I.

INTRODUCTION

i) Research Context

"Why do we even have to get this stuff anyway? I don't even know what it's on about, why can't he just write proper? It's stupid. He's dead anyway, who even cares about his stupid plays? I can't wait 'til I finish school, I'm just gonna burn it all...[laughing]...I'm never gonna read another stupid book again!"

Aaron (16yrs) on Shakespeare, April 2004, Rotherham U.K.

Terrific; after two-hours of hard labour, trying to tune thirty-plus students into literature for their upcoming examinations, this was the conclusion. Sat in the public library in Rotherham, I felt exasperated; *I* had enjoyed discussing literature, indeed it was one part of my job that I loved, firing young students up with literary study and hearing their reactions - but not *this* reaction! Obviously our lesson just wasn't cutting it. From the preliminary sighs and objections of the disgruntled group, and continually through the tutorial, Aaron's attitude appeared to be the consensus. And I'm terribly sorry Mr Shakespeare, but my young friend was talking about you; or to be more precise, you and your play *Macbeth*, which evidently he did not particularly enjoy studying.

This was the only time that my lovely student group had truly saddened me, as proudly they stood, united, and claimed their hatred of subject English, the pointlessness of the topic and their intention to leave Shakespeare well behind with their time at school. It was one of the few times that my group left sadness and loitering concern in my mind (and I had supported some of these kids through some pretty tough lessons); sadness for my students, who obviously hadn't *experienced* literature, and concern for the literature lesson and its apparent failing. Such disengagement is hard to swallow for a woman who has a life-long love of literature and who has been granted such powerful experiences with the literary that her own life has been affected so remarkably. Indeed, the

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phenomenon of aesthetic or literary affect, that is the ability of art to provoke intellectual, emotional and physical responses, has been such a significant and pivotal part of my own development and psyche, that I did not imagine such a fundamental difference in others' experiences; particularly given that intellectual and emotional development is such a significant part of all life.

Looking on in silent worry as Aaron's words hit me, I wondered what to do with such a confession, a confession with which the whole group unanimously agreed. After picking my heart up off the floor; and resisting the terrible urge to inform Aaron that his vocabulary was perhaps slightly limited and, as he employed the word three times in one sentence, he should find an alternative to 'stupid'; I managed to develop some discussions with the group around their opinions of subject English and their personal reading habits. After all, I had in front of me a group that contained willing voices on the topic of literature and as for me, well, after that outburst from Aaron, I certainly had questions.

So it was that my interest in and concern about the apparent lack of enjoyment school children were getting out of their literature lessons came to fruition. Working intensively with these 15 to 16 year-olds, whose issues ranged from simple lack of confidence, to more serious problems of abuse, pregnancy, drug addiction and homelessness, allowed me to explore their learning and development both in and out of the education environment; and particularly, their literary (dis)engagement. By asking simple questions, for example 'who is reading at the moment?', I quickly learnt that out of this random group of thirty-plus students, approximately eighty-five per cent clearly had a strong dislike for literature at school and were happy to joke, "Emma! I read what's on T.V. every night!". Most enjoyment, if there was any, came from a couple of *Harry Potter* fans, who could recite spells; and a few who mentioned liking some of the film studies and *Lord of the Flies*. Although that gave me some hope, it was nevertheless evident that some of the group were failing to grasp the essentials of literary study, despite having been taught English Literature and Language throughout their now 10 years' schooling. Given that the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) English syllabus

comprised some diverse and (what I thought were) very interesting texts, ranging from Shakespeare to *Harry Potter*, from Thomas Hardy to *Clueless*, I was quite taken aback by the lack of enthusiasm for school English. When one considers that the English syllabus also reflects a postmodern approach, providing a plethora of different levels medium through which the modern student may find opportunity to engage, this concern is only heightened. Nevertheless, I took some solace in the cheers for *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, film study and the few various other pieces of literature mentioned in the otherwise unimpressed arena.

From Aaron's initial statement, questions instinctively developed. My accidental pilot study group was evenly balanced in gender, so the issue was not restricted to boys; it also consisted of students with a range of academic abilities, from A* scholars, to students whose teachers expected a series of 'F's on their examination records. Because I worked closely with the students and some parents, I also had a clear idea of each individual's socio-economic status, which ranged from students with middle-class parents who were professionals such as doctors and teachers, to students with working-class parents who were in, for example, factory or supermarket employment, to students whose parents who were in and out of employment, or were attached to the couch and government dole cheques. The only constant variable was the fact that every group member was being educated in the same geographical area of the Dearne Valley, whose school catchment spans the three districts of Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley in South Yorkshire, England. This may be significant as the Dearne was classed as one of the most deprived areas in England due to particularly extensive impoverishments (ethical, individual, societal, economic and technological) caused by closures of the coal mining pits in the late 1980s. Despite this, however, the socio-economic status of individuals in the group was not uniform and conversely consisted of wide disparities, which suggests that the wider geographical area was not a significant factor.

In pursuit of further information I went to teachers, at which point the implications of such disengagement became increasingly clear through exploration of the developmental and cross-curricula functions of subject English. Drawing upon knowledge gained from

informal discussions with one primary school teacher and two secondary school English teachers, I developed an understanding of how subject English supports personal growth and executes a pivotal role in the curriculum. Literary texts, their capacity for affect and the ability to engage with literary texts is a fundamental and key aspect of children's and adolescent learning and development process.

Further investigation of research revealed Peel's (2000) study into 'Beliefs about English', which illustrates an extremely high percentage of participants strongly agreeing with this 'personal growth' model of English:

> English [is] a personal subject which provides space, pleasure and
> opportunities to reflect on moral or ethical issues. Literature deals with
> issues which transcend time... what we read in an English course has a
> role to play in the way we conduct out lives.
>
> (Peel, Patterson & Gerlach 2000:117)

The use of literary texts therefore challenges young adults to have a voice, to appreciate and understand what they read, and to put this knowledge into practice, thus making it 'purposeful', juxtaposing 'learning and usage' (Doecke, Homer & Nixon 2003:137). Accordingly, the significance of literary texts in the lives of children and adolescents is recognised by education systems globally; one only needs to acknowledge that literary study survives as a compulsory component of the education curriculum throughout the Western world until the age of sixteen. Yet contrast these assertions to Aaron's opening quote and the disparity is blatant; literature is personal, but Aaron's group of adolescents dislikes it.

Redefinitions of English or literary studies are occurring worldwide; in Canada and America, 'English' presently comes under the umbrella of 'Language Arts' and throughout Australia, recent English syllabi include study of critical theory approaches and popular culture texts. In whatever guise, there has been a global postmodernist shift

in literary study, which purported to cater more aptly for the contemporary student and individual student need. Thus in the context of recent attempts to align literary study with popular culture of the young generation, the furious reaction of my young friend Aaron and his conformist group is further perplexing and provocative. And such provocation provided me with the basis for this research project, which explores young people's experiences with literary texts and the forms, if any, these experiences take within the context of the changed curriculum regime.

ii) The Research Problem

Disengagement with the literary such as that of Aaron and his disciples, particularly in the educational environment, highlights the need to explore the ability of the literary to affect its audience. This study focuses on conditions for and influences upon identification and engagement with literary texts (literary affect), with a view to offering some conclusions regarding the contemporary nature of literary affect, aestheticism and positive student engagement. As a site of intense contest about the nature of the literary experience, the New South Wales (NSW) Higher School Certificate (HSC) English curriculum and its students is a prime location for research. As well as examining whether affect is still occurring in literary experiences, this will also allow investigations into old and new HSC syllabi and the changes that have, over the past six years, incited contention around subject English and English pedagogy. The study is thus contextualised in light of current debates surrounding the changed HSC English syllabi; particularly in the arena of popular culture versus canonical literature, and current media criticism of critical literacy approaches. We will see how this has played out in recent English Teacher Association (ETA) publications, which are explored further in the Literature Review.

The study is somewhat reflective in that its research participants have completed the HSC and are studying at university to become teachers themselves. As we will see, however, there are four distinct groups of participants. The study therefore offers an in-depth exploration of literary experiences, as the varied participants have much life understanding to attribute and draw upon. However, as the participants are (mostly recent) graduates of the HSC, the study maintains focus upon the consumer aspect of the new 1999 NSW English HSC. This is a neglected area in research and it offers contrast to other studies, which have primarily focused upon teachers' experiences, attitudes and practice, for example, Manuel's (2002) study, which investigated teacher reactions to the new 1999 NSW English HSC syllabus.

However we are not, and indeed should not be, restricted to educational literary experiences. The nature of the literary and its personally affective capabilities, supported by the fact that English syllabi require 'personal reflection', demands that the study should extrapolate beyond the educational arena, exploring the personal lives of participants in their private literary experiences. This will allow interesting comparisons to be made between private and educational experiences, which in turn may be investigated in the context of old and new NSW HSC English syllabi.

iii) Research Questions

Major research questions, which will form the focus of this study, are:

1) Is literary affect occurring in readers' lives and if so, what form(s) does it take?
2) Has literary affect been a significant part of readers' lives:
    - In private domains?
    - In the educational environment?
3) Are there any differences in the literary affective experiences of student teacher participants who are studying to be primary school teachers, compared to those studying to be secondary English school teachers?
4) Are there any differences between young and mature age groups' experiences of

the literary and its affective capabilities?

- Are there disparities of literary affect in students of the old, compared to the new syllabus?

- What issues in relation to literary affect and aesthetics are identified by students of the old compared to the new syllabus?

