providers in the market for GCSE English literature. Regulation associated with the national curriculum caused changes in the number, geographical organisation and constitution of awarding bodies licensed to offer GCSE qualifications. Before GCSEs were introduced there were between 12 and 14 examination boards for CSE qualifications, and six examination boards for GCE 'O' levels. To some extent, the examination boards all had regional roots. For CSEs, schools had to enter candidates through their local regional board, while the examination boards for GCE 'O' Levels dated back to the mid-nineteenth century when different universities offered examinations to schools mostly in their regions (Raban 2008). When the national curriculum was introduced, only five examination boards⁴⁵ were licensed to offer the new GCSE qualification and greater competition between them was introduced by dismantling regional association such that schools were free to choose whichever awarding body they wished. Over time the number of GCSE awarding bodies was reduced to four, each competing for a share of this valuable national market on a subject by subject basis.

In the early years of GCSE English literature, awarding bodies competed by offering different configurations of set texts and assessment modes perceived to be attractive to different types of schools with some specifications offered for small cohorts of students with particular needs, such as mature students and those unable to attend school for medical or other reasons. This helps to account for the wide range of poetry books available for GCSE English literature in 1988, as observed in chapter 4. Later, multiple specifications were a way of retaining the assessment history and identity of merged awarding bodies and of continuing to offer schools flexibility to adapt assessment to priorities for their pupils, but by 2012 government regulation had limited each awarding body to one specification in the perceived interests of assessment reliability. Less specification variation reduced the number of poetry books while tighter definition of the poetry content of the national curriculum for key stage 4 brought what could be offered into closer alignment, and competition for market share made it more difficult for awarding bodies to pursue a singular course. Their choices entailed risks of failing to meet regulatory requirements or failing to attract schools, many of whom keenly compared

⁴⁵ MEG, LEAG, WJEC, SEG and NEA.

specifications every time the national curriculum was amended, under government pressure themselves to produce improved GCSE examination results every year.

The third dynamic affecting the production of school poetry books was changing statutory regulation of the national curriculum for English. As discussed in chapter 4, there have so far been six series of GCSE English literature, each shaped by changing regulation of curriculum content including changing lists of named poets. The changes brought about by the 1990 statutory order to GCSEs first examined in 1994 was so significant that the long-standing stock cupboard resources of many schools were effectively made obsolete. With no new government funding available for new books of poetry that would meet the requirement to study four named pre-20th century poets and four named 20th century poets, there was a significant problem. To address this, the NEAB awarding body innovated the idea of an anthology that was provided free of charge to schools entering pupils for their GCSE English qualifications. The first iteration of this practice was called an anthology (see item 70 in the timeline below) but its A4 format, cheap production values and distribution to schools in the spring term of Year 11 was more recognisable as an existing awarding body practice of issuing material for study in advance of an examination⁴⁶. It gave schools an attractive solution to the problem of resourcing the national curriculum for English at key stage 4.

This kind of anthology proved sufficiently popular with schools that NEAB innovated this new hybrid genre further, such that their anthologies produced for the next series of GCSE English literature, from 1998 onwards, were more substantial in terms of production quality and number of poems, and they were distributed to schools so that their content could be taught from the beginning of key stage 4. A copy for each pupil entered for the NEAB (and then AQA) GCSE English/English literature qualifications continued to be provided free of charge. As the curriculum for key stage 4 English continued to be amended on a frequent basis, the pragmatism of a cheaply produced and ephemeral anthology of poems, capable of rapid response to statutory change, became more evident. The innovation was emulated by the other awarding bodies competing for market share until there were no distinguishable differences in quality, functionality or price (free). By series 5 of GCSE English literature, awarding body anthologies had become largely interchangeable generic commodities. That process of commoditisation resulted in the disadvantages observed by Simon Armitage in terms of the quality of the aesthetic encounter with poetry and the advantages observed by Simon Powell in terms of its democratic accessibility.

⁴⁶ Known professionally as 'pre-release' material.

The final dynamic to consider is change in the assessment modes licensed by government. In the period 1988 to 2018, poetry was presented for GCSE English literature examination purposes in three main assessment modes⁴⁷, each of which had different consequences for the poetry books needed to support it.

The **'set text'** mode entailed prescription by awarding bodies of poems to be studied in preparation for an examination. At different times, this could be a list of poems independent of any particular published collection; a list of poems selected from a published collection; a named thematic or single poet 'cluster' of poems within a published collection; or an entire collection of poems offered with the expectation that teachers would make a suitable select of poems. Pressure to reduce the variation between awarding body specifications led to the minimum number of poems for any poetry component being defined as 15 poems; the minimum became the standard number in awarding body anthologies, increasing the homogeneity of the hybrid genre. Within the 'set text' mode, there were 'open book' and 'closed book' variations, either allowing or not allowing pupils to use a copy of the text in the examination. 'Open book' examinations were usual until 2016, with awarding bodies presenting poems in their anthologies with plenty of white space around them suitable for pupil annotation, until government concern about the reliability of results increased prescription about the permitted level of annotation.

'Coursework' was a mode whose spirit lay in the idea that teachers would guide pupils in selecting poems and assessment tasks they were interested in. This mode supported the wide ecology of recommended anthologies and single poet collections evident in the first two series of GCSE English literature. Pupils produced written and oral responses to poems that were assessed by teachers, moderated internally by schools and externally by the awarding body. In later iterations, the coursework component was reduced from a maximum of 100 per cent to a maximum of 40 per cent and the degree of textual freedom curtailed, although it still operated within relatively broad parameters such as a list of approved poets.

The **'unseen'** mode required teachers to prepare their students to answer an examination question on one or two poems not previously studied. Awarding bodies usually offered guidance to teachers about the kinds of poems or poets likely to be suitable preparation. In the earlier series of GCSE, awarding bodies often provided long lists of recommended poetry collections but teachers were also free to make their own choices beyond this. In recent series a more

⁴⁷ A fourth mode, 'controlled assessment' existed briefly from 2012-2016. It entailed pupils preparing responses to an assessment task in class time and their writing their response under examination conditions in school. This was a compromise between widespread professional commitment to 'coursework' and successive government doubts about its reliability. It is not a permissible mode in the current series.

controlled approach developed: the prescription of a list of poets from whose work one or two poems were selected for the ‘unseen’ examination.

In the current series assessed for the first time in 2017, all GCSE English literature assessment is by terminal examination in ‘set text’, ‘closed book’ and ‘unseen’ written modes. The four awarding bodies continue to have a ‘set text’ mode with a free poetry anthology but these anthologies have become thinner as the government has placed increased emphasis on the value of the ‘unseen’ mode. This was regarded by education secretary Michael Gove as a more reliable method of assessing young people’s attainment in English literature at the end of key stage 4 than methods which gave young people greater opportunity to prepare for their examinations, or the support of having ‘banked’ a coursework component. The requirement that pupils make close reference to the ‘set text’ poems discussed has caused professional disquiet as pupils across the full ability range are tasked with learning lines from 15 poems in preparation for their ‘closed book’ examinations (Marsh 2017).

Having considered the assessment framework for GCSE English literature as the invisible system of value exchange that shapes the form and use of poetry books in the key stage 4 curriculum, I now turn to detailing its effects. First, by way of addressing the question *Which poetry books constituted this corpus of poetry?* I present a visual timeline of the 99 poetry books named by awarding bodies from 1988 to 2018. This timeline (and the material copies of the books from which it is derived) is also a significant act of recovery of the ephemeral artefacts of the subject history of school English.

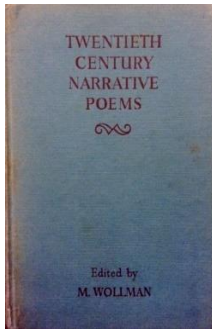
The corpus of poetry books for GCSE English literature

There are 99 books named as suitable or required reading in GCSE English literature specifications available to schools in England from 1988-2018. This is not the only format by which poetry could be made available for such purposes: in one per cent of cases in the period, awarding bodies specified a list of poems with no book source named. These constituted often anthologised poems that English teachers might find in existing anthologies in departmental stock cupboards. In 99 per cent of cases, though, a poetry book was named, usually a book consisting entirely of poems but in some cases including short prose, drama and non-fiction texts too. In some early specifications, awarding bodies named long indicative lists that included book-length narrative poems such as ‘The Odyssey’, ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’, ‘Beowulf’ and ‘The Prelude’. I classified these as individual poems in the database and as such they do not appear in the timeline. The 99 books were named in GCSE specifications from 1988

to 2018 but those selected in the first years of GCSE had often been stock cupboard staples for some time, ranging in publication date from as early as 1954.

The items in the timeline are numbered in chronological sequence by first publication date and illustrated with an image of the book jacket of the copy in my personal collection of the 99 books. Author, publication date, title, publication place and publisher are listed first in a standard bibliographical format. This is followed by further details: school poetry book type according to the seven-item typology I deduced from the evidence; book materiality in terms of number of pages, dimensions and whether hard or soft cover; and scope of the collection in terms of number of poems and poets featured. The editions featured in the timeline, for example of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, are as named in the specifications; sometimes, as in the case of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, an edition is not named so the Penguin Classics edition named in other specifications is used as a default. Publication dates for these books are therefore publication dates of specific modern editions in my collection. The timeline visualisation of the full collection of 99 poetry books named for GCSE English literature from 1988 to 2018 follows here.

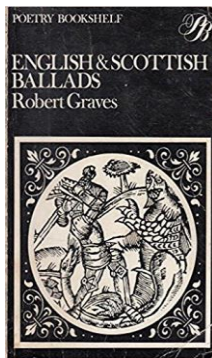
1



Wollman, M. (1954). *Twentieth-Century Narrative Poems*. London: Harrap.

General adult anthology
 176 pages, A format, hard cover
 35 poems by 22 poets

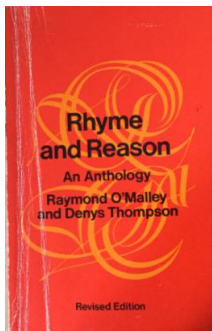
2



Graves, R. (1957). *English and Scottish Ballads*. London: William Heinemann.

General adult anthology
 163 pages, B format, soft cover
 38 poems by 1 poet (Traditional)

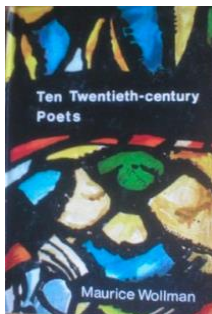
3



O'Malley, R.M., and Thompson, D. (1957, 1974). *Rhyme and Reason: An Anthology*. St Albans: Hart-Davis.

School anthology UK
 224 pages, A format, soft cover
 221 poems by 127 poets

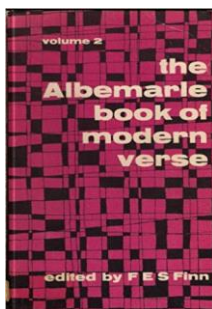
4



Wollman, M. (1957). *Ten Twentieth-Century Poets*. London: Harrap.

School anthology UK
 224 pages, A format, hard cover
 92 poems by 10 poets

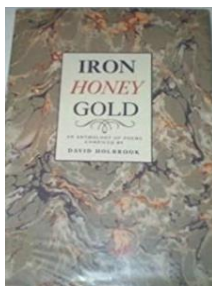
5



Finn, F. E. S. (1961). *The Albemarle Book of Modern Verse for Schools 2*. London: John Murray.

School anthology UK
 197 pages, non-standard 14.5 x 22.2 cm, hard cover
 259 poems by 109 poets

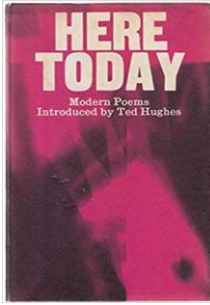
6



Holbrook, D. (1961). *Iron, Honey, Gold: An Anthology of Poems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

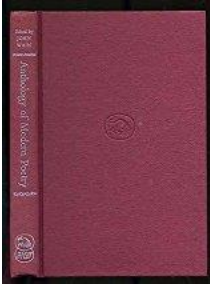
General youth anthology
 156 pages, Octavo, hard cover
 157 poems by 48 poets

7



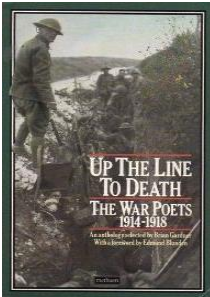
Hughes, T. (1963). *Here today*. London: Hutchinson Educational.
General adult anthology
 127 pages, B format, hard cover
 59 poems by 45 poets

8



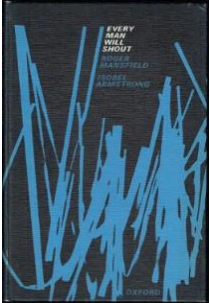
Wain, J. (1963). *Anthology of Modern Poetry*. London: Hutchinson.
School anthology UK
 240 pages, B format, hard cover
 106 poems by 40 poets

9



Gardner, B. (1964). *Up the Line to Death. The War Poets 1914-1918*. London: Methuen.
General adult anthology
 188 pages, B format, soft cover
 141 poems by 72 poets

10



Mansfield, R., and Armstrong, I. (1964). *Every Man Will Shout. An Anthology of Modern Verse*. London: Oxford University Press.
School anthology UK
 120 pages, C format, hard cover
 115 poems by 54 poets

11



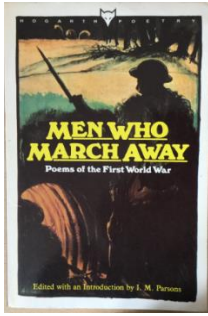
Osgerby, J.R. (1964). *Six Modern Poets: An Anthology*. Chatto and Windus.
School anthology UK
 96 pages, B format, hard cover
 48 poems by 6 poets

12



Finn, F.E.S. (1965). *Poets of Our Time. An Anthology*. London: John Murray.
School anthology UK
 160 pages, C format, soft cover
 148 poems by 10 poets

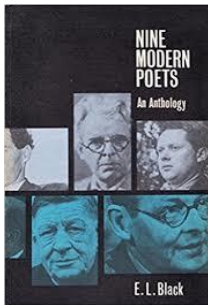
13



Parsons, I. (1965). *Men who march away. Poems of the First World War*. London: Chatto & Windus.

General adult anthology
192 pages, B format, soft cover
109 poems by 33 poets

14



Black, E. L. (1966). *Nine Modern Poets: An Anthology*. London: Macmillan.

School anthology UK
230 pages, B format, soft cover
91 poems by 9 poets

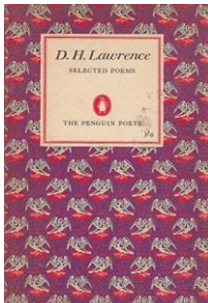
15



Gardner, B. (1966). *The Terrible rain. The war poets, 1939-1945*. London: Methuen.

General adult anthology
227 pages, A format, soft cover
156 poems by 119 poets

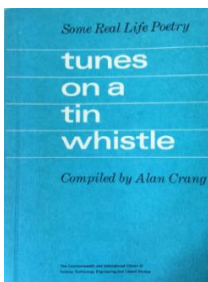
16



Lawrence, D. H., & Williams, W. E. (1966). *Selected poems*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books in association with W. Heineman.

Single poet selected poems
160 pages, A format, soft cover
86 poems by 1 poet

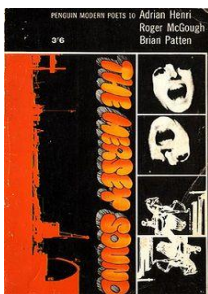
17



Crang, Alan. (1967). *Tunes on a Tin Whistle: Some Real-Life Poetry*. Oxford: Pergamon.

School anthology UK
167 pages, B format, soft cover
111 poems by 63 poets

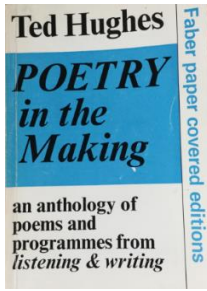
18



Henri, A., McGough, R., & Patten, B. (1967). *The Mersey sound*. (Penguin Modern Poets 10). London: Penguin Books.

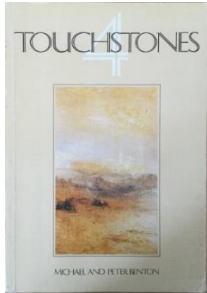
General adult anthology
126 pages, A format, soft cover
79 poems by 3 poets

19



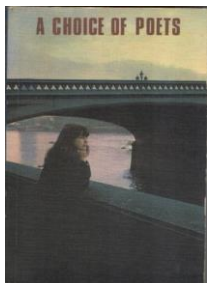
Hughes, T. (1967). *Poetry in the Making: An Anthology of Poems and Programmes from 'Listening and Writing'*. London: Faber & Faber.
School anthology UK
 124 pages, B format, soft cover
 51 poems by 24 poets

20



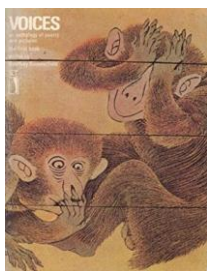
Benton, M., & Benton, P. (1968). *Touchstones 4*. London: English Universities Press.
School anthology UK
 208 pages, Octavo, soft cover
 139 poems by 82 poets

21



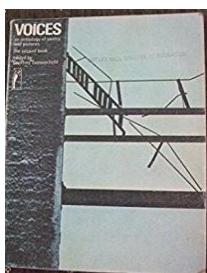
Hewett, R.P.(1968). *A Choice of Poets. An Anthology of Poets from Wordsworth to the Present Day*. London. George G. Harrap & Co.
School anthology UK
 318 pages, B format, hard cover
 155 poems by 14 poets

22



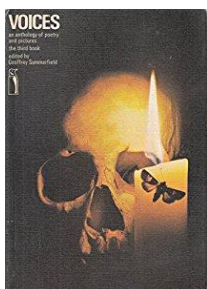
Summerfield, G. (1968). *Voices. 1st book*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.
School anthology UK
 160 pages, A5, soft cover
 145 poems by 51 poets

23



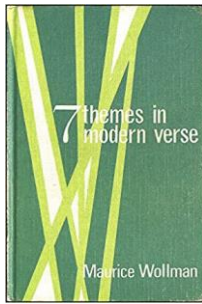
Summerfield, G. (1968). *Voices. 2nd book*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.
School anthology UK
 192 pages, A5, soft cover
 168 poems by 70 poets

24



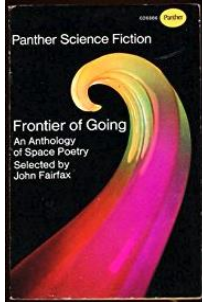
Summerfield, G. (1968). *Voices: 3rd Book*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.
School anthology UK
 190 pages, A5, soft cover
 178 poems by 84 poets

25



Wollman, M. (1968). *7 themes in modern verse*. London: Harrap.
School anthology UK
 154 pages, B format, hard cover
 108 poems by 61 poets

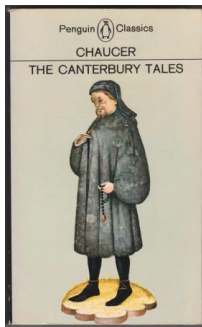
26



Fairfax, J. (1969). *Frontier of going. An anthology of space poetry*. London: Panther Books.

General adult anthology
 124 pages, A format, soft cover
 49 poems by 23 poets

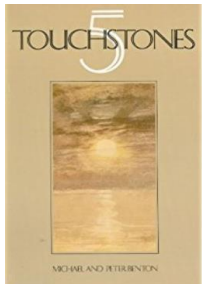
27



Chaucer, G. (1969). *The Canterbury Tales*.

Single poet original work
 504 pages, B format, soft cover
 25 poems by 1 poet

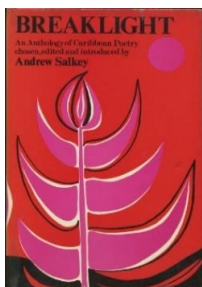
28



Benton, M., & Benton, P. (1971). *Touchstones 5. A teaching anthology*. London: English Universities Press.

School anthology UK
 208 pages, Octavo, soft cover
 148 poems by 83 poets

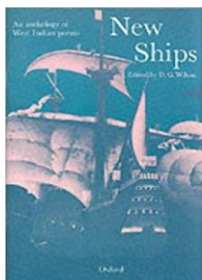
29



Salkey, A. (1971). *Breaklight: An anthology of Caribbean poetry*. London: Hamilton.

General adult anthology
 265 pages, C format, hard cover
 137 poems by 42 poets

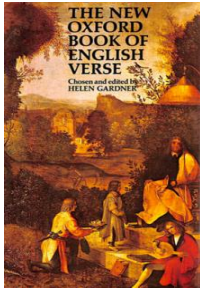
30



Wilson, D. (1971). *New ships. An anthology of West Indian poems for junior secondary schools*. Kingston, Jamaica: Savacou Publications. (UK edition, 1975 Oxford University Press)

School anthology non-UK
 96 pages, Octavo, soft cover
 52 poems by 25 poets

31



Gardner, H. (1972). *The new Oxford book of English verse, 1250-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

General adult anthology
 974 pages, C format, hard cover
 884 poems by 200 poets

32



Ramchand, K., and Gray, C. (1972). *West Indian Poetry: An Anthology for Schools*. Port of Spain and Harlow: Longman.

School anthology non-UK
 132 pages, C format, soft cover
 63 poems by 27 poets

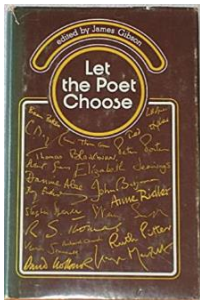
33



Williams, E. (1972). *Dragonsteeth*. London: Edward Arnold.

School anthology UK
 91 pages, Non-standard 23.5 x 17.8 cm, soft cover
 106 poems by 62 poets

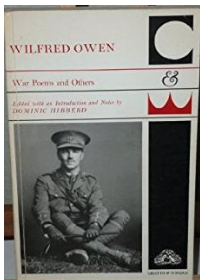
34



Gibson, J. (1973). *Let the Poet Choose*. London: Harrap.

General adult anthology
 191 pages, C format, soft cover
 88 poems by 44 poets

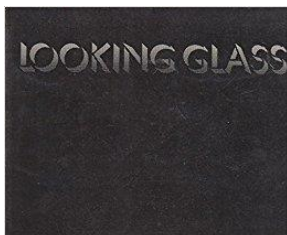
35



Owen, W., & Hibberd, D. (1973). *Wilfred Owen: War poems and others*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Single poet selected poems
 158 pages, C format, soft cover
 53 poems by 1 poet

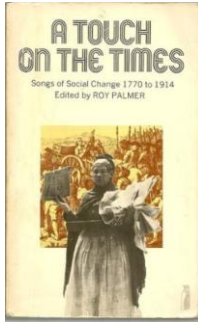
36



Williams, E. (1973). *Looking Glass. An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*. London: Edward Arnold.

School anthology UK
 96 pages, Non-standard 23.7 x 18.0 cm soft cover
 117 poems by 61 poets

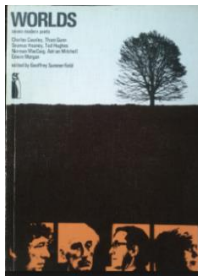
37



Palmer, R. (1974). *A touch on the times. Songs of social change, 1770-1914*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.

General adult anthology
 352 pages, A format, soft cover
 88 poems by 2 poets (81 by Anonymous)

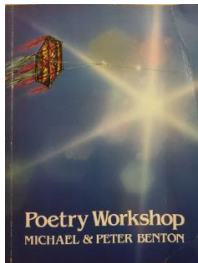
38



Summerfield, G. (1974). *Worlds. Seven modern poets*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.

School anthology UK
 288 pages, A5, soft cover
 146 poems by 7 poets

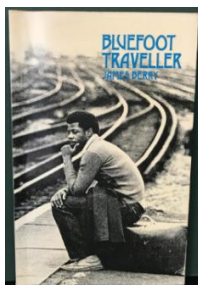
39



Benton, M., & Benton, P. (1975). *Poetry workshop*. London: English Universities Press.

School anthology UK
 148 pages, Non-standard 18.3 x 23.9 cm, soft cover
 154 poems by 67 poets

40



Berry, J. (1976). *Bluefoot traveller: An anthology of Westindian poets in Britain*. London: Limestone Publications.

General adult anthology
 64 pages, C format, soft cover
 44 poems by 19 poets

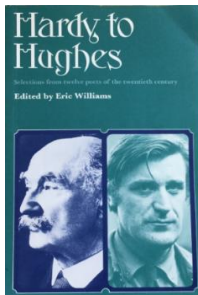
41



Finn, F.E.S. (1976). *Here & Human: An Anthology of Contemporary Verse*. London: Murray.


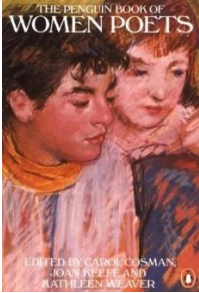
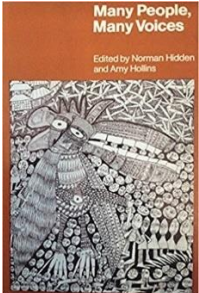
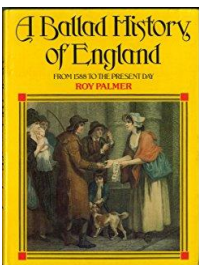
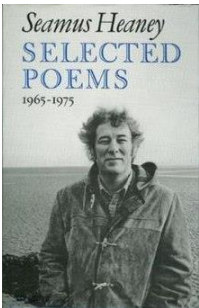
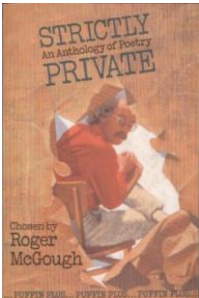
School anthology UK
 148 pages, C format, soft cover
 157 poems by 8 poets

42

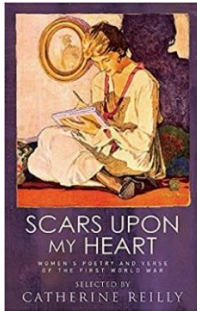


Williams, E. (1976). *Hardy to Hughes: Selections from Twelve Poets of the Twentieth Century*. London: Edward Arnold.

School anthology UK
 184 pages, C format, soft cover
 161 poems by 12 poets

- 43  Harrison, M., and Stuart-Clark, C. (1977). *The New Dragon Book of Verse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
School anthology UK
267 pages, B format, soft cover
190 poems by 99 poets
- 44  Cosman, C., Keefe, Joan, & Weaver, Kathleen. (1978). *The Penguin book of women poets*. London: Allen Lane.
General adult anthology
399 pages, B format, soft cover
389 poems by 189 poets
- 45  Hidden, N., and Hollins, A. (1978). *Many People, Many Voices: Poetry from the English Speaking World*. London: Hutchinson.
School anthology UK
60 pages, A5, hard cover
100 poems by 79 poets
- 46  Palmer, R. (1979). *A Ballad History of England: From 1588 to the Present Day*. London: Batsford.
General adult anthology
192 pages, Non-standard 18.2 x 25.4 cm, hard cover
82 poems by 1 poet (Traditional)
- 47  Heaney, S. (1980). *Selected poems 1965-1975*. London: Faber & Faber.
General adult anthology
136 pages, B format, soft cover
71 poems by 1 poet
- 48  McGough, R. (1981). *Strictly Private: An Anthology of Poetry*. London: Puffin.
General youth anthology
185 pages, B format, soft cover
128 poems by 66 poets

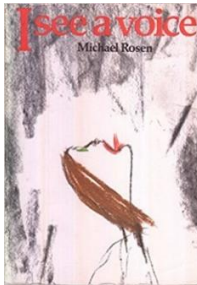
49



Reilly, C. (1981). *Scars upon my heart: Women's poetry and verse of the First World War*. London: Virago.

General adult anthology
144 pages, B format, soft cover
125 poems by 79 poets

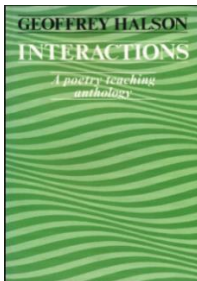
50



Rosen, M. (1981). *I See a Voice*. London: Thames.

School anthology UK
96 pages, A5, soft cover
49 poems by 36 poets

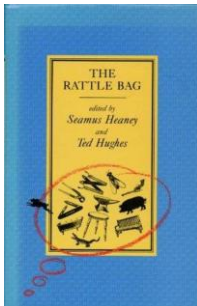
51



Halson, G. (1982). *Interactions: A Poetry Teaching Anthology*. Harlow: Longman.

School anthology UK
184 pages, Octavo, soft cover
100 poems by 68 poets

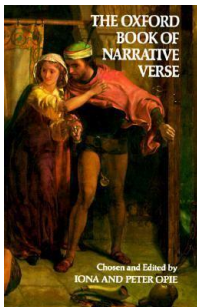
52



Heaney, S., & Hughes, Ted. (1982). *The Rattle bag: An anthology of poetry*. London: Faber and Faber.

General adult anthology
498 pages, C format, soft cover
486 poems by 140 poets

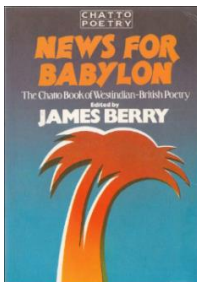
53



Opie, I., & Opie, P. (1983). *The Oxford book of narrative verse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

General adult anthology
407 pages, C format, hard cover
59 poems by 47 poets

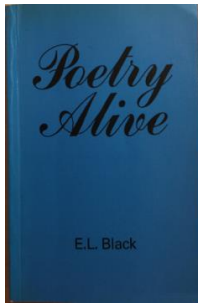
54



Berry, J. (1984). *News for Babylon: The Chatto book of Westindian-British poetry*. London: Chatto & Windus.

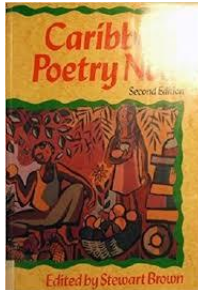
General adult anthology
212 pages, A5, soft cover
155 poems by 40 poets

55



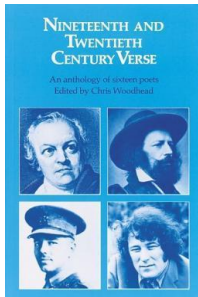
Black, E.L. (1984). *Poetry Alive: An Anthology*. London: Macmillan.
School anthology UK
246 pages, C format, soft cover
125 poems by 12 poets

56



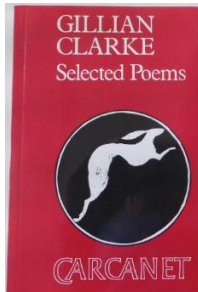
Brown, S. (1984). *Caribbean poetry now*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
School anthology UK
212 pages, Octavo, soft cover
120 poems by 68 poets

57



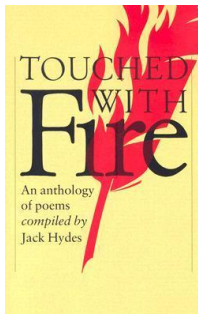
Woodhead, C. (1984). *Nineteenth and twentieth century verse: An anthology of sixteen poets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
School anthology UK
239 pages, C format, soft cover
114 poems by 16 poets

58



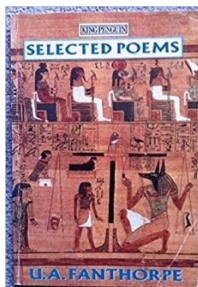
Clarke, G. (1985). *Selected poems*. Manchester: Carcanet.
Single poet selected poems
111 pages, C format, soft cover
78 poems by 1 poet

59



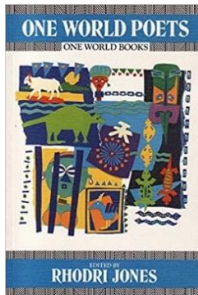
Hydes, J. (1985). *Touched with Fire: An Anthology of Poems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
School anthology UK
207 pages, C format, soft cover
132 poems by 75 poets

60



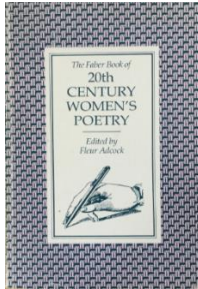
Fanthorpe, U. (1986). *Selected poems*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Single poet selected poems
124 pages, B format, soft cover
69 poems by 1 poet

61



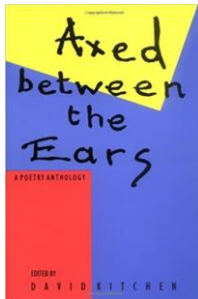
Jones, R. (1986). *One World Poets*. London: Heinemann Educational.
School anthology UK
 118 pages, Octavo, soft cover
 86 poems by 10 poets

62



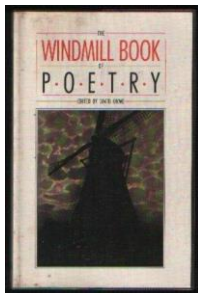
Adcock, F. (1987). *The Faber book of 20th century women's poetry*. London: Faber.
General adult anthology
 352 pages, B format, soft cover
 225 poems by 64 poets

63



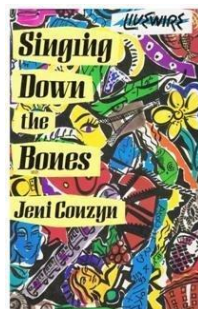
Kitchen, D. (1987). *Axed between the Ears: A Poetry Anthology*. London: Heinemann Educational.
School anthology UK
 102 pages, Octavo, soft cover
 72 poems by 55 poets

64



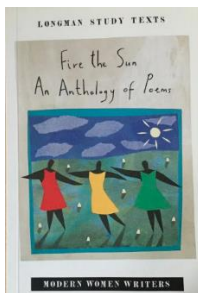
Orme, D.M. (1987). *The Windmill Book of Poetry*. London: Heinemann Educational.
School anthology UK
 128 pages, C format, soft cover
 72 poems by 67 poets

65



Couzyn, J. (1989). *Singing down the bones*. London: Livewire.
General youth anthology
 136 pages, B format, soft cover
 56 poems by 35 poets

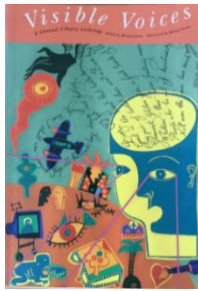
66



Healy, M. (1989). *Fire the Sun: An Anthology of Poems*. Harlow: Longman.
School anthology UK
 196 pages, B format, soft cover
 60 poems by 38 poets

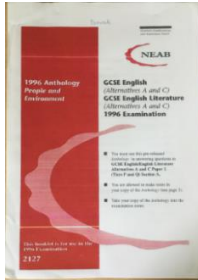
- 67  Martin, C. (1990). *War Poems*. London: Unwin Hyman.
School anthology UK
96 pages, Non-standard 19.8 x 26.9 cm, soft cover
74 poems by 65 poets
- 68  Blake, W. (1992). *Songs of innocence and songs of experience*. (Dover thrift editions). New York, London: Dover.
Single poet original work
52 pages, B Format, soft cover
45 poems by 1 poet
- 69  Kinsman, J. (1992). *Six Women Poets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
School anthology UK
184 pages, B format, soft cover
82 poems by 6 poets
- 70  Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (1994). *English/English Literature Anthology: The Experience of School*. Manchester: NEAB.
Awarding body anthology
30 pages, A4, soft cover
6 poems by 5 poets
- 71  Browning, E. (1994). *The works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. Ware: Wordsworth Poetry Library.
Single poet selected poems
667 pages, B format, soft cover
279 poems by 1 poet
- 72  Hardy, T., & Motion, A. (1994). *Selected poems/Thomas Hardy*; edited by Andrew Motion. London: Dent.
Single poet selected poems
276 pages, B format, soft cover
235 poems by 1 poet

73



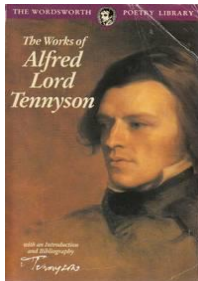
Jones, M.A. (1994). *Visible Voices: A Poetry Anthology Produced in Association with the Channel 4 Schools Series the English Programme*. London: Educational Television.
School anthology UK
 128 pages, A5, soft cover
 82 poems by 56 poets

74



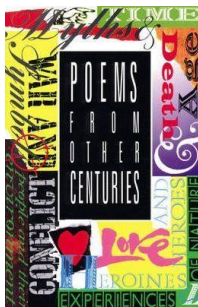
Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (1996). *1996 Anthology: People and Environment*. Manchester: NEAB.
Awarding body anthology
 37 pages, A4, soft cover
 7 poems by 7 poets

75



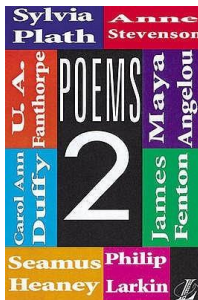
Tennyson, A. (1994). *The works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*. Ware: Wordsworth Poetry Library.
Single poet selected poems
 628 pages, B format, soft cover
 143 poems by 1 poet

76



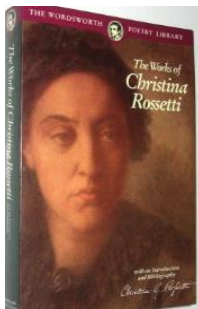
Tossier, A. (1994). *Poems from Other Centuries: An Anthology of Pre-Twentieth Century Poetry*. Harlow: Longman.
School anthology UK
 180 pages, B format, soft cover
 85 poems by 40 poets

77



Markus, J., and Jordan, P. (1995) *Poems 2*. Harlow: Longman.
School anthology UK
 176 pages, B format, soft cover
 87 poems by 8 poets

78

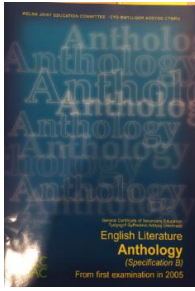


Rossetti, C. (1995). *The works of Christina Rossetti*. Ware: Wordsworth Poetry Library.
Single poet selected poems
 450 pages, B format, soft cover
 213 poems by 1 poet

- 79  Midland Examining Group. (1996) *The MEG/OCR Poetry Anthology: Published since 1900*. Harlow: Longman.
Awarding body anthology
64 pages, A4, soft cover
56 poems by 30 poets
- 80  Northern Examinations and Assessment Board. (1996). *NEAB Anthology*. Produced by Heinemann Educational.
Awarding body anthology
96 pages, A4, soft cover
57 poems by 39 poets
- 81  University of London Examinations and Assessment Council. (1996). *Tracks: a booklet of pre-released material*. Produced by Oxford University Press.
Awarding body anthology
62 pages, A4, soft cover
34 poems by 18 poets
- 82  WJEC. (1996). *English Literature Anthology (Syllabus B)*. Cardiff: WJEC.
Awarding body anthology
53 pages, A4, soft cover
22 poems by 9 poets
- 83  The Associated Examining Board. (1997). *Best Words: Poetry is 'the best words in the best order'*. Guildford: SEG.
Awarding body anthology
72 pages, Octavo, soft cover
32 poems by 27 poets
- 84  Edexcel Foundation. (1998). *Tracks 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Awarding body anthology
62 pages, A4, soft cover
35 poems by 25 poets

- 85  Northern Examinations and Assessment Board. (1998). *NEAB Anthology: English and English Literature*. Produced by Heinemann Educational.
Awarding body anthology
96 pages, A4, soft cover
55 poems by 41 poets
- 86  Hewett, R. P., and Edwards, D. (1999). *A Choice of Poets. New edition*. Walton-on-Thames: Nelson.
School anthology UK
313 pages, B format, soft cover
132 poems by 35 poets
- 87  Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. (2002). *Anthology: AQA GCSE English/ English Literature Specification A*. Produced by Oxford University Press.
Awarding body anthology
94 pages, A4, soft cover
64 poems by 31 poets
- 88  Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. (2002). *Best Words: Poetry is 'the best words in the best order'*. (Edited by Angela Williams and Tony Farrell.) Produced by Oxford University Press.
Awarding body anthology
64 pages, A4, soft cover
28 poems by 23 poets
- 89  London Qualifications Limited, trading as Edexcel. (2002). *The Edexcel Anthology for GCSE English*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
Awarding body anthology
92 pages, A4, soft cover
48 poems by 28 poets
- 90  Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations. (2002). *Opening Lines: Poetry Past and Present*. Produced by Heinemann Educational.
Awarding body anthology
112 pages, A4, soft cover
128 poems by 92 poets

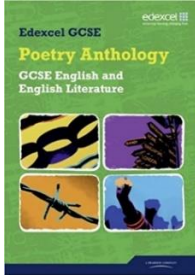
91



WJEC. (2003). *English Literature Anthology (Specification B)*. Cardiff: WJEC.

Awarding body anthology
 50 pages, A4, soft cover
 18 poems by 3 poets

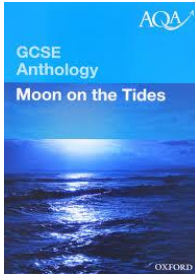
92



Pearson Education Limited. (2009). *Edexcel GCSE Poetry Anthology*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Awarding body anthology
 72 pages, A4, soft cover
 60 poems by 45 poets

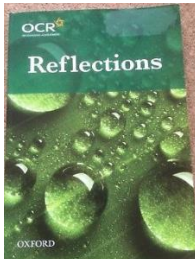
93



Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. (2010). *Moon on the Tides*. Produced by Oxford University Press.

Awarding body anthology
 64 pages, A4, soft cover
 60 poems by 46 poets

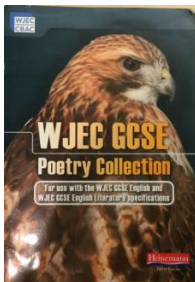
94



Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations. (2010). *Reflections: The OCR collection of Literary Heritage and Contemporary poetry*. Produced by Oxford University Press.

Awarding body anthology
 203 pages, A4, soft cover
 167 poems by 12 poets

95



WJEC. (2010). *WJEC GCSE Poetry Collection*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Awarding body anthology
 63 pages, A4, soft cover
 64 poems by 43 poets

96



Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations. (2014). *Towards A World Unknown*. Produced by Oxford University Press.

Awarding body anthology
 48 pages, A4, soft cover
 45 poems by 39 poets

- 97  Pearson Education Limited. (2014). *The Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature Poetry Anthology*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
Awarding body anthology
56 pages, A4, soft cover
46 poems by 36 poets
- 98  AQA. (2015). *Past and present: poetry anthology*. Supported by Cambridge University Press.
Awarding body anthology
48 pages, A4, soft cover
30 poems by 25 poets
- 99  WJEC CBAC Ltd. (2015). *WJEC Eduqas GCSE Poetry Anthology*. Produced by Oxford University Press.
Awarding body anthology
21 pages, A4, soft cover
18 poems by 18 poets

Figure 5.2: A timeline of GCSE poetry anthologies.

In documenting the bibliographical detail of the 99 books, this timeline enables the reader to see something of the range and variety of the poetry books licensed for key stage 4 assessment purposes over the 30 year period. It provides an overview of the total corpus of poetry made available for GCSE English literature. This corpus was not static, however; it changed in each of the six series of GCSE. To bring into view some of the dimensions of change over time, I now present quantitative data related to the number of poetry books, the variation of poetry book types, and the longevity of the books named in each GCSE series.

In 1988 there was considerable variety in the poetry books named as suitable texts for GCSE English literature but this quickly changed, as figure 5.3 shows in the exponential tendency of the decrease (marked by the exponential curve behind the columns of the bar chart).

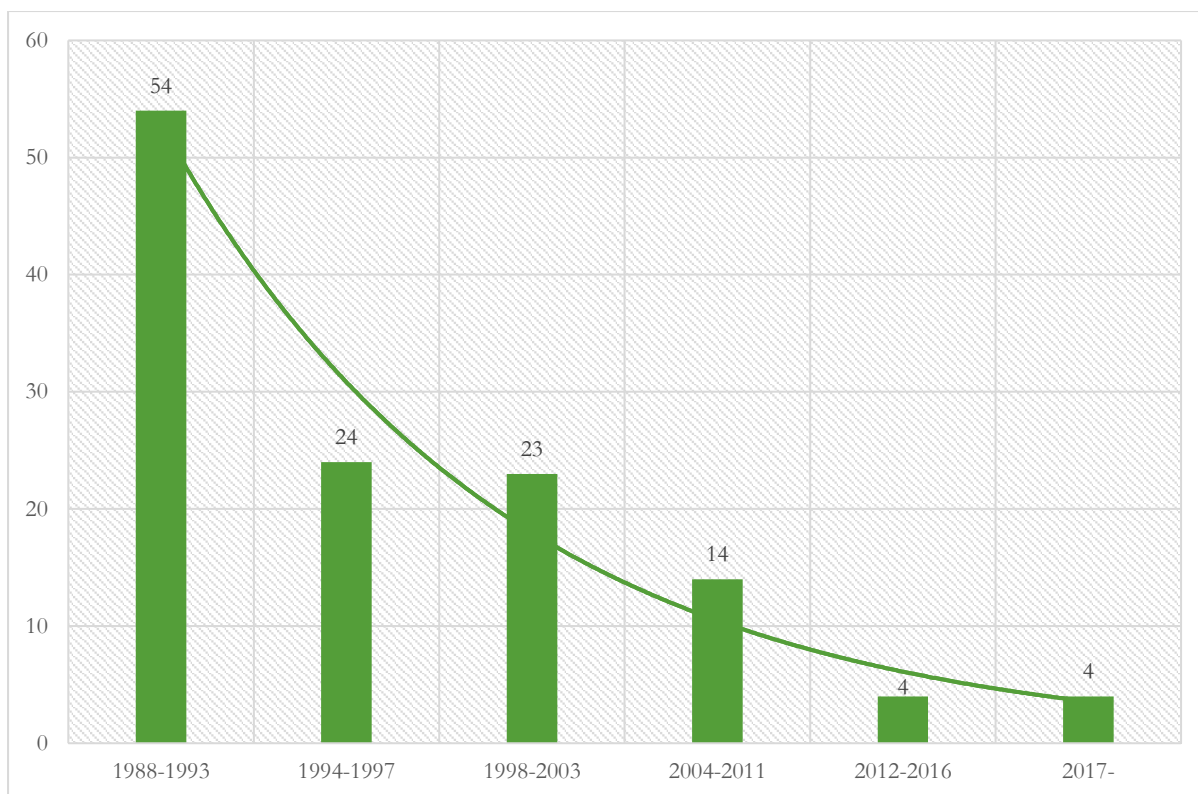


Figure 5.3: Exponential tendency of the decrease in the number of poetry books named in each GCSE series.