5) How do findings relate to current debates surrounding the postmodern nature of literary study and subject English?

iv) Significance and Potential Contribution of the Research

The affect of the literary upon consumers (students) of the HSC has not yet been the subject of readily available current research. Nevertheless, it is the students who must understand and engage with literary texts in order not only to pass their examinations, but as an essential part of their learning and development process. It seems logical to investigate the literary experiences of this group, who are the primary 'targets' of literary education. Also, it is important to conduct the research in such a way that offers opportunity for reflection upon experiences and engagement with the literary. This is especially significant in those for whom literary experiences have had so profound an affect that they are willing to dedicate their career to teaching it, i.e. student teachers of secondary school English, and conversely those who aren't, for example student primary school teachers.

Thus, the contribution to knowledge the study offers will span the disciplines of literature and education studies. This study will offer insights into the nature of personal identification with literature in light of English syllabi, and thus provide opportunity to reflect upon the effectiveness and working 'value' of literature. This is especially critical due to recent controversy regarding contemporary changes to the English curriculum in Australia, which has attracted unfavourable comments particularly in relation to the 1999

NSW English HSC, from the Australian Prime Minister John Howard and other media critics (King 2002; Donnelly 2005; Slattery 2005).

Yet the issue is wider; contemporary Western changes to English curricula are reflective of a global phenomenon that goes beyond the educational environment. The left-wing postmodernist push has many spheres of influence in which relativist theory dominates, and where truth is believed to be a naïve, ideological notion. Conversely, right-wing politics hails the failure of leftist philosophy, asserting doctrines of value and truth. The clash of these titans has been felt internationally and particularly in English studies, which, it seems, has been nominated as one culmination point for confrontation. The project therefore probes experiences of recent graduates of the HSC, in relation to the place of literature both in the curriculum and in personal lives, with a view to illuminating the contemporary nature of literary affect in the face of current postmodernist shifts in subject English and pedagogy, as reflective of wider subject issues that include culture, society, politics, economy and philosophy.

v) Methodology Overview

The chosen research methodologies applied to the research questions are survey by questionnaires and focus group interviews. These data-gathering tools were the most appropriate and suited to the research interest (Babbie 2004). Analysis of relevant literature and application of learning from preliminary explorations into literary affect with Aaron's group in the UK drew out founded and relevant issues which helped in development of the topic and research questions. Survey and focus group approaches were applied to achieve understanding of the nature of literary affect in participants' secondary education and in their private lives. Further investigations by way of case studies of defined groups of participants, applying data gathered from questionnaires and focus groups, were also conducted. The research study was thus staged across five phases, all of which were undertaken at the University of New England, which is a rural university in New South Wales:

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┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ 1) Application of understanding│◄─────►│ 2) Application of understanding│
│    from explorations in the UK │        │    from relevant literature    │
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          ┌───│  3) Surveys by questionnaire  │
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          │   │   4) Focus Group Interviews   │
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   │ 5) Complied case studies of four emergent groups │
   │    (Explored and defined in relevant chapters)   │
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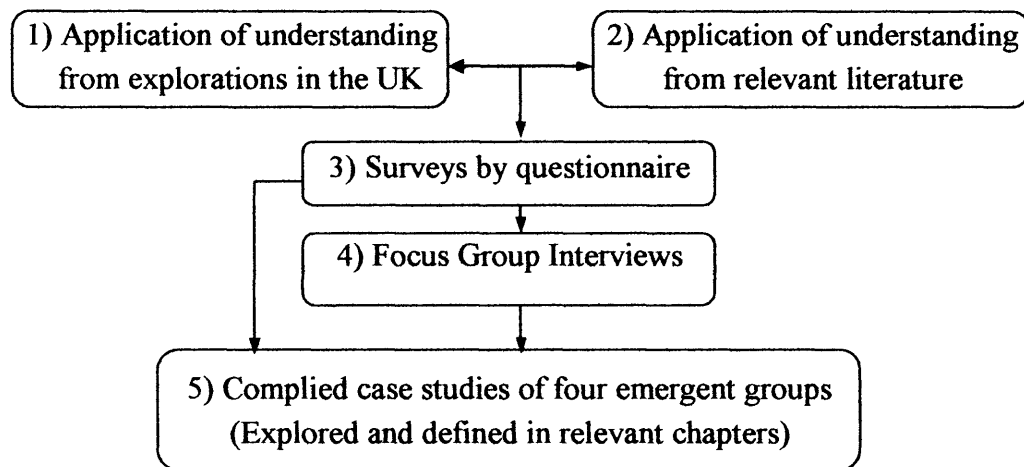
Figure 1.1 Five-Phase Development of Research Study

Data analysis will be conducted using the *SPSS* tool for quantitative data and *NUD*IST* tool to support qualitative data analysis. Data for this research study are, however, primarily qualitative and will require interpretation.

vi) Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

The study was limited in terms of its methodology, which had to consider time and resources available for the study sample. Acknowledgement and consideration of limitations at this initial stage serves not only to recognise them, but also attempts to justify the chosen methods and contextualise the research in terms of them so that data and analyses drawn can progress within the boundaries of the chosen study sample.

Perhaps the overriding limitation with regard to the study sample is the fact that students in a teacher education course are inherently unlikely to be dismissive of literature and education. In light of the origin of the study, which highlights the GCSE students'

aversion to literature, the chosen sample seems thus problematic. However, the present research should not be seen as a comparative account of UK and Australian literature teaching. Rather this thesis developed as research interest progressed away from its initial conception, to follow the present climate and debates around subject English and its development, justifiably located in NSW Australia where this issue is of public concern.

Given that the study seeks to investigate the occurrence of the phenomenon of literary affect and the forms it takes, the fact that the study sample *were* unlikely to be dismissive of literature and education was in this context a positive aspect; one that has produced an excellent range and depth of data. Such data would not have been possible if time and resources were split over a larger and more inaccessible (in terms of size, location and younger students) sample, and thus value would have been compromised.

This being said, the site of research, the University of New England, has a far larger percentage of students studying externally than those studying internally and thus the range of participants is quite diverse across many areas (age, geographical area, year completed HSC, etc.). Because definitive groups emerged in mature age and young generation student teachers, the research is also uniquely placed in a situation to compare 'old' and 'new' NSW HSC English syllabi experiences. As external and internal participants are at university at different times of year, the need for two series of focus groups arose.

Also for consideration under the limitations perspective is the tertiary level of study participants are engaged in. In this respect, the sample was limited as it comprised only those students studying education courses at primary or secondary (English) level. This is indeed a limitation in terms of the range of sample, however there were a number of

considerations that render the sample justifiable in the research study context. The first deliberation that framed the sample was a concern that GCSE (or HSC) level students would be constrained by time due to their involvement in school examinations; work for which would certainly take precedent over participation in the research. Students at the University of New England in tertiary education would be more available in these terms.

Development of ideas and progression of the research interest also highlighted potential problems if the research study had relied upon Year 12 student literary experiences; to attribute an all-encompassing significance at lasting literary power to one year's schooling would have been tenuous. Not only this, but it would have severely limited the range of experiences from which participants could draw and data may have been embedded specifically in *school* literary experiences and valuation of literary texts and engagement exclusively in the education domain. As the research intended to reach beyond the educational sphere, the decision to employ participants involved in tertiary level education (who have more life and literary experience upon which to reflect and who may regard their literary experiences as personal rather than purely educational) provided more rich data. In addition, there was the opportunity at this level for an interesting comparison between those participants studying primary education, and those studying secondary education. Data compared and contrasted between these two groups illustrate how tertiary study has compounded or undone literary experiences, where primary students experienced different types and levels of literary affect to the experiences of their secondary student counterparts.

vii) Definitions of Terms

The following table provides specific definitions to be applied to certain common terms in this research, illuminating meaning of terms as employed by the study.

Table 1.1 Definitions of Terms

Term	Definition
Aesthetics (or Aestheticism)	The philosophy of beauty and art and the appreciation of this beauty. Relates to the sensuous pleasure one receives from literary engagement.
Aesthetic (adj)	That which is pleasing or pleasurable in its appearance or content
Canonical Literature	That literature which forms part of the Canon in literary studies.
Critical Literacy	Various critical approaches to teaching and understanding literature that allow the audience to deconstruct, reconstruct, understand and have awareness of presented ideologies that seek to influence.
High School Certificate (HSC)	The school certificate sat by Australian students, completed when 17/18 years old.
Literary Affect (or Affect)	The ability of literary texts to act upon or produce effect(s) within their audience. The ability, for example, of the literary to be emotionally moving, to provoke behavioural or emotional change, or to create emotional mood(s) associated with the ideas or feelings they express. In this study, the use of 'aesthetic' denotes the production of literary affect.
Literary Text	Any text (written, drama, media, multimedia, film, television etc) that in the postmodern epoch may offer literary value.
Popular Culture Texts	Those texts that relate to and present the popular culture of the time.
Reader	Individuals who engage with literary texts.

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II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

i) Structure of the Literature Review

This chapter introduces and explores literature and debates underpinning the research. To illuminate current understanding, it first unpacks theories of affect and literary aesthetics, as these issues are central to this study. Founding principles and subsequent theory are then applied to current contexts particularly senior English education, where the issues of affect and aesthetics are controversial. Finally, current debates which probe contentious issues that have arisen with the inception of the new NSW 1999 HSC English syllabus are explored. This review concludes with an overview of recent research, upon which justifications for the present study rest.

ii) Introductory Comments

The Literature Review concentrates upon three principal areas that have substantial bearing on the issues under investigation. As the primary interest, the issue of literary affect is the leading area of exploration. This includes examination of the phenomenon of affect, the development of affect theory and its role and capabilities in contemporary literary arenas. Such questioning facilitates drawing assumptions regarding the forms affective experiences take, and subsequently what exactly this research study will be probing. Closely affiliated with affect is the second issue of aesthetics in literature. Aesthetics refers to the perceived pleasure or beauty derived from art, specifically in this case from literary texts. The aesthetic event in itself therefore constitutes an affective experience. As such, literature dealing with aesthetics in art, and with the contemporary nature and relevance of aesthetics, is surveyed.