After maximum variation with 54 poetry books in the 1988 to 1993 series, there is a sharp drop to 24 books in the series which first enacts the national curriculum for English. This remained similar in the 1998 to 2003 series, before the tendency to replace trade poetry books with awarding body anthologies resulted in a drop to 14 books. By the next series, and in the subsequent one, only four poetry books were named, one awarding body anthology produced by each of the four awarding bodies.

The shift observed here to a single type of poetry book, the awarding body anthology, is documented in more detail in figure 5.4. This uses a typology developed from analysis of the 99 books, as follows:

1. **Single poet original collection.** Specifically, William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* from which, at various times, 'The General Prologue', 'The Nun's Priest's Tale' and 'The Pardoner's Tale' have been set.
2. **Single poet selected poems.** Complete 'works of' volumes are also included here, as in practice teachers would select poems from such large collections.

3. **General adult anthology.** These are anthologies specified or recommended by awarding bodies but not intended for school purposes when they were published for a general adult readership.
4. **General youth anthology.** These are anthologies specified or recommended by awarding bodies but not intended for school purposes when they were published for a general youth readership.
5. **School anthology UK.** These UK anthologies are marked in some way as specifically designed for school use, for example publication in a publisher's schools imprint, or a reference in the introduction to classroom purposes, or containing context-specific pedagogical material.
6. **School anthology non-UK.** These are similar to type five but originally published outside the UK, though sometimes UK publication followed. The three examples here were all published in the Caribbean and brought to the UK to help build a more multicultural curriculum.
7. **Awarding body anthology.** These anthologies sometimes bear the logos of mainstream publishers, but they are devised by awarding body staff and "produced by" those publishers, not published by them.

Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of these seven poetry book types in each series of GCSE English literature. The number of books changed in each series, as already demonstrated. To show more clearly how the distribution of types changed relative to other series, this chart uses stacked columns to show the percentage of each type of book in each series. Use of different colours for each type also helps to visualise the gradual replacement of multiple types by a single type over the 30 year period.

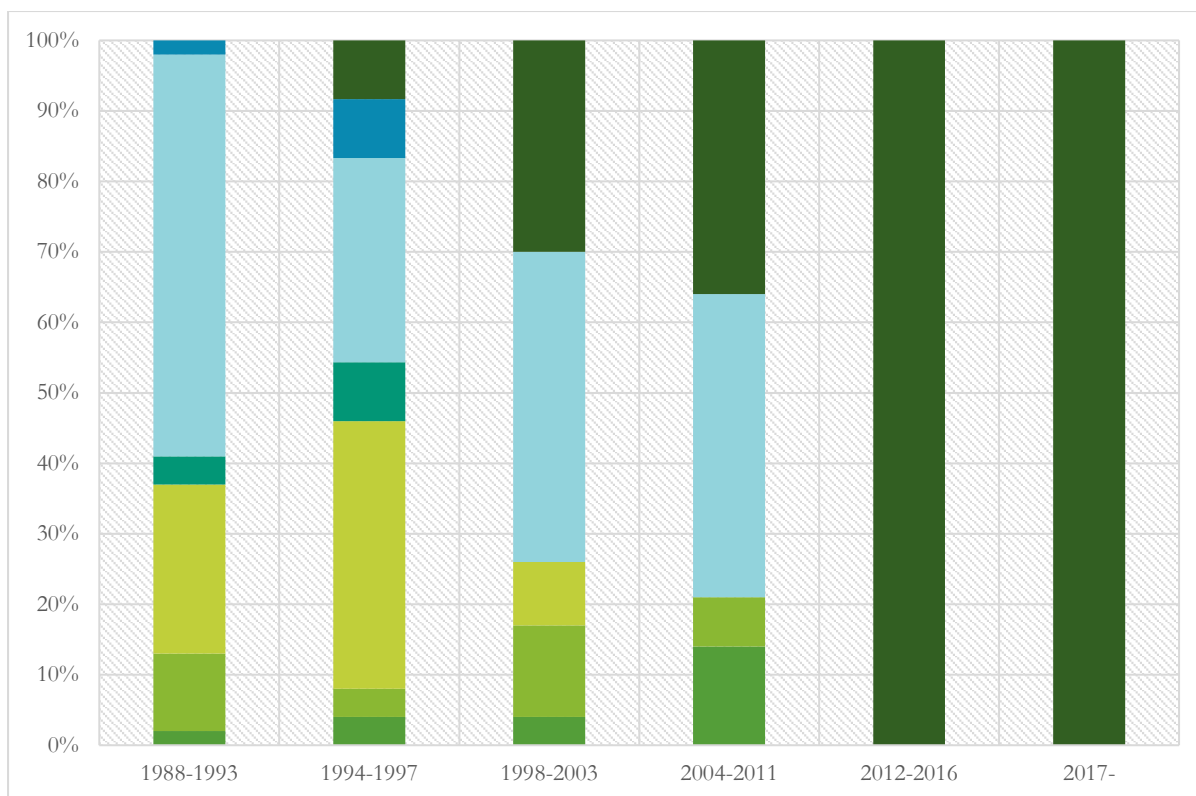
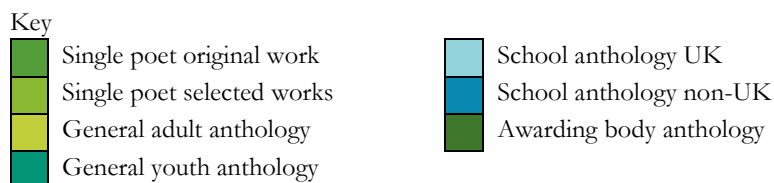


Figure 5.4: Distribution of anthology types by GCSE English literature series.



In the first GCSE series, six types of poetry books were named: all except the awarding body anthology which had not yet been innovated. This type began to appear in the second series when all seven types were present. In the third series, general youth anthologies and non-UK school anthologies disappeared as awarding bodies began to produce ‘in-house’ anthologies. Only five types were present at this point, which reduced to four types in the fourth series as general adult anthologies disappeared. From 2012 onwards awarding body anthologies were the only type of poetry book named.

The third dimension of change is the longevity of the books named for GCSE assessment purposes. This is significant as it shows the impact of the changing national curriculum on the resourcing of school English, from a situation in which school collections of poetry books could be used over many years to one in which new books were needed in each series. Figure 5.5 shows the increasing proximity of the publication date of the books named in each GCSE series to the first examination date of that series. A four part stratification has been used: very

contemporary books published 0-3 years prior to first use in a particular GCSE series; recent books published 4-10 years prior; 11-25 years prior; and older books 26-50 years prior. The publication date has been taken to be the first publication date of particular named editions. This chart again uses relative proportions and colour to visualise the changes.

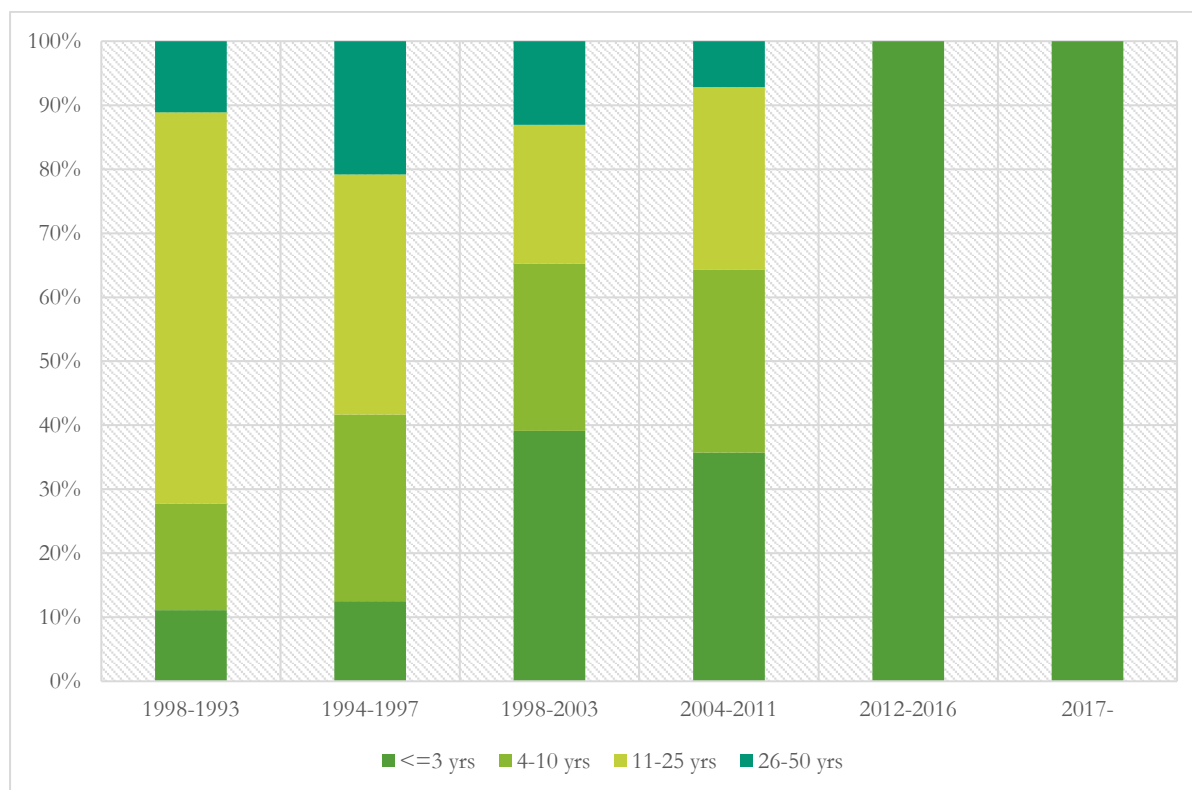


Figure 5.5: Proximity of publication to assessment use.

In the earlier GCSE series, poetry books that were over 26 years old were specified or recommended by awarding bodies, and there were many books in the 11-25 year band. After 1996, awarding body production of their own anthologies supported a process of publication and issue to schools two years prior to the examinations the poems first featured in. This allowed for a high level of responsiveness to statutory change, and a ‘just-in-time’⁴⁸ supply of anthologies to schools. From 2012 this has been the only approach. Its short-term obsolescence, based on single use books for a specific examination series, contrasts with the long shelf life of the stock

⁴⁸ In the manufacturing industry, “just-in-time” refers to a system in which materials are provided at the immediate point they are needed in order to reduce storage costs. I use this term loosely to indicate an examination ‘industry’ that no longer has stock cupboards full of anthologies that are stored for years and provides its materials at the point teachers need to begin teaching them.

cupboard standards of previous years. What democratic access to poetry may have won, environmental sustainability may have lost.

The observations here of reduced variation, standardised type and increased ephemerality are linked to government concern with the reliability of GCSE examinations and standards of school performance, and to the pragmatic need of awarding bodies to be responsive to the changing content of the national curriculum for key stage 4 English. In the next section here, I examine the effects of this pressure on the materiality of the books by attending to the question *What were their material forms?*

The changing material form of poetry books for GCSE English literature

Further evidence of standardisation can be seen in the gradual replacement of multiple book formats by a single format, the A4 booklet, as used by awarding bodies for their hybrid anthologies with one early exception. Figure 5.6 shows the distribution of book formats for poetry books named in each series of GCSE English literature, again showing the relative proportions in each series and using colour to visualise the changes. There were six standard publishing formats used for the 99 poetry books named for GCSE English literature from 1988 to 2018, and a seventh category shown as “Non-S” or Non-Standard, covering a number of bespoke sizes and shapes. The six formats were: standard paperback formats A (110mm x 178mm), B (129mm x 198mm) and C (135mm x 216mm); a larger Octavo (150mm x 230mm) format; A5 (148mm x 210mm) and A4 (210mm x 297mm).

In the first GCSE series poetry books appeared in six of the seven publishing formats, but not the A4 format that would eventually dominate. This format was innovated in the second series when all seven formats were present. In the third series, more of the awarding bodies began to produce ‘in-house’ anthologies, resulting in the disappearance of the smaller A format book, and fewer C format and Non-standard sized books. Six formats in the third series reduced to five formats in the fourth series as the number of A4 format books increased, A5 format books disappeared and there were again fewer C format books. From 2012 onwards awarding body anthologies were the only type of poetry books named and these were all published in an A4 format.

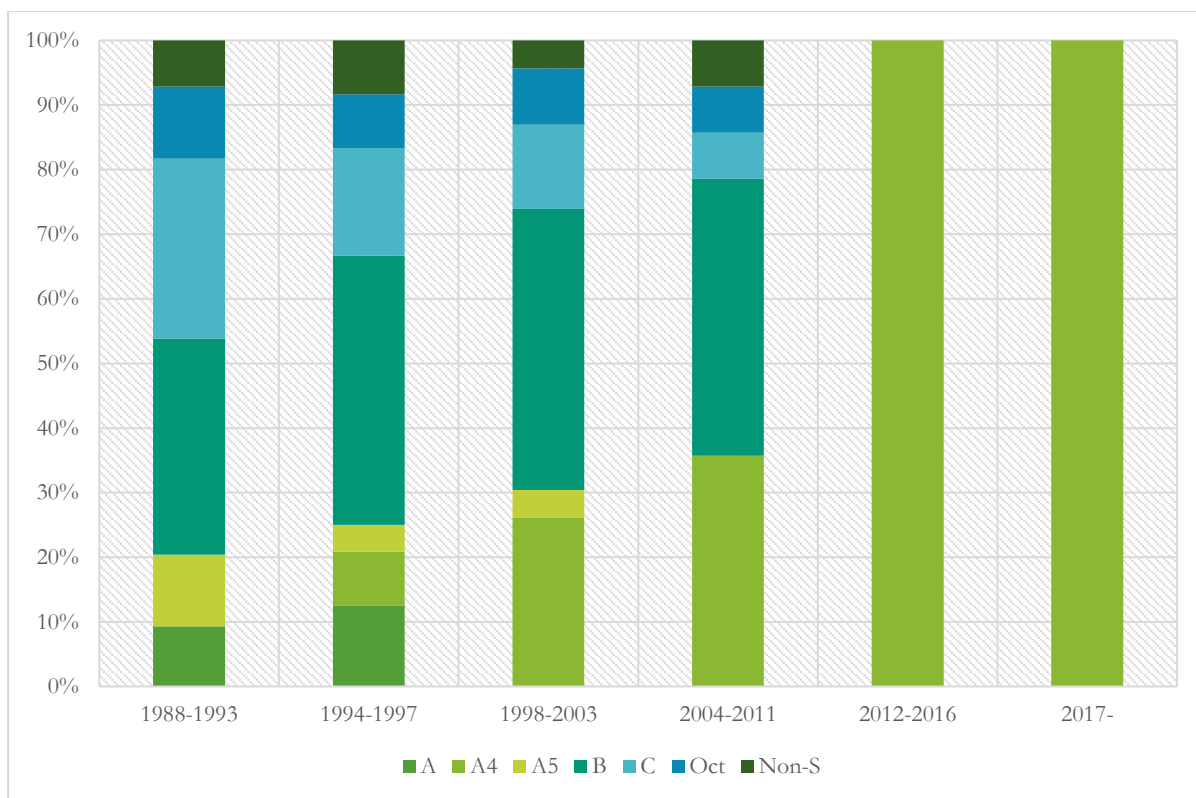


Figure 5.6: Distribution of book formats by GCSE English literature series.

This somewhat technical account of the changing formats is significant in considering the encounter young people have with poetry books as a material form. GCSE English literature is the last point at which all 16 year olds have this encounter and on that basis they go into their adult lives with expectations about what poetry is and the forms in which it is made available. Prior to the awarding body development of ‘in-house’ anthologies, pupils would mostly encounter poetry in some of the same forms they would find it if they were to visit a public library or bookshop in their later lives. If in their schooling young people have only encountered an A4 hybrid anthology, marked by its increasingly intensive use as examination material, then there will be a greater disjuncture later in life if they seek a reconnection with poetry. This disjuncture will disproportionately affect children who come from homes where poetry books are not available, attend schools without librarians to encourage diverse reading choices and live in areas without public libraries.

The next set of issues shaping the material form of poetry books for GCSE English literature concerns the shift from historical practices of anthology-making to the new hybrid form. As the awarding bodies took over the function of commercial publishing houses by producing their own anthologies, they adapted conventionalised branding practices in ways that foregrounded

the awarding body's corporate identity and emphasised product functionality over aesthetic appeal. Trade anthology-making that embodied traditional book production and selling practices gave way to an approach that prioritised the distribution on a mass scale of free material in a competition for examination market share. This shift had three effects on the material form of poetry books for GCSE English literature: corporate logos were multiplied and enlarged, book titles became more functional and editorial agency was erased.

Older anthologies such as *Worlds* and *Voices* were branded with the penguin logo of Penguin Education and the company name in a distinctive brand-associated font; likewise, *Axed Between the Ears* and *The Windmill Book of Poetry* were branded with Heinemann Education's windmill logo and name. These logos and company names were small and commonly appeared on the spines of books, at the bottom of the rear covers of paperbacks and on the inside title pages of hardbacks. As such, they were relatively discreet. The bigger format A4 anthologies supported the use of larger logos, and they were commonly placed in the most prominent positions at the top of the front cover, at the top of the back cover and on inside title pages. Although the awarding body logos were dominant, the booklet covers frequently also featured the brand identification of the commercial publisher that produced and printed them.

An example of these corporate branding practices is shown as figure 5.7 below. It is typical in having the awarding body logo <OCR Recognising achievement> in the premium position, the top right-hand corner, and the publisher's logo <Heinemann> in the centre at the bottom of the cover. Less typically the cover also carries a mark associated with its specific work in English, <OCR English *Opening Minds*> in the bottom left hand corner. On the back cover the two corporate logos appear side by side with the company addresses. A reader who is familiar with the English examination system would be in no doubt about the function of this poetry anthology as examination material.

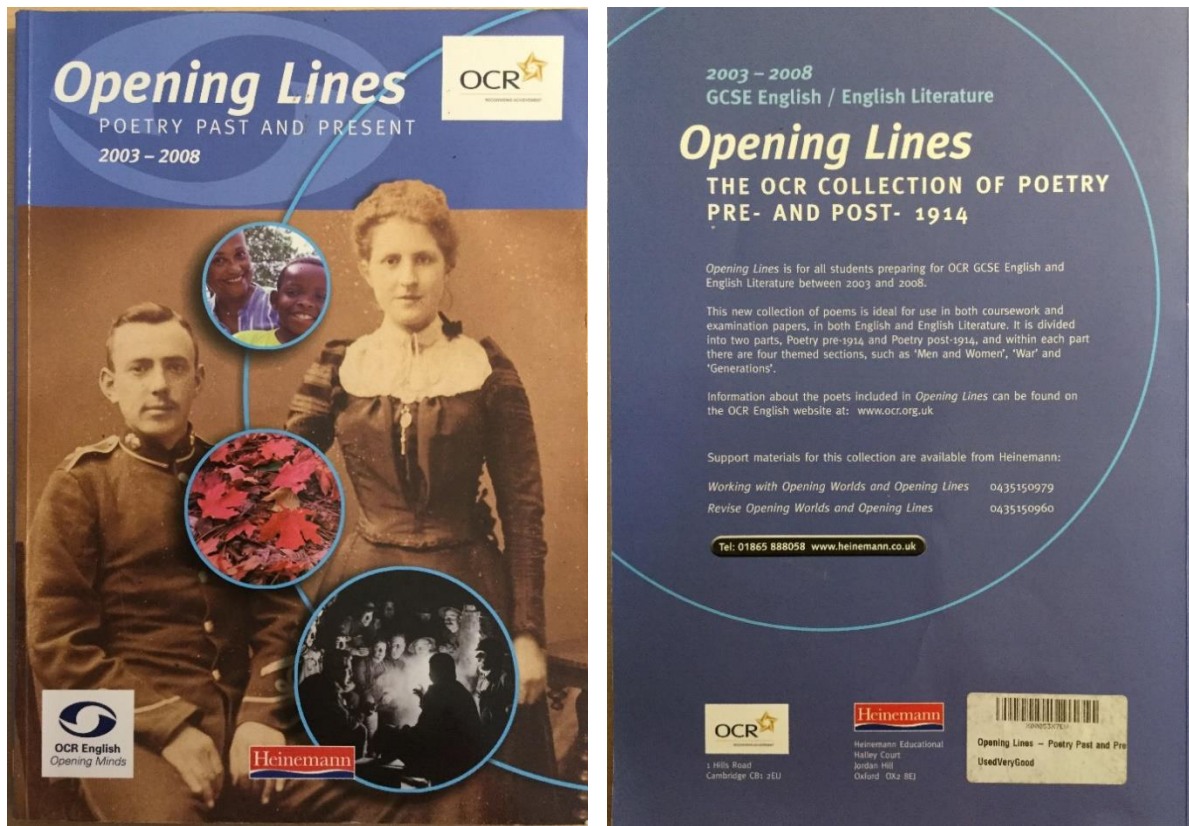


Figure 5.7: Front and rear covers of a series 5 awarding body anthology showing typical awarding body use of logos.

Consistent with this corporate branding is a shift in titling practices. This shift can be observed at a level of patterned change, shown in figure 5.8, from an almost even use of allusive and literal titles, to an increased tendency to literal titles. There is a literal descriptiveness in the title of the first poetry book in the visual timeline, *Twentieth Century Narrative Poems*, and a more allusive descriptiveness in later titles such as *Touchstones* and *Dragonsteeth*. The number of books decreased so much over time, as this chart makes explicit by using numerical values rather than percentages, that these findings can only be broadly indicative of a tendency.

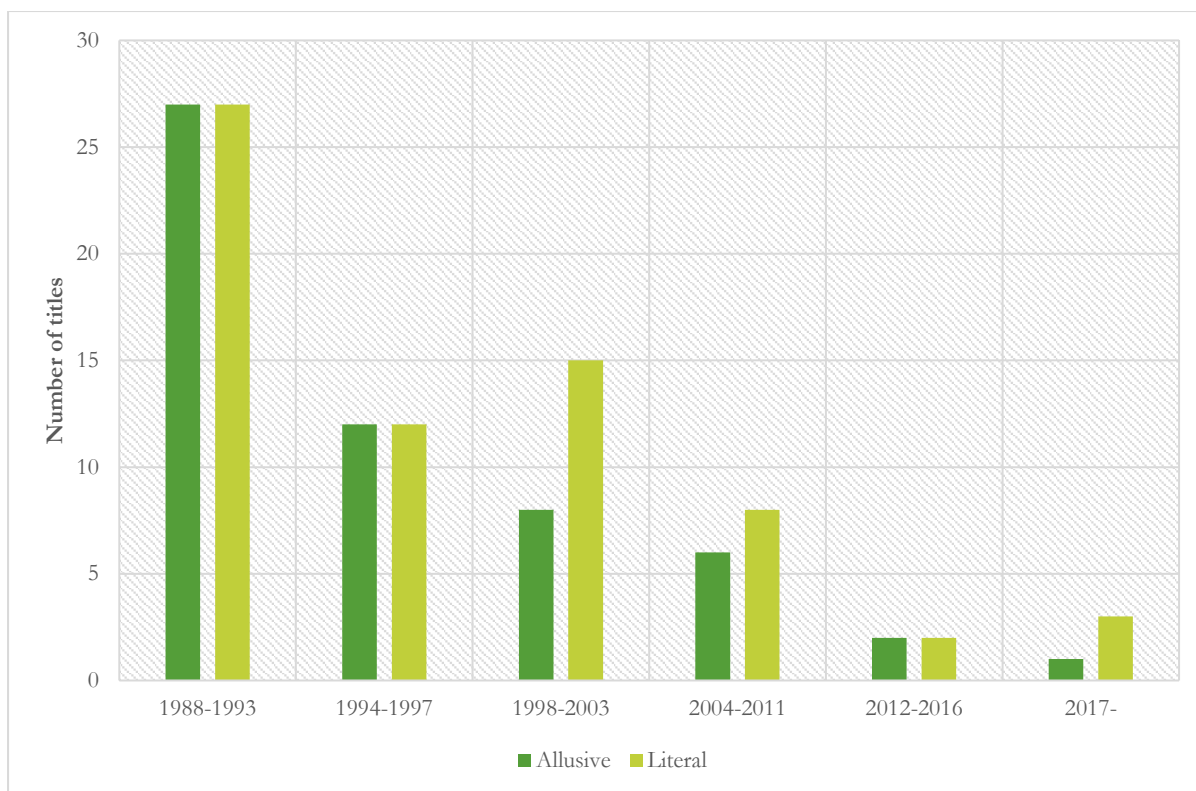


Figure 5.8: Numbers of allusive and literal titles of the poetry books named in each GCSE series.

Allusive titling continued in some awarding body examination anthologies, such as OCR’s 2002 *Opening Lines* already shown in figure 5.7, but literal titles like Edexcel’s *The Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature Poetry Anthology* became more common. There was also a shift in the nature of literal titling practices over time. The 1954 *Twentieth Century Narrative Poems* was literal in its description of the contents of the book, referring to its temporal range *Twentieth Century* and genre focus *Narrative Poems*. By contrast, *The Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature Poetry Anthology* awarding body anthology published in 2014 foregrounded brand identity *Pearson Edexcel* and examination purposes *GCSE (9-1) English Literature* where *(9-1)* referred to the recently revised GCSE grading system, before coming to a non-specific literal description *Poetry Anthology*. The reader cannot glean the nature of the poetry content included; the primary communication is that this is examination material.

In conventional anthology-making the reputation of the publisher’s brand, and the quality of the individual book, was supported in most cases by the authority and expertise of a named editor. Older poetry anthologies used for GCSE English literature purposes had named editors whose expertise was made clear in descriptions of their relationship to poetry. Sometimes this expertise derived from practice as a poet, as in the case of anthologies edited by Ted Hughes, James Berry

and Fleur Adcock. Sometimes it derived from English in Education with expert teachers, teacher educators and local authority English advisors common as anthologists, as in the case of teacher educators and prolific school poetry anthologists, Geoffrey Summerfield, and Peter and Michael Benton. Sometimes it derived from academic literary study, with professors of English literature invited to co-edit collections for schools, as in the case of Kenneth Ramchand and Cecil Gray's joint work to create *West Indian Poetry*. It is usual to find prefatory material in older anthologies that was written by the named editors, explaining something of the rationale for the anthology and encouragements about teaching poetry. By contrast, awarding body anthologies rarely had named editors. The small number of examples come from the earliest experiments in awarding body anthology-making and then the editors' names appeared in small print among bibliographic information inside the book, not on the cover. Earlier examples of awarding body anthologies retained prefatory practices but these either disappeared in future iterations or became solely focused on functional examination requirements and were anonymous. A typical example is shown as figure 5.9 below.

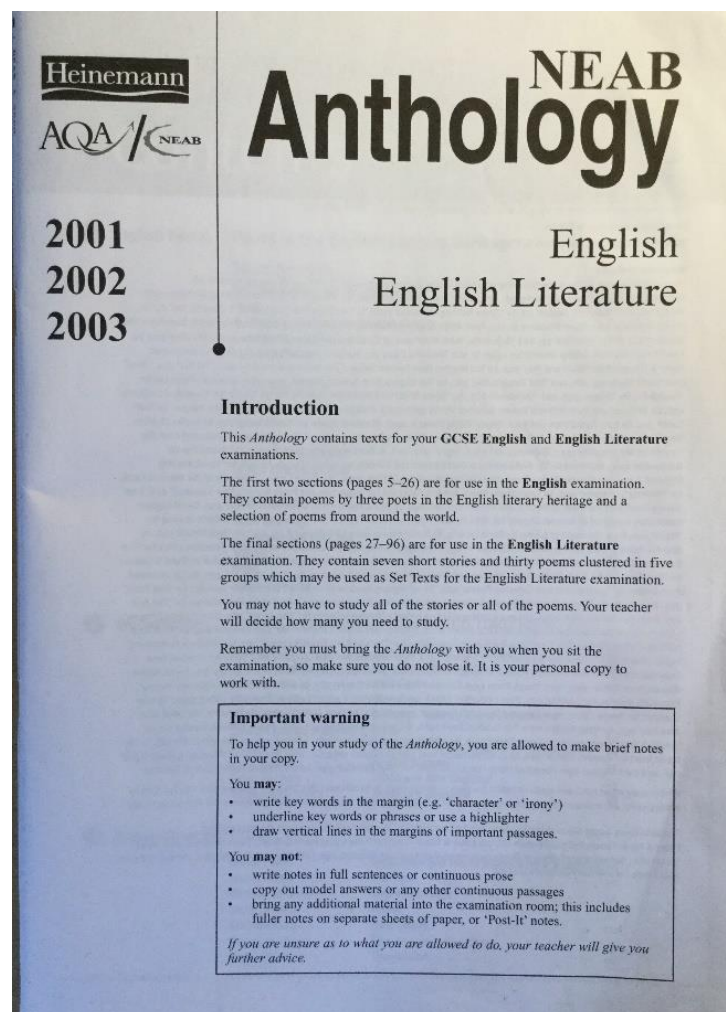


Figure 5.9: A typical example of anonymous functional prefatory material in awarding body anthologies.

In this example, the introduction gives the dates - 2001, 2002, 2003 - and the qualifications - GCSE English and GCSE English literature - that the anthology is valid for. It explains which sections of the anthology are to be used in preparation for which of these two qualifications. There is information for the pupil about which texts they will study under their teacher's guidance, and about what they are and are not allowed to do to prepare the anthology for use in the examination. Again, these are the markings of a hybrid anthology form that has been designed specifically for examination purposes.

The observations here about standardised book formats, corporate branding practices, functional titling and the erasure of editorial agency show how the competitive environment of key stage 4 assessment commoditised the material form of school poetry books. In the next section here, I investigate the effects of this on the way poems were presented to young people within the books, by attending to the question *What aesthetic encounter with poetry did they offer?*

The changing aesthetic encounter with poetry

Although mainstream adult poetry anthologies and single poet collections have commonly presented poems in a single mode of static textual artefact on a white page, a different tradition had developed in school poetry anthology-making. Poetry books designed for school use attended more closely to the multimodal possibilities of poetry. Not all school poetry anthologies worked in this tradition, and they did not all work in the same way, but multiple rationales for this practice were articulated in the prefatory material of many of the books, such as providing pupils with multiple entry points to a poem, broadening their experience through the presentation of additional art forms, opening pedagogical spaces for creative, critical and oral work, and the simpler matter of visual or auditory appeal in classroom settings. Consistent with other aspects of standardisation and commoditisation discussed in this chapter, there was a patterned change over time from multimodal to monomodal representations of poetry. In the section that follows, I discuss three particular ways in which this occurs: a shift from artwork to graphic design, the loss of sound, and the removal of dialogic framing.

In the older school poetry anthologies, a great variety of visual content often accompanied the poems. This visual material included reproductions of original artworks in the form of drawings, paintings, poem illustrations, manuscript illustrations, engravings, woodcuts, posters and cartoons; portrait, landscape and documentary photographs and photographic reproductions of sculptures, stained glass windows and woodcarvings. There was other visual content too: diagrams and infographics, facsimile reproductions of broadside ballads, film stills, poems in draft or manuscript form, maps and sheet music for songs. In the example from Eric Williams's

1972 *Dragonsteeth* shown below as figure 5.10, a striking page design consisted of a white poem text on a black background next to an artistically composed black and white photograph of a man in silhouette. It is no simple illustration of Seamus Heaney's opening line "With a billhook" but a multimodal invitation to explore the shifting state in Heaney's poem, between dream and nightmare, where a billhook might be an implement for hacking through woody plants or an implement for murder. The silhouetted figure in the photograph could be engaged in either, while the white text on a black page disrupts what is normal and gives off something of the night.

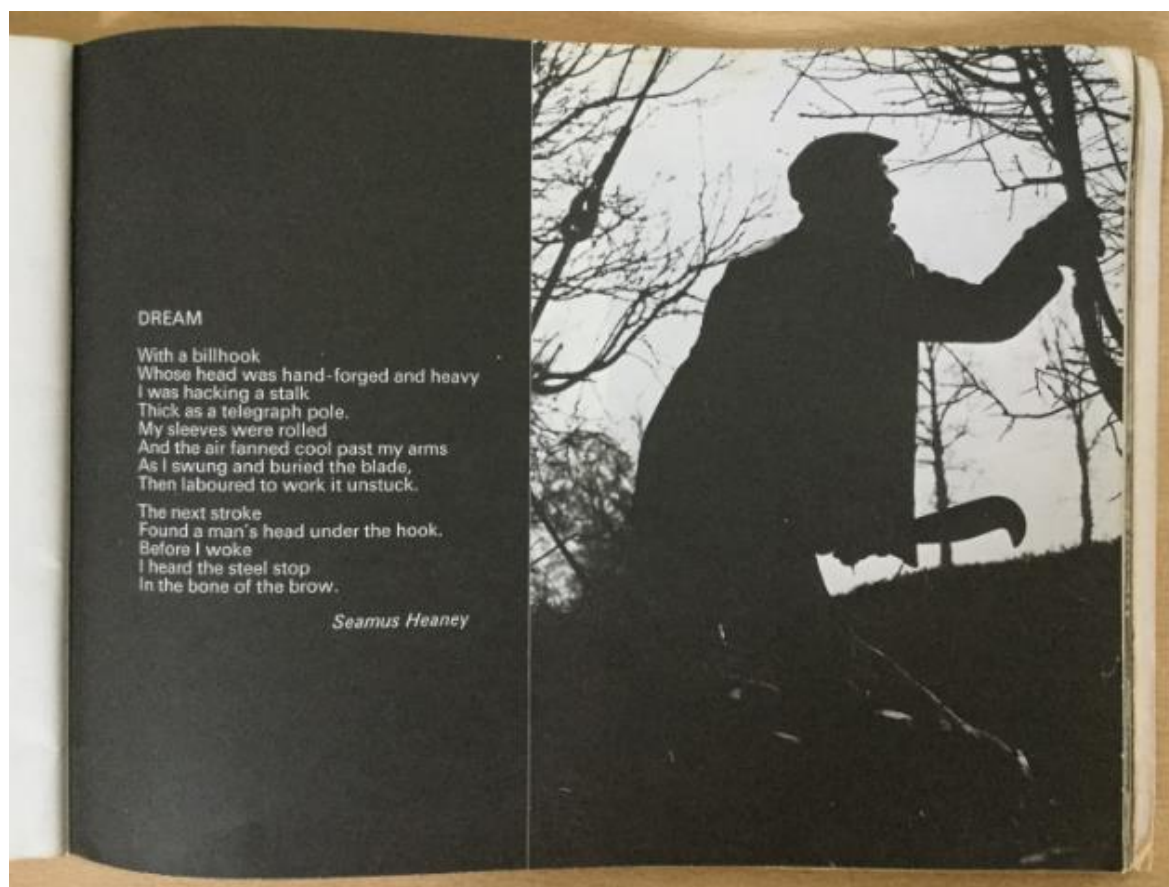
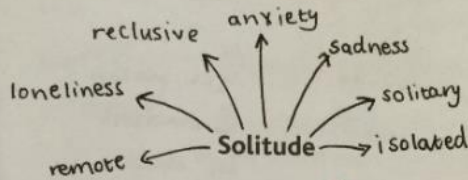


Figure 5.10: 'Dream' by Seamus Heaney as it is presented in Eric Williams's design-led *Dragonsteeth*.

Traces of this practice remained in some of the later awarding body anthologies: in the 2015 AQA anthology there were small poet portraits and in the 2009 Pearson Edexcel anthology there were some photographs, although in both these cases the artwork functioned primarily as page decoration or navigation. In the more typical example shown as figure 5.11 below there was an inconsequential graphic design element at the top of the page dominated by the monomodal poem text and surrounding white space. This design was configured for student annotation of the poem in preparation for examination, and it has been used in that way.



rhythem = 3,3,4,3. beats

— = internal rhyme

— = rhyme

— = repetition

♦ = metaphors

- = alliteration

opposition
 Laugh, and the world laughs with you; A
 Weep, and you weep alone; B
 For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth, C
 But has trouble enough of its own. B
 Sing, and the hills will answer; D
 Sigh, it is lost in the air; e
 The echoes bound to a joyful sound, F
 But shrink from voicing care. e

directive

Poetic persona

- first person speaking to the reader

Rejoice, and men will seek you;
 Grieve, and they turn and go;
 They want full measure of all your pleasure,
 But they do not need your woe.

Be glad, and your friends are many;
 Be sad, and you lose them all, —

There are none to decline your nectared wine,
 But alone you must drink life's gall.

no-one is going to refuse to have fun with you, but you must suffer on your own

Feast, and your halls are crowded;
 Fast, and the world goes by.

Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
 But no man can help you die.

There is room in the halls of pleasure
 For a long and lordly train,

But one by one we must all file on
 Through the narrow aisles of pain.

directive

3 stanzas

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Figure 5.11: Page showing student annotation of Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poem 'Solitude' printed as monomodal text.

Many of the older anthology prefaces articulated a belief in the importance of attending to sound when teaching poetry. In *Here Today*, the poet Ted Hughes explained how sound brings poetry not merely to our ears but to our core:

The string of facts in a poem are probably the least important thing about it, though they are important. What matters most, since we are listening to poetry and not to prose, is that we hear the dance and the song in the words. The dance and the song engage the deepest roots of our minds, and carry the poet's words down into our depths.

A “string of facts” pedagogy was clearly considered unhelpful and one attending to “the dance and the song” of poetry as sound was preferable. In *West Indian Poetry*, Kenneth Ramchand and Cecil Gray made a case for “repeated oral readings” as a way of revealing connections and preserving the wholeness of the poem; for Adrian Tisser in *Poems From Other Centuries* “Poems cannot come alive until they are spoken.” The absence of prefatory material in later awarding body anthologies meant there was no longer a space for pedagogical guidance and this explicit attention to the auditory mode. Without it, poetry was represented to young people as a textual matter, not as an art form that is ultimately derived from an oral acoustic tradition. Figure 5.12 below shows the contrasting pedagogical practices this representation might give rise to in the classroom: on the left hand side is an image of a page of Maurice Wollman’s 1957 *Ten Twentieth Century Poets*, annotated by a student in preparation for a choral reading of T.S. Eliot’s poem ‘Journey of the Magi’; on the right hand side is an example from a contemporary anthology of student annotation of semantic features. The loss of sound is palpable.

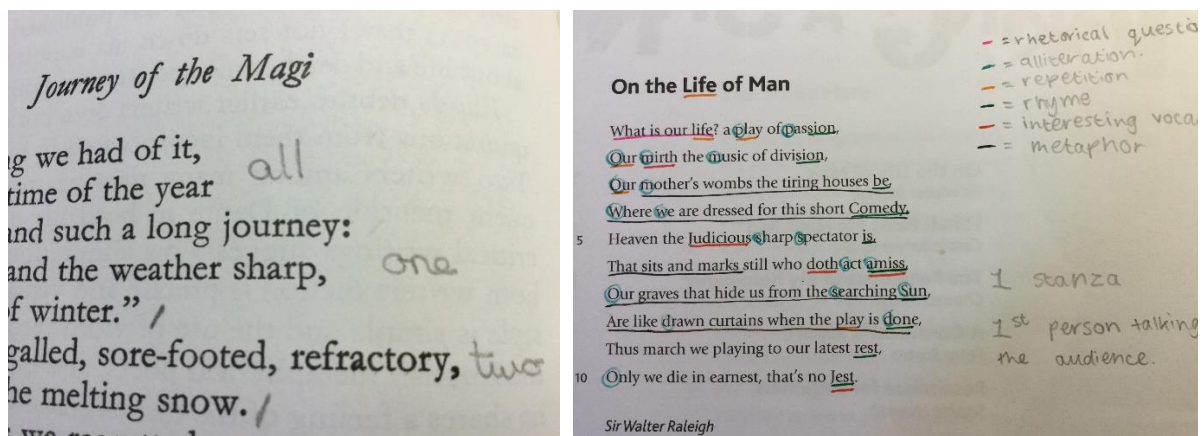


Figure 5.12: Left, traces of a student preparing for choral reading; right, traces of a student preparing for examination.

Editors’ prefaces were never the only vehicle for encouraging an attention to the sound of poetry, however. The print volume of *Here Today* could be supplemented by purchasing two records that featured poets, actors and an eight year-old girl reading all the poems. There were anthologies associated with radio and television broadcasts. *Poetry in the Making* was developed

from a school radio series called *Listening and Writing* presented by Ted Hughes. *The English Programme*, a long-running series of television broadcasts for schools about English, produced associated anthologies *I See A Voice* and *Visible Voices*. After the 1997 Labour government invested substantially in computers for schools, audio and video recordings of poems of variable quality could be sourced and played from educational websites such as BBC *Bitesize* and video platforms such as *YouTube*. In one case, an awarding body and a digital content provider collaborated to create audio poetry content: *Moon on the Tides* was accompanied by an online “Anthology Zone” available exclusively to schools entering candidates for AQA’s GCSE English literature from 2012 to 2016. This resource included recordings of all 60 poems produced by *The Poetry Archive*⁴⁹. By such technological means an attention to the sounds of poetry remained available to pupils and teachers in the longer tradition of school poetry anthologies, but this was not emulated by other awarding bodies or repeated by AQA in the subsequent GCSE series.

When the detail of the national curriculum for English was implemented in 1990 it included a statutory ‘Speaking and Listening’ component. Assessment of a student’s oral accomplishment was incorporated into GCSE English specifications and until 2016 counted for up to 20 per cent of a pupil’s final grade. In this context and because oral classroom activity had long been a valued method of English teaching, many of the earlier school poetry anthologies gave the poems a dialogic framing. Typical activities included questions that invited whole class or small group discussion of one or more poems, invitations to create imagined dialogues based on the poems, and tasks that needed to be completed through dialogue between pupils such as planning a dramatic performance of a poem. This material was sometimes presented in a section at the end of a cluster of poems or at the end of the book, but in Chris Martin’s *War Poems*, shown as figure 5.13, the dialogic framing appears next to individual poems or in relation to poems on a double page spread. On the top right hand side of the sample page are questions related to the poem on the left, and underneath those questions are two dialogic activities relating to a wider range of poems, marked with a capital D icon to signal that they are discussion based, one a class discussion, the other an imaginative role play. Pupil oracy is the pedagogical priority in these examples, but the dialogic framing can also be regarded as an invitation to teachers and students to understand poetry as a form encountered as shared experience and dialogue with the poem.

⁴⁹ The Poetry Archive is “a free, web-based library formed to hold recordings of English language poets reading their own work”, available at www.poetryarchive.org

To conclude, read this poem written in 1915.

War

Over the World
Rages war.
Earth, sea and sky
Wince at his roar.

He tramples down
At every tread,
A million men,
A million dead.

We say that we
Must crush the Hun,
Or else the World
Will be undone.
But Huns are we
As much as they,
All men are Huns,
Who fight and slay.

And if we win,
And crush the Huns,
In twenty years
We must fight their sons,
Who will rise against
Our victory,
Their fathers', their own
Ignominy.¹

And if their Kaiser
We dethrone,
They will his son restore,
Or some other one.
If we win by war,
War is a force,
And others to war
Will have recourse.

And through the World
Will rage new war.
Earth, sea and sky
Will wince at his roar.
He will trample down
At every tread,
Millions of men,
Millions of dead.

JOSEPH LEFTWICH

¹ disgrace

What is remarkable about this poem's general message?

What is uncanny about its details:

*We must fight their sons,
Or some other one. . . .?*

Why does the writer see war as pointless?
Was he right?

Work based on poems from the whole of Part Two

- W** Referring closely to about six poems, write about one of the following.
- 1 The picture of life on the Western Front as it is shown to us in these poems.
 - 2 The idea of the 'hero' in 1914-18 poetry.
 - 3 The gulf between civilians and fighting troops in the First World War.
 - 4 The reasons for the anger of First World War poets.
- D** Which two poems impressed you most? Prepare notes for a class discussion. It would be best to avoid such an obvious favourite as *Dulce et Decorum est*.
- W** Prepare an assembly reading by your class, which is based on a selection of First World War poems. You will need introductory material for the whole event and for individual poems.
- D** Hold a role-play discussion which is based on a meeting of a senior soldier, a politician, a civilian war-enthusiast, and a soldier from the Western Front. Try to bring in ideas from the poems.

Figure 5.13: A poem page in *War Poems* showing poem questions and broader dialogic tasks.

War Poems is a relatively late example of an anthology selected for GCSE English literature that maintained older traditions of school poetry anthologies. The hybrid awarding body anthologies did not provide a multimodal framing because they were designed to be taken into 'open book' written examinations where such material might have been regarded as a distraction. The effect of this on pupil understanding of what a poem is and what it is for is evident in the student annotations in figures 5.11 and 5.12 after this dialogic framing had been removed from school poetry anthologies. There is little sense here of the relationship between poetry and imagery, the

sound of the poem has been reduced to highlighting alliteration and rhyme, and there is little sense of any dialogue between the pupil and the poem. It is hard to imagine these pupils having had the kind of engagement with poetry that sparked Simon Armitage's interest as a child.

The multimodal framing of poems in school poetry anthologies did not entirely disappear, however. When the awarding bodies collaborated with mainstream publishers to produce their own poetry anthologies, they often also co-produced text books or other paid-for materials related to the anthologies. An early example is shown as figure 5.14, a page from the text book that was available to accompany the free 1996 *NEAB Anthology*. This focuses on Valerie Bloom's poem 'Wha Fe Call I?'. Other pages include visual material; this page invites pupils to encounter the poem as sound by reading it aloud and then re-working it in their own spoken dialect, and to engage in a dialogue with the poem and with each other through discussion activities and imaginative writing tasks. In this way, the representation of a dialogic pedagogical tradition was preserved but only in the optional paid-for material that not all schools would buy.