Because this study also focuses upon the location of contemporary affective or aesthetic experiences, and in particular whether the secondary English curriculum in New South Wales facilitates such occurrences, the third area of investigation takes the Literature Review into the current climate of debate surrounding the HSC English syllabi and postmodernist problematising of the literary. Since introduction of the new 1999 English syllabus, an old debate has been refuelled: how to satisfactorily define the term 'literary' and which texts can be labelled as literary. This dispute has not yet been resolved (Peel, Patterson and Gerlach 2000:1) and, over the past three decades in particular, theoretical perspectives underpinning the literary and forms the literary takes have been constantly shifting. Debates about the place and relevance of postmodernism in contemporary secondary English syllabi and the return of a revised form of aesthetics, particularly in the field of tertiary English studies, have prompted a degree of moral panic, particularly in the media, who voice concerns regarding falling literacy levels and a 'dumbing down' (King 2002) of the NSW HSC English curriculum. Contesting this, however, is a critical school that advocates the postmodern shift and embraces its paradigms, supporting theoretical approaches and inclusion of postmodern texts that reveal and encapsulate the diverse contemporary socio-cultural climate. The following review of relevant literature reveals that these debates have serious implications for this study, and in fact may provide some explanation for the negative reactions of the UK group of students who provided the initial stimulus for this research.

iii) <u>The Question of Literary Affect</u>

> The best moments in reading are when you come across something – a
> thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things, which you had thought special
> and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person
> you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand
> has come out and taken yours.   (Bennett 2006:60-61)

According to Alan Bennett, acclaimed actor and playwright whose artistic interests span literature, film, television, radio, stage and translations, such is the affective capability of the literary text, historical and modern. The extraordinary power of literary experience is also alluded to in Attridge's (2004) introduction to *The Singularity of Literature*, which probes definitions of the literary and implications of contemporary classifications, including the literary as a 'cultural event', to 'unsettle, intoxicate and delight'. However, the nature of the literary experience and its capacity for affect, that is, the ways in which literature provokes intellectual, emotional and physical responses, has generated much debate and questioning. This stems from historical formal recognition of the value of literature and the important role that the literary would play in educational environments, famously asserted by Matthew Arnold in his *Reports on Elementary Schools* (1910), compiled during his role as Inspector of Schools (1852 1882). Early champions of English such as Matthew Arnold, Churston Collins, Walter Raleigh and F. R. Leavis incorporated what we understand today as 'literacy' and 'literature' under the general theme of 'literary studies' and advocated literary affect, literary appreciation and evangelism over analysis and abstract thought (Peel, Patterson & Gerlach, 2000:2). In his series of *Reports on Elementary Schools 1852 to 1882*, Arnold (1910) argued the case for literature as an interpretation of life, offering consolation and sustainability to the reader. Literature, according to Arnold, represented culture and heritage, promoting understanding and integration; it was to be viewed as culture's artefact, harbouring a wealth of knowledge about the world and humanity. Arnold believed that the literary text should represent models of cultural transmissiveness and, containing human wisdom, should exemplify:

> A criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws
> of poetic truth and poetic beauty.   (Arnold 1889:4)

English was thus seen as inherently indefinable, where importance lay in achieving what was believed to be a direct response or affective experience derived from literary texts. These concepts survive today, rendering attempts to define the literary and its infectious capabilities inconclusive. Today, however, developments in literary theory have challenged subjectivity, resisting the aesthetics of 'direct response' in favour of cultural interplay or 'models of cultural transmissiveness'. This study acknowledges the problem of the intangibility of literary phenomena, but attempts to illuminate at least some of its substance in case study observations. The importance of such past theory, which still resonates today, is thus paramount to full understanding of issues emerging from research data.

The subjective view, incorporating the phenomenon of literary affect, was initially expanded by The Constance School (1967) and by modern reader-response theory, which argues from the perspective of the reader or audience in their creation of experience and meaning in a literary work (Richards 1924; Holland 1968 & 1975; Fish 1980; Jauss 1982; Iser 1989; Clifford 1991 and Rosenblatt 1995). It remains pivotal to the study of English today, despite mounting critical theory and modern technological developments. Much advancement has occurred in relation to study of social functions of the literary and the socio-cultural and subjective bases of literary value (Doyle 1989:5). Despite this, however, the capacity to promote free growth of the individual, to encourage asking of questions of the self, and, as Peel, Patterson and Gerlach (2000:6) observe, to direct the reader inwards in a process of open-ended self-reflective and personal affect, is still at the heart of literary experience.

Such expectations of the capabilities of affect also emerged in psychoanalytic theory, with Freud advancing initial ideas on affect in 1892 (Breuer 1892:147&150). Freud suggested affect as capable of inducing states of mind and altered states of consciousness

(Stein 1991:4), and of occurring within the conscious and secondary consciousness, that is, 'the abnormal centre of will, as opposed to the primary, normal waking consciousness' (Freud 1892 quoted in Stein 1991:4). Freudian theories of affect still resonate highly in contemporary psychology: for example in the investigations of Albon (1993) into the development of affect. Explorations of Freud's affect theory therefore have substantial bearing on this particular research, in helping to describe the nature of literary affect and how it may be exhibited by participants. Of major interest is Freud's psychoanalyses of the phenomenon of affect which outlined two primary ways in which it may be manifested: firstly, that ideas and intentions are formed and work from within the individual: and secondly, that affect results from reception of outside stimuli whilst the subject is in an altered state of consciousness (Stein 1991). It is thus apparent that this study attempts to probe affective experiences derivative of the second arena, where the stimuli are literary texts, which have induced an 'altered state of consciousness' via an individual's 'reception'. Accordingly, and due to the diverse nature of modern literary texts that are no longer constrained purely to written form (explored later), participants in the study will be deemed 'receivers' of literary texts, rather than applying the more common term of 'readers'.

Expanding on the phenomenon of affect, Zajonc (1980), in his general examination of affect, argues that individuals can have affective reactions to various stimuli despite having processed little information about the particular object. Thus the phenomenon and nature of affect in contemporary times remains inherently indefinable, evidently being at its foundation reliant upon the individual and unique psyche. Broadly stated, affect may refer to almost any psychologically emotional event that alters or influences its readerin some way. In literary texts, the affective experience conjures emotion in its receiver, creating a response to the literary depth. Accordingly, this research does not aim to provide a definition of affect, but rather seeks to illuminate examples of the affective experiences of a discrete group, with a view to offering models of the contemporary nature of literary affect and the forms it takes in both private and educational environments.

iv) <u>Aesthetics and the 'New Aestheticism?'</u>

In order to fully understand the nature of the literary experience and textual capacity for affect, it is necessary to explore the development and place of aesthetics in art. According to Attridge (2004:1), such an exploration reflects an 'increasing willingness among those who study literature to address, as an issue of major importance, the question of aesthetic affect'. While the focus of this study will be on more recent developments, it is necessary to briefly attend to early principles of the discipline in an attempt to address the 'new aestheticism' (Joughin & Malpas 2003), which is supported by and founded upon the origins and historical developments of aesthetic theory. Since contemporary critics of aesthetics find themselves immersed in many of the same questions that became discernible in emergence of eighteenth century philosophical aesthetic theory (Bowie 2003a:1): and, as the rise and fall of aesthetics as it is perceived today coincided with the rise and fall of Romanticism (Scruton 1991:39), the eighteenth century seems an apt starting point for this exploration into mainstream aesthetic philosophy and literary theory.

Although Western ideas surrounding art and beauty have been debated since Plato, the idea of aesthetics was formally distinguished as a discipline in Germany during the late eighteenth century (Baumgarten 1744; Hegel & Schelling 1796), and in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Aesthetic Movement, which arose in the late 1860s, created the cult of beauty, which Aesthetes believed was the overriding principle of art. Writers of this movement, such as Walter Pater, held that the arts, rather than being a vehicle for moral message (as was Arnold's perception), should simply provide sensuous pleasure. The reflection of the literary 'mirror', through which Aristotle proclaims that art is mimesis (Aristotle quoted in Cooper 1992:11) was turned around; the eighteenth century aesthetic perception disallowed interference of life and asserted that, in fact, life should copy art. In relation to this particular research, the paramount importance of 'beauty' and 'pleasure' asserted in these founding aesthetic theories is extremely significant, and will be discussed in a later section of this review which deals with critical literacy.

A predominant figure in aesthetic theory, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) has been described as the 'greatest eighteenth-century German philosopher, and one of the subject's most influential figures in aesthetics, a leading champion of European Enlightenment' (Cooper 1992:250). Certainly, Kantian theory directs us to the heart of aesthetics, as it is concerned with how the inside self appreciates beauty and creates it (Bowie 2003a:2). These founding concepts are key to the study, since much of this early aesthetic theory survives today, playing a pivotal role in development of what Joughin and Malpas (2003) term 'the new aestheticism'. In their publication of the same name, Joughin and Malpas (2003) acknowledge the anti-aesthetic climate that was 'spawned' by the rise of literary theory. Resisting such notions, they attempt to redefine aesthetics in the contemporary context, which, as is advocated, has the potential to evoke radically different ways of thinking about culture, identity and politics (Joughin & Malpas 2003:17). In the postmodern epoch, such exploration around aesthetic theory constitutes a fundamental line of questioning.

Within such questioning, Kant remains a pivotal figure as interest in his doctrines on aesthetics has, since the onset of 1990s, been renewed (Banham 2003:193). Kant evolved an important progression in aesthetic theory, distinguishing aesthetic judgement and removing it from material reality in his division of consciousness, stating that aesthetics is separate from morality (practical reason) and from science (understanding) (Scruton 1991:39). However, as Banham (2003:204) concludes in his reflections on Kantian theory and criticism, aesthetics is nevertheless involved 'with teleology in a unitary relation that comprehends works as parts of a culture', suggesting a 'new future for aesthetics as integral to the criticisms of works'. As Banham (2003:204) goes on to assert, this future will enable a fundamentally different type of criticism, which will be subject to 'its own conditions of transformation'. Thus probing the aesthetic affective experiences of participants as receivers of contemporary literature (personal and educational) offers valuable insights to this criticism, or 'new aestheticism'.

Cooper's (1992:250) comment on Kantian aesthetics acknowledges the further contribution that Kant provides in his marriage of subjectivity and aesthetics. This

includes judgements about the beautiful (or taste) and the sublime, concluding with the idea of synthesis, which states that we can only know our worldly perceptions through personal identity. Therefore, the aesthetic is intrinsically wound up in identity and is thus obliged, as Joughin and Malpas (2003) state, to take culture into account. As Bowie (2003a) explains:

> What we know by synthesis therefore cannot be wholly derived from our receptive, sensuous experience of nature, which, without the forms of identity involved in synthesis, just consists in endless particularity.
>
> (Bowie 2003a:17)

Such assertions are supported by Collingwood (1958) who, in his seminal text *The Principles of Art* surmised that without analytic theory, notions of the aesthetic become increasingly wound up in idealism, progressing into a version of 'expressionism' where art is regarded as pure expression of inner life and is apart from even representation.

As acknowledged, even by Kant himself (Banham 2003:207), Kantian ideas of expressionism and subjectivity are thus lacking formal conclusion (Scruton 1991:40). Nietzsche (1956 & 2001) however, having rejected Schopenhauer's view of strictly 'pure' individual aesthetics, also advanced new suppositions that underpin and contribute to modern perspectives. By upholding the validity of perspectives, that is, the need to see all concepts and values in context, Nietzsche advocated that what is important to humanity and individuals cannot be grounded by science. The sense the individual makes of the world is not inherent in the world, nor is it imposed from surroundings (Nietzsche 2001). These perspectives render the aesthetic problematic, whilst asserting the importance of aesthetic perception in art and the literary in its capacity to influence at psychological levels and incite affective experiences. Such capabilities demand the attention of this study, especially in providing practical examples of the nature of literary affect which may help to ground some of these theoretical dilemmas.

Also to consider in investigating aesthetics is Tolstoy's (1960) view, which contrasts to Platonist aesthetics, in its rejection of art in terms of the good, truth and beauty. Instead, Tolstoy emphasised the importance of the emotional link that art 'must' create between artist and receiver, terming this 'infection'. According to Tolstoy, to be classed 'literary', a text need merely to unite individuals through reception. The nature of the literary work is thus widened, although Tolstoy attaches a sense of value in declaring the greater the infection, the better the art (Tolstoy 1960). However, whilst writer/critics of the Aesthetic Movement such as James Joyce, Henry James, Keats and Oscar Wilde endorsed this view, the controversial nature of such effete theories (Cooper 1992:303) led to increasing marginalisation of Aesthetics due to its perceived excesses. This study attempts to realign aesthetics in literary experiences by illuminating the nature and survival of aesthetic engagement in contemporary arenas.

iv.i) <u>The Survival of Aesthetics in the Face of Rejection</u>

The concept of aesthetics in the arts was viewed as an extremely important aspect of modern English studies until the end of World War Two, when Theodor Adorno dramatically announced that poetry was no longer possible after Auschwitz (Zuidervaart 2003:online). During the 1960s, aesthetics in art slipped as a result of egalitarianism and laboured emphasis on critical theory, which pervaded the educational environment. Terry Eagleton's impact (from 1966 onwards) on subject English, via his progressive endorsement of literary theory in works such as *Literary Theory An Introduction* (Eagleton 1983), spanned literary and cultural studies throughout Europe and most of the developed world (Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia and the United States). Eagleton (1984:93) was concerned with deconstruction and removal of the 'distinctions between elite and popular culture, fictive and non-fictive discourse, [and] tragedy and television', and was an extremely influential figure in the field of literary studies. Making critical writing more user-friendly, Eagleton is acclaimed to have:

Almost single-handedly...transformed the very nature of the critical discourse, breaking down distinctions between critical and creative writing, between academic seriousness and popular comedy, and generally making criticism a more companionable and hospitable domain.

(Regan 1998:viii)

However, it was through the advancements of Raymond Williams in the field of cultural studies that such boundaries were lifted and literary or critical theory was made more accessible. Notably in *Culture and Society* (1958) and later in *The Long Revolution* (1961), Williams explores literature and related cultural forms as a system of deep social processes harbouring complex relationships between the author, receivers, ideology and the aesthetic. The culture Williams investigated had significant impact in literary spheres. As Edward Said (1983) acknowledges in exploring relationships between the world, text and receiver, culture surpasses that to which one belongs, having also a possessive quality; culture is 'all that which an individual possesses and which possesses an individual'. This is extremely important in literary arenas, especially where texts are viewed in the Arnold tradition as culture's artefact. Said (1993:217) later explains through his examination of imperialism, that it is therefore not the nature of culture to be owned, being as it is a matter of 'appropriations, common experiences and interdependence of all kinds among different cultures'. Adopting this notion, critical attention to culture is ongoing, for example in Purves, Rogres and Soter's (1990) *How Porcupines Make Love III*, which examines various texts in relation to cultures through reader response approaches in the classroom. As literary heritage is infused with writings of many cultures, cultural awareness and appreciation becomes increasingly important in literary studies. As Wendy Morgan (1997) suggests in *Critical Literacy in the classroom: The art of the possible*, which explores the study and practical function of theoretical approaches to literature in education, the curriculum provides an arena where students are brought into a broader culture than that of their home. This, argues Morgan, offers students different ways of reading the world, of constructing and reconstructing it, through valuing literary works. This develops individuality by encouraging student

reading experiences with new and diverse texts and might be expected to have some degree of influence over the nature of literary affect.

In *Shakespeare and Society* (Eagleton 1967), which pays attention to literary criticism and its ability to reveal creations of social identity, Eagleton deconstructs divides between the individual and society, proclaiming 'What we judge in the plays as relevant…is shaped by what we see in our own culture, in ourselves' (1967:9). In so doing, Eagleton elaborates the possibility of literary studies 'as a subject of critical and cultural debate' (Regan 1998:x). Indeed these notions have materialised; the 1980s saw a rapid move towards literary theory, as illustrated by Stanley Fish (1980) in his analysis of reader-response criticism, which examines interpretation of texts as dependent upon receiver's subjective community experience(s). This has had major consequences for subject English in its insistence that the essence of literary study may only be fully accessible in a given socio-cultural community:

> Communication occurs within situations and…to be in a situation is already to be in possession of (or to be possessed by) a structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place: and it is within the assumption of these purposes and goals that any utterance is *immediately* heard.   (Fish 1980:318)

Such theoretical explorations and developments in contemporary literary studies focussing on the reader, suggest that practical research, as this present study hopes to provide, is urgently needed. Literary theory has, since the 1980s, proliferated in English education, causing radical shifts in pedagogy that have not been without criticism. This contention arises from a perceived reduction of aesthetics and literary affect, but this needs to be complemented by actual evidence as to whether literary affect is alive or dead.

Assertions from mass media critics and in particular, a series of articles recently published in *The Australian*, which include comment from Luke Slattery (2005) and David Crawshaw (2007), claim that expanding post-modern literary theory has usurped the place of literary affect and aesthetics. Critical literacy also faces dissent from political comment: the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, 'blasts rubbish books in schools' (Welch, 2006:online) and 'canes rubbish postmodern teaching' (Lewis & Salusinszky, 2006:online) in the NSW HSC English syllabus. However, despite media and political claims, the contemporary English education experience reflects increasing importance of literacy and literacies (especially critical literacy) in English education. Within this however, aesthetics still finds mention in a number of current syllabi, notably in Stages 4/5 and 6 in New South Wales; in the Senior English syllabus in Victoria; and in Senior and Years 1-10 in Queensland. Such breakthroughs are the result of the last decade's attempts to reposition aesthetics and the literary, where critics (Armstrong 2000; Joughin & Malpas 2003; Attridge 2004; Misson & Morgan 2006) have advocated the emancipatory qualities of aesthetics in literary study. Armstrong (2000) advocates a 'radical aesthetic', which favours the political, transgressive and emancipatory and makes the case for Enlightenment art and literature in making 'gender apparent' and 'the feminine visible'. Coupling 'aesthetics' and the 'concept of play' through their involvement with form and feeling, Armstrong (2000) argues that they are sense-making activities that attempt to create coherent microcosms in their understanding and interpretation of reality. Therefore, states Armstrong (2000), aesthetics can be emancipated from Eagleton's (1990) counter-political position for it.