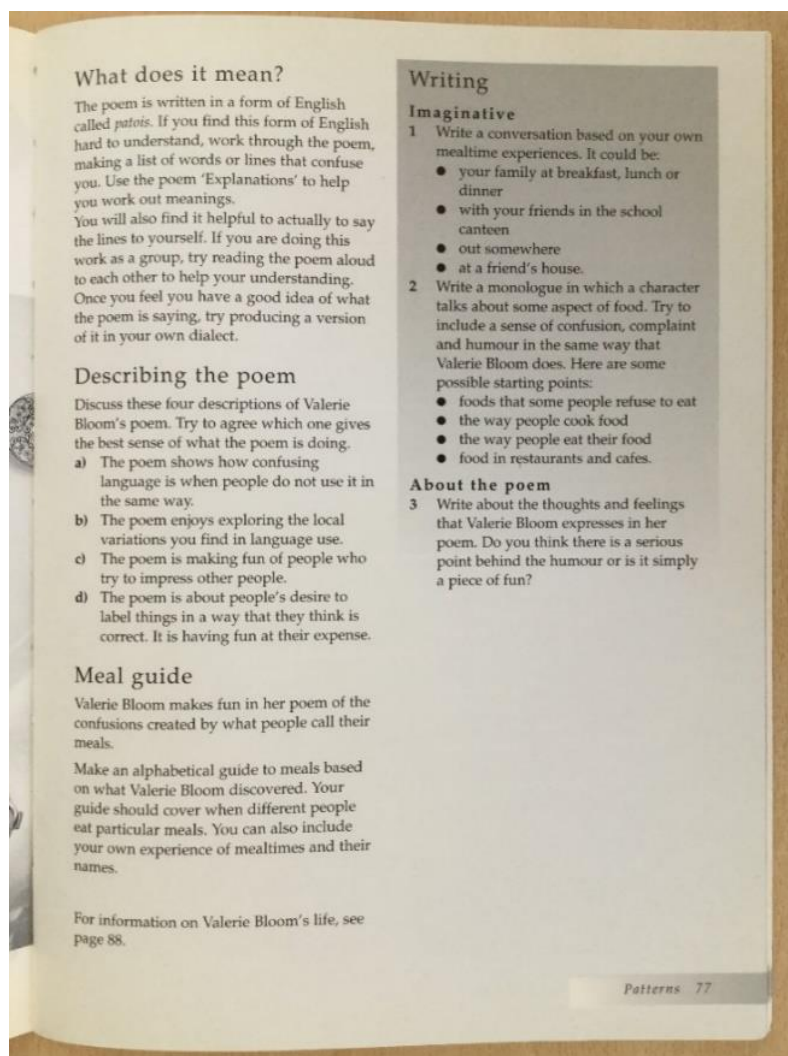


Figure 5.14: Sample page of the paid-for text book which accompanied the free NEAB anthology.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have followed the trajectory of school poetry anthologies featured as resources for GCSE English Literature from 1988 to 2018, as they were shaped by the dynamics of the National Curriculum and its assessment. The production of school poetry anthologies had always been a commercial activity, but this dynamic changed when awarding bodies began to produce their own anthologies. The successful innovation by NEAB of a hybrid form – part school poetry anthology, part examination pre-release booklet – was quickly emulated by other awarding bodies. Over time, in response to competition for examination market share and increasing regulatory pressure from government, the new hybrid book-form became a standardised generic product. To try to extract greater market advantage some awarding bodies developed paid-for resources to accompany their anthologies. Simon Armitage’s criticisms of contemporary awarding body anthologies as failing to offer an aesthetic encounter with the poem have been substantiated by this analysis, but by relating these changes to the framework of government regulated assessment that drove them, I have been able to explain why such substantial changes occurred over the 30 year period. There were principled educational achievements here too, as Simon Powell partly argued, in the interests of resourcing schools equitably, democratising access to poetry, and making new selections of poetry likely to engage the broadest range of young people within the context of a compulsory subject in mass state education.

The current awarding body anthologies are much thinner than hitherto in the 30 year period, and their selections of poems more constrained by the most recent specification of the national curriculum for English, but something of the tradition of school poetry anthology-making is preserved by their continued existence. At the same time, the increased significance of the ‘unseen’ mode of assessment perhaps provides an opportunity for fresh innovation, while Simon Armitage’s appointment as Poet Laureate provides him with a significant platform for speaking about how school experience of poetry might best provide the basis for lifelong enjoyment of the form. These modest grounds for hope are supported by Arjun Appadurai’s argument that commoditisation is not a fixed end-point in an object’s trajectory but a state of being it can enter and leave (Appadurai 1986:17).

In the next two chapters I turn to consider the poets and poems included in the poetry books discussed here. In the next chapter I consider the poets. Based on database documentation of the contents of all the poetry books named for GCSE English literature assessment purposes, I compare how the pattern of inclusion and exclusion over the six GCSE series compared with the national curriculum lists of named poets.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

6. Tracing power and agency: the naming of poets

In this chapter I establish the empirical fact that the work of 1,489 poets has constituted the corpus of poetry selected for GCSE English literature anthologies over 30 years. This number is derived from database documentation of the poets in awarding body selections from the named anthologies, and this answers in straightforward terms the question *Which poets constituted this corpus of poetry?* However, this number was not static during the period 1988 to 2018; it declined from 1,039 poets in 1988, before the national curriculum for key stage 4 English was established, to 73 poets in the series examined from 2017. The poet selections were not static either: in each series of GCSE English literature, poets were added and removed, forgotten and remembered. The selections were also subject to statutory pressure in the form of lists of named poets specified in the national curriculum with effect from the third series of GCSE English literature. The chapter therefore presents a second data-set: the 70 poets named in the national curriculum over the period. Using a bespoke quantitative method, I then bring the two data-sets into articulation in order to answer the question *How did the poets in the corpus compare with poet name lists in the national curriculum statutory orders?* Working at scale and with number, it became possible to trace precise effects of statutory power and professional agency at work in the poet selections. This chapter extends the invitation of chapter three to examine what happened from new perspectives in the interests of moving beyond the polarised positions of the debate about English in the national curriculum.

“...histories of canon formation, when they consist primarily of a narrative of reputations, of the names which pass in and out of literary anthologies, explain nothing. Such narrative histories fail to recognise generic or linguistic shifts which underlie the fortunes of individual authors by establishing what counts as literature at a given historical moment.”

John Guillory 1994:64

“When the school-children learn your verses they are good for another half century.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes to James Russell Lowell in July 1881, as cited by Joan Rubin (2007:108)

Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons
Thomas Hardy	Ted Hughes	Seamus Heaney	Wilfred Owen	Philip Larkin	Charles Causley
Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons
U.A. Fanthorpe	William Blake	Gillian Clarke	Robert Frost	W. Wordsworth	Edw. Thomas
Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons
Elizabeth Jennings	Alfred Tennyson	Sylvia Plath	Vernon Scannell	Robert Browning	Christina Rossetti
Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons
Gerard Manley Hopkins	Carol Ann Duffy	John Keats	Grace Nichols	Emily Dickinson	Simon Armitage
Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons	Poet image removed for copyright reasons
Eliz. Barrett Browning	Percy Bysshe Shelley	Wendy Cope	George Gordon Byron	Rupert Brooke	Denise Levertov
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John Agard	Keith Douglas	Tony Harrison	Fleur Adcock	Imtiaz Dharker	

Figure 6.1: Current core poets of GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

In the six series of GCSE English literature from 1988 to 2018, the awarding bodies implicitly licensed the work of 1,489 poets in the collections of poetry they specified or recommended for study. The complete list of these poets is available as table A.1 in Appendix A but it is not easy to ‘see’ a data-set of 1,489 poets in this manner. To better visualise something of its nature, figure 6.1 instead represents the 35 poets who constitute the current central core of the corpus that has evolved over the last 30 years⁵⁰. The poets are presented in rank order of their salience: from Thomas Hardy in the top left-hand corner, the most salient poet, to Imtiaz Dharker, a newer addition who has become salient in a short period of time. 37 per cent of these poets are women, a little under nine per cent are people of colour, 26 per cent are living poets. There are some surprises though I have worked with this corpus for 25 years: that Thomas Hardy is the highest ranking poet; that Ursula Fanthorpe is the highest ranking female poet, higher than Gillian Clarke; that Rupert Brooke and Keith Douglas, with restricted oeuvres as a result of their untimely war deaths, feature so prominently. In terms of status within the corpus, John Keats sits between Carol Ann Duffy and Grace Nichols, Simon Armitage sits between Emily Dickinson and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The juxtaposition on equal terms of pre-20th century poets, 20th century and contemporary poets, and poets ‘from other cultures and traditions’ indicates the success of the national curriculum in establishing these categories.

Over most of the same period, Conservative and Labour governments consistently imposed a “narrative of reputations” (Guillory 1994:64) by naming 70 approved poets for the study of English literature in key stage 4, as shown in table 6.1 below. The columns for series 1 and series 6 are greyed out to indicate no name lists were used in these series. Orange shading in the series 2 column indicates poets named in David Pascall’s National Curriculum Council report in response to government dissatisfaction with a canon-free curriculum (DFE/Welsh Office 1993)⁵¹, a precursor of the lists included in the statutory orders that affected GCSE English literature in series 3 to 5. The poets named in the national curriculum for implementation in series 3 to 5 of GCSE English literature are indicated by green shading.

⁵⁰ This is based on quantitative analysis of the frequency of occurrence of poems by each poet in the corpus, weighted to allow for change over time. The 35 poets here have all been included in the anthologies named by awarding bodies five or six times across the six series of GCSE English literature; or, to allow for contemporary poets emerging into the canon, they have appeared four times consecutively in the most recent four series. This method is explained in detail in chapter 8 where it is central to the argument about canon formation.

⁵¹ As discussed in chapter 4.

Table 6.1: The 70 poets named in the statutory orders for key stage 4 English of the national curriculum 1988-2018.

#	LastName	FirstName	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
1	Adcock	Fleur						
2	Agard	John						
3	Alvi	Moniza						
4	Armitage	Simon						
5	Arnold	Matthew						
6	Auden	W.H.						
7	Berry	James						
8	Blake	William						
9	Brathwaite	E. Kamau						
10	Bronte	Emily						
11	Browning	Robert						
12	Browning	Eliz. Barrett						
13	Burns	Robert						
14	Byron	G. Gordon						
15	Chaucer	Geoffrey						
16	Clare	John						
17	Clarke	Gillian						
18	Coleridge	S. Taylor						
19	Dickinson	Emily						
20	Donne	John						
21	Douglas	Keith						
22	Dryden	John						
23	Duffy	Carol Ann						
24	Dunn	Douglas						
25	Eliot	T.S.						
26	Fanthorpe	UA						
27	Frost	Robert						
28	Gray	Thomas						
29	Hardy	Thomas						
30	Harrison	Tony						
31	Heaney	Seamus						
32	Herbert	George						
33	Herrick	Robert						
34	Hopkins	G. Manley						
35	Hughes	Ted						
36	Jennings	Elizabeth						
37	Kay	Jackie						
38	Keats	John						
39	Larkin	Philip						
40	Lawrence	D.H.						
41	Lochhead	Liz						
42	Lowell	Robert						

#	LastName	FirstName	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
43	Marvell	Andrew						
44	Milton	John						
45	Mitchell	Adrian						
46	Muir	Edwin						
47	Nichols	Grace						
48	Owen	Wilfred						
49	Plath	Sylvia						
50	Pope	Alexander						
51	Porter	Peter						
52	Rossetti	Christina						
53	Sassoon	Siegfried						
54	Shakespeare	William						
55	Shapcott	Jo						
56	Shelley	Percy Bysshe						
57	Smith	Stevie						
58	Spenser	Edmund						
59	Tagore	Rabindranath						
60	Tennyson	Alfred						
61	Thomas	R.S.						
62	Thomas	Edward						
63	Thomas	Dylan						
64	Vaughan	Henry						
65	Walcott	Derek						
66	Whitman	Walt						
67	Wordsworth	William						
68	Wyatt	Thomas						
69	Yeats	W.B.						
70	Zephaniah	Benjamin						

The poet name lists exerted a pressure on the number of poets licensed for study by the awarding bodies in many different anthologies at the start of the period. The effect of this pressure can be seen in figure 6.2 below which shows the tendency to exponential decline in the number of poets licensed by awarding bodies over the 30 year period, from 1,039 poets in series 1 of GCSE to 73 poets in series 6. The variation in series 1 more than halved in series 2 as GCSEs were revised to accommodate the new national curriculum for English, after which the first national curriculum name list and its subsequent revisions affected series 3, 4 and 5. The number of poets was reduced to less than a third of the number in series 2, and later to a sixth of that number. The series 6 decrease to 73 poets occurred in the context of the Coalition government's removal of statutory name lists from the national curriculum for key stage 4

English, and is perhaps reflective of the greater weighting than before of the ‘unseen’ poetry component. The reduction over time in the ecology of poets is striking.

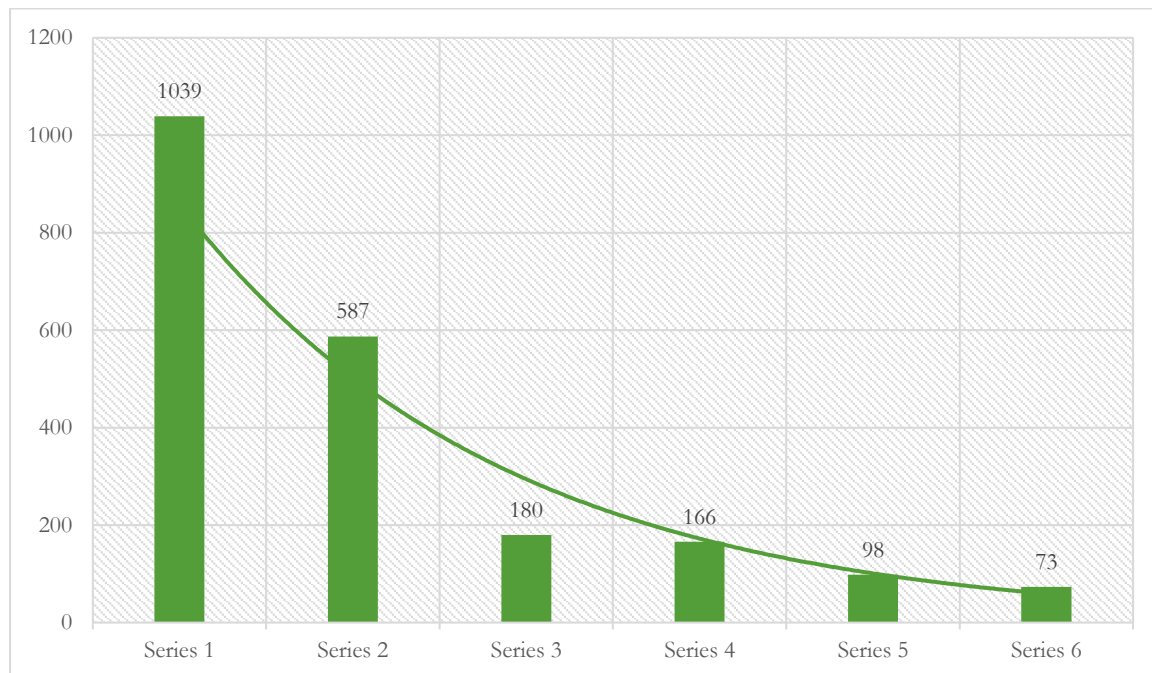


Figure 6.2: Exponential tendency of the decrease in the number of poets included in anthologies in each GCSE series.

Despite this evidence of a downward pressure on the number of poets, however, there was no simple overlay between the national curriculum name lists and the poet selections made by the GCSE awarding bodies. As an indication of this disjuncture, there are more women in the current central core of the GCSE corpus, 37 per cent compared with 23 per cent in the national curriculum lists; there are fewer people of colour, a little under nine per cent compared with 13 per cent named in the national curriculum lists; there are more living poets, 26 per cent compared with 21 per cent. There are six poets in the current central core who have never been named in the national curriculum: Charles Causley, Vernon Scannell, Wendy Cope, Rupert Brooke, Denise Levertov, and Imtiaz Dharker. Many of the poets named in the national curriculum lists are absent here: William Shakespeare and Nobel laureates W.B. Yeats and Derek Walcott, for example. The lists were always of course intertwined: professional agency was exerted on the naming of poets in the national curriculum lists, though the historical record of that agency is opaque; and the national curriculum lists influenced which poets were selected for GCSE English literature assessment purposes. Nonetheless, the simple comparisons made here indicate that a narrative in which professional agency was destroyed by government imposition of a particular canon, through their statutory power to determine the national curriculum, does not adequately account for the two data-sets compiled for this study.

In order to illuminate more precisely how the poet selections changed over time, I developed a quantitative method for bringing the two data-sets into articulation. By comparing which poets were named when in the national curriculum with the data of which poets were made available by the awarding bodies for the study of GCSE English literature, patterns of likely effects of statutory power and likely effects of professional agency became visible.

Tracing power and agency

To trace the likely effects of power and agency, I used database queries to identify the number of poem-iterations each poet had in each series of GCSE English literature. A poem-iteration is not the same as a poem; it is the number of times the poem was iterated in a GCSE series through its appearance in different anthologies and different awarding body specifications. It is the poem’s maximum exposure in the curriculum at a point in time. Thus, if a particular poem were to appear in five different anthologies in a GCSE series, each set by one awarding body, the poem-iteration count would be five. If two awarding bodies both set one of those anthologies in that series, the count would be six. I then mapped onto each poet’s profile whether and when they were named in the national curriculum for key stage 4 English, showing this by colouring the cell green. By this method, for example, Seamus Heaney had the profile of poem-iterations by series shown in table 6.2 below, with him being named in the national curriculum in three consecutive series from 1998 to 2016.

Table 6.2: Seamus Heaney’s profile of poem-iterations over time.

Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
157	6	28	22	19	4

From lines of data like this, I determined patterns across the complete set of 1,489 poets, although I will only discuss a sample of 199 poets here as this is sufficient to illuminate all of the different dynamics. This sample is shown as table A.2 in Appendix A. The sample of 199 poets includes the 70 poets named in the national curriculum over 30 years and a further 132 significant poets with different profiles, including the 35 poets illustrated at the start of this chapter as well as recent newcomers in the latest anthologies. Cells coloured red in the data tables show poets who, in series 6, can no longer be selected because of the statutory regulation that poetry to be studied must be from 1789 onwards. Orange cells show poets who, in series 6, are not explicitly named but might be considered to come under the statutory remit of “representative Romantic poets”. Green cells identify the series in which a poet was explicitly

named in the national curriculum, a possibility in series 3, 4 and 5 only. The colour coding helped to identify similar poet profiles.

Key to the colour coding used in the data tables in this chapter:

	Named in the national curriculum in this series
	Likely consequence of the “representative Romantic poets” stipulation
	No longer permissible because of the 1789 stipulation

By comparing colour-coded poet profiles, it was possible to see three major patterns in the articulated data-sets. First, there are effects that seem explicitly related to the exercise of statutory power, found in profile patterns that show immediate, delayed and short-term uptake of poets named in the national curriculum lists, and the corollary of this, the exclusion of some poets not named thus. Then there are effects that seem to exist at a point of tension between statutory power and professional agency. In these cases, the awarding bodies appear to have exercised their agency through a specific resistance or a general imperviousness to the name lists, as well as by interpreting national curriculum criteria in their own way. These effects show professional agency but it is a function of statutory power. Finally, there are effects that seem explicitly related to the exercise of professional agency beyond the stipulations of the national curriculum and its name lists. These effects are found in the way the awarding bodies maintained the status of poets well established in their selected anthologies, and in the way they remembered and recycled poets from previous anthologies. Professional agency is also evident in the exclusion by awarding bodies of some poets in order to make a space for new poets to be introduced. Each of these effects is documented in the sections that follow, but some codas first need to be observed.

First, the discourse in favour of naming authors for the national curriculum for English had its rhetorical base in the idea that educational standards were diminished without statutory regulation of a historic canon. However, in almost all cases the named poets had already featured in one or more of the anthologies selected or produced by the awarding bodies. It was unlikely to have been the case that the poets on the national curriculum list were not being taught somewhere to some GCSE English literature pupils; the problem to government ministers was that these poets were not being taught to all pupils. The poet name lists consequently paid more attention to the stipulation of pre-twentieth century poets than to modern and contemporary poets, and they tended to follow a particular strand of existing professional practice rather than to lead it.

Second, it is not possible to be wholly certain about the effects because there is little trace in the research literature of the decision-making processes that happened within awarding bodies, and in the negotiations between awarding bodies and the various statutory regulation bodies that existed at various times. In this respect, the history of English as a subject in secondary education would benefit from further oral histories of politicians and civil servants involved in these processes, as modelled by Tony Taylor's narrative account of the political dynamics of the introduction of the national curriculum (Taylor 1995), and to accompany Simon Gibbons' work to capture the oral histories of key figures in English professional subject associations from the 1960s to the 1980s (Gibbons 2013, 2017). It would also benefit from the kind of 'thick description' of professional agency exemplified in Asha Rogers' account of how Tatamkhulu Afrika's poem 'Nothing's Changed' came into the NEAB anthology in series 3 via work undertaken by Devon Curriculum Services in the 1990s to address concerns about "the lack of progress made by multicultural education" in Devon a decade after the Swann report and in the context of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry (Rogers 2015:84).

Some recovery of these decision-making contexts would be helpful but the complexity of the task of tracing power and agency is amplified by considering some of the many other factors that may have determined a poet choice: what was happening in the curriculum at A Level, in key stage 3 and in the primary phases of education; decision-makers' subject knowledge formations, in terms of a changing literary canon taught at degree level in different settings; the presentation of poetry teaching within Initial Teacher Education and other professional development programmes; personal cultural practices in relation to poetry; and access to different kinds of feedback from parents, teachers, examiners, members of subject associations, poets, organisational advocates for literature, media pundits and policy think tanks. That layering of descriptive detail is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the patterns of contested symbolic valuing presented here offer a substantial foundation for further interrogation and debate.

The effects of statutory power

In this section I consider three direct effects of poets being named in the national curriculum for English - immediate uptake, delayed uptake and short-term uptake - and the indirect effect of not being named. In some of the cases discussed here there is also evidence of an intertwined professional agency at work, but the dominant effect is one of statutory power.

Immediate uptake

The first kind of effect of being named in the national curriculum is what appears to be an immediate uptake effect, evident in the case of four poets shown in table 6.3 below: John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Dylan Thomas and Benjamin Zephaniah.

Table 6.3: Four poets named with an immediate uptake effect.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Donne	John	48	0	4	3	3	0
Marvell	Andrew	18	0	3	3	2	0
Thomas	Dylan	63	4	3	0	6	0
Zephaniah	Benjamin	0	3	0	0	16	1

Donne and Marvell had appeared in series 1 anthologies but were omitted by the selections made for series 2. They appeared on all the national curriculum name lists and were consistently included in the anthology selections for series 3, 4 and 5. From 2017 it was no longer permissible to include them as their works were first published before 1789. The pattern for Dylan Thomas is a little different in that his status declined over a longer period from 63 poem-iterations in series 1 to zero poem-iterations in series 4; then he was named in the national curriculum for series 5 with immediate uptake. Benjamin Zephaniah’s case is slightly different again: he appeared as a young poet in one of James Berry’s anthologies of Black British writing in series 2, then disappeared from view in the data record before being licensed by the national curriculum and taken up immediately. The status this named presence gave him is evident in his continued inclusion by one awarding body after statutory naming ended.

The immediate uptake effect can also be seen in the data for a group of three women poets who were not explicitly named but when the requirement to include “representative Romantic poets” was introduced in series 6, they were included for the first time in the 30 year period. These poets are Joanna Baillie, Mary Lamb and Helen Maria Williams, as shown in table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4: Three poets named with an immediate uptake effect, specific to “representative Romantic poets” requirement.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Baillie	Joanna	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lamb	Mary	0	0	0	0	0	1
Williams	Helen Maria	0	0	0	0	0	1

The inclusion of three women poets as “representative Romantic poetry” is indicative of an intertwined professional agency on the part of the awarding bodies in interpreting the criterion in

this way. No indication of the meaning of “representative” was given in the statutory order that established this stipulation.

Delayed uptake

The second kind of effect of being named in the national curriculum is what appears to be a delayed uptake effect, evident in the case of five poets: Emily Brontë, Robert Herrick, Jo Shapcott, Thomas Wyatt and W.B. Yeats, as shown in table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5: Five poets named with a delayed uptake effect.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Brontë	Emily	16	0	0	0	1	1
Herrick	Robert	31	0	0	3	1	0
Shapcott	Jo	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wyatt	Thomas	7	0	0	1	1	0
Yeats	W.B.	123	1	0	3	1	0

All but Shapcott appeared in series 1, 1988-1993. Brontë, Herrick and Wyatt were not included in anthologies used for series 2, 1994-1997, though Yeats was present in one poem-iteration, a minimal count in a series with 1,673 poem-iterations. When Brontë, Herrick, Wyatt and Yeats were named in the national curriculum for series 3, 1998-2003, and when Shapcott was named for series 4, there was no immediate effect on their inclusion, again indicating a degree of flexibility in the application of the national curriculum to GCSE English literature. However, in series 4, Herrick, Wyatt and Yeats all found a place in the awarding bodies’ own anthologies and were included again in series 5; in series 6, Herrick and Wyatt could no longer be included due to the 1789 stipulation. Emily Brontë was not included until series 5 but continued into series 6 after poets were no longer named; Jo Shapcott first featured in series 6, two series after her first naming and when poets were no longer named.

Short-term uptake

The third kind of effect of being named in the national curriculum is what appears to be a short-term uptake effect, evident in the cases of 13 poets: Matthew Arnold, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Robert Burns, John Clare, John Dryden, Douglas Dunn, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Gray, George Herbert, John Milton, Adrian Mitchell, Alexander Pope and Derek Walcott. All 13 poets had been present in series 1 in the context of many more anthologies but not necessarily in series 2 when the national curriculum first began to start shaping the curriculum differently. Brathwaite and Walcott maintained their status due to the number of Caribbean poetry anthologies introduced to address the “other cultures” stipulation of the national curriculum. Clare, Dunn,

Eliot, Gray, Mitchell and Pope remained but with significantly lower profiles; Arnold, Burns, Dryden, Herbert and Milton were omitted. This was the situation before the national curriculum name lists changed the profiles of these poets.

In series 3, 11 of these 13 poets were named and included, all but Dunn and Walcott, as table 6.6 below shows.

Table 6.6: 13 poets named with a short-term uptake effect.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Arnold	Matthew	18	0	3	1	0	0
Brathwaite	E. Kamau	29	24	2	1	0	0
Burns	Robert	20	0	2	2	0	0
Clare	John	48	2	5	3	0	0
Dryden	John	15	0	1	0	0	0
Dunn	Douglas	28	1	0	1	0	0
Eliot	T.S.	47	1	8	0	0	0
Gray	Thomas	9	1	3	1	0	0
Herbert	George	37	0	1	0	0	0
Milton	John	24	0	1	0	0	0
Mitchell	Adrian	42	4	1	1	0	0
Pope	Alexander	25	1	2	1	0	0
Walcott	Derek	18	19	0	1	0	1

In series 4 all 13 poets were named in the national curriculum and Dunn and Walcott were then included by the awarding bodies, but Dryden, Eliot, Herbert and Milton were discontinued. In series 5, Burns was no longer named and the awarding bodies would seem to have concurred with this evaluation in not including him; the other 12 poets continued to be named but were not included either. In series 6, only Walcott was present. The 1789 stipulation made it impossible to include Dryden, Herbert, Milton and Pope and the “representative Romantic poets” category might have revived Burns or Clare but did not. These patterns suggest that the national curriculum had an effect on uptake, but after the first series in which these poets were named these effects proved short-term.

Exclusion of the not-named

If being named in the national curriculum affected in various ways the uptake of some poets, its corollary effect was potentially one of excluding poets not named. Because the national curriculum name lists were primarily concerned with naming a traditional and historical canon of poets, this effect is more clearly evident in the cases of ten pre-twentieth century poets who were not named, as shown in table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7: Ten pre-twentieth century poets not-named.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Bradstreet	Anne	12	0	2	1	0	0
Clough	Arthur H	9	0	1	1	0	0
Cowper	William	8	1	2	0	0	0
Crabbe	George	10	1	2	1	0	0
Goldsmith	Oliver	7	2	3	2	0	0
Hood	Thomas	8	0	3	6	0	0
Housman	A.E.	19	2	1	3	0	0
Southey	Robert	4	1	3	2	0	0
Tichborne	Chidiok	3	0	1	1	0	0
Wilde	Oscar	3	0	2	2	0	0

Despite not being named, these poets continued to be selected in series 3 and series 4 but by series 5 all of them had been omitted and none were included in series 6, though it would not have been permissible to include Bradstreet, Cowper, Crabbe, Goldsmith and Tichborne due to the 1789 rule. Southey could have been re-introduced as a “representative Romantic poet” but was not. This pattern is likely to be multiply motivated, changing tastes in poetry and the overall reduction in the number of poems anthologised for GCSE English literature being two relevant factors, and in the case of Chidiok Tichborne having a limited oeuvre of only one known poem; however, not being backed by the instrumental power of national curriculum naming would also seem to have hastened their demise.

Poets who have come to be associated with writing for children would also seem to have been affected by not being named: Hilaire Belloc, Walter de la Mare, John Masefield and Alfred Noyes, as shown in table 6.8 below.

Table 6.8: Four poets associated with writing for children who are omitted.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Belloc	Hilaire	8	1	1	0	0	0
de la Mare	Walter	76	1	1	1	0	0
Masefield	John	15	1	1	0	0	0
Noyes	Alfred	3	1	1	0	0	0

These poets would not have regarded themselves as exclusively children’s poets, but they have come to be associated with children’s poetry through the popular anthologisation for children of particular poems, such as Belloc’s cautionary tales, Walter de la Mare’s ‘The Listeners’, Masefield’s ‘Sea-fever’ and ‘Cargoes’, and Noyes’s ‘The Highwayman’, all included in anthologies used in series 1 for GCSE English literature, 1988-1993. These poets were not named in the

national curriculum name lists, a likely effect of the stipulation that pupils seeking to gain awards at the higher levels of attainment must only study literature written for an adult audience. A large proportion of pupils was never going to attain these higher levels⁵², but as the awarding bodies developed their anthologies these four poets gradually disappeared. The status of the poets declined immediately after series 1, with only one poem-iteration for each in series 2 and series 3, after which Belloc, Masefield and Noyes were excluded. Walter de la Mare continued with one poem-iteration in an anthology used in series 4, after which he too was omitted.

Finally, anonymous or traditional poems with no authorial attribution appear to lose status because of the national curriculum's attention to named poets in a high status literary canon, and perhaps also because of the focus in examination questions on explaining how an author conveyed themes through their choice of linguistic effects. This kind of question assumes a single known author with particular intentions. This pattern of gradual exclusion is shown in table 6.9 below.

Table 6.9: The gradual exclusion of Anonymous.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Anonymous		494	179	5	4	0	0

The patterns demonstrated in this section show that the exercise of statutory power was not as influential in determining which poets were included and excluded as might have been expected by the appearance of the poet name lists in statutory instruments related to the national curriculum. Curiously, the name lists appear to have exerted their greatest influence in the exclusion of poems by unnamed poets, those presented as anonymous or traditional poems.

Effects at the tension point

In this section I consider three effects that appear to lie at a point of tension between statutory power and professional agency. There would seem to be evidence of an awarding body resistance to national curriculum name lists, a more general imperviousness to the name lists and an effect that is a focusing by the awarding bodies of national curriculum criteria other than name lists, specifically in working out how to implement the requirement to include literature from other countries and cultures. Agency is thus a function of statutory power.

⁵² Indeed, for some of the period pupils could be entered either for Foundation tier examinations (for the award of GCSE grades C-G) or Higher tier examinations (for the award of grades A*-D).

Resistance to name lists

There are eight poets named in a number of series of the national curriculum who were not then selected by the awarding bodies: James Berry, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Lowell, Les Murray, Edmund Spenser, Rabindranath Tagore, Henry Vaughan and Walt Whitman, as shown in table 6.10 below. The pre-twentieth century poets are interesting here, given the greater concern of successive governments to ensure coverage of the traditional and historic canon.

Table 6.10: Eight poets named but not included.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Berry	James	16	25	0	0	0	0
Coleridge	Samuel T.	18	2	0	0	0	0
Lowell	Robert	8	1	0	0	0	0
Murray	Les	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spenser	Edmund	12	0	0	0	0	0
Tagore	Rabindranath	4	0	0	0	0	0
Vaughan	Henry	9	0	0	0	0	0
Whitman	Walt	14	0	2	3	0	0

Coleridge's work featured in the earlier anthologies but despite being named it was not featured in series 3, 4 or 5, nor in series 6 when the requirement for "representative Romantic poetry" was stipulated. Spenser and Vaughan had both lost their already marginal status in series 2 but this was not changed by being named in series 3, 4 and 5, and in series 6 the 1789 rule precluded them. Whitman's status in series 1 to series 4 was modest, and temporarily lost in series 2, but when named for series 5 he was dropped. Lowell and Tagore were likewise only named once and it made no difference to their already lost status. James Berry is a more curious case. He featured in series 1 and series 2 partly because he included substantial selections of his own poems in the pioneering anthologies he edited, but by series 3 other Caribbean-born poets were more popular with the awarding body anthologists and his status was lost. This was not revived by his naming in series 4 and series 5. The Australian poet Les Murray had never been included by the awarding bodies and no difference was made to this status by being named twice in the national curriculum lists. The rationales for these decisions are likely to be as varied as the poets themselves.

Imperviousness to name lists

There are 29 cases where a poet being named in the national curriculum appears to have made little difference to their inclusion or exclusion, as shown in table 6.11 below. All of these poets had a status before they were first named. When named, most continued to be included by awarding bodies for at least one series, and for 25 of the poets this inclusion continued after they

were dropped from the national curriculum name lists. The exceptions are Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare who could not be included in series 6 because of the 1789 rule, and the modern poets Peter Porter and Stevie Smith.

Table 6.11: 29 poets apparently impervious to the national curriculum.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Adcock	Fleur	10	0	2	1	1	1
Agard	John	8	6	1	1	3	3
Alvi	Moniza	0	0	2	2	0	1
Armitage	Simon	0	0	6	9	23	4
Blake	William	68	4	27	34	2	6
Browning	Robert	40	2	6	6	20	5
Browning	Elizabeth B	6	1	17	2	2	3
Chaucer	Geoffrey	16	3	2	1	1	0
Clarke	Gillian	79	3	20	11	21	3
Duffy	Carol Ann	2	1	15	17	22	5
Fanthorpe	UA	73	40	13	16	3	1
Hardy	Thomas	204	21	14	26	19	8
Harrison	Tony	0	0	6	7	2	1
Heaney	Seamus	157	6	28	22	19	4
Hughes	Ted	230	19	22	8	5	2
Jennings	Elizabeth	73	7	6	3	2	2
Kay	Jackie	0	0	0	4	1	1
Larkin	Philip	146	2	5	18	3	2
Lochhead	Liz	25	1	13	0	0	1
Muir	Edwin	55	1	2	2	1	0
Nichols	Grace	11	13	16	4	4	1
Owen	Wilfred	124	18	24	14	19	4
Porter	Peter	18	0	0	2	1	0
Rossetti	Christina	24	1	30	4	19	1
Sassoon	Siegfried	64	22	13	8	2	0
Shakespeare	William	97	1	8	6	21	0
Smith	Stevie	33	4	1	2	2	0
Tennyson	Alfred	56	5	19	5	2	2
Wordsworth	William	52	20	37	14	2	6

In a different but related pattern of imperviousness, Moniza Alvi and Liz Lochhead were not included by awarding bodies when named in the national curriculum, but were so in series 6 after poets were no longer named. This pattern, in which choices sometimes coincided with the name lists and sometimes did not, is suggestive of a less instrumental effect, the national curriculum providing support for choices that were perhaps already being made, if not in some cases following them.

Focusing national curriculum criteria

A final tension effect appears to have been the focusing by awarding bodies of the national curriculum requirement to include literature, including poetry, from other countries, cultures and traditions. Although some poets were named for this category, this naming was limited and who counted as “other cultures” and as “contemporary” shifted between series, as illustrated in chapter four. Although this naming had some effects, professional agency in de-selecting some poets from other countries and cultures is also evident. By series 4 the ten poets detailed in table 6.12 below had been excluded: the Nigerian-born poets Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Okara and Wole Soyinka; the Caribbean-born poets Merle Collins of Aruba, and Edward Lucie-Smith, Claude McKay and Mervyn Morris of Jamaica; the African-American poets Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes and Alice Walker; and the Indian poet Nissim Ezekiel.

Table 6.12: 11 poets excluded by professional focusing of “other cultures and traditions”.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Achebe	Chinua	1	0	1	2	0	0
Angelou	Maya	8	1	4	1	0	0
Collins	Merle	0	3	2	1	0	0
Ezekiel	Nissim	6	0	2	1	0	0
Hughes	Langston	11	1	1	0	0	0
Lucie-Smith	Edward	14	5	2	1	0	0
McKay	Claude	12	3	1	1	0	0
Morris	Mervyn	5	13	0	1	0	0
Okara	Gabriel	13	1	1	3	0	0
Soyinka	Wole	15	1	2	1	0	0
Walker	Alice	4	3	1	0	0	0

There appear to have been two de-selection principles at work here. First, we can see by comparison with the trajectories of poets who in 2018 have a high status in the GCSE corpus that two groups of poets have been particularly favoured – Caribbean heritage poets such as John Agard, Grace Nichols and Derek Walcott over the six series, and more recently, living Indian heritage poets such as Moniza Alvi, Imtiaz Dharker and Daljit Nagra. The first group would seem to be an earlier effect of the Swann report’s focus on the disadvantage faced in education by the British children of migrant Caribbean parents; the second group might be regarded as a reflection of patterns of continuing migration and demographic growth. However, there seems to be a second principle at work here, one by which “other cultures and traditions” is reconceptualised from a window on the world of poetry written beyond Britain, as imagined by Brian Cox, to a way of understanding dual-heritage identity in multicultural Britain. If this is

the case, the exclusion of the poets in table 6.12 has a certain logic, although white American poets have not been treated the same way⁵³.

The patterns demonstrated in this section show that although professional agency was under pressure to engage with statutory power in the form of the name lists, the awarding bodies often responded on their own terms. This is most evident in the way the awarding bodies shaped the requirement to include poets from other countries, cultures and traditions by shifting the perspective from a global outlook to a local perception of “relevance” in the selection of poets who have written about the experience of mixed-heritage identity in Britain. There are gains and losses in these decisions that have received little attention in professional debate.

The effects of professional agency

In this final section I consider four effects that seem more clearly to be the product of professional agency, in that the poets concerned were not named in the national curriculum at all. Against the grain of the narrative about professional subordination, the awarding bodies exercised considerable judgment, imagination and innovation in maintaining the status of established poets, remembering and recycling poets, introducing new poets and excluding others to make way for them. These effects help to show by contrast that the changes brought about by the national curriculum name lists were relatively limited.

Maintaining the status of established poets

A strong indication of professional agency is evident in the poets who were never named in a national curriculum list but are established favourites in or near the current core of the corpus. There are 22 such poets as shown in table 6.13 below. Given the common rhetorical positioning of professional agency as averse to pre-twentieth century poetry, it is interesting to note the maintenance in the selections of Ben Jonson, Walter Raleigh and John Scott, until the 1789 rule in series 6 precluded them. It is also interesting to note Charles Causley’s presence as he was another poet likely to be associated with writing for children (though like the other poets in that category, he only wrote some of his poems for this audience); that he was not excluded as a consequence of the national curriculum is perhaps testimony to the level of esteem with which this teacher-poet was regarded in the professional community.

⁵³ It may also be the case, based on anecdotal evidence, that Maya Angelou’s copyright fees were instrumental in excluding her.

Table 6.13: 22 established poets never named in the national curriculum.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Atwood	Margaret	4	3	1	0	1	0
Betjeman	John	107	12	5	2	1	0
Brooke	Rupert	14	4	2	1	1	1
Causley	Charles	151	6	3	2	1	1
Cole	M. Postgate	0	4	1	1	1	0
Cope	Wendy	10	3	0	1	15	2
cummings	e e	27	1	1	0	1	0
Davidson	John	2	0	1	0	1	1
Dharker	Imtiaz	0	0	1	2	2	3
Ferlinghetti	Lawrence	9	0	1	1	1	0
Gibson	Wilfrid W.	12	7	0	1	1	0
Graves	Robert	106	6	1	0	1	0
Jonson	Ben	28	0	1	2	1	0
Levertov	Denise	23	2	1	1	0	2
MacNeice	Louis	67	6	1	0	2	0
Mew	Charlotte	13	3	0	0	1	2
Patten	Brian	38	25	1	2	1	0
Raleigh	Walter	28	0	1	1	1	0
Satyamurti	Carole	0	0	0	1	1	1
Scannell	Vernon	58	8	8	5	3	1
Scott	John	2	1	0	1	1	0
Stallworthy	Jon	30	2	3	1	1	0

The poets Rupert Brooke, Margaret Postgate Cole, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson and Robert Graves have a heightened status in this selection of poets. Although specialist First World War anthologies were not named once awarding bodies began to produce their own anthologies, their legacy was extended in clusters of poems related to war or the more generic category “conflict”. In these clusters, First World War poets continued to be included alongside the named poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Denise Levertov might also belong in this war poetry subset as the poem that was included in awarding body anthologies was ‘What Were They Like’, a poem about the effects of the Vietnam war on the country’s people and culture. Through such loosely defined clusters of poems, unhindered by any topical specification for poetry in the national curriculum, it was possible to maintain many established poets.

Remembering and recycling poets

Another form in which professional agency was manifested was in the remembering and recycling of less established poets, also not named in the national curriculum name lists. 21 such poets are detailed in table 6.14 below. Their status is less secure than the poets in table 6.13, but

through their periodic inclusion they maintained a visibility that may have slightly increased their probability of appearing in future anthologies.

Table 6.14: 21 poets remembered and recycled by awarding bodies.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Afrika	Tatamkhulu	0	0	1	1	0	1
Behn	Aphra	3	0	0	0	1	0
Bhatt	Sujata	0	0	2	1	0	1
Bridges	Robert	8	0	2	0	1	0
Brontë	Anne	0	0	0	1	0	1
Carson	Ciaran	0	0	1	0	2	1
Clarke	John C.	0	0	3	0	0	1
Corbett	Pie	0	1	0	0	1	0
Davies	W.H.	15	0	0	0	1	0
Day-Lewis	Cecil	21	1	0	0	0	1
Enright	D.J.	38	0	1	0	1	0
Fenton	James	0	0	2	0	1	1
Gunn	Thom	60	2	0	0	0	1
King	William	0	0	1	0	1	0
Lowery	Martyn	2	0	1	0	1	0
MacCaig	Norman	92	0	0	0	1	0
Marlowe	Christopher	9	0	0	1	1	0
Millay	Edna St.V.	3	0	0	1	2	0
Phillips	Katherine	2	0	0	0	1	0
Pugh	Sheenagh	1	0	0	7	2	0
Walsh	Christina	0	0	2	0	1	0

As before, it is interesting to observe the pre-twentieth century poets the awarding bodies chose to include: Aphra Behn, Anne Brontë, William King, Christopher Marlowe, Katherine Phillips and Christina Walsh, four of these six being women poets distinctly lacking in the national curriculum name lists. There is a clear professional agency in redressing that imbalance, though all but Anne Brontë became inadmissible in series 6 by the 1789 rule.

Some of these poets had a long if intermittent trajectory in anthologies used for GCSE English literature: Aphra Behn, Robert Bridges, W.H. Davies, Cecil Day-Lewis, D.J. Enright, Thom Gunn, Martyn Lowery, Norman MacCaig, Christopher Marlowe, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Katherine Phillips and Sheena Pugh were all present in series 1, 1988-1993. In many cases the inclusion of these poets went against the grain of their more general decline in wider cultural contexts, in line with the epigraph at the head of this chapter in which Oliver Wendell Holmes is cited as noting that “When the school-children learn your verses they are good for another half

century.” Christopher Marlowe is perhaps the exception here, always included for his poem ‘The Passionate Shepherd to his Love’ which Anne Ferry identifies in her study as the poem with the longest and most consistently anthologised history (Ferry 2001:108). In this regard, school poetry anthologies might be seen to participate in a bigger history of anthology-making.

Introducing new poets

The introduction of new poets by awarding bodies is very dynamic and can be shown happening throughout the 30 year period. The 31 poets presented in table 6.15 are the most recent examples of this practice of offering new voices mostly from contemporary poetry.

Table 6.15: 31 poets introduced by awarding bodies.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Casey	Mary	0	0	0	0	1	1
Clanchy	Kate	0	0	0	0	0	1
De Kok	Ingrid	0	0	0	0	3	1
Dooley	Maura	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dove	Rita	0	0	0	0	0	1
Fell	Alison	0	0	0	0	1	0
Forster	Andrew	0	0	0	0	2	0
Garland	Beatrice	0	0	0	0	0	1
Grieg	Andrew	0	0	0	0	1	0
Hadfield	Jen	0	0	0	0	0	1
Haggith	Mandy	0	0	0	0	1	0
Hannah	Sophie	0	0	0	0	4	1
Hardi	Choman	0	0	0	0	5	0
Hayhoe	Mike	0	0	0	0	1	0
Jamie	Kathleen	0	0	0	0	1	0
Jones	Alice Gray	0	0	0	0	1	0
Khalvati	Mimi	0	0	0	0	1	0
Komunyakaa	Yusuf	0	0	0	0	0	1
MacMillan	Ian	0	0	0	0	1	0
Minhinnick	Robert	0	0	0	0	1	0
Molloy	Dorothy	0	0	0	0	1	0
Nagra	Daljit	0	0	0	0	3	1
Norton	Caroline	0	0	0	0	1	0
Olds	Sharon	0	0	0	0	0	1
Rae	Simon	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sheers	Owen	0	0	0	0	1	3
Sprackland	Jean	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sweeney	Matthew	0	0	0	1	1	0
Waterhouse	Andrew	0	0	0	0	0	1
Weir	Jane	0	0	0	0	1	2

Some of the poets represented in table 6.15 have been *Poetry Live*⁵⁴ favourites such as Daljit Nagra and Owen Sheers; others are newer poets with non-European cultural heritages such as Ingrid de Kok (South Africa), Choman Hardi (Iran) and Mimi Khalvati (Iran); there are also the esteemed contemporary American poets Yusuf Komunyakaa, Rita Dove and Sharon Olds. The variety suggests an active and ongoing evaluation of poetry by the awarding bodies.

Excluding poets

Professional agency also determined which poets to exclude. These decisions happened within the context of the national curriculum and its increased regulation, but were not mandated by it. They were inevitable in order to accommodate new poets in the shrinking ecology of the anthologies, and desirable in updating the corpus. By series 4 this filtering was complete, as evident in table 6.16 below: none of these 23 poets appeared in series 5 or 6. Many more poets than this were excluded: these are from the 199 poet sample.

Table 6.16: 23 poets excluded by awarding bodies.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Abse	Dannie	9	1	0	1	0	0
Brock	Edwin	22	2	2	2	0	0
Connor	Tony	45	2	1	1	0	0
Dehn	Paul	7	2	1	0	0	0
Dickinson	Patric	41	1	1	0	0	0
Henri	Adrian	8	29	2	1	0	0
Hesketh	Phoebe	14	1	1	1	0	0
Hobsbaum	Philip	10	2	1	0	0	0
Joseph	Jenny	4	1	1	1	0	0
Kipling	Rudyard	23	8	6	4	0	0
Kirkup	James	67	1	1	0	0	0
MacBeth	George	13	2	1	1	0	0
McGough	Roger	49	32	3	4	0	0
Meynell	Alice	2	2	0	1	0	0
Nicholson	Norman	76	3	1	3	0	0
Raine	Kathleen	7	4	1	0	0	0
Raine	Craig	1	1	1	1	0	0
Roethke	Theodore	24	2	0	1	0	0
Spender	Stephen	32	5	2	0	0	0
Stafford	William	23	1	2	1	0	0
Stevenson	Anne	17	2	1	0	0	0
Summers	Hal	6	1	1	0	0	0
Webb	Harri	0	2	1	1	0	0

⁵⁴ Poetry Live is an established annual series of live readings by poets in venues across the UK designed to support GCSE pupils in their study of poetry; it was founded more than 20 years ago by the late Simon Powell.

Some of the poets in this list were perhaps easier to exclude because their reputations were declining anyway in the wider cultural context: looking at the evidence of the Google n-gram viewer⁵⁵, we can see the general reputational demise of Edwin Brock since 1972, Tony Connor since 1972, Paul Dehn since 1976, Patric Dickinson since 1972, Phoebe Hesketh following twin peaks in 1957 and 1975, James Kirkup following twin peaks at 1955 and 1970, George MacBeth since 1975, Alice Meynell since 1950, Norman Nicholson since 1951, Craig Raine since 1988, Kathleen Raine since 1959, Stephen Spender since 1975 and Hal Summers since 1950. For similar reasons Dannie Abse and Harri Webb may have been replaced by more contemporary Welsh poets, Theodore Roethke and William Stafford by more contemporary American poets. It is less easy to be clear about the likely motivation for excluding the remaining poets: Philip Hobsbaum's reputation as a critic ensures he has a rising trajectory in Google n-gram terms though perhaps as a poet his fortunes were declining as awarding body choices were being made; Kipling might have been a controversial choice for twenty-first century curriculum purposes because of his association with the values of the British Empire; perhaps Jenny Joseph and Anne Stevenson made way for more contemporary women poets. Though they all remain available to be remembered and recycled, for now they are the poets of curriculum past.

The exclusion of poets as a matter of professional agency also occurred in a more specific way through the shifting of topical focus, most evident in the data for poets associated with war poetry. As already noted, some war poets were maintained in clusters of war poems with a topical focus on war after the topically specific anthologies were no longer specified, but other war poets were also excluded by this narrowing. In series 4 to 6, these clusters included a traditional topical focus on "The 1914-1918 War" and "War" and a more diffuse focus on "Conflict" (three iterations of this by different awarding bodies) and "Power and conflict". This shift allowed for the inclusion of poets writing about a range of wars as well as a range of different types of social conflict, with the consequence that some of the older war poets were excluded. This is illustrated by the poets in table 6.17. These poets are mostly associated with the First World War but also include Henry Newbolt writing on military topics before the First World War, and Henry Reed and Alan Ross writing about the Second World War. Edith Nesbit is a slightly more complex case as only half of her poems in the GCSE corpus were topically related to the First World War, but this will nonetheless have contributed to her demise.

⁵⁵ The Google n-gram viewer provides a method for searching for a lexical string, such as a poet's name, in all the texts in Google Books. It is used here as a quick and approximate method for measuring a poet's reputation over time, at a particular moment. I am well aware of its methodological limitations.

Table 6.17: 13 poets excluded by topical shift.

Last Name	First Name	Series 1 1988-1993	Series 2 1994-1997	Series 3 1998-2003	Series 4 2004-2011	Series 5 2012-2016	Series 6 2017-
Binyon	Laurence	10	2	1	0	0	0
Brittain	Vera	0	3	1	1	0	0
Grenfell	Julian	1	2	1	1	0	0
Herbert	A.P.	4	4	1	0	0	0
Nesbit	Edith	0	2	2	3	0	0
Newbolt	Henry	2	1	1	1	0	0
Nichols	Robert	6	5	1	1	0	0
Pope	Jessie	0	5	1	2	0	0
Reed	Henry	19	3	2	1	0	0
Rosenberg	Isaac	18	5	5	2	0	0
Ross	Alan	49	4	2	0	0	0
Sorley	C.H.	4	4	0	1	0	0
Tynan	Katherine	0	3	2	1	0	0
West	Arthur G	1	2	1	1	0	0

As topics or themes in poetry were never specified in the national curriculum, only the names of poets, the awarding bodies had a high degree of flexibility in determining which poets and poems might constitute their clusters. This makes their topical exclusions appear relatively marked.

The large number of poets documented in the tables in this section give an indication of the extent to which professional agency was exercised, though in the matter of the exclusion of poets after series 1, there were many, many others. This agency was always exercised in a context of increasing statutory pressure but the choices demonstrate a degree of creative autonomy that is less visible in the other major patterns I have discussed.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented meticulous evidence of the profiles of 199 poets in anthologies used for GCSE English assessment purposes, as these have been shaped in response to the national curriculum for English over 30 years. This provides an original, historical and data-driven perspective on the content of a very particular part of the English curriculum. Every line of data is an epistemological commitment to the idea that there is a more objective reality to be described than exists in the political rhetoric and contested professional debate about which poets best serve the educational interests of young people, the pedagogical expertise of teachers and the political goals of state education. I am under no illusion that data is actually objective, and my attribution of each line to a motivational principle can only be a first step in understanding what happened without further detailed research and corroboration in qualitative

modes. However, by documenting in microscopic detail which of the 1,489 poets appeared when, there is now an empirical base for considering what happened when and why in the tension between (quite limited) statutory power and (quite considerable) professional agency.

This empirical base necessarily attends to the curriculum as it existed from 1988 to 2018. It does not attend to what might have been had successive governments not insisted on poet name lists. John Guillory's perspective is illuminating here. In the epigraph used at the head of this chapter, he argued that a canon that is essentially "a narrative of reputations" can "explain nothing", even if it is expanded to include more diverse authors. Such an approach maintains the idea of a "Tradition" of great authors, rather than showing the literary, linguistic and generic shifts that brought particular writers into prominence and maintained their reputations over time. The data presented in this chapter lays a foundation for a case study in support of Guillory's argument. I have shown here how successive governments reasserted the idea of a 'Tradition' on a super-diverse landscape of poetry for the GCSE English literature curriculum, and how through Brian Cox's initial insistence on "literature from other countries and cultures" and the awarding body introduction of new poets, that Tradition was diversified. The process by which this diversity was 'naturalised' is not evident in the poet data, but deep familiarity with the corpus means I have observed how poem choices narrowed to an idea of the 'relevance' of mixed heritage British identities, and the range of forms and the representation of non-standard varieties of English and other languages were restricted. This evidence would show how the idea of a 'Tradition' was so powerful that it was able to absorb new poets "without altering the impression of totality or cultural homogeneity" (Guillory 1994: 33). Such a case study might help to inform new curriculum development for English literature away from the paradoxically intense glare of an almost obsolete national curriculum.

In the next chapter I address the third component of the corpus of poetry named for GCSE English literature, the poems. This component was where professional agency had the most scope to determine what was made available to schools, and it therefore offers an opportunity to consider how the English teaching profession maintained its own traditions in poetry.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

7. A tacit definition of ‘adolescent poetry’: the super-salient poems

In this chapter I examine the poems in the corpus of poetry named for GCSE English literature. The question *Which poems constituted this corpus of poetry?* is answered in a straightforward way: 6,903 poems are documented in the research database. It is possible but not entirely satisfactory to contemplate in any detail the nature or significance of 6,903 poems: the scale is too large and they are too diverse. To address the question *Which were the most salient?* I therefore developed the quantitative methods of chapter 6 to apply to individual poems and identified a manageable set of 27 super-salient poems. This is a larger set of poems than might conventionally be treated with ‘close reading’ methods but in order to generalise about the kinds of educational valuing that might operate in poem selections made for GCSE English literature I needed a more substantial sample. Moving between quantitative data about 6,903 poems and the textual detail of 27 super-salient poems, this chapter exemplifies ‘scalable reading’ in order to answer the question *What do the super-salient poems have to tell us about curriculum and pedagogic valuing?* Extending Catherine Robson’s case study of ‘Casabianca’ (Robson 2012:91-122) I show how rightful intergenerational relations and blasted male bodies have continued to dominate poem choices in school, as have a gothic sensibility rooted in Wordsworth’s influential conception of adolescence (Joy 2010). The formal and stylistic properties of the super-salient poems construct another line of continuity with ‘Casabianca’ and other Victorian schoolroom verse. As poem choices were never subject to national curriculum stipulation, the super-salient poems represent a freer exercise of professional agency. I argue that this agency is deeply conservative, in the sustainable environmental sense of a long professional stewardship of the subject history of English and its pedagogical practices. Identification and analysis of the super-salient poems has made it possible to articulate the tacit definition of an ‘adolescent poetry’ that this stewardship has crafted.

Poem C: 'Casabianca' by Felicia Hemans

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm -
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though child-like form.

The flames rolled on - he would not go
Without his Father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud: - 'say, Father, say
If yet my task is done?'
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

'Speak, father!' once again he cried,
'If I may yet be gone!'
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And looked from that lone post of death
In still yet brave despair;

And shouted but once more aloud,
'My father! must I stay?'
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder-sound -
The boy - oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!-

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part -
But the noblest thing which perished there
Was that young faithful heart.

Illustration of Giaconte Casabianca from children's magazine Look and Learn issue 760, 7 August 1976 removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is Look and Learn.

Figure 7.1: Illustration of Giaconte Casabianca from children's magazine Look and Learn issue 760, 7 August 1976.

A ghost poem haunts this thesis. ‘Casabianca’ by the nineteenth century poet, Felicia Hemans, memorializes the death of a real 12 year-old boy, Giocante Casabianca, who served with his father in the French navy’s battle against the British in the Battle of the Nile on 1 August 1798. Their ship was attacked by Nelson’s forces, caught fire and exploded, causing the deaths of Giocante and his father, and 900 other crew members. Against the grain of British military jingoism, Felicia Hemans took this historical event and crafted a poem centred on the boy’s terrified filial obedience and the blasting of his body into the Mediterranean. As Catherine Robson has observed we might well be wary “of placing this combustible piece anywhere close to delicate young minds” (Robson 2012:98). Yet, as Robson has detailed in her case study of the poem, it was a staple of the Victorian school poetry recitation canon that has lived long in the collective British cultural memory, “first standing over its own century, and then haunting the next, with a doggedness rarely matched by other literary works” (Robson 2012:93).

Made to memorise and recite it at the grammar school he hated, my father both knew the poem and did not know it. In a specific incident in my childhood when I had expressed an enthusiasm for poetry, he and my grandmother gave an impromptu mocking recitation of the opening lines, “The boy stood on the burning deck/Whence all but he had fled”. Unable to go on, the poem merely “shreds and tatters” 150 years after it was published (Robson 2012:94), my father spat “Poetry? What a waste of bloody time!” The poem haunted him as a symbol of the meaninglessness of his education, and it has haunted me as a measure of the distance between a father and a 12 year-old daughter whose filial obedience fell far short of Casabianca’s, not least in the matter of wanting to hear the rest of the poem.

Robson makes a compelling case for this refusal of ‘Casabianca’ to be buried “in the dark and backward abyss of time” (Robson 2012:93) and in this chapter I will extend her case study to show how the ghost of this poem has haunted the poetry selections made for GCSE English literature assessment purposes in the 30 years to 2018. The poem itself has not featured but the super-salient poems attend nonetheless to a similar concern with the relationship between generations and the tragedy of doomed youth; they share a similar gothic tenor and demonstrate an allegiance to simpler stanzaic forms and a greater regularity of rhymes and rhythmic patterns (Robson 2012:94). Although the Victorian pedagogical practice of poetry recitation and its associated canon were largely eschewed by the English teaching profession long ago, I will show how ‘Casabianca’ continues to trace its thematic, tonal and formal patterns in the curriculum.

Identifying the super-salient poems

There are 6,903 poems in the research database that underpins the work of this thesis, but they are not all equally valued. Some have appeared fleetingly or are new introductions, others are mainstays; some are by poets whose wider oeuvre is represented in the corpus, some by poets who have only one poem here. The quantitative method described in this section is a way of evaluating the relative status of each poem in the corpus.

The first measure of status is the number of iterations each poem has in each GCSE series. As explained in chapter 6, a poem-iteration is the number of times the poem was iterated in a GCSE series through its appearance in different anthologies and different awarding body specifications. It is the poem's maximum exposure in the curriculum at a point in time. By this method, for example, Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' has 27 poem-iterations, distributed across the six series of GCSE English literature as shown below in table 7.1.

Table 7.1: The profile of poem-iterations over six series of GCSE English literature for 'Dulce et Decorum Est'.

Poet	Title	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
Owen	Dulce Et Decorum Est	11	4	6	3	2	1	27

Key to the GCSE English literature series codes used in the data tables in this chapter:

S1	Series 1, 1988-1993
S2	Series 2, 1994-1997
S3	Series 3, 1998-2003
S4	Series 4, 2004-2011
S5	Series 5, 2012-2016
S6	Series 6, 2017-

By calculating the total number of iterations of each poem, I was able to produce a rank order of poems in the GCSE corpus but this proved a crude measure. It favoured poems which appeared in the earlier series when the number of anthologies available for GCSE selection was greater. I also wanted to allow for the well documented idea that anthologists tend to follow anthologists (Ferry 2001, Mole 2017), such that a poem that appears in series 5 is more likely to appear in series 6, and therefore has a higher status at that point, than either a poem that has not yet appeared in a GCSE anthology or a poem that appeared in series 1 and not since. This approach allowed poems that were introduced later and quickly achieved a salient status to be compared with poems that have longer "trajectories of reception" (Mole 2017:191).

The methodological solution was to introduce a weighted factor, my second measure of status. I assigned a simple numerical value to each series: a poem only appearing in series 1 has a value of one, in series 2 a value of two, and so on up to series 6 and a value of six. These values were totalled to create a weighted factor. Thus, ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ appearing in all six series has a weighted factor of $1+2+3+4+5+6=21$. Likewise, a poem appearing in series 2, 4 and 5 would have a weighted factor of $2+4+5=11$. By multiplying the number of poem-iterations by the weighted factor, a better numerical representation of each poem’s status in GCSE English literature was achieved. This quantitative method is demonstrated in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2: The profile of poem-iterations over six series for 2 illustrative poems, ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ and ‘Lessons of the War’.

Poet	Title	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Poem-Iterations	Weight	Total
Owen	Dulce Et Decorum Est	11	4	6	3	2	1	27	21	567
Reed	Lessons of the War	19	3	2	1	0	0	25	10	250

Although Owen’s ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ and Reed’s ‘Lessons of the War’ have been iterated a similar number of times, when their weighted factors were applied the totals were very different, with Reed’s poem having half the value of Owen’s poem. This better reflects the fact that ‘Lessons of the War’ has not been selected since series 4. This pattern is obvious when looking at two lines of data, but when looking at 6,903 such lines, the quantitative method is necessary for seeing the patterns at scale.

This calculation improved the representation of poem status in the corpus but it still did not adequately account for differences in the data profiles of each poem. Table 7.3 below illustrates this by showing five poems in numerical order of their weighted totals.

Table 7.3: Five poems in numerical sequence after weighted factors applied.

Poet	Title	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Poem-Iterations	Weight	Total
Tennyson	The Charge of the Light Brigade	2	2	3	2	2	2	13	21	273
Heaney	Digging	11	1	2	3	1	0	18	15	270
Hughes	Wind	11	1	3	1	1	0	17	15	255
Reed	Lessons of the War	19	3	2	1	0	0	25	10	250
Wordsworth	The Prelude: ‘Boat Stealing’	1	2	3	1	1	3	11	21	231

These five poems have sequential scores but their status profiles are quite different. Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and William Wordsworth's 'Boat Stealing' excerpt from *The Prelude* have lower poem-iteration counts but they appear in every series. They are therefore more salient at present than Henry Reed's 'Lessons of the War' which was the most salient poem overall in series 1 but has not featured since series 4 ended in 2011. Heaney's 'Digging' and Hughes's 'Wind' have very similar profiles as corpus stalwarts but as they do not feature in the current series, they are less immediately salient than either 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' with its slightly higher weighted score or Wordsworth's 'Boat Stealing' excerpt with its slightly lower weighted score. So, the weighted scores were helpful but they still did not adequately account for longevity and change. The solution was to attend to scores and profile patterns.

So, to determine the super-salient poems in the GCSE English literature corpus I applied the weighted factor and placed the 6,903 poems in rank order by total score. I then examined the profile patterns to select the poems that have been included five or six times in the six series, including series 6. To allow for more recent poems emerging into the corpus, the super-salient set also includes poems that have appeared four times consecutively in the most recent four series. The 27 super-salient poems derived by this method are shown in rank order of weighted total in table 7.4 below. I then turn to analysis of these poems.

Table 7.4: 27 super-salient poems shown in rank order of total weighted scores.

Poet	Title	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Poem-Iterations	Weight	Total
Owen	Dulce Et Decorum Est	11	4	6	3	2	1	27	21	567
Owen	Anthem For Doomed Youth	12	4	5	1	1	1	24	21	504
Heaney	Follower	13	1	3	4	2	1	24	21	504
Owen	Exposure	9	2	3	2	2	2	20	21	420
Hughes	Hawk Roosting	13	0	2	1	2	1	19	19	361
Heaney	Death Of A Naturalist	9	1	1	3	1	1	16	21	336
Jennings	One Flesh	11	1	1	1	1	1	16	21	336
Blake	London	4	0	4	4	2	3	17	19	323
Wordsworth	Composed Upon Westminster Bridge	4	1	5	3	1	1	15	21	315
Browning	My Last Duchess	4	1	2	2	4	2	15	21	315
Tennyson	The Charge Of The Light Brigade	2	2	3	2	2	2	13	21	273
Wordsworth	The Prelude: Boat Stealing	1	2	3	1	1	3	11	21	231
Wordsworth	The Prelude: Skating at Night	3	3	3	2	0	1	12	16	192
Larkin	Afternoons	5	0	1	1	1	1	9	19	171
Browning	Porphyria's Lover	2	0	2	2	2	1	9	19	171
Browning	How do I love thee? Let me count the ways	0	0	3	2	2	2	9	18	162
Blake	A Poison Tree	3	1	2	2	0	2	10	16	160
Brooke	The Soldier	5	1	1	0	1	1	9	17	153
Harrison	Long Distance	0	0	3	3	1	1	8	18	144
Douglas	Vergissmeinnicht	4	2	1	1	0	1	9	16	144
Plath	You're	4	1	1	1	0	1	8	16	128
Duffy	Valentine	0	0	2	1	2	2	7	18	126
Duffy	War Photographer	0	0	4	1	1	1	7	18	126
Clarke	Catrin	1	0	1	1	2	1	6	19	114
Scannell	Nettles	1	0	1	1	2	1	6	19	114
Duffy	Before You Were Mine	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	18	72
Agard	Half-Caste	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	18	72

The relationship between generations

“Speak, father!” once again he cried

The first thematic trace of ‘Casabianca’ in the super-salient GCSE poems is found in their exploration of the relationship between generations. The poem is often regarded as the apogee of Victorian notions of filial obedience, Hemans representing in noble and heroic terms the boy’s steadfast commitment to remaining on a burning ship’s deck until given permission to move. However, if as Robson argues, Victorian classroom practices of mechanistic recitation reduced subtle variations within the poem’s meter to an “unthinking jog-trot” (Robson 2012:115-117), perhaps we might also consider whether the poem has more to say about intergenerational order than the “unquestioning fidelity to the father’s word” (Robson 2012:94) remembered by Spike Milligan and parodied as ‘Casabazonka’:

*The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled –
The twit!*

A closer focus on the boy’s direct speech in the poem presents a more nuanced perspective. The first time he speaks, with flames rolling around him and his father unconscious below deck, he pleads:

*“Say, Father, say
If yet my task is done?”*

There is a childish quality to the voice, as if keeping his position on the deck were more a matter of completing a domestic chore before being allowed out to play. His second utterance, not fathoming why his father has not replied, is a request to move:

*“Speak, Father!” once again he cried,
“If I may yet be gone!
And” -*

He is cut short by “booming shots”, making his utterance more poignant and dramatic and prefiguring what is about to happen to him. His voice is again childish, speaking in conventionally polite terms as if he were asking to get down from the dinner table, though the shift from “Say, Father” to the more imperative “Speak, Father” suggests the emergence of a more critical awareness. In the final utterance, the word “Father” loses its capitalisation, an orthographic demotion from god-like status to mortal man as the boy more openly challenges the purpose of his duty in the face of imminent death:

*And shouted but once more aloud,
“My father! Must I stay?”*

The poem thus enacts a kind of transition from childhood, not yet into adulthood but into an emerging adolescent state of awareness of the limitations of adult authority, and a more assertive questioning of the right of an older generation to determine the fortunes of the younger one.

A more direct questioning of parental authority is explored in Gillian Clarke’s poem ‘Catrin’, voiced from the point of a view of a mother confronted by her daughter’s request to stay out skating “In the dark, for one more hour”. The child’s “defiant glare” is more assertive than the “brave despair” of the boy on the burning deck, as is consistent with more than a century’s shift in how our society views childhood and children’s rights. The request generates a complex emotional response, the child “Trailing love and conflict” as the parent and child continue the “struggle to become/Separate” that has always defined their relationship. This is a struggle between generations located in a common domestic situation. In John Agard’s ‘Half-Caste’ the setting of the poem’s struggle is public, located in an unspecified encounter with everyday racism in the form of pernicious name-calling. The “Half-Caste” speaker asserts his value in a deft and witty deconstruction of the idea that a person with a mixed black/white heritage has less integrity than a white person. Agard enacts in the poem’s voice a resistance to the dominant public discourse in which this kind of assumption is made by rejecting Standard English in favour of a vibrant Caribbean vernacular with a high level of youth affect⁵⁶. These two poems have contemporary settings with an immediate resonance for adolescents, but the super-salient poems more commonly present generational contestation in historic situations. In three further poems, the conflict within and between nations provides a context for articulating challenges to the authority of an older generation in determining the destruction of a younger one.

The challenge to an older generation’s authority in Wilfred Owen’s ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ focuses on social transmission of “The old lie” that it is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country. The speaker bitterly contests this received wisdom by bearing witness to the grotesque reality of a man’s death by mustard gas and his own terrified, haunted dreams. As a soldier, the speaker is evidently an adult but he is situated in the poem between an older generation promulgating a fantasy of military heroism and the generation of “children” who listen, “ardent for some desperate glory”. Defiance borders on rage in William Blake’s ‘London’, which similarly puts the speaker in a between-space to comment on both “the new-born Infant’s tear” and the

⁵⁶ John Agard’s energetic performance of ‘Half-Caste’ at Poetry Live events and in YouTube videos supported its rapidly developed status as a super-salient poem.

“mind-forg’d manacles” of adults trapped by the established authority of “Church” and “Palace”. This between-space privileges him with a view of the symbol of devastation that troubles him most, the “youthful Harlot’s curse” which “Blasts” and “blights” any natural order of re-generation. The only hope would seem to lie in those able to access the between-space of the poem themselves in order to bring about change. In Tennyson’s ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’, the dramatic excitement of the poem’s charging rhythms, flashing sabres and the naming of the dead combatants as heroes might diminish the effects of the challenge to authority, but it is nonetheless a situation where “Someone had blundered” and “All the world wondered”. By enacting the thrill of the charge in tightly rhymed and very memorable lines, Tennyson invited the reader to admire the unthinking duty and obedience of these soldiers and to feel keenly the pathos of their slaughter:

*Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do or die.*

After ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ it is difficult for modern readers to interpret Tennyson’s poem in a way that preserves the celebration of sacrifice it shares with ‘Casabianca’. In the contemporary GCSE English literature classroom, all three poems are as likely to be read as a valorisation of the necessity of a new generation to think and act for itself.

Another trace between ‘Casabianca’ and the super-salient GCSE poems is a haunting sense of parental absence. In ‘Casabianca’ the parental absence is caused by the death below deck of the boy’s father, an event that occurs off-stage in the poem with our attention focused on the boy’s escalating sense of horror at his abandonment. The boy moves from childish ignorance “He knew not” of his father’s whereabouts, unconscious and “faint in death”, to a suspended state of grief as he looks out “In still, yet brave despair”, and then he is overwhelmed by the situation, the “wreathing fires” of his abandoned state making their way “o’er him fast”. Casabianca is then blown to the winds and his struggle with the ghostly presence of his father is over. Not so in the super-salient GCSE poems: ghost-parents haunt their children but in learning to live with their loss the children become adults.

There are super-salient poems in which the haunting sense of parental absence enacts a moment in which the speakers recognise that they have become the adults now. Heaney’s ‘Follower’ presents a child’s eye view of his father ploughing a field, the boy “tripping, falling,/Yapping always” behind the strong, quiet, expert presence of the man. 22 of the poem’s 24 lines present a vision of a loving and stable child-adult equilibrium until “But today” suddenly disrupts it in the

22nd line, followed by a terse final pair of lines in which everything is reversed, the speaker now the adult to the father's ghost stumbling and trailing behind:

*It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.*

In the suspended state of the first 22 lines of the poem it was still possible for the speaker to view himself as a child; the arrival of the ghost-parent reverses their roles and signals the full acquisition of adulthood. There is a similar haunting in Tony Harrison's poem 'Long Distance II'. In the first 14 lines of the poem, the speaker recounts his father's state of denial after his mother's death: keeping her slippers warm, renewing her transport pass, and holding onto a belief that she has just gone to the shops. Then, three lines before the end "just the same" disrupts the equilibrium, followed by the speaker's revelation that his father has died and he is in the same state of self-protective delusion:

*in my new black leather phone book there's your name
and the disconnected number I still call.*

The speaker is both "disconnected" from their intergenerational tussling – "He couldn't risk my blight of disbelief" – and haunted by the irony of his own act of self-protective delusion in the face of its loss.

The landscape of Carol Ann Duffy's 'Before You Were Mine' is a long way from Casabianca's "lone post" of despair, its 1950s setting redolent of the mid-century rise of the idea of a fun-loving and rebellious teenager as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Nonetheless, the two poems trace a path from one kind of contested parental authority to another as young people begin to exercise their agency. The poem's speaker is looking at an image of her mother as an adolescent in the decade before her mother became her parent. We are drawn into the scene of her mother and her friends laughing on a street corner with all the unconstrained joy of youth as the wind blows their dresses round their legs, reminiscent of the apparently carefree movie star "Marilyn" (Monroe). The speaker points us to the adolescent excitement about the possibilities of adulthood that seem to lie ahead of these young people:

*in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows
the right walk home could bring.*

She observes the conflict this causes with an older generation troubled by the risk of these "tomorrows", and notes the adolescent figure's cool evaluation:

*Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close
With a hiding for the late one. You reckon it's worth it.*

The speaker admires her mother's spirit, but 'Before You Were Mine' is also another ghost-poem, the speaker shifting focus from the image of her mother to a memory of playing with her mother's red shoes and into the "now" of a haunted present:

*your ghost clatters toward me over George Square
till I see you, clear as scent, under the tree*

These ghosts haunt the poems with the inevitability of life's generation and regeneration. Though the parents live on in Elizabeth Jennings's poem 'One Flesh', sleeping side by side but in separate beds, the conclusion is bleaker. The sexual "fire" of youth has "grown cold" in a life of adult, parental responsibility, leaving them "Tossed up like flotsam from a former passion" and subject to their child's pity. Bleaker yet is Philip Larkin's vision of the same death-in-life that the end of youth entails. Watching a group of young mothers "assemble/At swing and sandpit" with their children, the speaker observes how they are no longer at the adolescent ego-centre of their own lives and that, Larkin positions us to think, is to be pitied and mourned:

*Their beauty has thickened.
Something is pushing them
To the side of their own lives.*

The "hungry generations" have as little mercy as Nelson's booming cannons and we can no more escape them than Casabianca can get off the burning deck.

The poems discussed in this section would seem to offer young people a potential for exploring a potent theme in their journey to adulthood. This potential relates to the between-space they are in, able to look back to childhood and forward to adulthood, between the possibilities of challenge and change and the inevitability of generation and regeneration. Where younger people figure in these poems, there is a tenderness and respect towards them, a quality considered essential by the pupil respondents in Stephen Miles's study of poem choices for young people: "It was neither the form nor the content that ultimately mattered to them, but the intent: what really mattered was that the poet respect them as children" (Miles 2010:31). In this regard, there is another unexpected connection with 'Casabianca': although the boy on the burning deck is tragically blown to pieces, the poem's focus is relentlessly child-centred, in that we see nothing else, and the final line leaves us in no doubt about the value of "that young faithful heart". The super-salient poems discussed in this section understand that value and the specialness of the

transition from youth to adulthood. This sense of specialness is amplified by the gothic tenor that provides another connecting trace between ‘Casabianca’ and the super-salient poems.

A gothic tenor

In still, yet brave despair

In ‘Casabianca’, the vivid image of a desolate ship on fire out at sea immediately establishes a gothic setting in which the boy, isolated and in a state of captive terror, faces a violent death. As the “booming shots” and “wreathing fires” rush towards him, we share in that moment of terror but we also thrill to the “splendour wild” and the streaming flames of the ship on fire. The thunderous sound of the cannon exploding the boy’s body intoxicates the reader with a melodramatic mix of horror and pleasure and pity, as we follow the speaker’s question “The boy – oh! Where was he?” to its terrible conclusion:

*Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!*

It is macabre and morbid in a way that the poem’s sentimental coda about the nobility of the boy’s fidelity does not quite succeed in assuaging. We are enjoying the horror too much for that.

For Hemans to have written a poem with a gothic sensibility is not surprising. When the poem was published in 1826, gothic fiction was waning in popularity with critics but it continued to have a widespread popular appeal and the gothic was a genre in which the Romantic poets had excelled, including the poem frequently anthologised for children and young people ever since, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s sailor story, ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’. Neither is it surprising to find so many poems with a gothic sensibility in the most selected poems for GCSE English literature. Gothic fiction is a mainstay of contemporary publishing for the ‘Young Adult’ market where it has the status of being especially conducive to adolescent explorations of what is real and unreal, where the boundaries are between the individual and society, strong emotion, sex and death. In the super-salient GCSE poems this gothic sensibility is manifest in a terror of the unknown, an intertwining of sex and death, and the dark side of power.

A gothic terror of the unknown is the central focus of two poems: William Wordsworth’s ‘Boat Stealing’, a widely anthologised excerpt from Book I of *The Prelude*⁵⁷, and Seamus Heaney’s ‘Death of a Naturalist’. Both poems situate in adolescence a moment when the speaker realises, with horror, that there is more to the world than their previous childish conception

⁵⁷ Selected by all four awarding bodies in either the 1805 or 1850 versions in series 6 of GCSE English literature, examined from 2017 onwards.

encompassed. In 'Boat Stealing' a boy illicitly takes a boat and enjoys the thrill of autonomy and his own physical prowess until suddenly, a "huge peak, black and huge" hoves into view from behind the "craggy ridge" he had thought was the limit of the horizon. This sudden shift in perspective terrifies him: the boundary of his world is not where he thought it was, the dark presence seems to move towards him, and he rapidly turns his boat and heads back to the relative safety of the shore. He is left for many days afterwards in a withdrawn and depressed state, not yet able to assimilate his experience into a new understanding:

*after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion.*

This is a compassionate understanding of the shock of adolescence and how the darkness of adult reality can overtake the joy of life as the young person comes to terms with ideas that move "slowly through the mind" and disturb dreams (Joy 2010). Adolescence is intensely felt, disorienting and troubling.

In Heaney's 'Death of a Naturalist' the same conclusion is reached by a more domestic encounter with nature. The speaker describes the childhood pleasure of gathering frogspawn and watching it hatch into tadpoles. Where Wordsworth's poem gave us a silent, moonlit, mountainous setting already tending to the sublime, Heaney's poem opens with a festering flax-dam, vivid and sensuous with natural life - weaving "bluebottles", "dragonflies" and "spotted butterflies". The sense of the innocent pleasure that is lost at the moment of adolescent epiphany is heightened by the description of the child's teacher describing the cycle of life as a matter of "the daddy frog" and "the mammy frog". The poem turns simply and suddenly in its second stanza with "Then one hot day" when the young speaker sees a mass of adult frogs at the flax-dam. They emit a "coarse croaking" that he "had not heard/Before", making the air uncomfortably "thick" with their mature "bass chorus". The innocent "dots" he had observed as tadpoles before are now "gross bellied frogs", "slime kings", with "loose necks" that repulse him as much as the threatening sounds of their "slap and plop" movements or their "blunt heads farting" in stillness. The adolescent is confronted with coarse eruptions of bodily change and adult sexuality that he finds terrifying: he "sickened, turned, and ran", leaving us in the final two lines with an inexplicable vision of "vengeance" and a distinctly gothic imagining that if he put

his hand into the flax-dam again, “the spawn would clutch it”. There is a physical revulsion of the body here to complement Wordsworth’s troubled dreams.

This conception of adolescence is illuminated by Louise Joy in her discussion of William Wordsworth’s 36 “Poems founded on the Affections”, which appear after “Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood” in the loosely chronological sequencing that constitutes the 1815 edition of his complete short works (Joy 2010). In these poems, as in many of the most salient poems in the GCSE corpus, adolescence is “a process of mourning, a process of withdrawal, broodiness, and isolation, in which we adjust to adult reality whilst also attempting to salvage the comforts of our childish outlook on the world” (Joy 2010:61). The intensity of these moments of adjustment and re-orientation, and the fragility of the individual undergoing them, is well articulated by the gothic terror of these super-salient poems.

Murderous sexuality is the second strand in the gothic sensibility of these poems. This is the central focus of the two poems by Robert Browning, ‘My Last Duchess’⁵⁸ and ‘Porphyria’s Lover’. Both poems feature women as classic gothic figures: young, beautiful, of high-ranking birth, sensitive and pure. Both poems are dramatic monologues in which the male speaker explains, as if it were entirely rational, his intense jealousy of the woman’s sexual attractiveness to other men and his murderous possessiveness. In an entertaining gothic fashion, we temporarily enter the mind of a murderer and enjoy the suspense of the slow revelations, even as we shudder at the irrational, senseless acts. It takes us to line 46 of the 56 line ‘My Last Duchess’ to realise the full implications of the opening line “That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall”, when the Duke invites us to look again at the portrait of his dead wife “There she stands/As if alive”, before he turns briskly to the matter of his next potential wife, deepening the sense of horror as we are invited to imagine the serial murder of classic gothic fiction. The revelation is more explicit in ‘Porphyria’s Lover’. Porphyria arrives at the speaker’s cottage on a bleak night of “wind and rain”, having detached herself from a “gay feast” in society from which he is excluded. He recognises that Porphyria must truly love him to have done this, his repetitive language betraying his intense possessiveness and a gothic obsession with female purity: “That moment she was mine, mine, fair,/Perfectly pure and good.” Then Browning delivers the revelation in the speaker’s simple statement “I found/A thing to do” followed by his simple solution:

⁵⁸ In the fifth series of GCSE, 2012-2016 ‘My Last Duchess’ was selected by all four awarding bodies.

*and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her.*

The descent into madness is rapid as we are invited to hear the murderer's loving description of their evening together after this moment: his gentle opening of her eyelids to check if she is dead, her beautiful blue eyes and blushing cheek, and the cosy intimacy of her head resting on his shoulder. We know this is the corpse of a murdered woman; the poem thrills and revolts us at the same time in classic gothic fashion. In both poems, the action is presented by the speakers as an entirely rational response to female behaviour while at the same time revealing a deep unfathomable irrationality in the male psyche, capable of acts of extreme violence that go far beyond the boundaries of society's conventions⁵⁹.

The third dimension of gothic sensibility is a more specific concern with power as a dark and destructive force. Ted Hughes defended his poem 'Hawk Roosting' as an observation of Nature, "what I had in mind was that in this hawk Nature was thinking. Simply Nature", and not as an observation in symbolic terms of human nature, the subject read as "some horrible genocidal traitor"⁶⁰. It is however difficult to read the poem on Hughes's terms in the light of the dark gothic strain of the super-salient GCSE poems and its tendency to appear in the GCSE anthologies juxtaposed with other poems about human conflict, as in *Moon On the Tides* where it is last in a sequence that begins with John Agard's anti-nationalist poem 'Flag' and is immediately preceded by e.e.cummings's equally acerbic critique 'next to of course god America i'. Reading the poem in this kind of context invites us to consider the hawk as man's base element, brutal "My manners are tearing off heads", egocentric "I kill where I please because it is all mine" and uncomplicated by human illusions "no falsifying dream" or social reasoning "There is no sophistry in my body". The bird is a perfect realisation of form and nature, "It took the whole of Creation/To produce my foot, my each feather", rehearsing in its sleep what it must do, "perfect kills and eat". It is thrilling in its dark purity of purpose and its ability to act powerfully beyond the bounds of reason and social convention, like so many gothic heroes.

William Blake's 'Poison Tree' attends directly to human nature and the powerful destructiveness of anger. The poem's simple opening lines present us with a moral problem and its solution "I was angry with my friend;/I told my wrath, my wrath did end", establishing a context for

⁵⁹ In terms of what educators choose to present to delicate developing minds, I see Robson's cannon blasted boy and raise her two cold-blooded acts of gender-hating murder.

⁶⁰ This widely-quoted comment is from a 1971 interview with Ted Hughes; I have yet to trace its precise source.

thinking this might be a conventionally didactic children's poem. The next lines "I was angry with my foe:/I told it not, my wrath did grow" extend an invitation to consider where this cautionary tale might go before its likely conclusion in moral instruction. The poem is more darkly interesting than that: the speaker actively cultivates his anger into a shining symbol of temptation, "an apple bright", and gleefully watches as his "foe" takes it under cover of darkness and is killed by it:

*In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.*

Like the Browning poems, this act of violent rage is explained simply and as if it were entirely rational, the opening of the poem providing a frame for evaluating its departure from ordinary morality and social convention. We are provided with no explanation of the cause of the anger; it thus seems closer to 'Hawk Roosting' in its "Experience"⁶¹ of the dark side of human nature and its self-justification of power in simplistic, natural and amoral terms. Both poems are awe inspiring in a gothic sense, their actors thrillingly free to act on their powerful impulses and the symbolic consequences of their conception of the natural order of things deeply troubling.

In these six poems, there is an empathy for the dark and disturbing moods, experiences and changing bodies of older teenage pupils, though the extent to which such dark questioning is universally 'adolescent' might well be questioned. These poems are leavened to some extent by more uplifting voices in the super-salient poems. There is a quiet aesthetic pleasure in the suspended energy and beauty of London at dawn in William Wordsworth's 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802'. There is a playful, riddling delight in the prospect of an unborn child in Sylvia Plath's 'You're', an exalted joy in energy and movement in William Wordsworth's 'Skating at Night' excerpt from *The Prelude*, and the exuberant counting of "the ways" love is made manifest for the speaker of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 43rd poem in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways?' These four poems are quite unlike 'Casabianca' and unlike the other 23 super-salient GCSE poems, offering some relief from an otherwise relentless focus on conflict, terror and death. In the next section, however, I return to the morbid and the macabre, in considering 'Casabianca's' largely rhetorical question "the boy – oh where was he?" and the way the super-salient GCSE poems keep replicating tragic visions of doomed youth.

⁶¹ 'Poison Tree' appears in the "Experience" section of Blake's collection, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

The tragedy of doomed youth

The boy – oh! where was he?

The doomed youth in ‘Casabianca’ is a boy blasted by “the booming shots” of naval cannon into “fragments” that “strewed the sea”. Though the “young faithful heart” of the final line is clearly a synecdoche suited to the final moral coda, its close proximity to the boy’s other “fragments” close the poem on a slightly gorier, queasier note than was perhaps either intended by Hemans or noted by Victorian child reciters hastening towards the poem’s conclusion. The boy’s fragmented body is utterly gone - “The boy – oh where was he?” - such that there is nothing left for the reader to attach pity or horror to, leaving little scope for response other than the “lachrymose sentimentalism” (Robson 2012:94) of the poem’s moral abstraction. The super-salient poems of GCSE are not without their own strain of sentimentalism, but they also bear unflinching witness to blasted male bodies with a “tactile thickness” (Das, n.d.) that allows for emotional responses to the grotesque tragedy of these young men’s deaths. In this way, the poems seem to insist on their distance from ‘Casabianca’ even as they take forward an image of noble sacrifice, position poetry in the curriculum as “Christ by other means” and extend its “stock of works” that are “habitually...marked with the stamp of death” (Robson 2012:88-89).

The pre-eminent poem in the GCSE “stock of works” that represents the sacrificed male body is Wilfred Owen’s ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’. The speaker describes a column of exhausted men marching away from the front line, until the acoustic memory of “the hoots/Of gas-shells dropping softly behind” jolts him, and us as readers, into a dramatic and vivid memory of a mustard gas attack. In this, one man fails to secure his gas mask, “yelling out and stumbling/And flound’ring” as the gas takes his life in a most vile way. With the speaker, we bear witness “through the misty panes and thick green light” of a gas mask to the man’s “white eyes”, “hanging face”, and “vile, incurable sores”, and we too watch “the blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs”. In the speaker’s dreams, and in our classrooms, the man “plunges” towards us, “guttering, choking, drowning”. There is a double sacrifice here: the idealistic political sacrifice of young men to “the old Lie”, but also the messy sacrifice of this particular soldier by his fellow soldiers who in their “ecstasy of fumbling” to fit their own gas masks do not manage to help an innocent “someone” who so haunts the speaker after it is too late to do so.

The “stamp of death” is also graphically realised in Keith Douglas’s Second World War poem ‘Vergissmeinnicht’. In this, the speaker returns with other soldiers to a site where they fought a battle three weeks previously. They find the corpse of a German soldier and are “almost content” with the way his “hard and good” equipment mocks his rapidly decomposing corpse.

We are not spared any “tactile thickness” in the description of this body, forced as we are to witness it as if through the weeping eyes of “Steffi”, the girlfriend whose picture is found in the “gunpit spoil” with the note imploring him not to forget her, “Vergissmeinnicht”:

*But she would weep to see today
How on his skin the smart flies move;
The dust upon his paper eye
And the burst stomach like a cave.*

We are pulled back from this grotesque scene to reconsider the dead soldier as more than a dead enemy, a man who is both “lover and killer” mingled in “one body and one heart”. As in ‘Casabianca’, though we might appreciate this withdrawal to more considered moral reflection, it remains difficult to ‘un-see’ the blasted, corrupted figure. The poem ensures, like ‘Casabianca’, that we forget him not.

There are more young deaths alluded to in Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘War Photographer’. Like Owen’s gas victim seen through a misty gas mask pane and Douglas’s corpse seen through a girls’ misty eyes, we see the dead bodies of “Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh” opaquely as they slowly appear on a roll of camera film being developed by the photographer in a darkroom, back in England where fields do not:

*explode beneath the feet
of running children in a nightmare beat.*

As the images emerge in the chemical trays, the photographer recalls “a half-formed ghost”, “the cries/of this man’s wife”, “the blood stained into foreign dust”, not one terrible death but “A hundred agonies”. Owen’s speaker is racked by horrific nightmares, Duffy’s speaker’s hands tremble; in both cases the speakers are trying to make people at home care though in Duffy’s media saturated landscape the “reader’s eyeballs” will respond briefly but only superficially “between the bath and pre-lunch beers” however horrific the images of blasted bodies.

Accompanying this visceral detailing of dead bodies in the GCSE super-salient poems is a secular memorialisation of dead soldiers that serves to heighten the tragedy of the young lives lost. Killed “as cattle” in the “monstrous anger” of the battlefield the soldiers in Owen’s sonnet ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’ are denied proper rites and farewells in “passing-bells”, “orisons”, “prayers”, “choirs”, “candles”, coffin covers and “flowers”. Instead, the speaker tells us they will be sped on their way to whatever lies hereafter by the promise of the next generation, found in the “holy glimmers” of boys’ eyes and the innocent “pallor of girls’ brows”, and in the “tenderness of patient minds” who remember them “each slow dusk”. Second only in ranking to

Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est', the selection and reselection of this poem in school poetry anthologies for GCSE keeps re-enacting the industrial scale slaughter of this generation of "doomed youth" and the terrible pathos of the inadequate substitutes for what was lost. Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' puts this secular memorialisation into a more nationalistic context, the young male speaker imagining his dead body, buried in a "foreign field", as a piece of England itself, and a piece of a god-like presence too, "A pulse in the eternal mind". This poem enacts a search for meaning in a meaningless death too soon and far from home, over-reaching into a sentimental fantasy-England of laughter, peace, sunshine, rivers and roaming byways. The young speaker's vision is beautiful and desperate in ways that make a ghostly link to the boy sailor Casabianca who also dies too soon and far away.