Given such liberation, aesthetics takes on new dimensions becoming, according to Joughin and Malpas (2003), the 'new aestheticism'. This is of particular relevance to the research, in its attempts to understand what exactly this 'new' aesthetic might look like in students of contemporary literary studies. Although the declarations of theorists like Terry Eagleton, Immanuel Kant, Frederick Nietzsche and Leo Tolstoy resonate today, there is evidently little resolve as to the definition, purpose and role of aesthetics in literary studies, and this requires further investigation. Issues emerging from 1990s egalitarianism and late nineteenth century Aesthetic Movement are still at play in

contemporary awareness of the value of critical theory *and* subjective reader response, which involves aesthetic judgement. Contrary to Eagleton's (1990) declining aesthetic, Joughin and Malpas (2003), exploring the repositioning of aesthetics in the postmodern environment, assert the importance of aesthetics, arguing that cultural studies ignores the 'specificities of aesthetic experience' in its interpretation of literature, and that this failing neglects the fact that literature can be interpreted in different ways; ways which, quite often, question rather than ideologically reflect the status quo. Joughin and Malpas (2003) offer a place for aesthetics in 'the whole process of human perception and sensation – ideas about the body, imagination and feeling.' Comparatively, in exploring the 'singularity of literature', Atteridge (2004:2) outlines the 'trinity' that 'lies at the heart of Western art' as 'innovation', 'singularity' and 'alterity' or 'otherness', bringing into perspective two crucial dimensions of literature as an aesthetic event or performance, and as participating in the 'ethical'. These factors allow receivers to experience literature as an event through expression, representation and shades of emotion (Attridge 2004), which is reflective of aesthetic affect. The aesthetic impulse in art and literature therefore becomes a phenomenon for which society must find room; in educational arenas, aesthetic experiences are potentially vehicles of socio-cultural change and personal development. This research seeks evidence for such claims by going to the heart of the issue in its questioning of participants who have sat the HSC and who, as student teachers, have a keen interest in education. This is a necessary exploration in light of modern contentions, as the experiences of participants offer real insights into the nature of aesthetics and affect in literary arenas.

Despite the implied theoretical clash between critical literacy and aesthetics, the question remains whether or not affective experiences and aesthetic engagement are actually occurring in the contemporary classroom and whether critical literacy, literary theory and aesthetic experiences can occur in harmony.

v) The Contemporary Literary Experience: An Aesthetic Affective in High and Popular Culture Texts?

The contemporary English education experience is very different from the typical 1970s and early 1980s classrooms, where work was based on engagement with literature, and where communication and information technology in the classroom was a future vision. As Andrews (2001:1) observes, the twentieth century classroom, by contrast, has a reduced dependence on literature as the foundation for activities, more differentiation, tighter learning outcomes, increased assessment activities and at least one if not ten computers available for student work. This, coupled with changing theoretical positions for subject English, has advanced further problematising about English pedagogy and has significant implications for this study. The changing nature of the English experience, in light of disputes regarding aesthetics, literary affect and critical literacy, demands exploration of the experiences of students who studied pre-1999 and post-1999, where 1999 is significant due to the implementation of the new NSW HSC English syllabus. The following considerations of recent changes to, and developments in, English studies advance underpinning knowledge, subsequently aiding understanding of participant data.

According to Ball and Lacey (1984:21) in investigating classroom dynamics and subcultures, the watershed movement of what is termed 'New English' has generated many shifts in subject English curriculum framework and syllabus content, and consequently in pedagogy. At its examination in 1995, the Wyndham Stage 6 Curriculum (Wyndham 1957) presented its critics (the Board of Studies) numerous areas of concern based upon, as Manuel (2002) suggests in her study of what teachers think of the New NSW English HSC, vastly changed socio-cultural and economic conditions. These included the student population being increasingly diverse, rising retention rates in post-compulsory education, high youth unemployment statistics and, generally, a vastly different socio-economic context than that of the 1960s (Manuel 2002:67). As a result, the New Stage 6 Curriculum was borne out of an attempt by the Board of Studies (BOS) to align Years 11 and 12 with contemporary perspectives of the literary. This involved many changes, which are reflected in the contemporary education environment and which

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provide this study with an understanding of participants' school literary 'upbringing'. Manuel's (2002) work is particularly relevant in its probing of the new English syllabus, as it highlights areas of concern and praise from teachers of the new syllabus. In relation to this study, Manuel's (2002) conclusions, which reflect 'enhanced [teacher] collegial relationships', 'great potential for students to be challenged and enthused' and the syllabus as 'a catalyst for refreshing their [teachers'] spirit and enthusiasm', offer perspectives on teacher reception of the syllabus. Such observations present foundations upon which to build in order to investigate whether, as Manuel (2002) advocates, students are actually being 'challenged and enthused' and are still experiencing literary affect and aesthetic engagement under the new syllabus.

As part of these radical changes in the school study of literature, the definition of 'literary text' has been expanded to encompass and reflect contemporary trends towards media and multimedia, ironically replicating the assertion made in the 1963 United Kingdom Newsom Report, which advocates 'study of film and television in their own right, as powerful forces in our culture and significant sources of language and ideas' (HMSO 1963:para 474). Accordingly, the new curriculum encompasses a broader range of classic, canonic and popular texts from which teachers and students may choose. In line with critical theory approaches of the 1980s, areas devoted to awareness and implications of critical literary theory, such as reader-response, post- modernism/ structuralism/ colonialism, Feminist and Marxist theory also find place on the syllabus which, as Manuel (2002:68) advocates, explores and encourages appreciation of the 'interconnectedness of all texts and language'. Importance is attached to the comprehension of how meaning is made and contested, giving students a dual mission of creating meaning as well as being critical interpreters of literary texts. According to the Board of Studies (BOS), this constitutes an effort to relocate subject English as:

> ...central to the learning and development...[of all students whilst they]...make sense of and enrich their lives in personal, social and professional situations.
>
> (NSW BOS Senior English Review Committee 1997:6)

The climate of change continued into the NSW 1999 HSC English syllabus, which quickly and aptly responded to new critical literacy trends and the 'breakthrough' report by the British Film Institute (1999), which 'had begun to change the literature and personal development base of English' and gave 'an emerging sense that literacy is no longer a monolithic print-bound phenomenon' (Andrews 2001:4). However, media critics such as Boswell (2002), King (2002) and Slattery (2005) hotly condemn these radical ideas, arguing that they reflect lost morality, invasion by popular culture and declining societal standards. This is, however, balanced by advocates who champion the marriage of popular and high culture, and of critical literacy and traditional literary values of universality and timelessness. This research is underpinned by such debates, where data gathered from participants will explore whether marriage of the binaries has been successful in maintaining the phenomenon of affect and aesthetic appreciation in contemporary literary engagements. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore changes that have arisen in English study, in order to fully understand the contending approaches and disputes that have emerged around approaches to the subject.

From shifts in the conception of subject English arise two models relating to the purpose of English teaching, which were initially identified in the United Kingdom by the 1988 Kingman Report (Cox 1991) and which provide a summary of the contending schools of thought. This is demonstrated in the following figure.
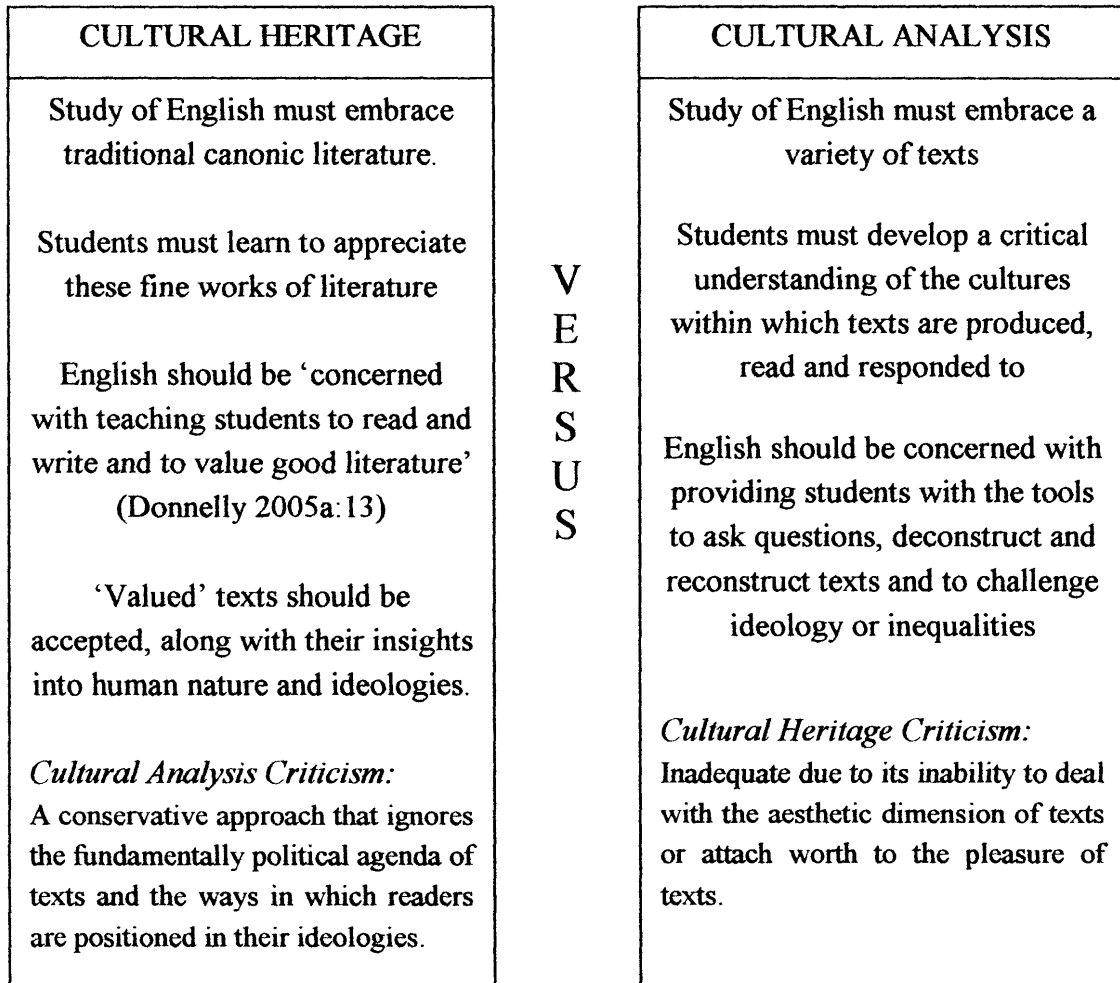
CULTURAL HERITAGE		CULTURAL ANALYSIS
Study of English must embrace traditional canonic literature. Students must learn to appreciate these fine works of literature English should be 'concerned with teaching students to read and write and to value good literature' (Donnelly 2005a:13) 'Valued' texts should be accepted, along with their insights into human nature and ideologies. *Cultural Analysis Criticism:* A conservative approach that ignores the fundamentally political agenda of texts and the ways in which readers are positioned in their ideologies.	V E R S U S	Study of English must embrace a variety of texts Students must develop a critical understanding of the cultures within which texts are produced, read and responded to English should be concerned with providing students with the tools to ask questions, deconstruct and reconstruct texts and to challenge ideology or inequalities *Cultural Heritage Criticism:* Inadequate due to its inability to deal with the aesthetic dimension of texts or attach worth to the pleasure of texts.