Casabianca is exposed on the burning deck "Whence all but he had fled". He is unprotected by his father, the crew or the ship, forced by circumstances not in his control to endure what comes at him; likewise the speaker of Wilfred Owen's third super-salient GCSE poem, 'Exposure'. Whereas the inevitable blasting of the body happens quickly in 'Casabianca', in Owen's poem "nothing happens" as soldiers required to hold an open position in icy weather either succumb to the figurative death of boredom or freeze to death. There is again a "thick" visceral quality to the description of the effects of the cold on mind and body. The night frost is described "Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp". The final image of the poem is of dead men with their eyes frozen open, mirrored by the frozen senses of the burying party that arrives to take care of the corpses "All their eyes are ice". As in 'Casabianca', an older generation fails to protect young people from extreme danger and the exposure kills them.

Three of these six poems are by Wilfred Owen, four of them by poets of the First World War whose education is very likely to have included poetry recitation; it is not improbable to think they may have recited 'Casabianca' at school. The threads between the poems themselves are unsurprising in this context and Duffy's poem reminds us of the continuing 'relevance' of the theme in its listing of some later twentieth century recent wars. During the course of this research, however, teachers more commonly accounted for this strand of the super-salient poems⁶² as material more likely to engage boys with poetry. It is curious that this engagement should be encouraged by poems that memorialise the tragic and violent deaths of young men.

⁶² In opportunistic conversations via Twitter and in various professional workshops and conference presentations.

Familiar simplicity: form, style and storytelling

'Casabianca' is written in a traditional ballad form comprising a series of quatrains, with alternating iambic lines in tetrameter (four beat) and trimeter (three beat) that are marked by full rhyme. It 'sounds' like a poem, whether read with attention to its rhythmic nuances or regularised in a "jog-trot" recitation. This ballad form has a simplicity that might have been considered especially amenable to Victorian elementary school reciters, as well as a wider cultural value as a form amenable to storytelling. In the super-salient poems, there is a similar tendency towards traditional form, stylistic simplicity and a storytelling mode. Although pupils sitting GCSE English literature examinations are older than pupils who would have recited 'Casabianca', the same context of mass education creates a need for material that is accessible to pupils across the full range of aptitude, interest and attainment. In this there is a long-standing pragmatism in the stewardship of poetry for the English curriculum.

Most of the super-salient GCSE poems are rhymed and regular stanzaic forms are used in 19 of the 27 poems. Of these 19 poems, four are sonnets: Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', Wordsworth's 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge', Barrett Browning's 'How Do I Love Thee?' and Brookes's 'The Soldier'. Three of the 19 poems have different five line forms, the disguised ABABB English quintain of Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover', Owen's innovative half rhymed AABBC quintains in 'Exposure', and Duffy's rhythmically looser, unrhymed five line form in 'When You Were Mine'. Two poems are formed of sestets, an ABABAA pattern of full and half rhyme in Jennings's 'One Flesh', and an xAAxBB pattern of full rhyme in Duffy's 'War Photographer'. Larkin's 'Afternoons' is formed of three unrhymed eight line stanzas; Plath's 'You're' is formed of two unrhymed nine line stanzas. Eight of the 19 poems are formed of different kinds of quatrain. Four use traditional tetrametric lines, with interlaced full rhymes in Blake's 'London', interlaced variable full and half rhymes in Heaney's 'Follower' and Douglas's 'Vergissmeinnicht', and rhyming couplets in Blake's 'A Poison Tree'. Harrison's 'Long Distance II' is fully rhymed in iambic pentameter. Hughes's 'Hawk Roosting' uses an unrhymed, metrically variable quatrain form. Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and Scannell's 'Nettles' are formed of disguised quatrains in interlaced full rhyme. Of the remaining eight poems half have a traditional non-stanzaic form: the blank verse of Seamus Heaney's 'Death of a Naturalist' and William Wordsworth's 'Boat Stealing' and 'Skating at Night' excerpts from *The Prelude*, and Robert Browning's dramatic monologue 'My Last Duchess'. Of the other half, Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' has an innovative irregular stanzaic form that predates the innovation of free verse forms adopted in Duffy's 'Valentine', Clarke's 'Catrin' and Agard's 'Half-caste'. This high level of regularity within traditional verse forms would seem to suggest a tacit theorisation

of a 'teachable' poetry by contrast with a poetry of more complex variation. It also offers an embodied pleasure in rhythm and rhyme that expert teachers of poetry recognise (Pullinger and Whitley 2013) even if GCSE 'teaching to the test' more commonly ignores this pleasure.

A tendency to stylistic simplicity is evident in the diction and figurative language of the super-salient poems. 'One Flesh', for example, is mostly monosyllabic representing a concrete domestic landscape of beds, books and lights or familiar abstractions of "passion", "confession" and "destination". 'Afternoons' has a similarly mundane lexical landscape of swings and sandpits, "washing" and "television". 'Porphyria's Lover' has its challenges in the archaic verb form "oped" and infrequent words like "dissever" but otherwise it is domestic and familiar with its "wind" and "rain", "gloves" and "hat", "white shoulder" and "yellow hair". Another feature of this stylistic simplicity is the relative opacity, or 'teachability', of the figurative language used. Similes are straightforward: exhausted soldiers are bent over "like old beggars under sacks in 'Dulce et Decorum Est', the frogspawn in 'Death of a Naturalist' grows 'like clotted water', London wears the morning's beauty "like a garment" in 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge', the 'Vergissmeinnicht' corpse's stomach is "like a cave", Duffy's war photographer stands in the red glow of his darkroom safety light "as though this were a church and he/a priest preparing to intone a Mass". Metaphors are fun riddles in Duffy's 'Valentine' and Plath's 'You're', or marked barbs in Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles" and Scannell's "fierce parade". There are simple, easily recognised examples of personification, the wind in 'Exposure' characterised by its "nonchalance", the barrel of the dead German soldier's gun "frowning" in 'Vergissmeinnicht'. This is not to say the poems are without difficulty for 14-16 year-old pupils, but this is more commonly a matter of syntax that is different to everyday speech, or references whose significance is opaque to younger twenty-first century readers, such as the Christian funeral rites alluded to in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'. Otherwise, the relative simplicity not only makes the poems accessible to the wide range of pupils taking GCSE English literature examinations, but also affords a kind of precision to examination mark schemes that must serve the national curriculum requirement of assessing the ability of pupils to analyse features of linguistically oriented literary technique.

The third aspect of relative simplicity is the frequency with which familiar narrative techniques are deployed in the super-salient GCSE poems. There are opening lines that establish a traditional temporal narrative mode: the first stanza of 'Death of a Naturalist' begins "All year", its second begins "Then one hot day"; the 'Boat Stealing' excerpt from *The Prelude* begins "One summer evening" and the 'Skating at Night' excerpt begins "In the frosty season"; Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' begins "The rain set early in to-night". There are moments of re-lived

dramatic action: “Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!” in ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’, “I struck and struck again” in ‘Boat Stealing’, “Plunged in the battery-smoke/Right through the line they broke” in ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’, and “then I took my billhook, honed the blade/And went outside and slashed in fury with it” in ‘Nettles’. There are revelations that provide distinctive denouements to the poems’ narratives: the shocking half line “And strangled her” in ‘Porphyria’s Lover’, the creepy “As if alive” in ‘My Last Duchess’, the sudden close-up to “These two who are my father and my mother” of ‘One Flesh’. These are not the long narrative poems that were once popular in school poetry anthologies but their selection succeeds in maintaining the narrative orientation of ‘Casabianca’, likewise a short lyric poem.

The characteristics of familiar simplicity that are evident in ‘Casabianca’ and the super-salient poems for GCSE English literature also tend to be found in the kinds of poems selected in national ‘favourite poem’ polls. One teacher told me that ‘Follower’, in common with other examples of super-salient poems, “sounds like a poem”. So, although classroom recitation of poems like ‘Casabianca’ has been replaced by close reading and semantic analysis, an idea of the importance of sound and the prospect of an accessible oral sharing of a poem would seem to have been maintained in the formal properties of poems selected for GCSE English literature.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have traced lines of connection between poem choices made at the start of mass education and now, as manifested in the super-salient poems of GCSE English literature. This continuity is constituted of an attention to the relationship between generations and the tragedy of doomed youth, a gothic tenor and a familiar simplicity. This analysis was initially surprising because schooling and society have changed so much over 150 years, and in the period of this study a political discourse of continuous dissatisfaction with state education generally and the English curriculum specifically means that constant change has been the norm for curriculum development for English schools. It might be considered a little retrograde to offer young people a range of poems whose dominant themes, tones and forms seem determined by Victorian values, rather than embracing the variety and diversity of poetry in the twenty-first century or new critical perspectives on historic poetry that might lead to different choices. This offer might be attributed to the effect of the pre-20th century name-lists of the national curriculum, but my method of evaluating poem status over all six series of GCSE shows that these choices belong to a longer professional tradition. It is also the case that these 27 poems are not all of the poems selected by the awarding bodies and they are the product of data aggregation, not an individual set of poems a pupil might encounter. However, as the most

salient poems across a 30 year period, they offer a unique perspective on the deeper principles of pedagogical valuing that underpin the choices made at any particular moment or by any particular awarding body.

The evidence of this chapter is that the professional agency by which these values are operationalised in poem choices is part of a long, historical stewardship of school English poetry which understands young people, retains a fondness for traditional forms of poetry and is pragmatic about what can realistically be achieved in the context of mass education. This evidence offers a different perspective on curriculum change in English, one in which a resilient professional integrity can be observed. The evidence here also supports the idea that in maintaining this long stewardship of school English poetry, English teachers and their professional agencies have defined an 'adolescent poetry' that is distinct from children's poetry and the adult poetry from which it has mostly been drawn.

In the next chapter I present a more theoretical perspective on the corpus of poetry named for GCSE English literature. The data and the quantitative method developed during this study made it possible to model canon formation happening in real-time over the 30 year period.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

8. Observing canon formation: a real-time case study

Having presented detailed analysis of the components of the GCSE English literature corpus in the previous three chapters - the anthologies, poets and poems – I now turn to consider the original overarching research question, *What is the nature of the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018?* On the basis of evidence presented in this chapter, the answer is that the poetry selected for GCSE English literature in this period constitutes a distinctive pedagogical canon which shifts and shrinks over time. Although this canon exists in relation to other canons, it is distinctive because it has been contested, shaped and scaled by the twin imperatives of statutory regulation and English teaching professional agency. It is possible to see its unfolding diachronic nature because I aggregated the data from 220 GCSE English literature specifications into the six series, each series providing a synchronic ‘snapshot’ of the poetry available at a specific time in the 30 year period. Each ‘snapshot’ had a sharper focus than the previous one because the decrease in the number of anthologies, and the shrinking number of poems and poets made available each time required tougher decisions about inclusion and exclusion.

The nature of this poetry selection has been further focused by the method of this chapter which is theoretically guided by John Guillory’s argument that “the latter-day curriculum is the archaeological evidence of its own sedimented history”. Thinking about the six series of GCSE English literature as sedimentary layers in a process of canon formation, I re-analysed the 1,489 poet profiles developed by quantitative method for chapter 6. This analysis identified six categories of poet profile: a current core of poets⁶³, established favourites, challengers, new traces, an old core, and old traces. From these categories I developed an original model to show the nature of the GCSE English literature canon in 2018 and the “archaeological evidence” of its formation. In this chapter I use this model as the basis for discussing in detail the nature of the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018, and for proposing some observations about canon formation that it gave rise to.

⁶³ As already discussed in chapter 6.

There is no question now, nor has there ever been, of the inevitability of curricular change: the latter-day curriculum is the archaeological evidence of its own sedimented history.

John Guillory, 1993

...the history of anthologies participates in the history of poetry and in the history of criticism, re-enacting or representing their shifts in direction; sometimes, in some measure, shaping them.

Anne Ferry, 2001

Literary anthologies, whether designed for use as textbooks or for the general reader, are an especially important mechanism of canon formation as they present a selection of literary texts to a wide audience and thereby contribute to those readers' understanding of literary history.

Natalie M. Houston, 2002

The fact that readers typically encountered anthologies early and in educational settings gave these books a disproportionate power to shape canons, construct publics, and form reading habits that extended to other books.

Tom Mole, 2017

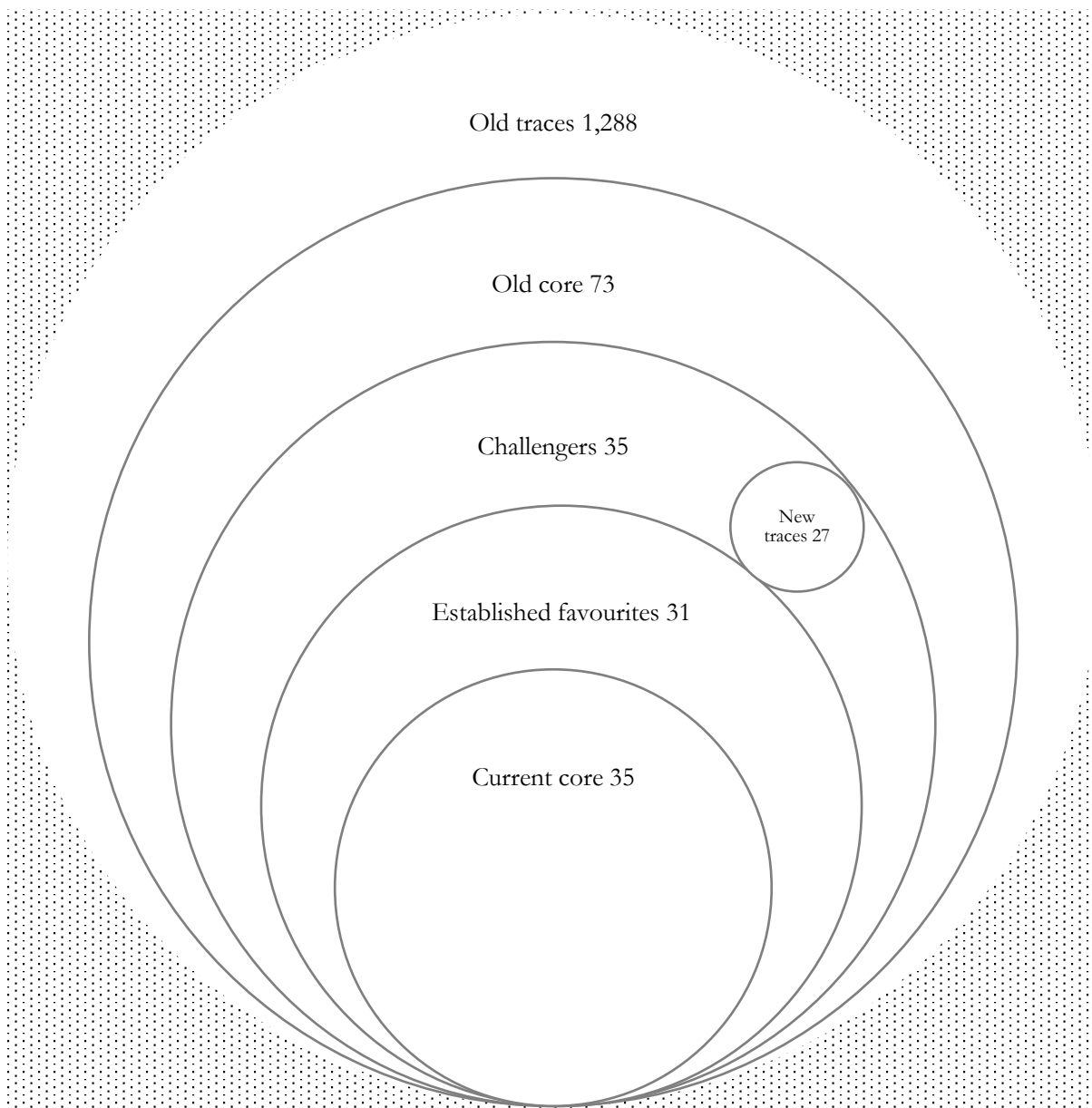


Figure 8.1: An archaeological model of the diachronic pedagogical canon for GCSE English Literature.

Much literary critical attention has been invested in attempts to agree a definition of 'the' literary canon, as John Guillory has shown in his 80-page critique of the 'canon wars' of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Guillory 1993:3-82). This particularly intense period of debate focused on issues of contested literary history and on how to achieve an appropriate representation of social and pedagogical dynamics in literary curricula. Mostly this was a debate in higher education English literature, especially in the USA, but some of the terms of this debate can be seen in the social history of poetry choices for GCSE English literature documented in this thesis. A similar questioning of what counts as literary value is evident in the very diverse range of anthologies, poets and poems available in 1988. A similar defence of the idea of an English literary tradition representing a particular cultural heritage was asserted by the government's statutory imposition of poet name lists, given a particular higher education legitimisation by the appointment of John Marenbon, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, to the National Curriculum Council under David Paskall. At the same time, similar work to expand the canon of texts and authors happened through the successful innovation of Professor Brian Cox's 'literature from other countries and cultures' category, and in the awarding bodies' later work to increase the representation of female poets. In the latest iteration of GCSE English this ongoing contestation of 'the canon' can be seen in the statutory requirement to teach "representative Romantic poets" and the awarding bodies' introduction of female Romantic poets never previously included in anthologies for GCSE English literature.

This dynamic illustrates a relationship between the processes by which poetry was selected for GCSE English literature and wider debate about 'the canon', but as I have shown, that selection was differently determined by the twin imperatives of statutory regulation and professional agency. Early political debate about GCSE English literature was concerned with ideas about 'shared cultural heritage' and the restoration to dominance of a traditional literary canon, over the 30 year period this argument was superseded by concern with the validity of GCSE assessment in the context of international comparisons of educational attainment. In this different dynamic, the priority for the selection of GCSE English literature texts was the construction of a perception of suitable rigour. The Department for Education led by Michael Gove took this idea to its logical extreme: by valuing terminal closed book examination and 'unseen' poetry questions as the highest standards of rigour, the selections of poetry for GCSE English literature have become the "irreducible minimum" (Dale 1994:255) for that purpose. The introduction of young people to poetry in the English literary canon is restricted to only that published after 1789 and by the licensed availability of just 119 poems by 73 poets in 4 hybrid anthologies. Professional agency continues to assert its own longer historical tradition of valued

texts and authors but in GCSE English literature it is doing so on a narrowing canvas of possibility.

Nonetheless, this study is concerned with the longer view of GCSE English literature and the impact that the national curriculum had on poetry selections over its duration from 1988 to 2018. I follow Guillory's argument that the question of which authors are included or excluded from a canon misunderstands the nature of power as it is invested in the dominant social group's definition of cultural capital. In this Guillory follows Pierre Bourdieu's argument that cultural "distinction" is achieved and replicated by social mechanisms predicated on dynamics of power that are so normalised that they appear invisible, even 'natural' (Bourdieu 1977, 1984). As such "selections of texts historically have the appearance of having selected themselves", and the alert critic and educator needs to see "what lies plainly before us: a process of unnatural selection, a social history" (Guillory 1993:62). The consequences of this process, Guillory claims, is that the "latter-day curriculum is the archaeological evidence of its own sedimented history" (Guillory 1993:51). In this chapter I exemplify this claim with the "archaeological evidence" of the changing poet profiles of GCSE English literature.

The "sedimented history" of choices presented here is a case study of canon formation happening in real-time over 30 years. My approach shifts the perspective from debate about 'the canon' to the idea that there are multiple canons that co-exist in different types of relation with each other, in line with Natalie Houston's synthesis of different typologies of literary canons (Houston 2002:361-2, following Fowler 1979:98 and Harris 1991:112-13). Figure 8.2 below offers a visualisation of this perspective of multiple co-existing canons. All the oral and written literature that has ever existed appears as a river (labelled 1), a visual metaphor for the fast-moving flow of literary texts constituting this potential canon as new texts are written and old ones recovered and revalued. The accessible canon of texts is visualised as a slower pool within this flow (2), within which different selective canons appear as metaphorical rocks of sedimented literary content (3-6). The darker colouring of the diachronic canon (7) suggests a greater density of sediment, formed of textual accretions over time from the critical and the pedagogical canons. It is a partial visualisation: in practice, there are many pedagogical canons, many critical canons and as many personal canons as there are people. There is also a significant type of canon missing from this schema: the popular canon of works with currency in people's memories (Whitley and Pullinger 2017:16-25), in popular culture such as film (Whitley 2019) and in popular public discourse as I shall exemplify in this chapter by reference to two BBC polls of "Nation's Favourite" poets and poems.

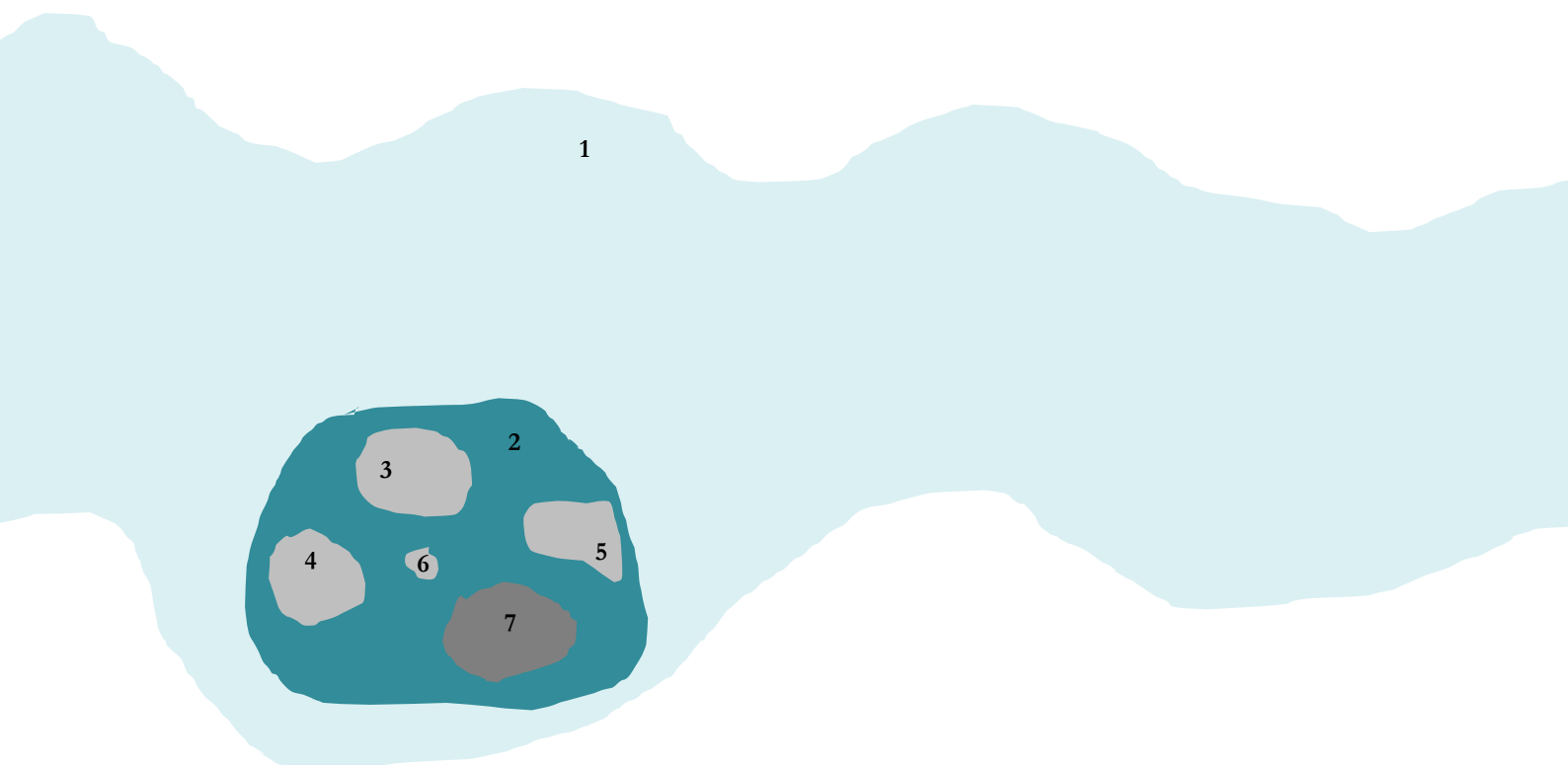


Figure 8.2: *The major types of literary canons, after Houston (2002:361-2).*

Key

The potential canon of all works of written and oral literature (theoretical).	1	
The accessible canon of those works readers could actually come into contact with.	2	
Selective canons narrowed according to particular criteria.	3	Official canons produced by mechanisms of patronage, education or censorship.
	4	Critical canons evidenced in trends in literary scholarship.
	5	Pedagogical canons of specific works that are frequently taught.
	6	Personal canons of any individual reader's tastes and knowledge
	7	A diachronic canon of works that remain in critical or teaching canons over long periods of time.

By adopting the perspective of multiple canons, I have been able to understand the significance of the work of this thesis as the identification of a particular pedagogical canon of poetry, that selected for GCSE English literature from 1988 to 2018. In this chapter I set out the nature of that canon, shaped by its past instantiations and current choices, and I make some observations about particular processes of canon formation that would appear to be at work. In this way, it offers insights into GCSE English literature curriculum development over time, as well as a case study to further illuminate more theoretical discussions of canon formation.

Tracking and visualising poet status over time

In chapter 6 of this thesis, I described the quantitative method by which I generated 1,489 poet profiles for comparison with the name lists of the national curriculum; in chapter 7, I described a development of this method that allowed me to generate a weighted rank order of the 6,903 poems. By examining both rank order position and the pattern of poem-iterations over six series, I was able to identify poem profiles associated with a super-salient status within the corpus. In the analysis of this chapter, I combined these methods. First, database queries established the number of poem-iterations in each series for each poet; then I adjusted this with the same weighted factor technique to produce a total value. As previously, the weighted scores were helpful but they still did not adequately account for longevity and change, so again I attended to the profile patterns created by the numerical data rather than crude scores.

This analysis determined six poet profile patterns:

1. a **current core** of poets in the diachronic pedagogical canon;
2. **established favourites** who are outside the central core at the moment;
3. **challengers** who look set to become established favourites over longer duration;
4. **new traces**, poets who have been included for the first time and may become challengers over longer duration;
5. an **old core** of poets who over time lost a previously high status;
6. **old traces**, poets who once were new traces or challengers but did not become more established.

The relationship between these six sets of poets is modelled in figure 8.1 at the start of this chapter as a set of six nested rings, five of which share an arc. The nested rings show something of the temporal nature of the formation of the canon. The inner ring represents the current central core of the canon; the next four concentric rings indicate sets of poets with decreasing temporal proximity to the central core; the new traces ring sits within the challengers' ring as this is the trajectory if the status of poets in this category is sustained over time. The shared arc is a point of contact between sets that represents a poet's potential for movement from one set to another in a different series. For example, after the first two series Thom Gunn was no longer selected and had become an old trace, but in series 6 he was re-selected and as a result moved into the challengers set.

The ring that represents challengers could exchange its place with the ring that represents established favourites, but in the current curriculum valuing of heritage over innovation, the

sequence presented here is more probable. The use of the word ‘core’ to describe both the current core and the old core is deliberate, to represent the idea that these categories are conceptually related but separated by time. There is a similar relationship between the new traces and old traces, the new traces of the latest series having the potential to become old traces over time if they lose their current status. The model accounts for all 1,489 poets in the research database though I will only represent a sample of the 1,288 old traces here as this is sufficient to demonstrate the pattern.

Current core (n=35)

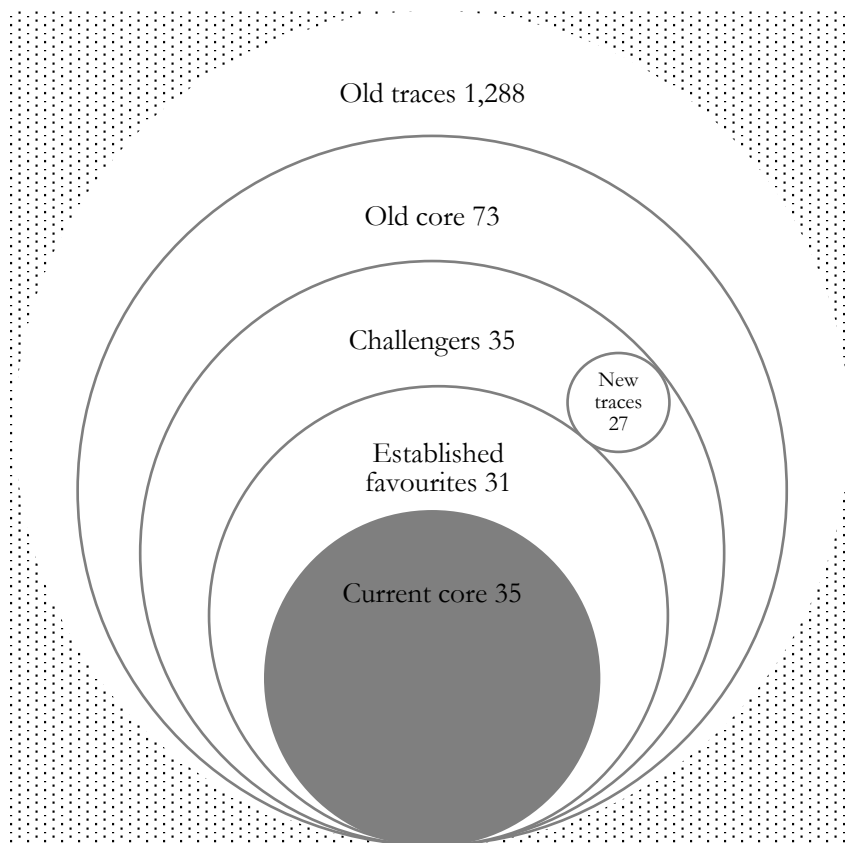


Figure 8.3: The current core of the GCSE English literature canon.

The first set of poets is the current central core of the canon, the 35 poets listed in table 8.1 below. These are poets who have been included all six times in the six series, indicated by a dark blue marker in the table, or five of the six times including the current series 6, indicated by a mid blue marker. To allow for younger poets emerging into the canon, this category also includes poets who have appeared four times consecutively in the most recent four series such as Simon Armitage and Imtiaz Dharker, indicated by a light blue marker in the table. It is the same list of poets as discussed at the start of chapter 6, but the data is enhanced here with the weighted factor calculation.

Table 8.1: 35 poets of the current central core category of the GCSE English Literature canon.

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-Iterations	Total
	Hardy	Thomas	204	21	14	26	19	8	21	292	6132
	Hughes	Ted	230	19	22	8	5	2	21	286	6006
	Heaney	Seamus	157	6	28	22	19	4	21	236	4956
	Owen	Wilfred	124	18	24	14	19	4	21	203	4263
	Larkin	Philip	146	2	5	18	3	2	21	176	3696
	Causley	Charles	151	6	3	2	1	1	21	164	3444
	Fanthorpe	UA	73	40	13	16	3	1	21	146	3066
	Blake	William	68	4	27	34	2	6	21	141	2961
	Clarke	Gillian	79	3	20	11	21	3	21	137	2877
	Frost	Robert	121	13	28	9	0	1	16	172	2752
	Wordsworth	William	52	20	37	14	2	6	21	131	2751
	Thomas	Edward	121	4	9	1	0	2	16	137	2192
	Jennings	Elizabeth	73	7	6	3	2	2	21	93	1953
	Tennyson	Alfred	56	5	19	5	2	2	21	89	1869
	Plath	Sylvia	78	9	15	7	0	2	16	111	1776
	Scannell	Vernon	58	8	8	5	3	1	21	83	1743
	Browning	Robert	40	2	6	6	20	5	21	79	1659
	Rossetti	Christina	24	1	30	4	19	1	21	79	1659
	Hopkins	G Manley	71	1	11	3	0	1	16	87	1392
	Duffy	Carol Ann	2	1	15	17	22	5	21	62	1302
	Keats	John	52	4	10	3	0	5	16	74	1184
	Nichols	Grace	11	13	16	4	4	1	21	49	1029
	Dickinson	Emily	51	7	2	1	0	3	16	64	1024
	Armitage	Simon	0	0	6	9	23	4	18	42	756
	Browning	Eliz. B	6	1	17	2	2	3	21	31	651
	Shelley	Percy B	29	1	0	1	2	3	18	36	648
	Cope	Wendy	10	3	0	1	15	2	18	31	558
	Byron	George G	20	1	5	2	0	5	16	33	528
	Brooke	Rupert	14	4	2	1	1	1	21	23	483
	Levertov	Denise	23	2	1	1	0	2	16	29	464
	Agard	John	8	6	1	1	3	3	21	22	462
	Douglas	Keith	15	8	1	1	0	1	16	26	416
	Harrison	Tony	0	0	6	7	2	1	18	16	288
	Adcock	Fleur	10	0	2	1	1	1	19	15	285
	Dharker	Imtiaz	0	0	1	2	2	3	18	8	144

Key

■	Central core poets featured 6 times in 6 series
■	Central core poets featured 5 times including series 6
■	Central core poets featured 4 times consecutively in series 3-6

Although it is difficult to establish causal relations, it is interesting to note the overlap between the top 30 poets of the GCSE English literature canon and the top 30 poets of the BBC's 2009 *Nation's Favourite Poet* poll (BBC 2009), as shown in figure 8.4 below. On the left are 13 poets who only appear in the BBC poll; on the right are 13 poets⁶⁴ who only appear in the GCSE current central core; in the centre are 17 poets who appear in both the BBC poll and the GCSE core. In each case, the poets named in the first text block featured in the top 10 places, those in the second text block featured among the other 20 poets. The basis of the BBC poll was idiosyncratic: the 30 poets were selected by Director of the Poetry Society and the Director of the Arts Council to provide a focal point for the public to explore poems by these poets ahead of National Poetry Day. Nonetheless, the diagram offers an intriguing perspective on the idea of an interaction between the GCSE English literature canon and a popular literary canon.

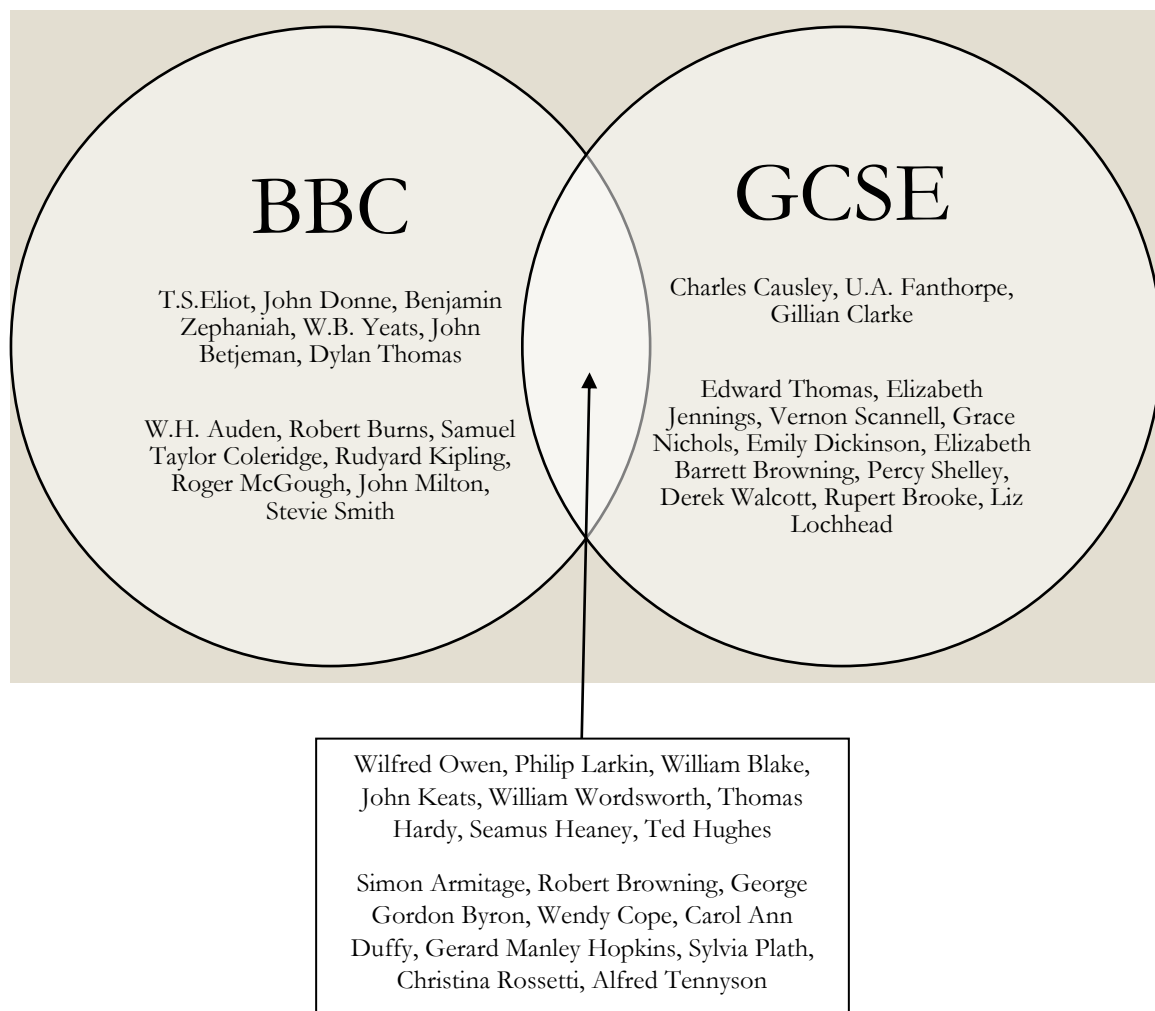


Figure 8.4: Overlap between the GCSE diachronic pedagogical canon and a popular canon selected for a BBC public poll.

⁶⁴ It is merely a curious coincidence that both circles contain 13 poets.

Established favourites (n=31)

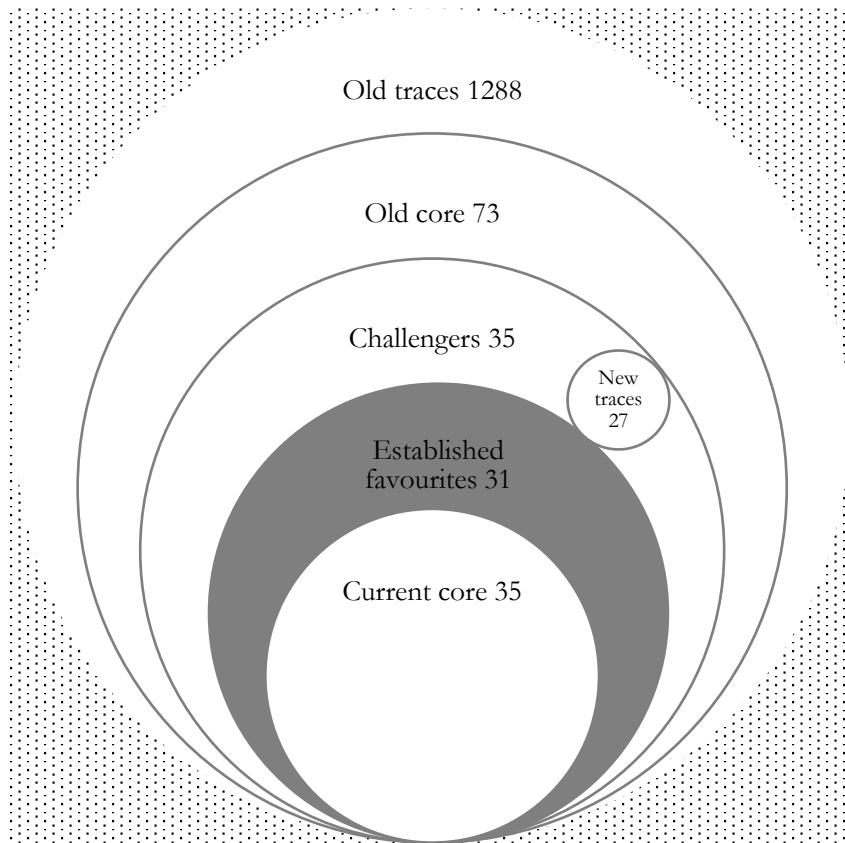


Figure 8.5: The established favourites of the GCSE English literature canon.

The second set of poets are the established favourites of the canon, the 31 poets listed in table 8.2 below. There are three sub-sets of established favourites: strongly established poets who have been included five times in the six series, but not in the current series 6, indicated by a dark blue marker in the table; poets who are less consistent over time but have still been included four times, including in series 5 or 6, indicated by a mid blue marker; and more recently established poets who have been included three times consecutively in the most recent three series, indicated by a light blue marker in the table. In their different ways these poets are all now established favourites. The red marker is used to indicate poets who have retained a status in the canon as established favourites poets by virtue of their longevity but are excluded from series 6 by the statutory order that all poetry has to have been published from 1789 onwards. This applies to the two major icons of any high status English literary canon, William Shakespeare and Geoffrey Chaucer, as well as those in the GCSE English literature canon with slightly lower but nonetheless well established status, John Donne, Ben Jonson, Walter Raleigh, Andrew Marvell and John Scott. If this stipulation remains in force, these poets will start to move outwards to the old core in future iterations of this pedagogical canon.

Table 8.2: 31 poets of the established favourites category of the GCSE English Literature canon.

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-Iterations	Total
	Thomas	R.S.	123	17	36	8	1	0	15	185	2775
	Lawrence	D.H.	166	6	7	1	1	0	15	181	2715
	Auden	W.H.	135	3	10	1	2	0	15	151	2265
	Shakespeare	William	97	1	8	6	21	0	15	133	1995
	Betjeman	John	107	12	5	2	1	0	15	127	1905
	Sassoon	Siegfried	64	22	13	8	2	0	15	109	1635
	Yeats	W.B.	123	1	0	3	1	0	12	128	1536
	Graves	Robert	106	6	1	0	1	0	11	114	1254
	Patten	Brian	38	25	1	2	1	0	15	67	1005
	Muir	Edwin	55	1	2	2	1	0	15	61	915
	MacNeice	Louis	67	6	1	0	2	0	11	76	836
	Thomas	Dylan	63	4	3	0	6	0	11	76	836
	Donne	John	48	0	4	3	3	0	13	58	754
	Smith	Stevie	33	4	1	2	2	0	15	42	630
	Stallworthy	Jon	30	2	3	1	1	0	15	37	555
	Walcott	Derek	18	19	0	1	0	1	13	39	507
	Lochhead	Liz	25	1	13	0	0	1	12	40	480
	Jonson	Ben	28	0	1	2	1	0	13	32	416
	Raleigh	Walter	28	0	1	1	1	0	13	31	403
	Chaucer	Geoffrey	16	3	2	1	1	0	15	23	345
	Marvell	Andrew	18	0	3	3	2	0	13	26	338
	cummings	e e	27	1	1	0	1	0	11	30	330
	Mew	Charlotte	13	3	0	0	1	2	14	19	266
	Gibson	Wilfrid W	12	7	0	1	1	0	12	21	252
	Ferlinghetti	Lawrence	9	0	1	1	1	0	13	12	156
	Atwood	Margaret	4	3	1	0	1	0	11	9	99
	Cole	M Postage	0	4	1	1	1	0	14	7	98
	Kay	Jackie	0	0	0	4	1	1	15	6	90
	Davidson	John	2	0	1	0	1	1	15	5	75
	Scott	John	2	1	0	1	1	0	12	5	60
	Satyamurti	Carole	0	0	0	1	1	1	15	3	45

Key

Established favourites featured 5 times but not in series 6
Established favourites featured 4 times including series 5 or 6
Established favourites featured 3 times in series 4-6
Established favourites no longer possible by the 1789 rule

These data tables present a retrospective account of what has already happened; it is not possible to predict with any great accuracy the future trajectory of the poets because the statutory parameters for poetry may change again. In the current context, all one can say about the other strongly established poets represented here, R.S. Thomas, D.H. Lawrence, W.H. Auden, John Betjeman, Siegfried Sassoon, Brian Patten, Edwin Muir, Stevie Smith and John Stallworthy is that their current status may reflect a temporary relegation from the central core, in a diminished series of only 73 poets, or this status loss may be the start of a longer decline in order that a very small pedagogical canon can continue to make way for newer poets like Jackie Kay and Carole Satyamurti.

The second sub-set of slightly inconsistent but still established favourites includes poets W.B. Yeats, Robert Graves, Louis MacNeice, Dylan Thomas, Derek Walcott, Liz Lochhead, ee cummings, Charlotte Mew, Wilfrid Gibson, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Margaret Atwood, Margaret Postgate Cole and John Davidson. Mostly these poets just seem to have a slightly greater propensity to be 'rested' from time to time; the exception seems to be Liz Lochhead who is present in series 1, 2 and 3 before reappearing in series 6 at a point when she had become part of the old core. This demonstrates the way in which any poet who has appeared in the canon has the potential to be included again, indicative of the "stewardship" and "appropriation" that Tom Mole has identified as key strands of an author's "web of reception" (Mole 2017:2).

The third sub-set of recently established poets is much smaller, comprising just Jackie Kay and Carole Satyamurti. This might suggest that the shift from being a challenger in the canon to an established favourite is difficult, a perspective reinforced by the fact that 28 of these 31 poets were present in series 1. There is clearly a dynamic for change in this canon, but one that operates slowly, on a small scale and over longer durations than the individual series. This slow dynamic will be compounded by the considerable overall reduction in the number of anthologies, poems and poets made available by the awarding bodies, and it is likely to make the newly established favourites, with only poem apiece represented in the canon, vulnerable within this category.

Six of the long term established favourites - W.H. Auden, John Betjeman, W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas, John Donne and Stevie Smith – also appear in the 2009 BBC poll of the nation's favourite poets, further confirming the overlap between the GCSE English literature canon and a popular canon.