Figure 2.1 Cultural Heritage versus Cultural Analysis Model
(adapted from observations made in Misson & Morgan 2006:4).

Although Cox (1989) did not perceive approaches to literary study as mutually exclusive, or sharply distinguishable (Andrews 2001:6), the contemporary climate situates the above positions as opposing binaries. Such opposition has resulted in many challenges for contemporary English syllabi, and inevitably, the revised 1999 HSC English syllabus in New South Wales has been the focus of much debate. Changes to the way subject English in schools is approached and perceived have derived from selection of texts and consequent political concerns, which have created an arena for dispute concerning criteria for 'valuable' literature (McGraw 2005). Additionally, contention arises as to who should

select texts and thus define the study of English. This view considers changes occurring in subject English and public reactions to it, which have arisen due to inclusion of multimedia, film and television texts for study. Inclusion of such texts and recognition of critical literacy in the classroom have created a state of moral panic, which has led to disputes regarding old against new, the 'Shakespeare versus Spielberg debate', alongside assertions that new critical/technical language is 'destroying' traditional learning. Certainly, recent syllabi affirm the teaching, for example, of Shakespeare, Bronte, Yeats and other canonical literature, whilst at the same time affirming the value of multimedia, film and television texts for study (NSW BOS 1999a,b&c). This has become not only an issue for scholarly educators, but for media, public and particularly pupils, who in the 2005 HSC English (Senior) examination find themselves active participants in the debate. This present study contributes to the debate through case study data, by exploring the literary experience, affect and aestheticism, and student reactions to NSW English HSC syllabi.

The theories explored above amply demonstrate that the literary and all that it implies is not without its problems. These stem from lack of a resolute definition of 'literature' in a postmodernist era, where rapidly changing socio-political and educational environments continue to produce new artistic and potentially literary media. Nevertheless, critics such as Joseph Hillis Miller (2002:1), in his exploration of literature and its authority over individuals, believe the perennial and universal nature of the literary portends that it will survive the ages of change and technological development. Thus, Shakespeare and Chaucer still survive in subject English, along with study of film and television, web-page design and advertising. With such diverse media in play across all academic levels, the literary text is no longer fixed in written language, and also exists in a number of text types which each have a capacity to induce an affective experience. In the postmodern epoch the affective capability of a diverse range of texts is thus a critical factor in understanding the literary, and consequently recognition of the affective domain is imperative. It may well be that Bennett's (2006:60-61) description of the hand, lifting out of the text and taking the hand of the receiver, is an apt metaphor for the literary affective dimension that is necessary for individual engagement and connection with texts from

this new era, given that modern literature in particular is vernacular literature (Miller 2002:3). However, to conclude this section on current theoretical debates, more should be said about the influence on critical literacy.

The existence of critical literacy as a useful tool for approaching texts in the contemporary has been extensively debated. Strongly advocating critical literacy and its relevance in the new English syllabus, English Teacher Association (ETA) publications, which include comments from Amanda Collins (2005); Catherine Beavis (2006) David Freesmith (2006); Trevor Gale (2006); Anita Jenitkoff (2006) and Wayne Sawyer, (2006) deliver a positive view of theory as a tool that provides literary enlightenment and awareness. These assertions find support from scholars: for example Bonnycastle (2002), who believes that:

> Often literary theories change our views of a work of literature by
> proposing new distinctions or new categories for looking at the work.
> This is a bit like putting on a new set of glasses: suddenly you see
> things more clearly.   (Bonnycastle 2002)

Through such advocation, media voices that accuse critical literacy of political and pedagogical offences experience strong and ongoing contention (Freesmith 2006:25). Offering case study insights through exploration of participant data which reflect experiences with the literary, this study seeks answers to whether critical literacy, affect and aesthetics can be engaged with simultaneously. Further review of the role critical literacy currently takes in the curriculum provides understanding for such exploration.

vi) A Place for Critical Literacy?

As noted by Goodwyn and Powell (2003) in their exploration of approaches to studying the *Lady of Shalott*, the central argument for examination of texts through critical literacy relates to recognition of varying belief systems, the plurality of texts with their 'gaps and silences' that render varying meanings, and critical literacy's battle against the traditional canon, as it allows texts to be analysed and re-presented or re-examined through different perspectives. Campaigners of critical literacy such as Christie et al. (1991:2&30) advocate it as an 'instrument of social power', a tool that 'enhance[s] students' powerful participation in social practices'. Such claims derive from critical literacy's focus on, and interrogation of, ideological and socio-cultural assumptions that underwrite literary texts, such as the politics of construction and representation, discourse inequalities and socio-cultural positioning (Morgan 1997:1-2). The reader is thus placed in an informed position (of power), which illuminates the ways in which texts seek to construct and present their dominant ideologies through structure, form and language whilst subverting, concealing or admonishing alternative ideas or perspectives (Lankshear & McLaren 1993; Luke 1993; Ryan 1999). As Morgan's (1997) work on critical literacy suggests, to cross-examine various texts, or to compare and contrast texts as subject English curricula require (NSW BOS 1999b), consequently provides students with an array of perspectives that incite argument, discussion and questioning:

> Any discourse tends to work in relation to others and in distinction from them, offering alternatives to what other discourses offer. Within the field of English, for example, the discourse of a humanist, progressive education promotes one kind of reading practice to 'develop' and 'encourage' one kind of reader, whereas in the discourse of critical literacy, the aim of teaching is to 'produce' a different kind of reading and reader.   (Morgan 1997:3)

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Similarly, Bonnycastle (2002) advocates literary theory as enjoying a distinctive place in English syllabi, able to deal with the 'problem of ideologies', introducing uncertainty into texts and requiring that students become active participants in the issue of which knowledge, or literature, is valuable. Literary texts become a place where the three ideologies of receiver, author and text coalesce, producing conflict or comparison. From conflict there derives a 'surprise', which constitutes the singularity of response; in comparison understanding is gained, where the reader responds as a cultural representative (Bonnycastle 2002). This neatly identifies two categories for affective experiences that emerge from this research study, which correspond to individual development of the personal and social selves (Bennett & Sani 2004), and which allow identification of the singularity of affect and affect as understanding.

Is it with such conviction, that literary theory provides a tool through which one may develop personally and socially, that progress in the field of literary theory study has been made. There exists such an intricate relationship between literary theory, critical literacy and popular culture texts, that there emerges a new form of 'cultural theory', which brings together the three components. Where literary theory provides one with interpretive contexts from which one may find direction for the ways in which a text may be read, it seems instinctive to juxtapose this with critical literacy; an approach which facilitates the analysis and critique of the presupposed relationships in texts in order that we may align ourselves or challenge underpinning beliefs. The progressive shift towards and integration of popular culture texts for study responds to the need created by literary theory and critical literacies for texts that reveal the social and cultural identities of the postmodern epoch, and which respond, through their varied modes of representation, to multiliteracies that form part of teaching frameworks (Muspratt, S. Luke, A & Freebody, P. (1997). Accordingly, the new challenges and issues that such texts reveal provoke further questioning for literary theory and critical literacies.