Challengers (n=35)

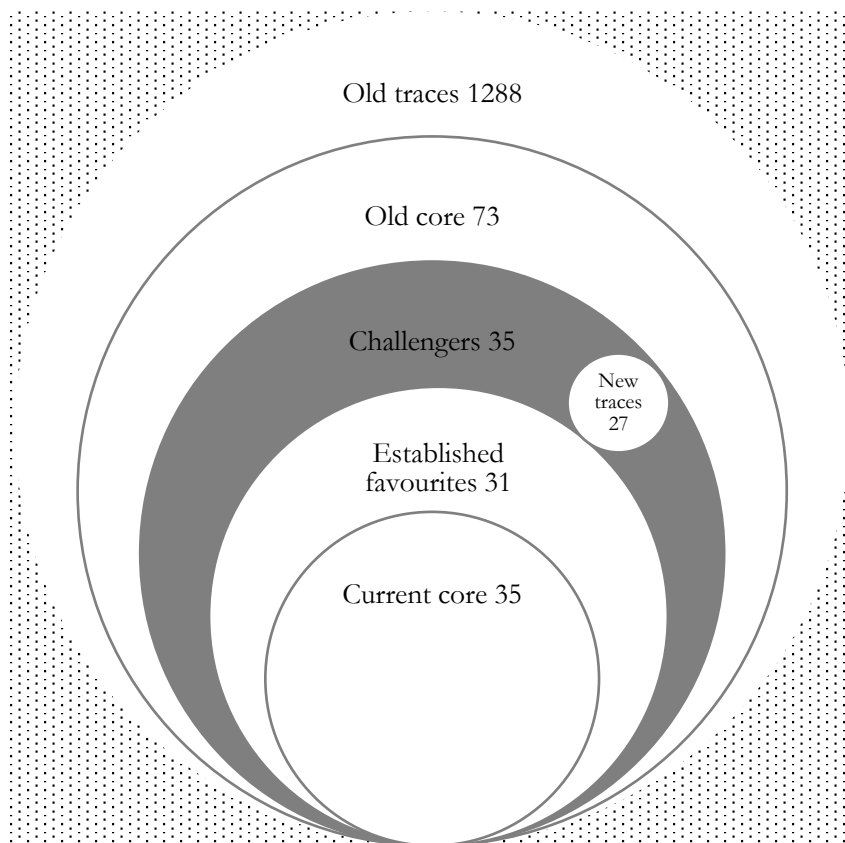






Figure 8.6: *The challengers of the GCSE English literature canon.*

Next are the challengers of the GCSE English literature canon, the 35 poets listed in table 8.3 below who have appeared two or three times, including in series 5 or 6. There are three sub-sets of poets here too: challengers who have appeared three times, indicated by a dark blue marker in the table; newer challengers who have only appeared in series 5 and 6 who may become stronger challengers over longer duration, indicated by a mid blue marker; and more occasional challengers who have either suddenly been remembered from older canonical selections or who might be regarded as persistent ‘pop-up’ challengers, indicated by a light blue marker in the table.

Table 8.3: 35 poets of the challenger category of the GCSE English Literature canon.

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-Iterations	Total
	MacCaig	Norman	92	0	0	0	1	0	6	93	558
	Gunn	Thom	60	2	0	0	0	1	9	63	567
	Enright	D.J.	38	0	1	0	1	0	9	40	360
	Herrick	Robert	31	0	0	3	1	0	10	35	350
	Zephaniah	Benjamin	0	3	0	0	16	1	13	20	260
	Bronte	Emily	16	0	0	0	1	1	12	18	216
	Porter	Peter	18	0	0	2	1	0	10	21	210
	Day-Lewis	Cecil	21	1	0	0	0	1	9	23	207
	Marlowe	Christopher	9	0	0	1	1	0	10	11	110
	Pugh	Sheenagh	1	0	0	7	2	0	10	10	100
	Bridges	Robert	8	0	2	0	1	0	9	11	99
	Davies	W.H.	15	0	0	0	1	0	6	16	96
	Wyatt	Thomas	7	0	0	1	1	0	10	9	90
	Alvi	Moniza	0	0	2	2	0	1	13	5	65
	Millay	Edna St.V.	3	0	0	1	2	0	10	6	60
	Carson	Ciaran	0	0	1	0	2	1	14	4	56
	Fenton	James	0	0	2	0	1	1	14	4	56
	Hannah	Sophie	0	0	0	0	4	1	11	5	55
	Bhatt	Sujata	0	0	2	1	0	1	13	4	52
	De Kok	Ingrid	0	0	0	0	3	1	11	4	44
	Nagra	Daljit	0	0	0	0	3	1	11	4	44
	Sheers	Owen	0	0	0	0	1	3	11	4	44
	Afrika	Tatamkhulu	0	0	1	1	0	1	13	3	39
	Clarke	J. Cooper	0	0	3	0	0	1	9	4	36
	Lowery	Martyn	2	0	1	0	1	0	9	4	36
	Weir	Jane	0	0	0	0	1	2	11	3	33
	Sexton	Anne	4	4	0	0	0	1	3	9	27
	Behn	Aphra	3	0	0	0	1	0	6	4	24
	Walsh	Christina	0	0	2	0	1	0	8	3	24
	Casey	Mary	0	0	0	0	1	1	11	2	22
	Bronte	Anne	0	0	0	1	0	1	10	2	20
	Phillips	Katherine	2	0	0	0	1	0	6	3	18
	Sweeney	Matthew	0	0	0	1	1	0	9	2	18
	King	William	0	0	1	0	1	0	8	2	16
	Corbett	Pie	0	1	0	0	1	0	7	2	14

Key

	Challengers featured 3 times in series 3-6, or in series 5 and 6 and one other		Occasional challengers featured 2 or 3 times across the 6 series
	Challengers featured twice in series 5 and 6		Challengers not possible by the 1789 rule

More established challengers who may have achieved enough longevity in the past four series to move towards becoming established favourites are Moniza Alvi, Ciaran Carson, James Fenton, Sujata Bhatt and Tatamkhulu Afrika. There is evidence of the commitment to include different contemporary poets, though the removal of a defined requirement for literature from “other cultures and traditions” in the English curriculum makes the specific direction of this more difficult to predict. Two poets with a slightly different profile but a related trajectory are Benjamin Zephaniah and Emily Brontë. Benjamin Zephaniah has been included three times, though stretching over longer duration having been included in early anthologies of black British poetry as well as having more recently achieved an iconic status as an individual poet represented by a selection of 15 poems in OCR’s series 5 anthology, almost an explicit act of new GCSE English literature ‘canonisation’. Emily Brontë may also have more chance of being propelled towards becoming an established favourite as she has currency in the valuing of pre-20th century female poets but as a 19th century poet her status is not threatened by the 1789 rule.

Newer challengers include the poets Sophie Hannah, Ingrid de Kok, Daljit Nagra, Owen Sheers, Jane Weir and Mary Casey. This list further suggests the commitment to introducing diverse contemporary poets to the canon, including in Mary Casey’s case a non-professional working class poet from 1970s Liverpool. The South African poet Ingrid de Kok entered the canon as a result of the same advocacy by the Devon Curriculum Service that brought in Tatamkhulu Afrika, a more established challenger in this category.

The larger third sub-set of challengers consists of poets who appear twice or three times across the six series but seem to have an occasional status rather than being on a trajectory towards becoming established favourites. These poets appear only periodically in the canon but they remain challengers precisely because their work has some capacity to ‘pop-up’ in the minds of the canon-shapers, even if it is unclear from this relatively distant reading why that is so. Despite their marginal status as challengers, they would seem to have good survival odds.

In this sub-set there are poets who appeared in series 1 and/or series 2 who then seem to have been ‘forgotten’ for the next few series and ‘remembered’ again in series 4, 5 or 6. This sub-set includes Norman MacCaig, Thom Gunn, Peter Porter, Cecil Day-Lewis, Sheenagh Pugh, W.H. Davies, Edna St Vincent Millay, Anne Sexton, Aphra Benn and Katherine Phillips. It is not clear why some of these poets might have been remembered, though Behn and Phillips were perhaps part of an ongoing project to represent female poets in the pre-20th century category and it seems likely that the remembering of Day-Lewis and Davies was a matter of a single iconic poem being remembered, ‘Walking Away’ and ‘Leisure’ respectively. As poets published in the 17th century,

Aphra Behn and Katherine Phillips are now excluded from the canon by the 1789 stipulation; unless that is revoked in the next iteration of GCSEs they will lose their status as challengers, as will Robert Herrick, Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Wyatt.

Finally, there is a group I have termed ‘pop-up poets’ which includes D.J. Enright, Robert Bridges, John Cooper Clarke, Martyn Lowery, Christina Walsh, Anne Brontë, Matthew Sweeney, William King and Pie Corbett. These poets appear to be remembered more sporadically but the combination of their longevity over duration and their recent selection mean they are still challengers in the canon. These poets especially illustrate the dynamic nature of the canon and the way poets can quite suddenly move between sets.

New traces (n=27)

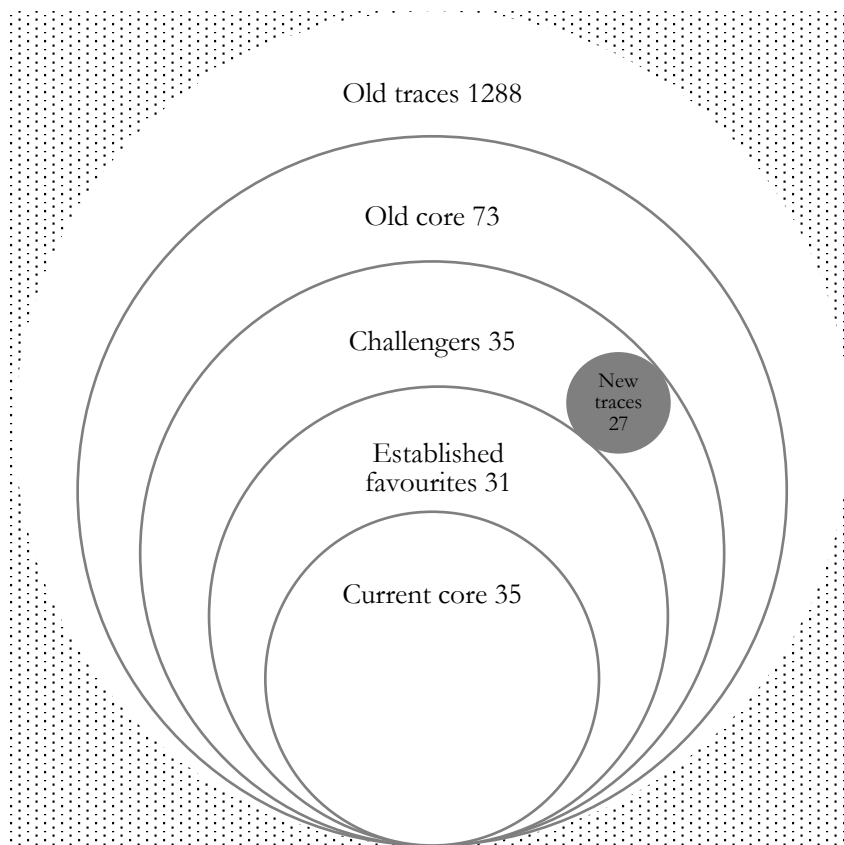


Figure 8.7: The new traces of the diachronic GCSE English literature canon.

The fourth set of poets are the new traces of the GCSE English literature canon, the 27 poets listed in table 8.4 below who have been included once in the six series, either in series 6, indicated by a dark blue marker in the table, or in series 5, indicated by a mid blue marker. There are no other coloured markers in this table as this is a simple set of one type and there are no pre-1789 poets.

Table 8.4: 27 poets of the new traces category of the GCSE English literature canon.

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-Iterations	Total
	Hardi	Choman	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	5	25
	Forster	Andrew	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	2	10
	Baillie	Joanna	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Clanchy	Kate	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Dooley	Maura	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Dove	Rita	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Garland	Beatrice	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Hadfield	Jen	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Komunyakaa	Yusuf	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Lamb	Mary	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Olds	Sharon	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Shapcott	Jo	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Waterhouse	Andrew	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Williams	Helen M	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	6
	Fell	Alison	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Grieg	Andrew	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Haggith	Mandy	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Hayhoe	Mike	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Jamie	Kathleen	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Jones	Alice Gray	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Khalvati	Mimi	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	MacMillan	Ian	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Minhinnick	Robert	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Molloy	Dorothy	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Norton	Caroline	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Rae	Simon	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5
	Sprackland	Jean	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	5

Key

	New traces in series 6
	New traces in series 5

The new traces are poets who are being tried out in the GCSE English literature anthologies. They are mostly but not necessarily contemporary poets. Although the 1789 rule precluded older, previously un-set historic poets being introduced, the “representative Romantic poetry” stipulation caused three female poets to be given a new trial: Joanna Baillie 1762-1851, Mary Lamb 1764-1847 and Helen Maria Williams 1759-1827. Mostly, however, the list reiterates the commitment to including living contemporary poets in the pedagogical canon. With the overall narrowing of the selections to 73 poets in series 6, there are fewer new traces in series 6 than in series 5: 15 poets were introduced in series 5 and 12 in series 6. With three of the 12

introductions in series 6 the product of a new statutory regulation, there are only nine ‘free’ introductions, compared with 15 in series 5, a loss of more than a third. Despite this reduction, the commitment to introducing new contemporary poets into the canon remains.

Old core (n=73)

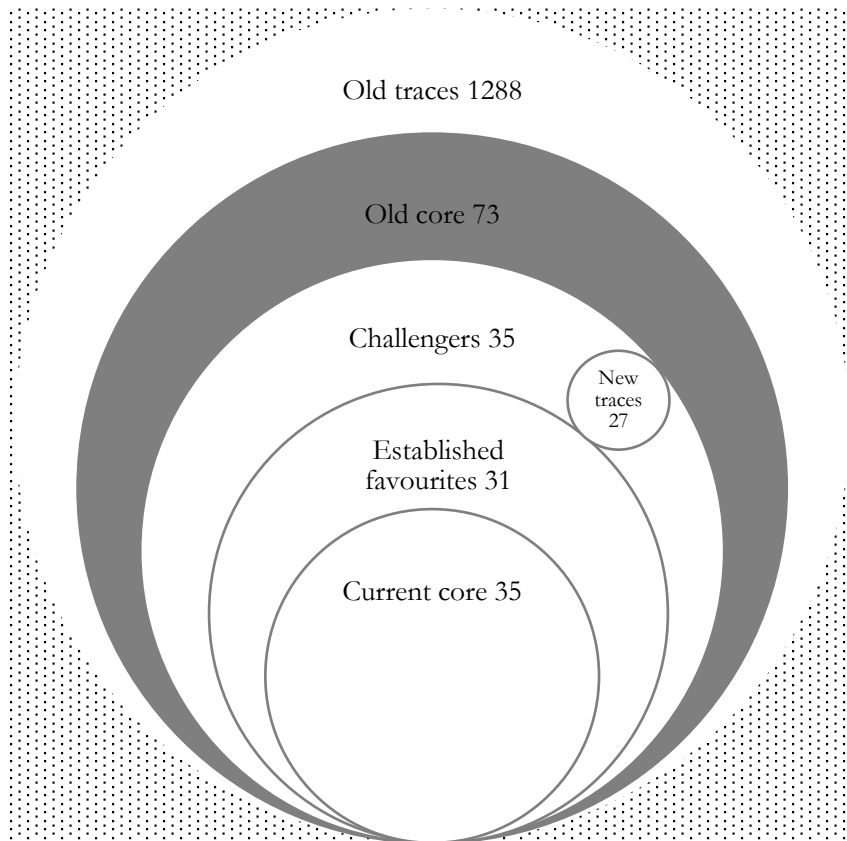


Figure 8.8: The old core of the diachronic GCSE English literature canon.

The fifth set of poets is the old core of the GCSE English literature canon, the 73 poets listed in table 8.5 below who have been included three or four times in the six series, in series 1 to 4 but not since. Those appearing four times are indicated by a dark blue marker in the table, those appearing three times by a mid blue marker, and poets that would now be excluded by the 1789 rule are indicated with a red marker. A threshold weighted score of 30 has been applied to filter out poets who just had one poem in one anthology that was multiply iterated. This provides a better representation of the old core. At a time when many more anthologies were licensed for GCSE, it is not surprising that this set is more than double the size of any of the previous sets.

Table 8.5: 73 poets of the old core category of the GCSE English Literature canon.

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-Iterations	Total
	Anonymous		494	179	5	4	0	0	10	682	6820
	McGough	Roger	49	32	3	4	0	0	10	88	880
	Nicholson	Norman	76	3	1	3	0	0	10	83	830
	de la Mare	Walter	76	1	1	1	0	0	10	79	790
	Clare	John	48	2	5	3	0	0	10	58	580
	Brathwaite	E Kamau	29	24	2	1	0	0	10	56	560
	Connor	Tony	45	2	1	1	0	0	10	49	490
	Mitchell	Adrian	42	4	1	1	0	0	10	48	480
	Kirkup	James	67	1	1	0	0	0	6	69	414
	Kipling	Rudyard	23	8	6	4	0	0	10	41	410
	Henri	Adrian	8	29	2	1	0	0	10	40	400
	Eliot	T.S.	47	1	8	0	0	0	6	56	336
	Ross	Alan	49	4	2	0	0	0	6	55	330
	Rosenberg	Isaac	18	5	5	2	0	0	10	30	300
	Pope	Alexander	25	1	2	1	0	0	10	29	290
	Brock	Edwin	22	2	2	2	0	0	10	28	280
	Stafford	William	23	1	2	1	0	0	10	27	270
	Dickinson	Patric	41	1	1	0	0	0	6	43	258
	Housman	A.E.	19	2	1	3	0	0	10	25	250
	Reed	Henry	19	3	2	1	0	0	10	25	250
	Spender	Stephen	32	5	2	0	0	0	6	39	234
	Lucie-Smith	Edward	14	5	2	1	0	0	10	22	220
	Dunn	Douglas	28	1	0	1	0	0	7	30	210
	Burns	Robert	20	0	2	2	0	0	8	24	192
	Soyinka	Wole	15	1	2	1	0	0	10	19	190
	Roethke	Theodore	24	2	0	1	0	0	7	27	189
	Okara	Gabriel	13	1	1	3	0	0	10	18	180
	Arnold	Matthew	18	0	3	1	0	0	8	22	176
	Hesketh	Phoebe	14	1	1	1	0	0	10	17	170
	MacBeth	George	13	2	1	1	0	0	10	17	170
	McKay	Claude	12	3	1	1	0	0	10	17	170
	Whitman	Walt	14	0	2	3	0	0	8	19	152
	Angelou	Maya	8	1	4	1	0	0	10	14	140
	Crabbe	George	10	1	2	1	0	0	10	14	140
	Goldsmith	Oliver	7	2	3	2	0	0	10	14	140
	Gray	Thomas	9	1	3	1	0	0	10	14	140
	Hood	Thomas	8	0	3	6	0	0	8	17	136
	Morris	Mervyn	5	13	0	1	0	0	7	19	133
	Nichols	Robert	6	5	1	1	0	0	10	13	130
	Bradstreet	Anne	12	0	2	1	0	0	8	15	120
	Stevenson	Anne	17	2	1	0	0	0	6	20	120
	Masefield	John	15	1	1	0	0	0	6	17	102

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-Iterations	Total
	Southey	Robert	4	1	3	2	0	0	10	10	100
	Clough	Arthur H	9	0	1	1	0	0	8	11	88
	Binyon	Laurence	10	2	1	0	0	0	6	13	78
	Hobsbaum	Philip	10	2	1	0	0	0	6	13	78
	Hughes	Langston	11	1	1	0	0	0	6	13	78
	Abse	Dannie	9	1	0	1	0	0	7	11	77
	Ezekiel	Nissim	6	0	2	1	0	0	8	9	72
	Pope	Jessie	0	5	1	2	0	0	9	8	72
	Raine	Kathleen	7	4	1	0	0	0	6	12	72
	Joseph	Jenny	4	1	1	1	0	0	10	7	70
	Cowper	William	8	1	2	0	0	0	6	11	66
	Nesbit	Edith	0	2	2	3	0	0	9	7	63
	Sorley	C.H.	4	4	0	1	0	0	7	9	63
	Belloc	Hilaire	8	1	1	0	0	0	6	10	60
	Dehn	Paul	7	2	1	0	0	0	6	10	60
	Wilde	Oscar	3	0	2	2	0	0	8	7	56
	Collins	Merle	0	3	2	1	0	0	9	6	54
	Herbert	A.P.	4	4	1	0	0	0	6	9	54
	Tynan	Katherine	0	3	2	1	0	0	9	6	54
	Newbolt	Henry	2	1	1	1	0	0	10	5	50
	West	Arthur G	1	2	1	1	0	0	10	5	50
	Summers	Hal	6	1	1	0	0	0	6	8	48
	Walker	Alice	4	3	1	0	0	0	6	8	48
	Brittain	Vera	0	3	1	1	0	0	9	5	45
	Grenfell	Julian	1	2	1	1	0	0	10	4	40
	Raine	Craig	1	1	1	1	0	0	10	4	40
	Tichborne	Chidiock	3	0	1	1	0	0	8	5	40
	Webb	Harry	0	2	1	1	0	0	9	4	36
	Meynell	Alice	2	2	0	1	0	0	7	5	35
	Achebe	Chinua	1	0	1	2	0	0	8	4	32
	Noyes	Alfred	3	1	1	0	0	0	6	5	30

Key

■	Old core included 4 times in series 1-4
■	Old core included 3 times in series 1-4
■	Old core no longer possible by the 1789 rule

Once the awarding bodies all began to produce their own anthologies, the number of poets reduced considerably but at the same time the new anthologies created a space for fresh innovation of the canon. The old core listed here is a mixture of poets who no longer quite fitted the requirements of the National Curriculum, specifically Anonymous and poets regarded as primarily writing for children, Walter de la Mare and John Masefield. As also already noted in chapter six, the new ‘other cultures and traditions’ category was innovated with a primary focus on Caribbean poets living in Britain and later on newer British-born poets with Caribbean or Indian subcontinent family heritages. This pushed out to the old core a number of poets from Africa and the Caribbean, and black American poets, including poets with significant international literary statures: Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Edward Lucie-Smith, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Claude McKay, Maya Angelou, Mervyn Morris, Langston Hughes, Nissim Ezekiel, Merle Collins, Alice Walker and Chinua Achebe. This process would seem to suggest the operation of an increasingly parochial principle of poetry selection, driven in part by a particular conception of relevance and in part by a pressure to understand ‘English literary heritage’ as a matter of Englishness not as a matter of a shared and contested global language.

In the old core is also a substantial sub-set of significant pre-20th century poets: John Clare, Rudyard Kipling, Alexander Pope, A.E. Housman, Robert Burns, Matthew Arnold, George Crabbe, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Gray, Robert Southey, Arthur Hugh Clough, William Cowper and Anne Bradstreet. There are almost certainly a number of de-selection principles at work here. It is not difficult to imagine Rudyard Kipling being de-selected for his association with a politically disfavoured imperial past, perhaps Robert Burns for his Scottishness and his dialect use in the context of pressure on the idea of an English literary heritage and standard English in the curriculum. Some poets here would seem to be pushed out by a de-selection principle derived from the national curriculum name-lists: if a poet is not named, don’t include him or her. This would apply to A.E. Housman, George Crabbe, Oliver Goldsmith, Robert Southey, Arthur Hugh Clough, William Cowper and Anne Bradstreet, as well as the minor poet Chidiock Tichborne. Perhaps the inclusion of more female pre-20th century poets required some pre-20th century male poets to give way. Much of this is simply unknowable from the data.

Five poets who appear in the old core also appeared in the 2009 BBC Nation’s Favourite Poets poll: T.S. Eliot, Robert Burns, Rudyard Kipling, Roger McGough and John Milton. This again points to the inter-relatedness of the pedagogical canon and a popular canon, the selections having been made by adults likely to have been educated within the older tradition and the poets’

reputations in the popular canon renewed by the actions of people exploring them, voting for them and reading about them in BBC coverage of National Poetry Day.

Old traces (n=1288)

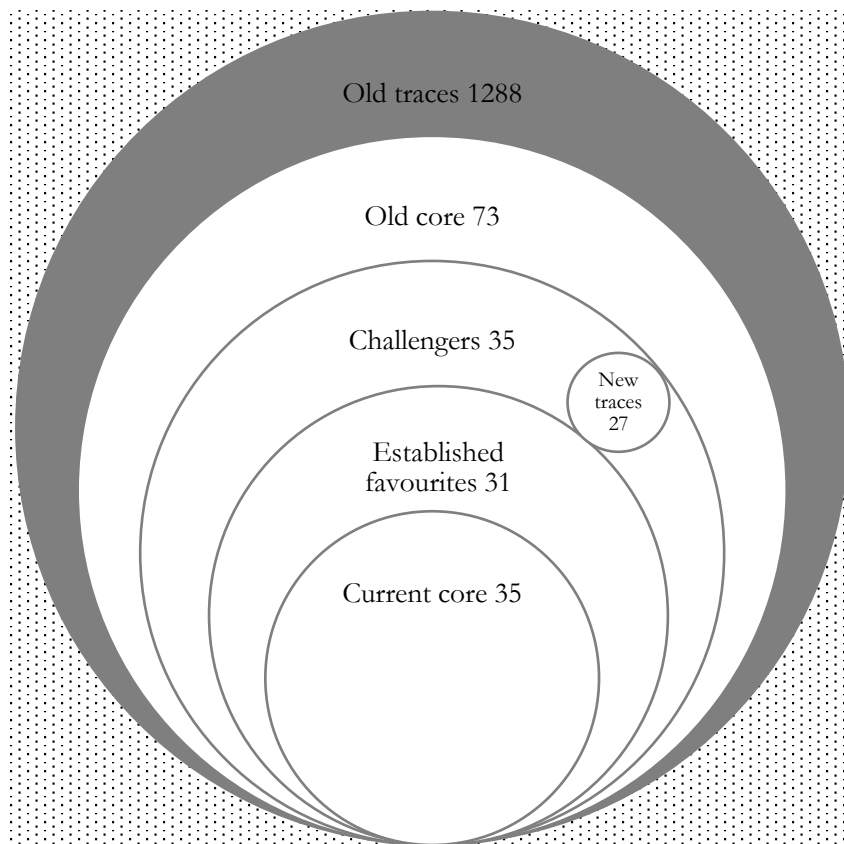


Figure 8.9: The old traces of the GCSE English literature canon.

The final set of poets are the old traces of the GCSE English literature canon, the 1,278 poets listed in table 8.6 below who were included just once or twice in series 1 to 4, as well as marginal poets appearing three times who did not meet the threshold score of 30 that would have seen them included in the old core. The top 70 poets in the set are shown here.

Poets appearing twice including more recently in either series 3 or series 4 constitute a sub-set of slightly more recent old traces. These poets are indicated by a dark blue marker in the table. They include Edwin Morgan, Christopher Logue, Fred D’Aguiar, Valerie Bloom, Winifred Letts, James Shirley, Mary Elizabeth Coleridge and Ivor Gurney, as well as some pre-20th century poets who would no longer be permissible by the 1789 rule: George Herbert, John Milton, Michael Drayton, John Dryden, William Collins, indicated with a red marker.

Poets indicated by a mid blue marker in the table are those whose trace is restricted to series 1 and 2 and on that basis would seem less likely to appear in future anthologies. These very old

traces include a wide range of poets. Some like Laurie Lee, Clifford Dymont and Anthony Thwaite would have had declining reputations at that time, as already noted in chapter 6, and might have been de-selected on that basis. Caribbean poets like James Berry, E.A Markham and Dennis Scott were included in wide-ranging new anthologies published with the explicit goal of introducing Caribbean poetry to a wider popular and schools audience, but they were not taken forward as the selections narrowed, and as, perhaps, the influence grew of Caribbean poets living in Britain who were becoming popular performers at *Poetry Live* events. Some poets in this subset had poems included in early anthologies in translation from other languages, but after the national curriculum narrowed to include only poems originally written in English, they could not be continued. Present in the table are Miroslav Holub, Anna Akhmatova, Vasco Popa and Andrey Voznesensky but there are many more in the full data set.

Those poets indicated with a light blue marker have appeared just once, in either series 1 or series 2. Some of these are again Caribbean poets but appearing in just one of the new wide-ranging anthologies they had less chance of gaining the exposure needed to be taken further into the canon. Shown in this sample of 70 of the 1,288 poets are Anthony McNeill, Martin Carter and Wayne Brown. Those indicated with a lime green marker are those poets excluded from the old core category by my application of a threshold weighted score of 30, as these were mostly poets who had one poem in one anthology that was recycled in three series. These poets are more accurately described as old traces than part of an old core. Some of the women poets, Sally Flood for example, are interesting for representing a practice in some older anthologies of including working class female poets published through community poetry projects. This, and the inclusion of poems by many school pupils in anthologies in series 1 represent a different dynamic of inclusion. These are the vestiges of a debate about how expansive the pedagogical canon might be and the ability of awarding bodies to experiment more widely prior to the national curriculum.

Some of the poets in the old traces table had significant status in other literary, curriculum and publishing contexts, for example Elizabeth Bishop, Edwin Morgan and Linton Kwesi Johnson, and it is not clear why they have such low status in the GCSE English literature canon. A more extreme example is that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. As one of the 2009 BBC Nation's Favourite Poets he has an established position in the popular canon; he was named several times in the national curriculum name lists; he is no less a "representative Romantic poet" than many others included in the canon under this criterion in series 6; and his popular and accessible poem 'Kubla Khan' is well established in the popular canon, as evidenced by its status as forty-first most popular poem in the BBC's earlier poll (BBC 1996). Yet in the pedagogical canon for GCSE

English literature, Samuel Taylor Coleridge is only an old trace. This seems so particular as to be the reverse of Benjamin Zephaniah's recent curriculum canonisation, a deliberate de-canonisation. It is difficult to know why when so many other poets have been so carefully stewarded into new associations with the present.

Table 8.6: First 70 of 1,288 poets of the old traces category of the GCSE English literature canon.

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-iterations	Total
	Morgan	Edwin	84	0	1	0	0	0	4	85	340
	Lee	Laurie	61	1	0	0	0	0	3	62	186
	Herbert	George	37	0	1	0	0	0	4	38	152
	Pupil	School	147	0	0	0	0	0	1	147	147
	Dyment	Clifford	45	1	0	0	0	0	3	46	138
	Blunden	Edmund	36	7	0	0	0	0	3	43	129
	Thwaite	Anthony	41	1	0	0	0	0	3	42	126
	Berry	James	16	25	0	0	0	0	3	41	123
	Beer	Patricia	33	1	0	0	0	0	3	34	102
	Milton	John	24	0	1	0	0	0	4	25	100
	Scott	Dennis	7	24	0	0	0	0	3	31	93
	Markham	E.A.	4	26	0	0	0	0	3	30	90
	Wright	Judith	26	2	0	0	0	0	3	28	84
	Drayton	Michael	14	0	0	1	0	0	5	15	75
	Plomer	William	21	1	0	0	0	0	3	22	66
	Dryden	John	15	0	1	0	0	0	4	16	64
	Coleridge	S.T.	18	2	0	0	0	0	3	20	60
	Hendricks	Arthur L.	11	9	0	0	0	0	3	20	60
	Holub	Miroslav	19	1	0	0	0	0	3	20	60
	Norris	Leslie	19	1	0	0	0	0	3	20	60
	Young	Andrew	60	0	0	0	0	0	1	60	60
	Charles	Faustin	1	17	0	0	0	0	3	18	54
	Stevens	Wallace	17	1	0	0	0	0	3	18	54
	Fuller	Roy	14	1	0	0	0	0	3	15	45
	Logue	Christopher	7	0	0	2	0	0	5	9	45
	Tomlinson	Charles	14	1	0	0	0	0	3	15	45
	Johnson	Linton Kwesi	1	13	0	0	0	0	3	14	42
	d'Aguiar	Frederick	0	7	1	0	0	0	5	8	40
	Daryush	Elizabeth	9	4	0	0	0	0	3	13	39
	Johnson	B.S.	12	1	0	0	0	0	3	13	39
	McNeill	Anthony	0	19	0	0	0	0	2	19	38
	Akhmatova	Anna	8	4	0	0	0	0	3	12	36
	Carter	Martin	0	18	0	0	0	0	2	18	36
	Read	Herbert	10	2	0	0	0	0	3	12	36
	Brown	Wayne	0	17	0	0	0	0	2	17	34
	Campbell	Roy	16	1	0	0	0	0	2	17	34

	LastName	FirstName	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Weighted factor	Poem-iterations	Total
	Bishop	Elizabeth	10	1	0	0	0	0	3	11	33
	Ewart	Gavin	7	4	0	0	0	0	3	11	33
	John	Frank	4	7	0	0	0	0	3	11	33
	Redgrove	Peter	9	2	0	0	0	0	3	11	33
	Sandburg	Carl	33	0	0	0	0	0	1	33	33
	Sitwell	Edith	9	2	0	0	0	0	3	11	33
	Tessimond	A.S.J.	10	1	0	0	0	0	3	11	33
	Barker	George	9	1	0	0	0	0	3	10	30
	Bloom	Valerie	0	4	2	0	0	0	5	6	30
	Collins	William	5	0	0	1	0	0	5	6	30
	Letts	Winifred M	0	4	0	1	0	0	6	5	30
	Popa	Vasco	7	3	0	0	0	0	3	10	30
	Shirley	James	5	0	0	1	0	0	5	6	30
	Voznesensky	Andrey	9	1	0	0	0	0	3	10	30
	Asquith	Herbert	1	2	0	1	0	0	7	4	28
	Arrowsmith	Pat	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Broderick	Philomena	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Flood	Sally	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Gill	David	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Hill	Richard	8	1	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
	Hinton	Debbie	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Jones	J.I.	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	La Rose	John	1	8	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
	Lowell	Amy	8	1	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
	Lowell	Robert	8	1	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
	Magee	Wes	8	1	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
	Palmer	Roger	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Smart	Christopher	8	1	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
	Thien	Ho	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Wallace	Edgar	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	3	27
	Brownjohn	Alan	26	0	0	0	0	0	1	26	26
	Coleridge	Mary Eliz	4	0	0	1	0	0	5	5	25
	Gurney	Ivor	3	0	0	2	0	0	5	5	25

Key

	Old traces included twice in series 1-4 including series 3 or 4
	Old traces included twice, only in series 1-2
	Old traces included once in series 1-4
	Old traces 3 times in series 1-4 and below 30 threshold score
	Old traces no longer possible by the 1789 rule

It is possible that there are idiosyncratic reasons for many of the more curious de-selections noted here. For my O Level in English literature I studied three poets from F.E.S. Finn's anthology *Poets of our Time*: Norman Nicholson, who is one of the old core poets, and Clifford Dyment and Laurie Lee who are old traces. I did not care at all for these poets at age 16 and can still barely bring myself to read their work. This seems of little apparent consequence until you consider that as a teacher, teacher educator and anthologist with a particular interest in poetry education, my experience has ensured that I have deliberately never brought these poets to my students' attention. Perhaps in these lists there is a 'bugbear' principle that is also sufficient to account for the de-canonisation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

In the data presented in this chapter it has been possible to observe a number of dynamics that appear to have operated in the formation over 30 years of this particular pedagogical canon, beyond the more immediately observable effects of statutory power and professional agency. These dynamics add more texture to the understanding of the GCSE English literature canon generated by analysis in the previous chapters. In the discussion that follows, I compare the dynamics I have observed with the characteristics Tom Mole has identified as the constituents of a web of reception by which Romantic poets were renewed in the Victorian period. State education has a public institutional framing that is different to the "dark" web of reception that Tom Mole has attended to, but as a conceptual framework for thinking about the way poets are 'held' for future generations it has proved productive. The observations I have made here add evidence of its validity for thinking about how poets are woven differently into other webs.

Weaving the web of a pedagogical canon

Tom Mole's "dark web of reception" has six characteristics. It is "rhizomatic" in not having a single centre of influence or operation; "intermedial" in being effected through artefacts other than the original artistic work, "stochastic" in having a quality of randomness, "presentist" in its appropriation of the past to engage with the present, "disciplined by tradition" and "traversed by flows of power" (Mole 2017:2). I will consider each of these characteristics in relation to the characteristics of the GCSE English literature canon.

I have described how the GCSE English literature canon was formed by the contested relationship between statutory authority and professional agency, rather than having a single centre of influence, and each of these centres has had its own rhizomatic tendencies in the work of different governments, think tanks, quangos, multiple competing awarding bodies, subject associations, anthologists, publishers, teacher education programmes, a private enterprise like

Poetry Live, and in the everyday classroom work of teachers and pupils. Because the school English curriculum has been a matter of national prescription, however, these are ‘bound’ rhizomes, not the ‘free’ rhizomes of Mole’s study. This was different before the implementation of the national curriculum when, for example, a publisher like Penguin Education might develop a schools anthology series like *Voices* on its own understanding of curriculum value and an awarding body might validate it as an appropriate choice. It was also different before the introduction of the GCSE qualification when a locally-devised curriculum could be validated for assessment through the CSE Mode 3 route⁶⁵. These ‘free’ rhizomes do not currently exist.

Because the school English curriculum is subject to the statutory determination of a national curriculum, I have necessarily discussed obvious flows of power affecting the formation of its canon, particularly through the disciplinary force with which government insisted on a particular literary tradition in the form of poet name lists. I have also shown that resistance to this disciplining by tradition can be observed, and I have shown how professional agency has operated as an alternative flow of power, particularly as it maintained its own discipline of a tacit tradition of poem choices. Professional agency has sometimes been able to operate with a curious level of autonomy in its decisions, apparently impervious to the valuing of poetry in other literature education contexts, the history of poetry or national and international critical esteem. These operations of power and agency are fundamental to this canon but comparison with the way poetry is selected in other school education contexts gives an indication of how ‘closed’ this system has become. In Jamaica, for example, poets select the contents of the anthology used for the qualification equivalent to GCSE.

I have also discussed the collections of poetry named for GCSE English literature, showing how infrequently these are single author collections and how commonly they are intermedial artefacts of a type Tom Mole also considered significant, anthologies. I have shown how the awarding bodies developed an additional quality of intermediality in the hybridisation of the poetry anthology and ‘pre-release’ examination material. I have also referred to other kinds of intermediality, and I have browsed many others in the course of this research, including: the availability of audio and video recordings of poets reading their work, schools television broadcasts and websites about poets featured in the curriculum, pupil and teacher poem blogs, teacher work sheets and other classroom resources on particular poems, teacher professional

⁶⁵ Mode 3 CSE was an assessment innovation available to schools and colleges just prior to the introduction of GCSE and the national curriculum. Teachers applied to awarding bodies for approval of their own curriculum and assessment following exam board criteria but calibrated to the particular needs of their students. Student portfolios were moderated by a local consortium of teachers under the supervision of the awarding body.

development courses, and the vast economic hinterland of textbooks and resources published as support material for poetry in the GCSE anthologies, including those co-devised by the awarding bodies. More research is needed to explore this intermedial ‘surround’ in detail, but it is likely to have contributed significantly to the conservation of particular poets and poems in a context where many teachers are anxious about teaching poetry, especially at points where the content changes, and where publishers and awarding bodies have a large retrospective investment in materials related to particular poets and poems.

I have observed different types of evidence of a “stochastic” principle operating in the formation of this pedagogical canon. There have been glimpses in the data and in anecdotal reporting of idiosyncratic selections on the basis of the personal preferences of an influential examiner or subject officer. There is a randomness too in the matter of securing copyright permissions, with anecdotal evidence of some poets being included or excluded due to copyright cost or availability supporting the evidence of the data traces. I also know this to be a factor from my work as an anthologist for the Poetry By Heart schools recitation competition (Blake, Dixon, Motion & Sprackland, 2014). There is a certain randomness, too, in the way that a particular poem by a poet who has been the subject of a different curriculum initiative might find its way into the GCSE English literature canon through professional networks, as in the case of South African poets Tatamkhulu Afrika and Ingrid de Kok via a Devon Curriculum Services initiative.

A presentist dynamic was also observed by Anne Ferry in her discussion of how anthologists appropriated particular poems of the past – Oliver Goldsmith’s ‘The Deserted Village’, Matthew Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’ and Philip Larkin’s ‘Church Going’ in order to construct an idea for the present reader of a “public meeting ground” (Ferry 2001:125-160). In the GCSE English literature canon, similarly constructed of multiple anthologies, presentism can be observed in the recovery of pre-20th century female poets in order to construct a 21st century idea of gender equality. Statutory insistence on “representative Romantic poets” might also be attributed to this characteristic for its nostalgic appropriation of a misleading image of pastoral Englishness, particularly as it simultaneously removed by statutory order the need to include poets “from other countries and cultures”. There is another dynamic to be observed in the pedagogical canon: a shallow appropriation of contemporary poets and poems to construct a representation of contemporaneity. The flows of power have been such that selections have been dominated by the twin traditions I have documented and these dynamics have shaped the establishment in the canon of a small number of contemporary poets. In this context, the one-series selection and de-selection of many other contemporary poets seems to function as a proxy for ‘relevance’, one of the key ideas underpinning thinking about young people, poetry and education.

The other dynamic that appears to have characterised the weaving of the pedagogical canon's web is a certain degree of sustainability. The central period of this canon's formation, 18 years from 1998 to 2016, was marked by a relatively high level of overall stability. The national curriculum parameters had been set and they remained broadly stable while subject to review by quasi non-governmental organisations such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority established for that purpose. The anthologies approved for teaching and assessment of key stage 4 English lasted the length of the series before any new statutory orders were made: series 3 lasted six years 1998 to 2003, series 4 lasted eight years 2004 to 2011 and even as it faced its most significant disruption, series 5 lasted five years 2012 to 2016. This gave teachers time to get to know and to develop confidence with the poems and poets in their chosen anthologies and for awarding bodies to get feedback about engagement with the poet and poem choices from teachers and pupils to inform future development, while providing a focus for periodic refreshment of the canon. A similar tendency to sustainability is apparent in the evidence of a drag effect on the canon, by which a poet who is already established is quite likely to be remembered and recycled at some later point. It suggests a long collective professional memory of the poems and poets that have previously been included, in line with the idea of stewardship developed in chapter 7, but it is also likely to contribute to the difficulty of individual contemporary poets becoming established over any duration. In the context of a profession with increasing challenges to teacher recruitment and retention, and historically low levels of confidence in teaching poetry, this attention to sustainability is realistic.

Conclusions

This discussion has been very abstract, in terms of the data tables and the model presented and in the extrapolation of some of the dynamics of pedagogical canon formation. I should like to conclude by returning to the material artefacts from which these abstractions have been derived - the poetry anthologies named for GCSE English literature over 30 years. Many authors have argued that anthologies are important "capillaries of cultural transmission" (Mole 2017:224) and that they play a significant part in the formation of canons. In the epigraphs at the start of this chapter, Anne Ferry noted the interaction between poetry anthologies and the histories of criticism and poetry (Ferry 2001:101). I would amplify her observation: the history of school poetry anthologies participates in the history of poetry anthologies, the history of poetry and in literary canon formation, re-enacting or representing their shifts in direction; sometimes, in some measure, shaping them and sometimes, in some measure, insisting on an alternative route. Natalie Houston has drawn attention to the idea that canons are formed by people whose understanding of literary history is in part shaped by their encounters with anthologies, including

those presented as 'textbooks' in educational settings (Houston 2002). I would add that there is a popular canon formed by people whose understanding of poetry will in part be shaped by their encounter with school anthologies. Elizabeth Renker has pointed out that this also shapes the way poets interact with the canon because "after a certain point in history, all poets were once schoolchildren" (Hutchison and Renker 2002:402). Tom Mole has recognised the "disproportionate power" of anthologies encountered at school to "shape canons, construct publics, and form reading habits" (Mole 2017:188). With these observations, in mind, it is logical to wonder what damage to the longer term formation of the popular canon, public understanding of poetry and poetry itself may be caused by 30 years of intense regulation and standardisation of poetry that has reduced school poetry anthologies to the irreducible minimum required as the material focus for public examination answers.

What did the national curriculum do for poetry? Pattern, prescription and contestation in the poetry selected for GCSE English literature 1988-2018.

9. “And miles to go before I sleep”: reflecting on the journey.

In the final chapter I consider some of the implications of this study for education policy and practice, particularly in relation to how the lifelong possibilities of poetry might best be provided for in school English; how poetry curriculum and assessment might better serve educational justice; and how policy decision-making might be improved. I then summarise the original contributions to knowledge this thesis has made empirically, theoretically and methodologically, with a consideration of further research possibilities. I conclude with a short coda and a poem.

“A politically effective critique of literary education would be better served now by discarding the problematic of representation for a problematic whose object is the systematic constitution and distribution of cultural capital. For if social groups now imagine that they are too different to speak the same language, or to be represented by the same cultural works in the schools, they are nevertheless always exchanging the same currency, even in the symbolic form of cultural capital. In the case of literature the problematic of cultural capital will always return us to the question of the relation between the means of literary production and the institutions of social reproduction within which speakers succeed or fail to speak for themselves.”

John Guillory, 1994

Series 5: 2012-2016



Series 6: 2017-



Figure 9.1: Two dispersion plots showing the presence of poems in decades from the year 1500 to the year 2010. In series 5, 2012-2016, poems ranged unevenly across the centuries. In series 6, 2017 onwards, this historical range was eliminated by a new rule specifying that only poems published from 1789 onwards could be set.

In June 2011 I was walking with Andrew Motion, poet, former Poet Laureate, founder and co-director of the Poetry Archive⁶⁶, towards St James's Park underground station in London. We had been at a Poetry Archive meeting but instead of talking about that, Andrew told me about a meeting he had had the previous day with the Schools Minister. He recounted a slightly awkward interaction in which Andrew explained what the Poetry Archive website was and its benefit to poetry education in schools, only for the Minister to dismiss the value of websites in favour of the incoming government's interest in poetry recitation. "What do you think of that?" the Minister asked. Andrew described a moment's silence that seemed to stretch far out in front of him as he thought about it, and then he said "I'll tell you what I think of it – if I were still the Poet Laureate, I'd set up a national schools poetry recitation competition." The Minister said "Why don't you then?" before being swept off to his next meeting. Andrew laughed and shrugged as we went through the ticket barrier at St James's Park and prepared to go in different directions down the stairs. "Why don't you then?" I said. "It's a great idea."

So began Poetry By Heart⁶⁷, the national poetry recitation competition for schools in England that I co-founded and directed all the way through the part time PhD programme that has culminated in this thesis. There have been five full-scale national competitions involving more than 10% of English secondary schools and an estimated 15,000 pupils per year encountering poetry recitation in this new form. Poets and educators co-developed a digital anthology for pupils to select poems from in a competition that deliberately included pupils in key stage 4 in order to increase the range and variety of poetry they might encounter during this intensely narrowed phase of their schooling. There have been teacher professional development workshops, a print anthology⁶⁸ and articles in a range of professional journals. In many ways Poetry By Heart has been the creative corollary of this thesis, a working out in practice of some of the roads not taken by the national curriculum for English.

For all my efforts in this thesis to step back from the dynamics of contestation about poetry in the curriculum, I have been a committed advocate for change throughout the period of its research and writing. Through my work I have had unique access to different perspectives in the debate about poetry education including those of Ministers and civil servants at the Department

⁶⁶ The Poetry Archive is a not-for-profit organisation that produces, acquires and preserves recordings of poets from around the English-speaking world and makes substantial excerpts from them freely available online.

⁶⁷ Founded by Andrew Motion and Julie Blake in 2012, developed by The Poetry Archive with The Full English, and funded by the Department for Education, Poetry by Heart is a national poetry recitation competition and multimodal digital anthology for exploring poems and poets across time.

⁶⁸ *Poetry By Heart: Poems for Learning and Reciting* was published in hardback in 2014; the paperback edition, *Poetry By Heart: A Treasury of Poems to Read Aloud*, was published in 2016.

for Education, teacher educators and teachers in all kinds of secondary schools, young people participating in the competition and families who came to support them, poets and professional advocates of poetry, awarding body subject officers and members of professional subject associations, libraries and other organisations engaged in public access to and promotion of reading in all its forms, poetry education researchers nationally and internationally, colleagues from arts organisations running similar competitions in other countries, publishers, journalists and radio producers. I am not a disinterested observer but nor am I the beleaguered child whose experience I described in chapter 1. State comprehensive schools, public libraries, teachers who were rich in their own enjoyment of poetry and a free university education enabled me to access a world of poetry I might never have encountered otherwise. In offering this final discussion of some key themes arising from my study, I cannot be anything other than shaped by that journey.

Implications for education policy and practice

I began this thesis with an autoethnographic perspective on the impact of education policy on working class lives. Has a thirty-year process of English curriculum policy-making and practice in relation to poetry made any difference to the lives of working class children who are at school today? Fundamentally, but not unproblematically, the answer is yes. The twin implementation of GCSEs and a national curriculum ensured that all pupils at least structurally had access to the same employment and education pathways. However, ‘off-rolling’ pupils⁶⁹, well documented increases in social inequality and family poverty, and changes in educational funding that have a disproportionate effect on working class children’s lives⁷⁰ have undermined the original vision of the national curriculum and its assessment as levers of educational equality. So too has the current limitation of the national curriculum to its irreducible minimum for public examination and the technical disapplication of the national curriculum to schools which have academy status.

Nonetheless, making poetry mandatory in the curriculum for English and its assessment at key stage 4 ensured that all pupils had some encounter with it before they left school, an outcome that was far less certain for working class children before the implementation of the national curriculum. For children who completed a GCSE in English literature, their encounter with poetry was on broadly equivalent terms. For most of the 30 year period, all pupils encountered poems from other cultures and countries, whether they lived in communities characterised by

⁶⁹ A method by which students whose GCSE results might disadvantage their school’s status are excluded from examination entry.

⁷⁰ Including the abolition of Educational Maintenance Awards to support pupils from poorer families to stay in education after the statutory minimum age of 16, and the introduction of some of the highest university tuition fees in the world.

ethnic and cultural diversity or communities characterised by homogeneity. Benedict Anderson's analysis of how "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) are constructed through accretions of social practice might suggest that this poetry would have been slowly contributing to a more inclusive sense of national identity. In June 2019, with the legacy of the UK government's 2016 referendum on leaving the European Union still a matter of bitter division and national uncertainty, questions about immigration, Englishness, the former British Empire and future global aspirations are at the centre of political debate. Though the statutory requirement to teach literature from other cultures and traditions was never adequately defined or positioned in relation to "the English literary heritage", as I discussed in chapter 4, its presence was an important placeholder for the idea that poetry does not belong to any one community. At least notionally, all young people also had access to poets from the same substantial historical range of English poetry, from Chaucer and the early modern period through to contemporary poetry by living poets. The dispersion plots shown as figure 9.1 at the start of this chapter show how that range was affected by the latest iteration of the national curriculum for key stage 4 English. Not everyone would agree that poetry is a necessary part of a child's education, but by making it mandatory, inclusive and historically wide-ranging, neither poetry as a whole nor specific prestige selections of older historical poets could be appropriated quite as easily as marks of educational distinction for socially privileged pupils. All of it belonged to everyone.

The importance of 'owning' poetry was emphasised in some of the more optimistic rationalisations of the awarding body anthologies that pupils were given to keep from the mid 1990s. The value of this was reinforced for me by a response to a public talk I gave at Cambridge University Library in January 2019. Emma Morgan, a student journalist for the *Varsity* newspaper, wrote about the impact her awarding body anthology had on her as a child in a mainstream secondary school classroom characterised for her by "a group of boys, their shirts streaked with mud from lunch-time's football match, who sat at the back rolling their eyes and putting in the bare minimum of effort" (Morgan 2019). She remembered her anthology with great fondness for the sense of ownership it gave her and the access it gave her to an identity that was different to the one dominating her classroom experience:

Already an avid collector of books, and perhaps the most enthusiastic of the Enthusiasts, I remember being quite excited that this anthology would be mine to keep, to scribble in, and to revisit whenever I wanted. I felt cultured and intellectual; I was the proud owner of a collection of poetry – albeit a mass-produced, A4 paperback which had been doled out to every GCSE student across the country.

This testimony to the transformative power of school encounters with books resonates with the powerful testimonies from much earlier times collected by Jonathan Rose (Rose 2001).

Nonetheless, publishers and awarding bodies might attend to criticism of the diminished recent forms of school poetry anthologies and the corresponding experience of poetry they provide for the majority of children, as observed by Simon Armitage and evidenced in this study. The significance of this diminution is not a matter of the immediate exigencies of school examination performance, but of how schooling gives access to the varied benefits of reading and enjoying poetry as a matter of pleasure, comfort and lifelong learning. By only presenting pupils with an A4 booklet of poems intensively prepared for a high stakes examination, schools may not induct young people into the idea that poems can be found in books that they might reasonably expect to borrow, buy and enjoy when they are ready to seek poetry out again in their lives. Thinking about schooling as part of a lifetime trajectory of reading, living and learning is notably absent from recent educational debate but for a curriculum component like poetry, where most pupils will only encounter it at school, the bridges provided to adult literacy practices are important.

Reading is the dominant mode by which pupils have experienced poetry in the key stage 4 curriculum, with increasing pedagogical emphasis on the production of a particular kind of analytical essay. There is a widespread understanding that for examination success such essays should be structured in Point-Evidence-Explanation (PEE) paragraphs, though the origin of this formulaic framework is unclear. Similarly, there is a common professional expectation that successful examination answers will focus on identifying lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features by which the poem's meaning is considered to be transacted. These understandings have intensified but for almost all of the 30 year period writing poetry was a stated possibility in the national curriculum, as documented in chapter four. In a demonstration of how curriculum can be dominated by its assessment outcomes, this opportunity for creative writing and creative response was devalued, along with other ways of knowing a poem, including reading aloud, that had been evident in the pedagogical matter of older anthologies and teacher handbooks.

At the time of writing, this devaluing of creativity has found new favour in a Twitter-mediated debate that positions 'trads', or 'Gove era' traditional teachers who prioritise 'knowledge' and teacher-led pedagogies informed by cognitive science against 'progs', or 'pre-Gove era' progressive teachers who prioritise student-centred modes of learning⁷¹. It is a debate that represents a long-established continuum of pedagogical possibilities as binary opposites on either

⁷¹ For a relatively balanced view of this debate see Tom Sherrington's account at <https://teacherhead.com/2018/05/27/is-there-a-right-way-to-teach-making-sense-of-the-trad-prog-debate/>

side of a watershed constituted by the most recent curriculum reforms. It should remind politicians and professionals alike of James Callaghan's warning that reducing everything to binary opposition will "get us nowhere" (Callaghan 1976), but in the UK in June 2019, the continuing paucity of educational debate is part of a newly divisive, populist political discourse in which the nature of evidence and the validity of expertise are much disputed. Social media also exerts a powerful influence in creating and sustaining echo-chambers in which polarised positions are reiterated and reinforced by algorithmic determination (Zuboff 2019).

As has been documented in this study, the 1988 Education Reform Act included legal provision for the establishment of the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council. These bodies had a remit to advise the education secretary on matters appropriate to its effective implementation in schools. This should have been impartial advice but as I showed in chapter four, it was possible from the start to manipulate the work of these bodies by politically-motivated appointment and it was also within the government's power to disband them in the 2012 "bonfire of the quangos"⁷². It is now the responsibility of the education secretary and officials in the Department for Education to determine the content of the curriculum. There has subsequently been greater decision-making speed, with less extensive professional consultation and greater opacity in the public record of how decisions were arrived at, such as why only poetry published after 1789 was specified in the most recent iteration of the national curriculum, why "representative Romantic poetry" or what this is intended to be. During the 30 year period, there has also been a gradual dismantling of a larger historic network of university-based initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in favour of employment-based teacher training. University-based ITE had provided professionally informed centres of curriculum advocacy, sustainable repositories of the history of education, and research-led development of new thinking about teaching and learning in specific subjects. The evidence of this thesis is that the integrity of the national curriculum for key stage 4 English, especially as it pertains to young people's encounters with poetry, is breaking up under the weight of the different political pressures it is expected to serve with fewer systems for "in-flight" correction. Any new debate about the literature curriculum and poetry's place in it might usefully attend to the idea of a relationship between the symbolic valuing of different kinds of curriculum content and the access this might provide to participation in public intellectual life. The recent

⁷² For a full list of the 106 non-departmental public bodies that lost their status, including the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Teacher Development Agency and the General Teaching Council, see <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/aug/22/bonfire-quangos-victims-list>.

appropriation of the idea of “cultural capital”, derived from the work of Pierre Bourdieu⁷³, recognises the disadvantages working class young people may face when attempting to operate in middle class cultural environments. However, it fails to recognise the grounding of Bourdieu’s metaphor in the concept of capitalism. On these terms, people will tend to move their cultural capital to where it rewards them with greater profit, such that if everyone had prestige forms of access to Tennyson’s poetry, a more profitable mark of distinction would be found. The endgame of cultural capitalism is not equality. Instead of focusing on particular poets whose status as prestige literary figures is not innate but is rather the product of Victorian literary historiography (Houston 2002:375), policy-makers interested in social justice might instead consider John Guillory’s idea of a literature curriculum based on an understanding of changing genres and literary language. By considering how different social groups developed “the English literary heritage” together by aesthetic contestation and innovation, a curriculum space might be formulated in which young people come to understand poetry as the art of making it possible for new voices to be heard. This thinking might also invite a reconsideration of the place for pupils’ own voices, in performance of poems and other creative modes of interpretation and response, and in writing poems. Brian Cox, the chair of the National Curriculum English Working Group, argued that his exclusion of poetry writing from assessment was because he could not envisage how it would be done: there is now substantial higher education experience of teaching and assessing creative writing (Munden 2013), and Sue Dymoke’s theoretical and practical work on writing and assessing poetry in school contexts (Dymoke 2003). There is also professional experience to be drawn on from teachers, examiners and subject officers involved in the development of the short-lived A level in Creative Writing⁷⁴.

Poets have proved so successful in contesting the ground of “what counts as literature” that the genre currently appears to be experiencing a vibrant and diverse renaissance in public engagement and popular esteem. Yet poets’ voices have less frequently been heard in debate over the last thirty years about poetry in the formal curriculum. David Whitley’s account of Ted Hughes’s letters to Kenneth Baker offers a fascinating insight into the relationship between a Poet Laureate dedicated to expanding the place of poetry in education and an education secretary in the process of making it mandatory (Whitley 2018:327 and 330). Hughes’s advocacy of poetry as orality and memory was not heard by Baker or subsequent education secretaries as heated

⁷³ From his work on how education reproduces social inequality (Bourdieu 1977) and how judgements of taste operate in society (Bourdieu 1984).

⁷⁴ This was terminated under the most recent review of AS and A level specifications, following Ofqual’s concern that “Creative Writing is (or could be construed to be) more skills-based than knowledge-based” (Taylor 2015).

debate centred on the issue of an approved list of names. Andrew Motion advanced this agenda shortly after his term as the next Poet Laureate, by convincing the Department for Education to fund a national poetry recitation competition for schools but this intervention has been an extra-curricular ‘enrichment’ activity not a formal entitlement. During her laureateship, ending in April 2019, Carol Ann Duffy restored a focus in schools on poetry written in other languages through her *Mother Tongue Other Tongue* educational project⁷⁵, but again this was beyond curriculum entitlement. The extent to which the absence of the voices of poets matters might be debated: the job of poets is to write poetry, and the job of education secretaries is to oversee the school curriculum. However, as esteemed public advocates of poetry, Poet Laureates are invested in the public stewardship of poetry in a way that an education secretary with an average term of two years is not. It seems unlikely that a Poet Laureate would have passed the 1789 rule or excluded poets from other cultures and traditions. One of the implications of this study might be a reconsideration of the democratic place of a curriculum advisory body and how its authority might best be constituted.

While I worked on this thesis, many people asked if I would conclude my analysis with the recommendation of a new list of poems and poets for pupils to study for GCSE English literature. Those expectations are disappointed here. My concern is with the broader issues of how all the possibilities of poetry as a source of lifelong reading, enjoyment and learning might best be developed through the school English curriculum; how poetry might be constructed in curriculum and assessment choices to better serve the purposes of social justice in education; and how a more robust educational infrastructure might ensure that the rounded expertise of poets and public advocates for poetry, poetry teachers, teacher educators and education researchers is consulted, respected and attended to in the formation of curriculum policy. The fundamental concern I am left with from this study is that England currently has diminished processes of curriculum determination and that is not in the best interests of young people, civil society or democratic government.

Original contributions to knowledge

This study contributes to the empirical knowledge of English as a school curriculum subject. It provides a comprehensive and closely documented account of how poetry was constructed as an entity within the national curriculum for English at key stage 4, and how this construction

⁷⁵ The Mother Tongue Other Tongue project was originally devised by staff in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University and Routes into Languages North West. It has been running since 2012.

changed over time in response to different political imperatives. In addition to creating the empirical basis of chapter 4 of this thesis, *Parameters for Poetry*, my research need for access to all the original national curriculum for English key stage 4 documents has helped to progress the cataloguing and documentation of the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education's collection of historic national curriculum documents to create a more accessible archive for future scholars. I have also arranged to provide Derek Gillard with digital reproductions of rare documents missing from his outstanding web archive of the history of education⁷⁶, such that a wider constituency of researchers, policy makers and other interested parties worldwide can access these materials. More broadly, the empirical footing of this thesis has made it possible to observe the specific effects of political power and professional agency in this historical curriculum context, as shown in chapter 6 *Evidencing power and agency*, and to be clear that binary oppositions of the kind that have characterised much debate about English in education are of limited validity in the face of the empirical evidence of what happened.

The empirical contribution of this thesis is also represented in the original and comprehensive data set constructed from almost every awarding body specification for GCSE English literature over the 30 year period, the database development of that data set, and the tables produced by quantitative analysis. It is now possible to see which anthologies, poets and poems were set when in the six iterations of GCSE English literature, and how these choices compared with the intentions of the statutory orders of the national curriculum. The database is generative, in that it is possible to use it to construct and answer many different queries about poetry in this educational context, and it could be further developed. Alongside this thesis, I have already used it to write journal articles about the representation of Sylvia Plath's poetry in school poetry anthologies for Americanist literary scholars (Blake, forthcoming), and about the changing canon of Caribbean poetry in GCSE English literature for Caribbean educators (Blake and Alonso, forthcoming). Constructing this database was a monumental, single-handed and mostly invisible labour; I intend to make it available in a suitable format in due course such that other professionals and scholars might conduct their own enquiries.

This thesis has also recovered the material artefacts - 99 school poetry anthologies - of a significant part of the subject history of school English and it has shown how that subject history might be amplified by attending to these books as instantiations of policy interpretation. The timeline provided in chapter 5, *Following the Things*, provides an empirical trail for others to

⁷⁶ *Education in England: the History of our Schools*, available at <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/>. Derek Gillard deserves more than my gratitude for this invaluable work of scholarly recovery, interpretation, and accessibility.

follow. Anthologies and the practices of anthologising have recently become a focus of interest in literary scholarship, and I recently presented some aspects of chapter 8, *Observing canon formation*, at the international conference *Canon? Practice? Commodity? The Past, Present and Future of the Literary Anthology* at Queen Mary, University of London. Within this field, however, school poetry anthologies are under-researched and my wider exploration of the genre during the course of this research suggests there is interesting work to be done in recovering their longer history. J. Christopher Warner's account of the didactic purposes of the first English-language poetry anthology published in England, *Tottel's Miscellany* (Warner 2013) provides a conceptual starting point for this and Ian Michael's bibliographic documentation of school anthologies from 1771-1870 provides an empirical one; new bibliographic work is needed to complete the record, including in colonial education contexts where anthologies were a key ideological and pedagogical tool. I intend this to be the subject of my next major research project.

The collection of anthologies also proved of wider public and professional interest as material artefacts than as merely the empirical basis of this thesis. In public and professional engagement work, I talked about and displayed various aspects of the anthologies in conference presentations and workshops for teachers and English in Education researchers, and under the auspices of the Cambridge University Library's Rose Book Collecting Prize, a public exhibition at the University Library, a related public talk and University Library Special Collections blogpost (Blake 2019). Interest in this work resulted in a feature in the online edition of *The Guardian* (Flood 2019) and many people contacted me via email and social media to tell me about their memories of school poetry anthologies, often accompanied by digital images from copies they have kept and offers to donate them to my collection. People have intense affective memories of their school poetry anthologies and there would seem to be scope for further public engagement and research to amplify other empirical studies of the lived historical experience of school English.

On the basis of the empirical work undertaken for this thesis, I have been able to develop a model of diachronic change in the pedagogical canon of poetry for GCSE English Literature, as detailed in chapter 8 *Observing canon formation*. The model is predicated on the idea that each poem and its granular trace through curriculum time constitutes the "sedimented history" of our subject. This is visualised as six connected sedimentary layers, although the model also allows for dynamic change in the state of any of its poems' particles: they can move between layers when there is a catalyst of change. This geological metaphor affords a perspective that allows us to better understand the nature of time and process in curriculum history. It also offers a theoretical model to be tested empirically against other changing corpora of anthologies to determine

whether it only models the patterns of change in this particular canon, or whether it applies more widely as a theoretical description of the process of literary canon formation. The invaluable act of anthology recovery that underpins Constance Ruzich's research into the lesser known poetry of the First World War⁷⁷ could provide an excellent test case. Information about her collection of anthologies could offer a more extended history of anthology-making in the interests of canon formation, and an interesting potential addition to the model's dynamics in the patterns created by conscious memorialisation at the 50th anniversary in 1964-1968 and the centenary commemorations of 2014-18.

Chapter 7 of this thesis, *Defining adolescent poetry*, adds to the theoretical perspective developed by Louise Joy of an aesthetic of adolescent poetry (Joy 2010). Poetry has been an under-researched area of children's literature by comparison with fiction written for children, though a small number of recent publications (Wakely-Mulroney and Joy 2018, Pullinger 2017, Styles, Joy and Whitley 2010) suggests the situation may have changed a little since Morag Styles's 1998 description of her work in writing a 300 year history of children's poetry as "a lonely occupation" (Styles 1998:ix). In the broader field of children's literature, considerable attention is paid to adolescent (or 'young adult') fiction; in contrast, children's poetry research mostly focuses on poetry written for and read by children up to about the age of 12. Joy's chapter is groundbreaking and in examining the top-ranking poems in the GCSE English literature corpus, I have added to this discussion a set of formal, tonal and thematic elements constitutive of a more recent aesthetic of adolescent poetry. In the cases both of poetry for young children and for adolescents, these are of course canons constituted by adults for young people, not by young people. It would be intriguing to explore in more detail what canon of poetry interested adolescents might claim for themselves, and what aesthetic values this might represent.

This thesis has also contributed a little more specific detail to the idea of a 'popular' or 'indigenous' canon of literature, that "which is most widely known, enjoyed, remembered; which is quoted and recalled, which is used by people to define their everyday experience and which in turn prompts them to redefine their own experience in words" (Walmsley 1990:4). Anne Walmsley wrote this definition as part of a discussion about the critical role of anthologies used

⁷⁷ Professor Ruzich describes this more poetically on her blog as the "lost voices and faded poems". Her blog, *Behind their Lines*, presented a lost voice or faded poem to a wide public audience every week from 2014-2018 (and new content continues to be added in June 2019).

in Caribbean schools in defining such a popular, indigenous literary canon. In showing the relationship between the diachronic pedagogical canon for GCSE English literature and popular polls of the nation's favourite poems in chapter 8, *Observing canon formation*, I would add that this idea is not limited to a nation seeking to determine its literary heritage out of the shadow of past colonial imposition. It is not solely a matter of encounters with school poetry anthologies either: the Leverhulme-funded *Poetry and Memory* research project points to domestic, family contexts for learning poems by heart that are remembered over the course of a lifetime (Whitley and Pullinger 2017). Further research is needed to illuminate the multiple dynamics by which the popular canon and public understanding of poetry are developed. Nonetheless, Anne Walmsley's point that "schools are still where Caribbean literature is most widely read in Caribbean society" is a useful reminder that what happens in schools is significant.

Martin Mueller's conceptualisation of the use of digital affordances to achieve a "Scalable Reading" (Mueller 2012), one that is capable of allowing the reader to pan between text and context, has been critical in understanding the methodological contribution this thesis makes to a version of digital humanities that is less concerned with algorithms and more with ways of seeing. During the course of this research I experimented with an algorithmic approach to my data. I spent some considerable time creating an electronic corpus of a large sample of the 6,903 poems and running the Mallet semantic topic modelling programme to analyse the statistical patterns of collocation by which I might identify key topics in the data set. This was an interesting experiment but I did not use it here, partly because I was not sufficiently confident of the robustness of the input data, but mostly because I wanted my research to be understood outside the field of digital humanities. As Martin Mueller has explained, the term 'D.H.' "puts phenomena into the ghetto of an acronym that makes its practitioners feel good about themselves but allows the rest of the humanities to ignore them" (Mueller 2012). This thesis contributes to the field of English in Education, a humanities discipline nested in social science faculties; the same warning would apply despite Education's greater tendency than the traditional Humanities to make use of quantitative methods. However, I hope that demonstrating the potential of working at scale and with number, and scaling between quantitative abstraction and the aesthetic, material source texts will contribute to the creation of ambitious new pathways for research in our field.

The specific innovation of a weighted quantitative method for establishing the reputational profiles of anthologised poets over time has possibilities for literary scholars interested in reception histories, anthologies and canon formation. The method presented here is the result of

considerable trial and error, and I would welcome challenges to its assumptions and opportunities to test it against other data sets in order to refine it further, but it has veracity in relation to my deep professional experience of the canon under scrutiny. That experience gave me the confidence to work with a certain degree of designed fuzziness. The numerical calculations are ‘capta’, as Johanna Drücker has articulated the concept, material that has been collated and manipulated by human enquiry, not the reification of objectivity that the word ‘data’ assumes (Drücker 2011). This is a humanistic method that seeks to illuminate the topic through number without being bound to a logic the material does not abide by. I hope this application of ‘fuzziness’ makes an additional contribution to the development of research methods for quantitative literary studies.

Finally, this thesis has made considered use of a variety of images and data visualisations in order to achieve its methodological goal of creatively disrupting existing ways of seeing the topic under discussion. This variety includes photographs, visual heuristics, popular culture artefacts, graphs and charts, and a conceptual model, the visualisation in chapter eight of the pedagogical canon for GCSE English literature as touching layers of sedimentary accretion. This visualisation contributes by exemplification and extension to Johanna Drücker’s argument that digital humanists need to think differently about data visualisation, reflecting the contingency and constructivism of the ‘capta’ they are working with rather than appropriating in an unreflective way the x and y axes of a positivist research paradigm (Drücker 2011). Overall, the visual approach adopted in this thesis has enabled me to better articulate what I ‘see’ in this research and to communicate it effectively in public and professional engagement work⁷⁸. I should have liked to go further in order to contribute to debate about the future of the doctoral dissertation as a digital multimodal form (Andrews 2012, 2014) in domains other than arts-based practice.

I should still like to know a lot more about how particular decisions were made about particular poets and poems, along the lines of Asha Rogers’s discussion of how ‘Tatamkhulu Afrika’s poem ‘Nothing’s Changed’ came to feature in the NEAB anthology via a Devon Curriculum Services intervention with local schools (Rogers 2015). I did not have sufficient time to interview awarding body officers and senior examiners about their anthology-making practices or to consider in more detail the processes by which particular poems achieved salience, such as by being featured in well regarded teacher resources⁷⁹. I should have liked to have developed a

⁷⁸ In this, the timeline of anthologies in chapter 5 and the ‘bar codes’ in chapter 9 have proved particularly resonant with audiences.

⁷⁹ Peter Thomas of NATE and Barbara Bleiman of the English and Media Centre kindly offered to help me with these matters but I just couldn’t do everything.

comparative and international dimension to this study by looking at the anthologies developed or selected for English literature qualifications for school pupils that are equivalent to GCSE. This proved beyond the scope of this thesis though I collected anthologies used for the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) qualification in English literature (for example McWatt and Simmons-McDonald 1994), the Cambridge international GCSE (Cambridge International Examinations 2018a, 2018b), and the WJEC GCSE for schools in Wales (Stephens 2007). I hope this thesis will prove generative by providing a foundation for such future work.

During the course of this thesis I developed a new understanding of the importance of the work English teachers, examiners and awarding body staff do in order to process curriculum policy into a practice that is meaningful for a nation's young people. English teachers and their professional community are engaged in the detailed daily negotiation of the pedagogical literary canon and a nation's tastes. This is work that Whitley and Pullinger's work tells us will last a child's lifetime, and beyond in the pattern of influence their tastes may have on their children and grandchildren (Whitley and Pullinger 2017). This long slow relationship deserves considerably more attention than this thesis has been able to provide.

A coda

A PhD is a personal journey as well as an intellectual one. On the final day that I worked on this thesis a small package dropped through my letter box. I opened it and inside was a crisp cellophane envelope containing two heart shapes. There was a pink paper heart with a typed note of encouragement. There was also a pale blue padded felt heart. It had a house and two trees sewn onto it, a moon in the sky and silver sequins suggesting starlight and snow. In the centre of the heart there was a white horse with a tiny functioning bell sewn onto its bridle. A man sat astride the horse looking at the house. Beneath the man and the horse there was a milestone. A photograph cannot do justice to the tactile beauty or emotional resonance of this object but it is shown as figure 9.2 below.



Figure 9.2: Robert Frost's poem 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' represented as a pale blue embroidered heart.

This pale blue padded heart is a personal response to Robert Frost's poem 'Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening', embroidered by my 74 year old mum, Daphne Blake. Her experience of education left her with no poetry. This stitched heart articulates in its "mute inglorious" way an acceptance, at last, of my lifelong enjoyment of a form my family disparaged as 'posh' and 'pretentious', a matter of social class exclusion and educational injustice. It also articulates a tacit recognition that my quest for an education has always positioned me outside of the house with "miles to go before I sleep". There is no finer symbol of my continuing optimism that things can change, though it may take generations, than this pale blue heart.

Poem D: Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost

Poem removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holders are Henry Holt and Company and Penguin Random House.

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Appendix A: Poets in the GCSE English literature corpus

Table A.1: the 1,489 poets in the GCSE English literature corpus

#	Last Name	First Name
1.	Abse	Dannie
2.	Abutsu	The Nun
3.	Achebe	Chinua
4.	Adams	Anna
5.	Adcock	Fleur
6.	Adisa	Opal Palmer
7.	Afrika	Tatamkhulu
8.	Agard	John
9.	Agard	Sandra
10.	Agustini	Delmira
11.	Aidoo	Christine Ama Ata
12.	Aiken	Conrad
13.	Ajibade	Ebony
14.	Akhmadulina	Bella
15.	Akhmatova	Anna
16.	Akiko	Yosano
17.	Akin	Gulten
18.	Albiach	Anne-Marie
19.	Aldington	Richard
20.	Ali	Jamal
21.	Alighieri	Dante
22.	Al-Khansa	
23.	Allan	Lewis
24.	Allen	Marian
25.	Allingham	William
26.	Allison	Drummond
27.	Allnutt	Gillian
28.	Allott	Kenneth
29.	Allwood	Brian
30.	Al-Mustakfi	Wallada bint
31.	Als	Michael
32.	Alvi	Moniza
33.	Amichai	Yehuda
34.	Amis	Kingsley
35.	an tSaoi	Maire Mhac
36.	Andersen	Sophia de Mello Breyner
37.	Anderson	Lillian M.
38.	Andrewes	Walter
39.	Angelou	Maya
40.	Anghelaki-Rooke	Katerina

41.	Anonymous	
42.	Anyiam-St. John	Rita
43.	ap Gwilym	Dafydd
44.	Apollinaire	Guillaume
45.	Appleton	Peter
46.	Arden	John
47.	Arlott	John
48.	Armitage	Simon
49.	Armitage	Jennifer
50.	Armour	Richard
51.	Armstrong	Frankie
52.	Armstrong	Martin
53.	Armstrong	Thomas
54.	Arnold	Matthew
55.	Arrowsmith	Pat
56.	Asalache	Khadambi
57.	Ashbrook	John
58.	Ashby	Gerald
59.	Asquith	Herbert
60.	Attah	Samar
61.	Attik	Mririda n'Ait
62.	Atwood	Margaret
63.	Auden	W.H.
64.	Avila	Saint Theresa of
65.	Aylen	Leo
66.	Aymerich	Angela Figuera
67.	Ayres	Pam
68.	Ba	Oumar
69.	Bachmann	Ingeborg
70.	Bai	Mira
71.	Baillie	Joanna
72.	Bain	Bruce
73.	Bain	Donald
74.	Baker	Peter
75.	Baldwin	Michael
76.	Banus	Maria
77.	Bargate	Verity
78.	Barham	Richard Harris
79.	Baring	Maurice
80.	Barker	George
81.	Barnes	William
82.	Barnes	Leonard
83.	Barnfield	Richard
84.	Barrington	Pauline

85.	Barrow	Raymond
86.	Barsley	Michael
87.	Basho	Matsuo
88.	Bastien	Elliott
89.	Baugh	Edward
90.	Baxter	James K.
91.	Baybars	Taner
92.	Bayliss	John
93.	Bazeley	Rebecca
94.	Beaumont	John
95.	Beaumont	Francis
96.	Beddoes	Thomas Lovell
97.	Bedford	William
98.	Bedford	Madeline Ida
99.	Beer	Patricia
100.	Begbie	Harold
101.	Behn	Aphra
102.	Bell	Maud Anna
103.	Bell	Vera
104.	Bellerby	Frances
105.	Belloc	Hilaire
106.	Benedikt	Michael
107.	Benjamin	Olga
108.	Bennett	Rose
109.	Bennett	Louise
110.	Bentley	Edmund Clerihew
111.	Bergonzi	Bernard
112.	Berners	Juliana
113.	Berry	Francis
114.	Berry	James
115.	Bethell	Mary Ursula
116.	Betjeman	John
117.	Bewsher	Paul
118.	Bhatt	Sujata
119.	Bickerstaff	Isaac
120.	Binyon	Laurence
121.	Birney	Earle
122.	Bishop	Elizabeth
123.	Bishop	John Peale
124.	Black	David Macleod
125.	Blackburn	Thomas
126.	Blacksheep	Jawiattika
127.	Blake	William
128.	Blight	John

129.	Bloom	Valerie
130.	Blunden	Edmund
131.	Bluwstein	Rachel (Rahel)
132.	Boatswain	Hugh Hailson
133.	Bodker	Cecil
134.	Bogan	Louise
135.	Bold	Alan
136.	Bomford	Nora
137.	Borrell	D.E.
138.	Bottomley	Gordon
139.	Bottrall	Ronald
140.	Boumi-Pappas	Rita
141.	Bourne	David
142.	Bowers	Edgar
143.	Boyd	Mark Alexander
144.	Boyd	A.C.
145.	Boye	Karin
146.	Bradstreet	Anne
147.	Bragg	Billy
148.	Brand	Dionne
149.	Branson	Clive
150.	Brasch	Charles
151.	Brathwaite	Edward Kamau
152.	Brazier	David
153.	Brecht	Bertolt
154.	Breeze	Jean Binta
155.	Brennan	Joseph Payne
156.	Breton	Nicholas
157.	Brew	Kwesi
158.	Brewster	Elizabeth
159.	Bridges	Robert
160.	Bridges-Adam	William
161.	Bristowe	Sybil
162.	Brittain	Vera
163.	Brock	Edwin
164.	Broderick	Philomena
165.	Bronowski	Jacob
166.	Bronte	Anne
167.	Bronte	Emily
168.	Brooke	Rupert
169.	Brooke	Jocelyn
170.	Brooks	Gwendolyn
171.	Brown	George Mackay
172.	Brown	Audrey Alexandra

173.	Brown	Pete
174.	Brown	Pauline
175.	Brown	Wayne
176.	Browne	William
177.	Browning	Elizabeth Barrett
178.	Browning	Robert
179.	Brownjohn	Alan
180.	Brutus	Dennis
181.	Bryceson	Alexander
182.	Buck	Heather
183.	Buckley	Vincent
184.	Bull	Arthur J.
185.	Bullett	Gerald
186.	Bunting	Basil
187.	Bunyan	John
188.	Burden	Jean
189.	Burge	Maureen
190.	Burke	Thomas
191.	Burns	Jim
192.	Burns	Robert
193.	Buruga	Joseph
194.	Bush	Duncan
195.	Butler	Samuel
196.	Buxton	John
197.	Byrne	Dorothy
198.	Byrom	John
199.	Byron	George Gordon
200.	Caesar	Imruh Bakari
201.	Calder	Dave
202.	Cameron	Norman
203.	Campbell	Roy
204.	Campbell	David
205.	Campbell	Thomas
206.	Campbell	George
207.	Campion	Thomas
208.	Cannan	May Wedderburn
209.	Carberry	Hugh Doston
210.	Carew	Thomas
211.	Carew	Jan
212.	Carey	Henry
213.	Carpenter	Maurice
214.	Carr	Peggy
215.	Carroll	Lewis
216.	Carson	Ciaran

217.	Carter	Martin
218.	Carter	Sydney
219.	Carver	Raymond
220.	Casey	Mary
221.	Cassels	James Kenneth
222.	Cassian	Nina
223.	Cassidy	John
224.	Castellanos	Rosario
225.	Catnach	James
226.	Cato	Nancy
227.	Causley	Charles
228.	Cavafy	Constantine P.
229.	Chakrabarti	Nirendranath
230.	Chaloner	Robert L.
231.	Champkin	Peter
232.	Chandidas	
233.	Chaplin	James Harvey
234.	Chapman	George
235.	Charles	Faustin
236.	Chatterton	Thomas
237.	Chaucer	Geoffrey
238.	Chen	Willi
239.	Chesterton	G.K.
240.	Chettle	Henry
241.	Chien	Wang
242.	Ch'ien	T'ao
243.	Chin	Ch'iu
244.	Ching-chao	Li
245.	Chin-i	Hwang
246.	Ch'on-myong	No
247.	Chu	Li
248.	Chu-i	Po
249.	Chun	Hsi
250.	Chung	Rosemarie
251.	Church	Richard
252.	Claire	Paula
253.	Clanchy	Kate
254.	Clare	John
255.	Clark	Leonard
256.	Clark	John Pepper
257.	Clarke	Gillian
258.	Clarke	John Cooper
259.	Clarke	Isabel Constance
260.	Clarke	Austin

261.	Clementelli	Elena
262.	Cleveland	John
263.	Cliff-Lubwa	A.R.
264.	Clothier	Cal
265.	Clough	Arthur Hugh
266.	Cockrill	Maurice
267.	Cohen	Leonard
268.	Cole	Margaret Postgate
269.	Cole	Barry
270.	Coleridge	Samuel Taylor
271.	Coleridge	Mary Elizabeth
272.	Collins	Billy
273.	Collins	Merle
274.	Collins	William
275.	Collins	Mary Gabrielle
276.	Collymore	Frank
277.	Colonna	Vittoria
278.	Colum	Padraic
279.	Compton	Henry
280.	Congreve	William
281.	Conn	Stewart
282.	Connor	Tony
283.	Conquest	Robert
284.	Constantine	David
285.	Cook	Stanley
286.	Cope	Wendy
287.	Corbet	Richard
288.	Corbett	Pie
289.	Corbin	Alice
290.	Corby	Herbert
291.	Corinna	
292.	Corke	Hilary
293.	Cornford	Frances
294.	Cornford	John
295.	Cornish	William
296.	Corsellis	Timothy
297.	Cory	William
298.	Cotton	John
299.	Cotton	Charles
300.	Coulson	Leslie
301.	Coupey	Pierre
302.	Couzyn	Jeni
303.	Cowley	Abraham
304.	Cowper	William

305.	Crabbe	George
306.	Craig	Dennis
307.	Craig	Christine
308.	Crane	Stephen
309.	Crang	Alan
310.	Crashaw	Richard
311.	Creeley	Robert
312.	Crichton Smith	Iain
313.	Cross	Beth
314.	Crossley-Holland	Kevin
315.	Cruikshank	Alfred M.
316.	cummings	e e
317.	Cunard	Nancy
318.	Cunningham	James Vincent
319.	Curnow	Allen
320.	Currey	Ralph Nixon
321.	Cutler	Ivor
322.	da Sousa	Noemia
323.	Dabydeen	David
324.	d'Aguiar	Frederick
325.	Dammers	Kim
326.	Daniel	John
327.	Daniel	Samuel
328.	Darley	George
329.	Daruwalla	Keki N.
330.	Daryush	Elizabeth
331.	Das	Kamala
332.	Das	Mahadai
333.	Davenant	William
334.	Davidson	John
335.	Davidson	Joan
336.	Davies	W.H.
337.	Davies	J.R.S.
338.	Davies	John
339.	Davies	Idris
340.	Davis	Dick
341.	Day	Jeffery
342.	Day-Lewis	Cecil
343.	D'Costa	Jean
344.	De	Ira
345.	de Avellaneda	Gertrudis Gomez
346.	de Brebeuf	Georges
347.	de Burgos	Julia
348.	de Castro	Rosalia

349.	de Die	Comtesse
350.	de France	Marie
351.	de Graft	Joe
352.	de Ibarbourou	Juana
353.	De Kok	Ingrid
354.	de la Cruz	Sor Juana Ines
355.	de la Mare	Walter
356.	de Lemos	Gouveia
357.	de Navarre	Marguerite
358.	de Noailles	Anna
359.	de Pisan	Christine
360.	de Sant'Ana	Gloria
361.	de Stein	Edward
362.	Dearmer	Geoffrey
363.	Dehn	Paul
364.	Dekker	Thomas
365.	Dempster	Roland Tombeki
366.	Deshoulieres	Madame
367.	Deutsch	Babette
368.	Devaney	James
369.	Dharker	Imtiaz
370.	Dickey	James
371.	Dickinson	Emily
372.	Dickinson	Patric
373.	Diop	David
374.	Dipoko	Mbella Sonne
375.	Dircks	Helen
376.	Ditlevsen	Tove
377.	Dixey	Giles
378.	Dixon	Peter
379.	Dixon	Richard Watson
380.	do Espirito Santo	Alda
381.	Dobell	Sydney
382.	Dobell	Eva
383.	Dolezal	Anna
384.	Donne	John
385.	Dooley	Maura
386.	Doolittle	Hilda (H.D.)
387.	Dorcey	Mary
388.	Douglas	Keith
389.	Douglas	Marcia
390.	Dove	Rita
391.	Dowland (?)	John
392.	Dowling	Basil

393.	Dowson	Ernest
394.	Drayton	Michael
395.	Drinkwater	John
396.	Drummond	William
397.	Dryden	John
398.	du Guillet	Pernette
399.	Duchess of Newcastle	Margaret
400.	Duffy	Carol Ann
401.	Dugan	Alan
402.	Duggan	Eileen
403.	Dunbar	William
404.	Duncan	Robert
405.	Duncan	Ronald
406.	Dunk	Ben
407.	Dunlop	William
408.	Dunn	Douglas
409.	Durrant	Creswell
410.	Durrell	Lawrence
411.	Dyer	Edward
412.	Dyment	Clifford
413.	Easten	Meg
414.	Eastlake	William
415.	Eberhart	Richard
416.	Eden	Helen Parry
417.	Edgar	Marriott
418.	Eglington	Charles
419.	Elimimian	Isaac I.
420.	Eliot	T.S.
421.	Elizabeth I	Queen
422.	Elliot	Gabrielle
423.	Ellis	Steve
424.	Ellis	Royston
425.	Emerson	Ralph Waldo
426.	Empson	William
427.	Endicoff	Max
428.	Enright	D.J.
429.	Escoffery	Gloria
430.	Evans	Paul
431.	Evans	Abel
432.	Ewart	Gavin
433.	Ezekiel	Nissim
434.	Fainlight	Ruth
435.	Fairburn	A.R.D.
436.	Fairfax	John

437.	Fairfax	J. Griffyth
438.	Faiz	Faiz Ahmed
439.	Fallon	Peter
440.	Fanshawe	Richard
441.	Fanthorpe	UA
442.	Farjeon	Eleanor
443.	Farrar	James
444.	Farrell	Fiona
445.	Farren	Robert
446.	Farrokhzad	Forough
447.	Fearing	Kenneth
448.	Feaver	Vicki
449.	Feinstein	Elaine
450.	Fell	Alison
451.	Fenton	James
452.	Ferland	Barbara
453.	Ferlinghetti	Lawrence
454.	Ffrench	Yvonne
455.	Figuroa	John
456.	Finch	Anne
457.	Finch	Peter
458.	Fisher	Roy
459.	Fitzgerald	Edward
460.	Flecker	James Elroy
461.	Fleming	Marjory
462.	Fletcher	John
463.	Fletcher	Phineas
464.	Fletcher	Giles
465.	Flood	Sally
466.	Flynn	Lorraine
467.	Foottit	Keith
468.	Ford	John
469.	Ford	Sophia Gertrude
470.	Forde	A.N.
471.	Forman	Elizabeth Chandler
472.	Forster	Andrew
473.	Franco	Veronica
474.	Frankau	Gilbert
475.	Fraser	George Sutherland
476.	Freeman	John
477.	Freuchen	Peter
478.	Frost	Robert
479.	Fry	Christopher
480.	Fuertes	Gloria

481.	Fuller	Roy
482.	Fuller	John
483.	Fullerton ('E')	Mary
484.	Gambara	Veronica
485.	Ganjavi	Mahsati
486.	Gard	Lillian
487.	Garland	Beatrice
488.	Garlick	Raymond
489.	Garnett	Richard
490.	Garrett	Georgia
491.	Garstin	Crosbie
492.	Gascoigne	George
493.	Gascoyne	David
494.	Gawsworth	John
495.	Gay	John
496.	Gershon	Karen
497.	Ghose	Zulfikar
498.	Gibbons	Stella
499.	Gibbons	Orlando
500.	Gibson	Wilfrid Wilson
501.	Gibson	Miles
502.	Gibson	Douglas
503.	Gilhooly	Bernard
504.	Gill	David
505.	Gillilan	Pamela
506.	Gilman	Charlotte Perkins
507.	Gilmore	Mary
508.	Gilmore	John T.
509.	Ginsberg	Allen
510.	Gittings	Robert
511.	Glover	Denis
512.	Gluck	Louise
513.	Godolphin	Sidney
514.	Godwin	Peter
515.	Goldberg	Leah
516.	Goldsmith	Oliver
517.	Gonzalez	Anson
518.	Goodison	Lorna
519.	Gorbanyevskaya	Natalya
520.	Goulbourne	Jean
521.	Graham	Henry
522.	Graham	James
523.	Graham	Muriel Elsie
524.	Graham	Harry

525.	Gransden	Ken W.
526.	Graves	Robert
527.	Gray	Thomas
528.	Gray	Cecil
529.	Green	F. Pratt
530.	Greene	Robert
531.	Greenwell	Dora
532.	Greig	Robert
533.	Grenfell	Julian
534.	Grenfell-Hill	Jeffrey
535.	Greville	Fulke
536.	Gridley	Gordon
537.	Grieg	Andrew
538.	Griffin	Susan
539.	Griffith	Wyn
540.	Griffiths	Nora
541.	Griffiths	Bryn
542.	Grigson	Geoffrey
543.	Guidacci	Margherita
544.	Guillen	Nicolas
545.	Guinness	Bryan
546.	Gunn	Thom
547.	Gurney	John
548.	Gurney	Ivor
549.	Gurney	Diana
550.	Guthrie	Woody
551.	Gutteridge	Bernard
552.	Gyodai	Kato
553.	Habington	William
554.	Hadewijch	
555.	Hadfield	Jen
556.	Haggard	Stephen
557.	Haggith	Mandy
558.	Haines	John
559.	Hajinal	Anna
560.	Hall	John Clive
561.	Hall	Martin
562.	Hamblett	Charles
563.	Hamburger	Michael
564.	Hamilton	Ian
565.	Hamilton	George Rostrevor
566.	Hamilton	Cicely
567.	Hamilton	Helen
568.	Hampson	Norman