Critics of critical literacy (Slattery 2005; Crawshaw 2007) nevertheless contest notions of student 'empowerment'. Commentators such as Kevin Donnelly (2005b:13) proclaim that the study of literary theory simply conceals the political agenda of the cultural Left,

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serving as a tool to indoctrinate children to, 'embrace a left-wing, politically correct view on social and political issues'. Such opposition accuses teachers and academics who practice critical literacy of 'peddling political views', and it also places liability for the perceived decline in literacy standards directly on the shoulders of critical literacy and its attention to popular culture texts (Harris and Maiden 2005; Donnelly 2005a). Critical literacy is thus seen as a vehicle for practical dissemination of political agenda which ignores fundamental philosophies of beauty and art (Plato; Aristotle; Kant; Nietzsche), denying students 'emotional and psychological...aesthetic and moral' (Donnelly 2005b:13) engagement with literary texts. This study probes whether this is the case and whether, in fact, critical literacy replaced aesthetic and affective literary engagements. The reviewed issues are thus very relevant, putting into context the importance of the data and justifying the need to investigate student experiences under the new NSW 1999 HSC English syllabus. Apart from offering case study examples that illustrate the nature of literary affect and aesthetic experiences with literary texts, data may go some way to suggesting whether students share critics' concerns for the new syllabus.

A significant recent development in the marriage of critical literacy and aesthetics, Misson and Morgan (2006) investigating these binaries in *Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic*, suggest harmony between critical literacy and the aesthetic which, it is argued, need not be in direct opposition but instead may sit relatively neatly with each other, providing the most enriching literary experiences. Thus the impetus has become:

> ...to reconfigure critical literacy so that it can cope with the aesthetic
> and all the attendant aspects of human experience.
>
> (Misson & Morgan 2006:xix)

The significance of critical literacy *and* aesthetic affective literary experiences is thus acknowledged. Bowie (2003a) offers support for this view in his argument for critical literacy and theoretical approaches as tools that significantly enhance aesthetic experiences through interrogation and problematising of literary texts. Similarly,

Eaglestone (2003:152-156) advances 'two types of truth': the first as correspondence, being associated with science or understanding, and the second as unveiling, as found in art. These truths come together with the critical appreciation of literary texts *and* aesthetic or affective engagement. Eaglestone (2003) argues that in attending to literary texts, importance lies in acknowledging and empathising with what it is that moves the receiver. The aesthetic is thus distinct from humanist ideologies, being concerned with deepening emotional and logical interpretations of the intricacies of life and attending to what it is about a literary text that 'moves' us. Thus, the literary debate returns to deciphering textual capacity for affect and aesthetic experiences; it transcends critical literacy's socio-cultural, political and economic concerns to reach to 'the grain of our being' (Whitehead 1969). This is the literary affective or aesthetic that this study is concerned with exploring.

vii) <u>Previous Research: Recent Teacher Perspectives on the new 1999 NSW English HSC Syllabus and Student Reading Habits</u>

Since introduction of the new 1999 syllabus for subject English in the NSW HSC, there has been increasing scholarly and government concern to assemble perspectives from teachers of the new syllabus. Accordingly, Manuel's (2002) collation and examination of teacher reactions has provided data that offer insight on concerns and achievements in the syllabus. Her research reveals anxiety about the expanding nature of English study given the fixed amount of time subject English receives in the curriculum. According to Manuel (2002), teachers were specifically concerned about a reduction in time allocated to reflective writing and personal interpretation of literary texts. This is coupled with growing assessment and marking requirements, and student concern about how to 'say anything substantial about so much in only forty minutes' (Manuel 2002:66). Having said this, it was also noted after investigation of *Stage 6 Prescriptions* (NSW BOS:1999c), that the new HSC English courses offer a balance of literary texts judged to be of lasting value (the canonical), and texts which reflect and are shaping contemporary culture, which demands critical attention at compulsory level (Stanley 2001). As Sawyer (1998)

observes, it has not, as media critics such as Donnelly (2005a&b) and Slattery (2005) suggest, abandoned the 'traditional' terrain of English studies. Teacher perspectives in Manuel's (2002) study therefore offer evidence to challenge current opposition to the new syllabus. However, it is necessary to briefly explore some case studies on student reading habits in order to provide some perspectives on current research that links directly to literary affect in the receivers, rather than the teachers, of literary texts, particularly within the context of contemporary education.

Studies concentrating on this area are borne out of the assumption that the relevancy of literary texts in education depends upon the extent to which texts connect with what students already know (Durrant & Beavis 2001; Hull & Schultz 2002). It is thus the prerogative of these studies to probe student text choices. Accordingly, Ryan (2005) offers analysis of a Melbourne study of 'adolescent text pleasures', in which secondary school students were interviewed on their personal text choices. As Ryan (2005:38) comments, the study illuminates the need for 'the English curriculum to take seriously young people's text pleasures and suggests some specific directions for change'. Two major findings relating to differences between texts studied as 'passions' and texts studied at school, and specific gender and class patterns shaped recommendations for English curriculum (Ryan 2005:38), which centred upon 'choice', 'building on students' knowledge' and 'multi-modal responses to reading' (Ryan 2005:44-45). Taking into account these observations, this present study responds by exploring student reactions to the new 1999 NSW English HSC, whether affective and aesthetic experiences are occurring and the nature of these experiences in the contemporary climate. Such investigations add to conclusions drawn by Ryan (2005) by providing examples of the nature of affect and thus illuminating ways in which 'choice', 'student knowledge' and 'multimodal responses' may be specifically addressed.

viii) <u>The Contemporary Battle for Subject English</u>

As this review has illuminated, literature and literary studies have played, as Trevor Cairney (2004:3) observes, 'a vital role in shaping human existence for many centuries', providing 'a means not only to understand the human condition but also to re-create ourselves'. This too is the opinion of earlier critics such as Rosen (1983), Bruner (1990) and Langer (1995). At the same time, literature is a school subject: the syllabus frames the literary educational experience and the overall aim of the experience is to meet targets and, ultimately, sit an examination. The curriculum requires that students must recognise and recall through interpretation and evaluation, in relation to preference and value:

> It [the Curriculum Framework] supports the development and expression of
> a system of personal values based on student's understanding of moral,
> ethical and spiritual matters and gives expression to their hopes and ideas.
>
> (NSW BOS 1999a:online)

From this review of the theoretical literature, there emerge two relevant approaches that Bruner (1990) terms the paradigmatic and narrative, and which are not necessarily exclusive of, and can in fact be 'complementary' to, one another. Cairney (2004) outlines the distinction between these modes, where the paradigmatic 'seeks to convince of truth through logical argument' and the narrative 'seeks to enrich life', communicating 'timeless truths about the human condition through fictional experiences that are nonetheless reflective of the reality of life'. Similarly, reader approaches to literary texts can range from objective to subjective; as Cairney (2004:3), with reference to Rosenblatt (1978) describes, from a detached objective reading 'for a narrow purpose', which he terms an 'efferent reading', to a 'subjective personal reading' where one's 'knowledge and experience are brought to bear on a text as an insider', which is the 'aesthetic reading'. Such views may be aligned with critical literacy and aesthetic approaches to literary texts and their study, where efferent readings support critical literacy approaches and subjective personal reading obviously reflects the aesthetic. In contemporary English study, these competing approaches are proving a challenge.

For subject English, contentions between aesthetics and critical literacy are posing severe problems, to which NSW English Teacher Association (ETA) critics have been forced to respond. Most recently, Misson and Morgan's publication, *Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic* (2006), which pays attention to concepts and issues raised in recent texts such as *The New Aestheticism* (Joughin & Malpas 2003), and *The Singularity of Literature* (Attridge 2004), suggests a new understanding between the critical and the aesthetic or affective in literary texts. If we are to accept this position, then the fundamental divide between critical theory (postmodern) and aesthetics (traditional) may be satisfactorily bridged. Also, since critical literacy brought with it a new arena for texts other than traditional prose, poetry and drama, differences of valuation between postmodern texts and traditional (canonical) classics that have been the cause of much literature *on* literature (Widdowson 1999; Beaumont Bissell 2002; Holden & Schmit 2002; Miller 2002) may find some objective resolve. This would constitute a leap forward from current disputes, which have produced widely publicised strident reactions (Boswell 2002; King 2002; Glover 2002; Slattery 2005), exemplified in King's (2002) *Sydney Morning Herald* article, 'This Is Not A Headline, It's An HSC English Exam Text'. Both King and Boswell's (2002) point to a 'dumbing' of the syllabus, one which according to King, 'is not exactly a dumbing down; it's a dumbing up. It aspires to stupidity' (King 2002). Such critics condone postmodern texts like radio, newspaper or press articles and advertisements (written, oral and visual), the internet, web-sites, email and text messaging, as being dressed up as 'literary' by virtue of their annexation to the subject English. In 'reality', assert such critics, they have no literary value. These issues are perceived, inevitably, as one of value. Again, as Misson & Morgan (2006:1) observe, the debate returns to differences in personal preference and subjective discrimination between canonic and postmodern texts, where each opponent tries to enlist others to share his taste.

However, to fully understand the idea of the literary, more fundamental issues of the affective capability of texts and literary aesthetics must be considered. What are the results of the changed nature of English studies upon receivers of literary texts? Is affect occurring in the postmodern climate? Particularly following Eagleton's (1966-1990)

diminishment of aesthetics and move towards critical theory, is there still a place for aesthetics in English syllabi? If so, how are both popular culture and classical texts to be accommodated? These are important questions to negotiate, since both high and popular culture texts are very prevalent in new HSC English syllabi, and since textual capacity for affect and student aesthetic appreciation incite cognitive processes of learning and development (Berkowitz 2000:123-143), thus allowing students to realise the benefits of a literary education:

> An awareness and valuing of the aesthetic can, indeed must, be incorporated into a critical sociocultural model of English pedagogy. The aesthetic and the socially critical are not opposed to one another but, rather, are necessary, complementary components of a rich literary practice, one that can lay claim legitimately to benefiting both individual readers and writers and the society to which they graduate from English classrooms.