569.	Hanim	Nigar
570.	Hanim (Saz)	Leyla
571.	Hannah	Sophie
572.	Hardi	Choman
573.	Hardy	Thomas
574.	Harris	Wilson
575.	Harrison	Tony
576.	Harrison	Ada M.
577.	Harsent	David
578.	Harte	Bret
579.	Hartnett	Michael
580.	Hart-Smith	William
581.	Harvey	F.W.
582.	Harwood	Lee
583.	Hassall	Christopher
584.	Hatun	Mihri
585.	Hawkins	Spike
586.	Hawkins	Desmond
587.	Hayhoe	Mike
588.	Haynes	David Nathaniel
589.	Heaney	Seamus
590.	Heath-Stubbs	John
591.	Hebert	Anne
592.	Hecht	Anthony
593.	Heguri	Lady
594.	Henderson	Mary H.J.
595.	Henderson	Hamish
596.	Henderson	Harold Gould
597.	Henderson	Stewart
598.	Hendricks	Arthur Lemiere
599.	Henley	William Ernest
600.	Henri	Adrian
601.	Henryson	Robert
602.	Heppenstall	Rayner
603.	Herbert	George
604.	Herbert	A.P.
605.	Herbert	Edward
606.	Herbert	Zbigniew
607.	Herbert	C.L.
608.	Herbertson	Agnes Grozier
609.	Herrick	Robert
610.	Herschel-Clarke	May
611.	Hesketh	Phoebe
612.	Hewitt	John

613.	Hewlett	Maurice
614.	Hidden	Norman
615.	Higgins	Frederick Robert
616.	Hilaire	Patricia
617.	Hill	Geoffrey
618.	Hill	Richard
619.	Hill	Selima
620.	Hill	Alan
621.	Hinkson	Anthony
622.	Hinton	Debbie
623.	Hippius	Zinaida
624.	Hippolyte	Kendel
625.	Hitomaro	
626.	Hobsbaum	Philip
627.	Hodgson	Ralph
628.	Hodgson	William Noel
629.	Hodgson	Thomas Rahilley
630.	Holbrook	David
631.	Hollins	Amy
632.	Hollo	Anselm
633.	Holloway	John
634.	Holloway	Mark
635.	Holmes	Robert L.
636.	Holub	Miroslav
637.	Homer	
638.	Hood	Thomas
639.	Hooker	Jeremy
640.	Hooley	Teresa
641.	Hope	Alec Derwent
642.	Hopkins	Gerard Manley
643.	Hopkinson	Slade
644.	Horovitz	Frances
645.	Horovitz	Michael
646.	Horta	Maria Teresa
647.	Hosain	Shahid
648.	Housman	A.E.
649.	Houston	Libby
650.	Howard	Henry
651.	Howard	R.C.M.
652.	Hroswitha	
653.	Hsin	Ping
654.	Hsuan-chi	Yu
655.	Hubert	Cam
656.	Huch	Ricarda

657.	Hughes	Ted
658.	Hughes	Langston
659.	Hughes	Glyn
660.	Hughes	Richard
661.	Hunt	James Leigh
662.	Huntley	Accabre
663.	Huong	Ho Xuan
664.	Hutchins	Liz
665.	Ingamells	Rex
666.	Ingram	Ken
667.	Iratsume	Kasa no
668.	Issa	Kobayashi
669.	Jackowska	Nicki
670.	Jackson	Alan
671.	Jackson	Aunt Molly
672.	James	Martin
673.	James I of Scotland	King
674.	Jamie	Kathleen
675.	Jara	Victor
676.	Jarmain	John
677.	Jarman	Geraint
678.	Jarrell	Randall
679.	Jean-Baptiste	Emmanuel
680.	Jeffers	Robinson
681.	Jenkins	Elinor
682.	Jennett	Sean
683.	Jennings	Elizabeth
684.	Jito	Empress
685.	John	Frank
686.	Johnson	Amryl
687.	Johnson	B.S.
688.	Johnson	Geoffrey
689.	Johnson	Samuel
690.	Johnson	Lionel
691.	Johnson	Linton Kwesi
692.	Johnson	Mick
693.	Johnstone	Philip
694.	Jones	Alice Gray
695.	Jones	Brian
696.	Jones	David
697.	Jones	David Geraint
698.	Jones	Denys L.
699.	Jones	Evan
700.	Jones	William

701.	Jones	J.I.
702.	Jones	Ernest
703.	Jonker	Ingrid
704.	Jonson	Ben
705.	Jordan	Thomas
706.	Jordan	Margot
707.	Joseph	M.K.
708.	Joseph	Jenny
709.	Joseph	Rosemary
710.	Joszef	Attila
711.	Jourdan	Pat
712.	Joyce	James
713.	Juhasz	Ferenc
714.	Kaffka	Margit
715.	Kanie	Leon Maurice Anoma
716.	Kantaris	Sylvia
717.	Karelli	Zoe
718.	Kassia	
719.	Kavanagh	Patrick
720.	Kay	Jackie
721.	Kay	John
722.	Keane	Shake
723.	Keats	John
724.	Keens-Douglas	Paul
725.	Kell	Richard
726.	Kelley/O'Driscoll	John/John
727.	Kelly	Sue
728.	Kennelly	Brendan
729.	Keown	Anna Gordon
730.	Kettle	Thomas Michael
731.	Keyes	Sidney
732.	Khalvati	Mimi
733.	Kilvert	Francis
734.	King	William
735.	King	Henry
736.	King	Francis
737.	King	Benjamin
738.	King	Jane
739.	Kinnell	Galway
740.	Kipling	Rudyard
741.	Kirkup	James
742.	Kirsch	Sarah
743.	Kizer	Carolyn
744.	Kizerman	Rudolph

745.	Knevet	Ralph
746.	Knight	John
747.	Knowles	Suzanne
748.	Kolatkar	Arun
749.	Kolmar	Gertrud
750.	Komachi	Ono no
751.	Komunyakaa	Yusuf
752.	Kooser	Ted
753.	Kops	Bernard
754.	Korn	Rachel
755.	Kumar	Shiv K.
756.	Kunitz	Stanley
757.	Kynaston	Francis
758.	La Fortune	Knolly Stephen
759.	La Rose	John
760.	Labe	Louise
761.	Lal	Purushottama
762.	Lamb	Mary
763.	Lamb	Charles
764.	Landesman	Fran
765.	Landor	Walter Savage
766.	Langland	Joseph
767.	Langland	William
768.	Langley	Tom
769.	Lanyon	Carla Lanyon
770.	Larkin	Philip
771.	Lashley	Cliff
772.	Lasker-Schuler	Else
773.	Lawrence	D.H.
774.	Lawrence	Margery
775.	Layton	Irving
776.	Lazard	Paul
777.	Lear	Edward
778.	Ledward	Patricia
779.	Ledwidge	Francis
780.	Lee	Laurie
781.	Lee	Christopher
782.	Lee	John Robert
783.	Leftwich	Joseph
784.	Lehmann	John
785.	Lenngren	Anna Maria
786.	Lennon	John
787.	Lennon/McCartney	John/Paul
788.	Leonard	Tom

789.	Lerner	Laurence
790.	Letts	Winifred M.
791.	Levertov	Denise
792.	Levi	Peter
793.	Levy	Amy
794.	Levy	Reginald
795.	Lewis	Alun
796.	Lewis	C.S.
797.	Lewis	Chaim
798.	Liadan	
799.	Lifshin	Lyn
800.	Lindsay	Vachel
801.	Lindsay	Olive E.
802.	Lindsay	Jack
803.	Lindsay	Maurice
804.	Ling	Lin
805.	Lipertis	Demetres
806.	Little	Lawrence
807.	Litvinoff	Emanuel
808.	Livesay	Dorothy
809.	Livingstone	Douglas
810.	Liyong	Taban Lo
811.	Lochhead	Liz
812.	Lodge	Thomas
813.	Logan	John
814.	Logue	Christopher
815.	Lomax	Alan and John
816.	Longfellow	Henry Wadsworth
817.	Lorca	Federico Garcia
818.	Lovelace	Richard
819.	Lowbury	Edward
820.	Lowell	Robert
821.	Lowell	Amy
822.	Lowery	Martyn
823.	Lowhar	Syl
824.	Lowther	Pat
825.	Lucas	Frank Laurence
826.	Lucie-Smith	Edward
827.	Lung	Richard Ho
828.	Lushington	Claude
829.	Lylly	John
830.	Lyon	Percy Hugh Beverley
831.	Macatti	Okkur
832.	Macaulay	Thomas Babington

833.	Macaulay	Rose
834.	MacBeth	George
835.	MacCaig	Norman
836.	MacColl	Ewan
837.	MacColl	D.S.
838.	MacDiarmid	Hugh
839.	MacDonagh	Donagh
840.	MacDonald	Nina
841.	MacEwen	Gwendolyn
842.	MacGill	Patrick
843.	Mackenzie	Kenneth
844.	Mackintosh	E.A.
845.	MacLeod	Mairi
846.	MacMillan	Ian
847.	MacNeice	Louis
848.	Magee	Wes
849.	Mahadeviyakka	
850.	Mahon	Derek
851.	Malik	Tariq
852.	Malik	Michael Abdul
853.	Mallalieu	Herbert Blythe
854.	Mandelstam	Osip
855.	Manifold	John
856.	Manner	Eeva-Liisa
857.	Mannes	Marya
858.	Mansour	Joyce
859.	Maraj	Jagdip
860.	Markham	E.A.
861.	Markham	Jehane
862.	Marlowe	Christopher
863.	Marquis	Don
864.	Marriott	Jack
865.	Marriott-Watson	Richard Breerton
866.	Marson	Una
867.	Martin	Stanley Alexander
868.	Martinson	Harry Edmund
869.	Marvell	Andrew
870.	Masefield	John
871.	Mason	R.A.K.
872.	Masters	Edgar Lee
873.	Mastin	Florence Ripley
874.	Mastoraki	Jenny
875.	Mathew	Ray
876.	Mathews	Henry

877.	Matthews	Geoffrey
878.	Matthews	Tony
879.	Matura	Mustapha
880.	Maxwell	Marina Ama Omowale
881.	Mayakovsky	Vladimir
882.	Mayo	Frances
883.	M'Baye D'Erneville	Annette
884.	McAndrew	Wordsworth
885.	McAuley	James
886.	McCabe	Brian
887.	McColl	Ewan
888.	McCormack	Phyllis
889.	McCrae	John
890.	McCreary	Frederick R.
891.	McCuaig	Ronald
892.	McDaniel	Judith
893.	McDonald	Ian
894.	McFarlane	Basil
895.	McGonagall	William Topaz
896.	McGough	Roger
897.	McKay	Claude
898.	McLeish	Archibald
899.	McLeod	Irene
900.	McNeill	Anthony
901.	McWatt	Mark
902.	Mei	Yuan
903.	Meireles	Cecilia
904.	Melville	Herman
905.	Melville	Pauline
906.	Menai	Huw
907.	Meredith	George
908.	Meredith	William
909.	Meriluoto	Aila
910.	Mew	Charlotte
911.	Meyerstein	Edward Harry William
912.	Meynell	Alice
913.	Michie	James
914.	Middleton	Christopher
915.	Mikhailov	Artyomy
916.	Miles	Judy
917.	Millay	Edna St Vincent
918.	Milligan	Spike
919.	Milne	Alan Alexander
920.	Milner	E.V.

921.	Milton	John
922.	Min	Cheng
923.	Ming	T'Ao Yuan
924.	Minhinnick	Robert
925.	Mistral	Gabriela
926.	Mitchell	Adrian
927.	Mitchell	Julian
928.	Mitchell	Ruth Comfort
929.	Moat	John
930.	Mole	John
931.	Molloy	Dorothy
932.	Molodowsky	Kadia
933.	Monar	Rooplall
934.	Monkhouse	Cosmo
935.	Monro	Harold
936.	Monroe	Harriet
937.	Montagu	Mary Wortley
938.	Montague	John
939.	Moore	Marianne
940.	Moore	Thomas
941.	Mordaunt	Robert Osbert
942.	Mordecai	Pam
943.	Morejon	Nancy
944.	Morgan	Edwin
945.	Morgan	Robert
946.	Morgan	Pete
947.	Morgenstern	Christian
948.	Morpurgo	Rahel
949.	Morris	Mervyn
950.	Morris	William
951.	Mtshali	Oswald Mbuyiseni
952.	Muir	Edwin
953.	Munday	Anthony
954.	Mundoon	Paul
955.	Munro	Robin
956.	Murphy	Richard
957.	Murray	Les
958.	Myrie	Daisy
959.	Nabokov	Vladimir
960.	Nagra	Daljit
961.	Nagy	Agnes Nemes
962.	Naidu	Sarojini
963.	Nam-jo	Kim
964.	Namjoshi	Suniti

965.	Nanak	Guru
966.	Nannakaiyar	Kaccipettu
967.	Nansorhon	Ho
968.	Nanton	Philip
969.	Napier	Felicity
970.	Nash	Ogden
971.	Nashe	Thomas
972.	Ndaaya	Citeku
973.	Neal	Kenneth
974.	Negri	Ada
975.	Nelson	Errol
976.	Nemerov	Howard
977.	Neruda	Pablo
978.	Nesbit	Edith
979.	Newbolt	Henry
980.	Newton	Eileen
981.	Ni Chonaill	Eibhlin Dhubh
982.	Nichols	Grace
983.	Nichols	Robert
984.	Nicholson	Norman
985.	Nicholson	Hubert
986.	Nicol	Abioseh
987.	no Chiyo	Kaga
988.	Noor	Omar Mohd.
989.	Norman	Alma
990.	Norman	Rosemary
991.	Normanton	John
992.	Norris	Leslie
993.	Northall	J.F.
994.	Norton	Caroline
995.	Norton	Eleanour
996.	Noyce	Wilfrid
997.	Noyes	Alfred
998.	Nukada	Princess
999.	Nunes	Fred
1000.	O	Huang
1001.	O'Boyle	Annette
1002.	O'Driscoll	Dennis
1003.	of Orleans	Charles
1004.	Ogden	Maurice
1005.	O'Hara	Frank
1006.	Okara	Gabriel
1007.	Olds	Sharon
1008.	Oliver	William Hosking

1009.	Oman	Carola
1010.	Onuora	Oku
1011.	Oppenheim	Roger
1012.	O'Rourke	May
1013.	Orr	Emily
1014.	O'Shaughnessy	Arthur
1015.	Osundare	Niyi
1016.	Otomo of Sakano	Lady
1017.	Owen	Wilfred
1018.	Owen	Gareth
1019.	Oxland	Nowell
1020.	Page	Patricia Kathleen
1021.	Palmer	Robert
1022.	Palmer	Herbert
1023.	Palmer	Timothy
1024.	Palmer	Roger
1025.	Paraske	Larin
1026.	Parikh	Pravin A.
1027.	Parker	Dorothy
1028.	Parthasarathy	Rajagopal
1029.	Parun	Vesna
1030.	Paterson	Don
1031.	Paterson	Alasdair
1032.	Paterson	Andrew Barton 'Banjo'
1033.	Patmore	Coventry
1034.	Patten	Brian
1035.	Pavlova	Karolina
1036.	Paxton	Tom
1037.	p'Bitek	Okot
1038.	Peacock	Thomas Love
1039.	Peake	Mervyn
1040.	Peele	George
1041.	Peters	Lenrie
1042.	Peters	Donald
1043.	Pheng	Lee Tzu
1044.	Phillip	Dawad
1045.	Phillips	Katherine
1046.	Phillips	Tom
1047.	Pickard	Tom
1048.	Piercy	Marge
1049.	Pilinszky	Janos
1050.	Pilkington	Laetitia
1051.	Pitter	Ruth
1052.	Pitt-Kethley	Fiona

1053.	Plath	Sylvia
1054.	Plomer	William
1055.	Plowman	Max
1056.	Plunkett (Lord Dunsany)	Edward
1057.	Plutzik	Hyam
1058.	Poe	Edgar Allan
1059.	Pole	John
1060.	Pollard	Velma
1061.	Pompili	Vittoria Aganoor
1062.	Popa	Vasco
1063.	Pope	Alexander
1064.	Pope	Jessie
1065.	Portal	Magda
1066.	Porter	Peter
1067.	Porter	Cole
1068.	Portnoy	Ethel
1069.	Potter	Alex
1070.	Pound	Ezra
1071.	Powell	Enoch
1072.	Pozzi	Antonia
1073.	Praed	Winthrop Mackworth
1074.	Pratt	Edwin John Dove
1075.	Praxilla	
1076.	Prescod	Colin
1077.	Prevert	Jacques
1078.	Price	Jonathan
1079.	Prince	Frank Templeton
1080.	Prior	Matthew
1081.	Pritam	Amrita
1082.	Pudney	John
1083.	Pugh	Sheenagh
1084.	Pupil	School
1085.	Pybus	Rodney
1086.	Quarles	Francis
1087.	Questel	Victor D.
1088.	Quilter	Inez
1089.	Rabearivelo	Jean-Joseph
1090.	Rae	Simon
1091.	Rafat	Taufiq
1092.	Raikes	David
1093.	Raine	Kathleen
1094.	Raine	Craig
1095.	Raleigh	Walter
1096.	Ramanujan	Attipate Krishnaswami

1097.	Ramkissoon-Chen	Rajandaye
1098.	Ramon-Fortune	Barnabas J.
1099.	Ramsey	T.W.
1100.	Rand	Jimi
1101.	Randolph	Thomas
1102.	Rands	William Brighty
1103.	Ranko	Takakuwa
1104.	Ransom	John Crowe
1105.	Raper	Michell
1106.	RAPP	Radical Alliance of Poets and Players
1107.	Ratcliffe	Dorothy Una
1108.	Rattenbury	Arnold
1109.	Ratushinskaya	Irina
1110.	Ravikovich	Dahlia
1111.	Raworth	Tom
1112.	Raymond	Arthur
1113.	Read	Herbert
1114.	Reade	Derek B.
1115.	Redcam	Tom
1116.	Redgrove	Peter
1117.	Reed	Henry
1118.	Reeves	James
1119.	Reid	Alistair
1120.	Reid & Brooker	Keith & Garry
1121.	Reynolds	Malvina
1122.	Rhys	Keidrych
1123.	Rich	Adrienne
1124.	Richards	Keith
1125.	Rickword	Edgell
1126.	Riddell	Alan
1127.	Riding	Laura
1128.	Ridler	Anne
1129.	Ridley	George
1130.	Rihaku	[Li Bai]
1131.	Rilke	Rainer Maria
1132.	Rin	Ishigaki
1133.	Riviere	Michael
1134.	Roach	Eric
1135.	Roberts	Michael
1136.	Roberts	Charles G.D.
1137.	Roberts	Ursula
1138.	Roberts	W. Adolphe
1139.	Roberts	Michele
1140.	Robinson	Edward Arlington

1141.	Robinson	Mary
1142.	Roche	Paul
1143.	Roche	Peter
1144.	Rodgers	W.R.
1145.	Roethke	Theodore
1146.	Rogers	Samuel
1147.	Roland-Holst	Henriette
1148.	Rook	Alan
1149.	Roscoe	John
1150.	Rosen	Michael
1151.	Rosenberg	Isaac
1152.	Ross	Alan
1153.	Rosselson	Leon
1154.	Rossetti	Christina
1155.	Rossetti	Dante Gabriel
1156.	Rowbotham	Colin
1157.	Rowse	Alfred Leslie
1158.	Royes	Heather
1159.	Rukeyser	Muriel
1160.	Rumens	Carol
1161.	Ryan	Richard
1162.	Saakana	Amon Saba
1163.	Sachs	Nelly
1164.	Sackville	Thomas
1165.	Sackville	Charles
1166.	Sackville	Margaret
1167.	Sackville-West	Victoria
1168.	Saha	Subhas Chandra
1169.	Salkey	Andrew
1170.	Sandburg	Carl
1171.	Sansom	Clive
1172.	Sappho	
1173.	Sassoon	Siegfried
1174.	Satyamurti	Carole
1175.	Sauter	Rudolf Helmut
1176.	Savage	Patrick
1177.	Sayers	Dorothy L.
1178.	Scannell	Vernon
1179.	Scarfe	Francis
1180.	Schmidt	Michael
1181.	Scott	John
1182.	Scott	Dennis
1183.	Scott	Walter
1184.	Scott	Aimee Byng

1185.	Scott	Paul
1186.	Scovell	E.J.
1187.	Sealy	Clifford
1188.	Sedley	Charles
1189.	Seeger	Peggy
1190.	Seeger	Alan
1191.	Selvon	Samuel
1192.	Senior	Olive
1193.	Sergeant	Howard
1194.	Serote	Mongane Wally
1195.	Serraillier	Ian
1196.	Service	Robert W.
1197.	Seward	Anna
1198.	Sexton	Anne
1199.	Seymour	Arthur James
1200.	Shakespeare	William
1201.	Shange	Ntozake
1202.	Shanks	Edward
1203.	Shapcott	Jo
1204.	Shapiro	Karl
1205.	Sharpless	Stanley
1206.	Shaw-Stewart	Patrick
1207.	Sheers	Owen
1208.	Shelley	Percy Bysshe
1209.	Shenstone	William
1210.	Shepperson	Janet
1211.	Sherlock	Philip
1212.	Shikibu	Izumi
1213.	Shikishi	Princess
1214.	Shirley	James
1215.	Shove	Fredegond
1216.	Shu-chen	Chu
1217.	Shuttle	Penelope
1218.	Sidgwick	Frank
1219.	Sidney	Philip
1220.	Sidney	Mary
1221.	Silabhatarika	
1222.	Silkin	Jon
1223.	Sillitoe	Alan
1224.	Simmons	James
1225.	Simon	Paul
1226.	Simpson	Louis
1227.	Simpson	John Murray
1228.	Sinason	Valerie

1229.	Sinclair	May
1230.	Singh	R.P.
1231.	Sinna (Queen Gormley)	Gormflaith ingen Flann
1232.	Sitwell	Edith
1233.	Sitwell	Osbert
1234.	Skelton	Robin
1235.	Skelton	John
1236.	Skinner	Martyn
1237.	Slessor	Kenneth
1238.	Smart	Christopher
1239.	Smith	Stevie
1240.	Smith	John (Charles)
1241.	Smith	Cicily Fox
1242.	Smith	James and Horatio
1243.	Smith	Michael
1244.	Smith	Basil
1245.	Smith	Walter Chalmers
1246.	Smith	Michael Garfield
1247.	Snaith	Stanley
1248.	Snyder	Gary
1249.	Sodergran	Edith
1250.	Sorley	C.H.
1251.	Souster	Raymond
1252.	Southey	Robert
1253.	Southwell	Robert
1254.	Soyinka	Wole
1255.	Spaziani	Maria Luisa
1256.	Spence	Skip
1257.	Spencer	William Robert
1258.	Spencer	Bernard
1259.	Spender	Stephen
1260.	Spender	Richard
1261.	Spenser	Edmund
1262.	Sprackland	Jean
1263.	Squire	John Collings
1264.	St John	Justin
1265.	St John	Bruce
1266.	St Vincent (EA Markham)	Paul
1267.	Stafford	William
1268.	Stallworthy	Jon
1269.	Stampa	Gaspara
1270.	Stanford	Derek
1271.	Stanley	Thomas

1272.	Stanley-Wrench	Margaret
1273.	Stein	Gertrude
1274.	Stephens	James
1275.	Stevens	Wallace
1276.	Stevens	George Alexander
1277.	Stevenson	Anne
1278.	Stevenson	Robert Louis
1279.	Stewart	Douglas
1280.	Stewart	W.F.M.
1281.	Stewart	Gervase
1282.	Stewart	Margot
1283.	Stopes	Marie Carmichael
1284.	Storey	Edward
1285.	Storni	Alfonsina
1286.	Strode	William
1287.	Stuart	Muriel
1288.	Suckling	John
1289.	Sulpicia	
1290.	Summerfield	Geoffrey
1291.	Summers	Hal
1292.	Sung	Ts'ao
1293.	Sutherland	Millicent
1294.	Sutton	David
1295.	Swaine	Gordon
1296.	Sweeney	Matthew
1297.	Swenson	May
1298.	Swift	Jonathan
1299.	Swinburne	Algernon Charles
1300.	Swir (Świrszczyńska)	Anna
1301.	Symes	Gordon
1302.	Symons	Julian
1303.	Szyborska	Wisława
1304.	Tabrar	Joseph
1305.	Tafari	Levi
1306.	Taggard	Genevieve
1307.	Tagore	Rabindranath
1308.	Taigi	Tan
1309.	Tarn	Nathaniel
1310.	Tate	Allen
1311.	Tawney	Cyril
1312.	Taylor	Susan
1313.	Taylor	James O.
1314.	Taylor	Rex
1315.	Taylor	Margaret

1316.	Taylor	George
1317.	Taylor	Edward
1318.	te Apakura	Irihapeti Rangi
1319.	Teasdale	Sara
1320.	Tennant	Edward Wyndham
1321.	Tennyson	Alfred
1322.	Tessimond	Arthur Seymour John
1323.	Thackeray	William Makepeace
1324.	Thanet	Lesbia
1325.	Theiner	George
1326.	Themerson	Stefan
1327.	Thien	Ho
1328.	Thomas	Edward
1329.	Thomas	Dylan
1330.	Thomas	R.S.
1331.	Thomas	Donald Michael
1332.	Thompson	Francis
1333.	Thompson	John O.
1334.	Thompson	Edward
1335.	Thompson	Frank
1336.	Thompson	Anthony
1337.	Thomson	James
1338.	Thomson	James 'B.V.'
1339.	Thwaite	Anthony
1340.	Thwaites	Michael
1341.	Tichborne	Chidiock
1342.	Tiller	Terence
1343.	Tilley	H.H.
1344.	Tillyard	Aelfrida
1345.	Timperley	Malcolm
1346.	Tirolien	Guy
1347.	Todd	Ruthven
1348.	Tollefson	Astrid
1349.	Tomlinson	Charles
1350.	Torrance	Chris
1351.	Toulson	Shirley
1352.	Townsend	John R.
1353.	Townshend	Aurelian
1354.	Traherne	Thomas
1355.	Transtromer	Tomas
1356.	Travers (CALT)	Caroline A.L.
1357.	Treby	Ivor C
1358.	Tree	Iris
1359.	Treece	Henry

1360.	Trotter	Alys Fane
1361.	Trypanis	Constantine Athanasius
1362.	Tsu-Lung	Ch'en
1363.	Tsvetayeva	Marina
1364.	Tueni	Nadia
1365.	Tuquan	Fadwa
1366.	Turnbull	Gael
1367.	Turner	Walter James
1368.	Turner	Steve
1369.	Tussman	Malka Heifetz
1370.	Tynan Hinkson	Katherine
1371.	Untermeyer	Louis
1372.	Updike	John
1373.	Usherwood	Vivian
1374.	Vakalo	Eleni
1375.	Vala	Katri
1376.	Vallejo	Cesar
1377.	van den Bogaerde	Derek
1378.	Van Sertima	Ivan
1379.	Vaughan	Henry
1380.	Vautor	Thomas
1381.	Venmanipputi	
1382.	Verne	Viviane
1383.	Vernede	R.E.
1384.	Vickridge	Alberta
1385.	Villon	Francois
1386.	Viorst	Judith
1387.	Virtue	Vivian
1388.	von Droste- Hulshoff	Annette
1389.	von Greiffenberg	Catharina Regina
1390.	Voznesensky	Andrey
1391.	Wagner	G.A.
1392.	Wagoner	David
1393.	Wain	John
1394.	Walcott	Derek
1395.	Waley	Arthur
1396.	Walker	Alice
1397.	Walker	Ted
1398.	Walker	Margaret
1399.	Walker	James
1400.	Walker (Oodgeroo Noonucca	Kath
1401.	Wallace	Edgar

1402.	Waller	Edmund
1403.	Waller	John
1404.	Walley	Graham
1405.	Walrond	Glyne (Olutoye)
1406.	Walsh	John
1407.	Walsh	Christina
1408.	Walsh	William
1409.	Wanless	Meg
1410.	Ward	Martin
1411.	Warner	Rex
1412.	Waterhouse	Andrew
1413.	Waterman	Andrew
1414.	Watkins	Vernon
1415.	Watson	Wilfred
1416.	Watson	Denis
1417.	Watts	Isaac
1418.	Waugh	Alec
1419.	Weaving	Willoughby
1420.	Webb	Mary
1421.	Webb	Harry
1422.	Weber	Richard
1423.	Webster	H.
1424.	Webster	John
1425.	Wedge	John
1426.	Wedgwood	M. Winifred
1427.	Wei	Pai
1428.	Weir	Jane
1429.	Weir	Nigel
1430.	Welch	Denton
1431.	Welty	Eudora
1432.	Weores	Sandor
1433.	Wesley	Charles
1434.	West	Arthur Graeme
1435.	Wever	Robert
1436.	Wevill	David
1437.	Whetham	Catherine Durning
1438.	Whitman	Walt
1439.	Whitmell	Lucy
1440.	Whittemore	Reed
1441.	Wickham	Anna
1442.	Wilbur	Richard
1443.	Wilcox	Ella Wheeler
1444.	Wilde	Oscar
1445.	Wilkinson	Anne

1446.	Williams	Helen Maria
1447.	Williams	William Carlos
1448.	Williams	Eric
1449.	Williams	Hugo
1450.	Williams	I.A.
1451.	Williams	Fred
1452.	Williams	Milton
1453.	Williams	Herbert
1454.	Willy	Margaret
1455.	Wilmot	John
1456.	Wilson	Margaret Adelaide
1457.	Wilson	Marjorie
1458.	Wilson	T.P. Cameron
1459.	Wilson	T-Bone
1460.	Windsor	Penny
1461.	Wine	Maria
1462.	Wither	George
1463.	Wolcot	John
1464.	Wolfe	Humbert
1465.	Wolfe	Charles
1466.	Woman	Owl
1467.	Woodworth	Lizette
1468.	Wordsworth	William
1469.	Wotton	Henry
1470.	Wright	Judith
1471.	Wright	David
1472.	Wright	Kit
1473.	Wright	James
1474.	Wu-Ti	
1475.	Wyatt	Thomas
1476.	Wylie	Elinor
1477.	Yardan	Shana
1478.	Yates	L.J.
1479.	Yeats	W.B.
1480.	Yen	Ts'ai
1481.	Yen-Shou	Wang
1482.	Yevtushenko	Yevgeny
1483.	Young	Andrew
1484.	Young	Francis Brett
1485.	Young	Edward Hilton
1486.	Yu	Lu
1487.	Yun-feng	Sun
1488.	Zabolotsky	Nikolai Alekseevich
1489.	Zephaniah	Benjamin

Table A.2: the 199 poet sample used for comparison with the national curriculum name lists

#	Last Name	First Name
1.	Abse	Dannie
2.	Achebe	Chinua
3.	Adcock	Fleur
4.	Afrika	Tatamkhulu
5.	Agard	John
6.	Alvi	Moniza
7.	Angelou	Maya
8.	Anonymous	
9.	Armitage	Simon
10.	Arnold	Matthew
11.	Atwood	Margaret
12.	Auden	W.H.
13.	Baillie	Joanna
14.	Behn	Aphra
15.	Belloc	Hilaire
16.	Berry	James
17.	Betjeman	John
18.	Bhatt	Sujata
19.	Binyon	Laurence
20.	Blake	William
21.	Bradstreet	Anne
22.	Brathwaite	E. Kamau
23.	Bridges	Robert
24.	Brittain	Vera
25.	Brock	Edwin
26.	Brontë	Anne
27.	Brontë	Emily
28.	Brooke	Rupert
29.	Browning	Elizabeth B
30.	Browning	Robert
31.	Burns	Robert
32.	Carson	Ciaran
33.	Casey	Mary
34.	Causley	Charles
35.	Chaucer	Geoffrey
36.	Clanchy	Kate
37.	Clare	John
38.	Clarke	Gillian
39.	Clarke	John C.
40.	Clough	Arthur H
41.	Cole	M. Postgate
42.	Coleridge	Samuel T.

43.	Collins	Merle
44.	Connor	Tony
45.	Cope	Wendy
46.	Corbett	Pie
47.	Cowper	William
48.	Crabbe	George
49.	cummings	e e
50.	Davidson	John
51.	Davies	W.H.
52.	Day-Lewis	Cecil
53.	De Kok	Ingrid
54.	de la Mare	Walter
55.	Dehn	Paul
56.	Dharker	Imtiaz
57.	Dickinson	Patric
58.	Donne	John
59.	Dooley	Maura
60.	Dove	Rita
61.	Dryden	John
62.	Duffy	Carol Ann
63.	Dunn	Douglas
64.	Eliot	T.S.
65.	Enright	D.J.
66.	Ezekiel	Nissim
67.	Fanthorpe	UA
68.	Fell	Alison
69.	Fenton	James
70.	Ferlinghetti	Lawrence
71.	Forster	Andrew
72.	Garland	Beatrice
73.	Gibson	Wilfrid W.
74.	Goldsmith	Oliver
75.	Graves	Robert
76.	Gray	Thomas
77.	Grenfell	Julian
78.	Grieg	Andrew
79.	Gunn	Thom
80.	Hadfield	Jen
81.	Haggith	Mandy
82.	Hannah	Sophie
83.	Hardi	Choman
84.	Hardy	Thomas
85.	Harrison	Tony
86.	Hayhoe	Mike

87.	Heaney	Seamus
88.	Henri	Adrian
89.	Herbert	A.P.
90.	Herbert	George
91.	Herrick	Robert
92.	Hesketh	Phoebe
93.	Hobsbaum	Philip
94.	Hood	Thomas
95.	Housman	A.E.
96.	Hughes	Langston
97.	Hughes	Ted
98.	Jamie	Kathleen
99.	Jennings	Elizabeth
100.	Jones	Alice Gray
101.	Jonson	Ben
102.	Joseph	Jenny
103.	Kay	Jackie
104.	Khalvati	Mimi
105.	King	William
106.	Kipling	Rudyard
107.	Kirkup	James
108.	Komunyakaa	Yusuf
109.	Lamb	Mary
110.	Larkin	Philip
111.	Levertov	Denise
112.	Lochhead	Liz
113.	Lowell	Robert
114.	Lowery	Martyn
115.	Lucie-Smith	Edward
116.	MacBeth	George
117.	MacCaig	Norman
118.	MacMillan	Ian
119.	MacNeice	Louis
120.	Marlowe	Christopher
121.	Marvell	Andrew
122.	Masefield	John
123.	McGough	Roger
124.	McKay	Claude
125.	Mew	Charlotte
126.	Meynell	Alice
127.	Millay	Edna St.V.
128.	Milton	John
129.	Minhinnick	Robert
130.	Mitchell	Adrian

131.	Molloy	Dorothy
132.	Morris	Mervyn
133.	Muir	Edwin
134.	Murray	Les
135.	Nagra	Daljit
136.	Nesbit	Edith
137.	Newbolt	Henry
138.	Nichols	Grace
139.	Nichols	Robert
140.	Nicholson	Norman
141.	Norton	Caroline
142.	Noyes	Alfred
143.	Okara	Gabriel
144.	Olds	Sharon
145.	Owen	Wilfred
146.	Patten	Brian
147.	Phillips	Katherine
148.	Pope	Alexander
149.	Pope	Jessie
150.	Porter	Peter
151.	Pugh	Sheenagh
152.	Rae	Simon
153.	Raine	Craig
154.	Raine	Kathleen
155.	Raleigh	Walter
156.	Reed	Henry
157.	Roethke	Theodore
158.	Rosenberg	Isaac
159.	Ross	Alan
160.	Rossetti	Christina
161.	Sassoon	Siegfried
162.	Satyamurti	Carole
163.	Scannell	Vernon
164.	Scott	John
165.	Shakespeare	William
166.	Shapcott	Jo
167.	Sheers	Owen
168.	Smith	Stevie
169.	Sorley	C.H.
170.	Southey	Robert
171.	Soyinka	Wole
172.	Spender	Stephen
173.	Spenser	Edmund
174.	Sprackland	Jean

175.	Stafford	William
176.	Stallworthy	Jon
177.	Stevenson	Anne
178.	Summers	Hal
179.	Sweeney	Matthew
180.	Tagore	Rabindranath
181.	Tennyson	Alfred
182.	Thomas	Dylan
183.	Tichborne	Chidiock
184.	Tynan	Katherine
185.	Vaughan	Henry
186.	Walcott	Derek
187.	Walker	Alice
188.	Walsh	Christina
189.	Waterhouse	Andrew
190.	Webb	Harri
191.	Weir	Jane
192.	West	Arthur G
193.	Whitman	Walt
194.	Wilde	Oscar
195.	Williams	Helen Maria
196.	Wordsworth	William
197.	Wyatt	Thomas
198.	Yeats	W.B.
199.	Zephaniah	Benjamin

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Life doesn't stop when you decide to pursue a doctorate, and mine certainly didn't. I don't need to rehearse the grim details of family catastrophe here but I wish to start by acknowledging the faith, kindness and encouragement I received along the way from many people simply to keep going. My supervisor, David Whitley, was pre-eminent among those, somehow finding a way every time the sky fell in to make me laugh about something. I am thankful to Nidhi Singal, then PhD programme manager, and Emma Rixon, then Higher Degrees Administrator, for handling multiple extension requests during the registration phase in a way that left my dignity intact. The calm, practical advice of Homerton College graduate tutor Melanie Keene to see the College Counsellor, Catherine Snelson, when I thought I couldn't go on saved this PhD. Catherine's immense professional skill and wisdom strengthened me in ways that go beyond the PhD and I am indebted. When I needed the sanctuary of Homerton College's walls, Finance Tutor Dhuru Karia cleared the obstacles as fast as I could articulate them. I am grateful to the Fellows of Homerton College for resourcing student Welfare provision such that this support was available immediately, without question and for as long as I needed it. These decisions also shape the culture of an institution, and I should also like to thank Michelle O'Shea, Homerton College receptionist, for always keeping a weather eye on me and Paul Coleman, Catering Manager, for always asking me if I'd eaten. These things are not trivial and through them I came to understand the value of the Cambridge College system.

I have had outstanding academic support too. David Whitley, my supervisor, could not have been a better match. Endlessly tolerant of a messy and often incoherent account of my work in supervisions, he was also tough and direct about getting the writing right. The conversation we had over six years about poetry education has never been anything other than stimulating, always challenging me to read and think more widely, always pushing me to understand rather than judge. David's unfailing support of the value of combining doctoral research with professional work in poetry education motivated me to do better at both. I also learned a great deal about more collaborative approaches to research from his generosity in involving me as an advisor to the Leverhulme Poetry and Memory research project, and in the Faculty-funded Poetry Beyond

Borders international research scoping project. My advisor Morag Morrison-Helm was an excellent ‘critical friend’ during the registration process, as was Louise Joy whose interventions about not losing sight of the aesthetic nature of the poems and the books fundamentally influenced the final shape of this thesis.

Though I was always a bit wary of haunting the Centre for Research in Children’s Literature at Cambridge with the spectre of school examinations, this was a very stimulating research group to be part of and I had much encouragement from Maria Nikolajeva, Zoe Jaques and all my MPhil and PhD peers. For their friendship, laughter and solidarity over the years, I should especially like to thank Nina Alonso, Debbie Aitken, Siddharth Pandey, Patrick Olsen, Meghanne Flynn, Rosanna Hennessy and Ana Mocanu. I was also greatly encouraged by Pam Burnard to engage in the different paradigm of the Arts and Creativities Research group. Through the activities of this group I learned a lot about creativity, risk-taking and arts-based research but I also reconnected with my own creative practices and developed more courage to say what I see.

The empirical foundation of this thesis is a database. When I started the PhD programme I knew I would build one though I had never done so before. The University Information Services training programmes helped me to achieve this and I should especially like to thank Lynn Foot for her additional help as I solved specific design and development problems. My understanding of digital research methods was greatly enhanced by participation in many of the activities of the Cambridge Digital Humanities learning programme over several years. I am particularly grateful to Anne Alexander and Gabe Recchia for the mentoring I received in 2017-18 that allowed me to explore the value of Semantic Topic Modelling in this research. I haven’t ended up using that work in this thesis but it contributed enormously to my testing of various hypotheses and I will write it up separately for a digital humanities audience in due course. Being made a Cambridge Digital Humanities Methods Fellow for 2018-19 was a great honour and having the opportunity through this to work more closely with Anne Alexander, Mary Chester-Kadwell and other CDH colleagues helped me enormously in defining where this thesis sits in the DH landscape.

Librarians and archivists have been integral to the research for this thesis: without their work in collecting the artefacts of state education, storing them and making both the artefacts and data about them accessible, this study could not have happened. My thanks begin with the outstanding staff in the Cambridge University Faculty of Education Library. The national curriculum documents I needed to access were thin mass-produced A4 booklets, designed for the issue of curriculum guidance to every school. Although these documents were the instruments of statutory power, they also had a short lifespan and could have been treated as

marginal ephemera. Indeed, not all of them had been collected, but when my requests made it clear there was a need for this material, not simply as part of the past trace of PGCE teaching but as research material for subject histories, a member of staff was assigned to further develop and document the full collection of such material. This work is made more difficult, not less so, by the Department for Education's born-digital publication of curriculum documents which now 'disappear' when they are superseded. I have not yet discovered whether and where they are formally archived. Collecting and maintaining the artefacts and records of state education is important work and it will shape future research possibilities.

In this regard, I should next like to express my gratitude to Derek Gillard who single-handedly maintains the Education in England website at www.educationengland.org.uk. This is an extraordinary resource containing digital copies of over 600 historic education documents, 30 articles about the history of education and 32 book reviews. The site is maintained and paid for by Derek as a private citizen, with no commercial interests. I could not have completed this thesis without his website. In the absence of such work by the state, it is the most comprehensive digital repository of publicly available records of state education policy that exists. I very much hope a plan exists for its long term legacy. Derek Gillard deserves to be honoured by the state for this essential unsung work in the history of education.

My work was also very well supported by archivists and librarians at institutions that have collected and managed the material record of the state's public examinations system. Jacky Emerson and colleagues at OCR, Hilary Nichols and colleagues at AQA and Rhodri Jones and colleagues at WJEC, and the special collections librarians at the University of London Senate House Library were all extremely efficient in providing me with digital and material access to hundreds of GCSE examination specifications and examination papers. They were all most supportive of my research and very welcoming when I visited the archives in person. By contrast, there appeared to be no such archive for the Pearson-owned Edexcel awarding body, and although I tried enquiring in a number of different channels, all I was offered was the material for the current series as available on Edexcel's website. I don't know if my request was treated as a matter of commercial confidentiality, or whether no records have been kept, but I am quite certain it should be a legal obligation to preserve and make available all of the materials of state education for research and public scrutiny. To try and find Edexcel's record Nazlin Bhimani at the Institute of Education was most supportive, providing me with the opportunity to look in as yet uncatalogued boxes in the hope of finding a stash of specifications. This proved unsuccessful but I have found this willingness to treat no research question as too weird or too

much trouble entirely characteristic of librarians and archivists. In the end, the Internet Archive was able to give me just enough access to old Edexcel website iterations to know my record was sufficient, and I am grateful to them for collecting and maintaining this digital record.

For this study I also needed access to the 99 poetry collections named over 30 years in awarding body specifications for GCSE English literature. I was able to access two thirds of the material I needed through a combination of Homerton College's Children's Literature collection and items in the legal deposit acquisitions of Cambridge University Library. However, I needed them all, and these libraries only had one of the many hybrid anthologies produced by awarding bodies, despite their having official status as books with ISBN numbers. This would suggest that awarding bodies have not sent this material to all legal deposit libraries, and as it would not look like premium research material it has not been proactively collected. To fill this gap, I turned to second hand booksellers, most particularly those who trade on the internet as I was able to search their catalogues. Without their less conventional work in collecting, cataloguing and making available the material artefacts of state education, I would not have had a complete collection. I would especially like to thank Bookbarn International and Worldbooks who between them had a large proportion of what I needed and were most efficient in supplying it. I entered the complete collection in the Cambridge University Library's Rose Book Collecting Prize and was delighted that it was selected as a finalist. The lively conversations I was privileged to have with Suzanne Paul, Keeper of Rare Books, other members of the judging panel and rare books team, and their support in hosting an exhibition and public talk in the library, helped me to understand the wider value of what I was doing, and to think harder about book history.

I am grateful for the support and encouragement of my professional community. Members of NATE and the British Education Research Association (BERA) English in Education Special Interest Group listened to presentations of emerging ideas at conferences and workshops, and gave helpful feedback. Sue Dymoke, Barbara Bleiman, Gary Snapper and John Hodgson in particular generously gave many thoughtful observations in live encounters and via social media. I am especially grateful to Lorna Smith for our 'peer supervision' sessions, for which she read some draft chapters and gave invaluable feedback. Thanks to research funding from the Education Faculty and Homerton College, I was also able to attend conventions and research seminars in the UK, USA and Jamaica. These enabled me to build networks of people and knowledge that widened the scope of my thinking. Over many years now, Connie Ruzich of Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, USA, has generously shared her enormous reservoirs of enthusiasm and expertise in English education and enriched my work with a hundred

conversations about poetry anthologies. For her collaborative generosity, her friendship and her unfailing belief in my ability to pull this thing off, I am most grateful.

Throughout the thesis, I directed Poetry By Heart, the national schools poetry recitation competition for schools in England. From this incredibly rich network of teachers and school librarians who care passionately about the place of poetry in education, I have had much encouragement for a work so closely focused on the national curriculum, and the best critical sounding board for ideas and hypotheses that one could wish to have. Every student who had the courage to take part, choosing poems that lay far outside their courses of study and making them uniquely their own, also strengthened my courage to write this thesis. If they were going to undertake a giant act of intellectual risk and self-exposure, I had to too.

It is no overstatement to say that this thesis would not have existed without the incredibly rich *Poetry Matters* seminar series facilitated by Sue Dymoke, Anthony Wilson and Andrew Lambirth, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Attending this in my role as then Education Director of the Poetry Archive, I was challenged by the questions raised, reminded that poetry had been the great love of my teaching career and bothered by the problems. The outcome seven years later is this thesis, though research impact is measured over too short a timescale for my work to have contributed to the evaluation of this outstanding seminar series.

This thesis is dedicated to three people who at different times told me the right thing to do. To Paul McLoughlin, poet and my English literature A Level teacher. When the odds were stacked against me finishing my A Levels, he shut his classroom door and gave a whole lunch hour to listening, at the end of which he said very simply “Don’t settle for mediocrity”. To Paula Short, my school PE teacher and basketball coach. When I left school, she fixed me with a stern teacher look and said “Never forget where you come from”. And to my dear cousin, Elaine Dunford, who died of cancer half way through my doctoral studies and just before completing the final assignment of her Open University degree. When she knew her journey had no way back, she said “You make sure you finish it. You’re doing this for all of us.” It took me a long time to get here, but in completing this thesis I have tried hard to honour these injunctions.