> (Misson & Morgan 2006:4)

ix) <u>In Conclusion</u>

Through exploration of student experiences with the literary both in and out of the education environment, this study attends to the questions of literary affect and aestheticism. In particular, these case study investigations illuminate whether the postmodern climate (educational and personal) allows for student engagements that are reflective of the survival of aesthetics and affect in contemporary times.

III.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methods employed in undertaking this study. Conceptual and research frameworks and context of the study are given consideration, and guiding research questions are detailed. Reasons and justification for the selection of methodology are presented, with comment on selection of participants. Processes by which data were collected are explored, including consideration of ethical issues for each aspect of data collection. This is succeeded by observations on the data analysis methods. Finally, justification for the study in terms of reliability and validity issues is presented. As this is a study involving students in a special teacher–student relationship with the supervisors of the research, the chapter concludes with further discussion on ethical considerations.

i) Research Design

Research design for this study emerged from the conceptual framework and the research framework. The scientific research techniques employed function to constructively explore, describe and explain (Babbie 2004:87) occurrence of the phenomenon of literary affect, making the notions of probability and causality less ambiguous. Exploration into the phenomenon of literary affect and the forms it takes in an age dominated by postmodernist problematising of the literary offers some familiarisation with the nature of literary affect and its capabilities. The research subsequently probes and describes student experiences with the literary and the nature of affect, including emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual responses. This information was obtained via data collection tools, which document and describe individual literary encounters. Finally, the study concludes with explanatory details that go some way to offering justification for the presence or absence of literary affect. Such justifications take place within the context of contemporary concerns for the literary, particularly within the educational arena.

i.i) The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study emerged as exploration of relevant literature offered insights and possibilities for experiences with literature and literary affect encountered by students in the UK in 2004. This advanced a deeper understanding of significant issues surrounding the phenomenon of literary affect, its role and the forms it takes in contemporary educational and private domains.

Emerging from support work done with secondary school students in the UK was concern that students were not engaged with literary texts; educationally or privately. This guided investigations towards the phenomenon of literary affect, its design and survival, and the forms it takes in contemporary socio-educational environs if, indeed, it has a place at all. In conjunction with this issue, there was acute awareness that the literary experience in relation to each individual student's enthusiasms must be considered. Querying these concerns allowed reflection on issues involved in personal and educational engagement with literary texts.

The literature review offered insights into contentions around literary experiences in the revised 1999 NSW HSC English syllabus, compared with that of the old 1982 document. It expounded significant contemporary debates around the nature of the literary, including deliberations about definition of a literary text in the postmodern socio-cultural climate, and contending approaches to studying literary texts. The idea emerged that changed approaches to study of literary texts may have influence upon the affective dimension and capabilities of texts. There is a need to explore individual student experience, both educational and private, to provide insights into and exploration of affect that includes: investigations into the types of texts that affect, the forms affect takes, the experiences of students with varying demography, and affective experiences in relation to old and new syllabi. A process by which these factors could be measured therefore developed, based on the Knowledge that previous studies have attended to teacher perceptions of the revised 1999 NSW HSC English syllabus, but have yet to fully investigate student experiences. The UK student reactions to literary study, however, highlighted the

apparent and significant need to survey student affect, as disengagement was negatively impacting on individual's whole and life-long literary lesson:

> I can't wait 'til I finish school, I'm just gonna burn it all...[laughing]...I'm
> never gonna read another stupid book again!   (Aaron 2004)

Thus the conceptual framework derived from aforementioned concerns, which suggest that literary affect is dependent upon text choice, approaches to study and educational literary experiences. Running contrapuntally with these notions is the individual aesthetic, which is part of and integral to the affective capability of literary texts. This is supported by psychological theories of affect, which pertain to individual emotions and responses to stimuli. It is therefore of major importance that the study is reflective of individual experiences with literary affect, as well as the educational dimensions of literary engagement. This conceptual framework is graphically represented on the following page.

THEORY

Literary experiences have the ability to affect the individual and are fundamental to individual development and the teaching and learning of literacy skills

Private Literary Experiences

School Literary Experiences

Converge

Literary Influences

Definition / concept of 'Literary'

A U T H O R I T I E S

Personal | Parental | Peer | School Curriculum | Teacher Preference

THE AUTHOR

Literary Irrelevancy
No enjoyment
Disengagement

THE INDIVIDUAL

Aesthetic Experience
Appreciation
Engagement

UNAFFECTIVE

AFFECT

Figure 3.1 Graphic Representation of Conceptual Framework

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i.ii) The Research Framework

This study focused upon development of issues and hypotheses derived from individual and group consultations with disengaged secondary students in the UK, who were preparing to sit their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) English examinations. Research is therefore founded on questions originating from practices in student support, which illuminated need for revision of the occurrence and capabilities of literary affect in the twenty-first century. Questions were subsequently developed and moulded by relevant literature pertaining to the problem, as a means of support and grounding of concepts. Issues raised by the literature review illuminated concerns for the NSW HSC English syllabi by other significant people, including: the Board of Studies (BOS), the English Teachers Association (ETA), media critics, professional scholars, government, and teachers. Thus, the study focuses on the NSW HSC English syllabi as an appropriate case study for exploration.

Applying learning and ideas stimulated by consultations with students in the UK in 2004 unavoidably meant that reflection on events was prior to formal instigation of the study. Nevertheless, these concepts provided sound guidance as to direction of research and areas that should be considered by the literature review. These initial insights also provided founding bases for the research questions. Thus, the study does not trial existing hypotheses; rather, it is a grounded study which fosters the notion that research not only seeks answers, but also incites further questioning (Borg & Gall 1989:386). Congruent reflections on UK student consultations and literature review topics ensured that the eventual research design was directed by 'prevailing theories and fresh empirical observation' (Yin 1993:15).

The second phase of research sought to gather information via a survey from a cross-section of student teachers at the University of New England (UNE). Participants had an understanding of some concepts and ideas from the first phase of the research; this was developed by a short presentation delivered as a prelude to those groups who were considering participating. Target participants were of different demography to the UK

students who had provided insights to the study and informed its direction. The UK group of students, known hereafter as 'UK Group', were a mix of fifteen to sixteen year-old students, some from a large grammar school and others from a smaller Catholic school. The schools were situated in close proximity on the border of three major cities in Northern England. Participants targeted for the research proper, however, were older (primarily 20-23 years, but included mature students of 50+ years) and studying to be teachers themselves, in a small rural town university in Australia. They also fell into two distinct groups; those studying to be primary teachers and those studying to be secondary teachers. This change of demography for targeted participants was significant on three levels, including the geographical shift in location, and two central alterations in target participants, being significantly older and also engaged in tertiary level of study, rather than secondary school leavers. These changes and their justifications are further detailed under point ii), 'Selection of Participants'. Changes also support preliminary initiatives that hypothesised whether attitudes proliferating from the UK Group were characteristic of a global trend for literary affect amongst adolescents in the twenty-first century, or if they are specific to their context.

The third phase of study was an extension of data gathered from the survey. It took the form of two focus groups, which consisted of seven and three participants respectively, and developed ideas from the survey data collection tool. The focus groups were semi-structured interviews, centred on flexible topics whilst simultaneously allowing scope for reflection upon and retelling of experiences of individual participants. Group dynamics were also noted due to the contagious nature of literary affect and affect formation through discussion and interaction with others. In relation to this, and in addition to the comments of participants and their interactions, my learning and experiences as participant / researcher were considered. Including myself in the study in a self-reflexive way was not only a valuable opportunity to gain further insights into my own literary affect as a UK citizen, having completed my schooling and undergraduate studies in England, but also to do a small amount of comparative work against Australian participant experiences, upon which to draw in the Conclusion chapter of research. Like participants, I found that I was experiencing somewhat renewed affective encounters

from actively participating in, as well as facilitating, focus groups. As a participant, I was able to refresh awareness of my personal literary affect, and learn from insights gained. The participant researcher role could not be neglected if I was to fully understand and respond to participants' individual affective experiences in the data collection stage.

Data produced from surveys and focus groups were finally compiled into case study format, and were observed and interpreted by myself and other professionals, which included the two research supervisors and UNE research methods and psychology researcher. Issues raised were considered, which allowed for diversity of opinion and breadth of professional knowledge from which final hypotheses, observations and conclusions were drawn. The research framework is graphically depicted on the following page, and illustrates the development and investigations included in this research project. As the diagram illustrates, research proper commenced at a later date to initial conceptualisation of ideas and concerns, which occurred over a year previous to commencement of the project. The research is essentially grounded theory, bringing together positivism and interactionism (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and attempting to generate theory from comparison and unfolding of observations derived of participants' experiences with literary affect, where the researcher is 'scientific and creative at the same time' (Babbie 2004:291-2). The research is essentially of the qualitative research paradigm, although quantification of data is applied in order to manipulate observations 'for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect.' (Babbie 2004:396). Initial concepts derived from the UK Group along with issues and understandings drawn from review of relevant literature created a solid foundation for research into the second and third study phases.

As the second and third phases unfolded, consolidation of underpinning theory and participant experience began to form hypotheses through comparison of data and of data with theory. These hypotheses responded to the research questions and, as previously stated, were considered by other professionals. The study asserts the need for re-examination and revision of literary affect, and the question of aesthetic affect in the twenty-first century, which according to Attridge (2004:1) restarts 'a very old debate that

had, for a long time, fallen silent'. The following figure illustrates the research framework that underpins this study.
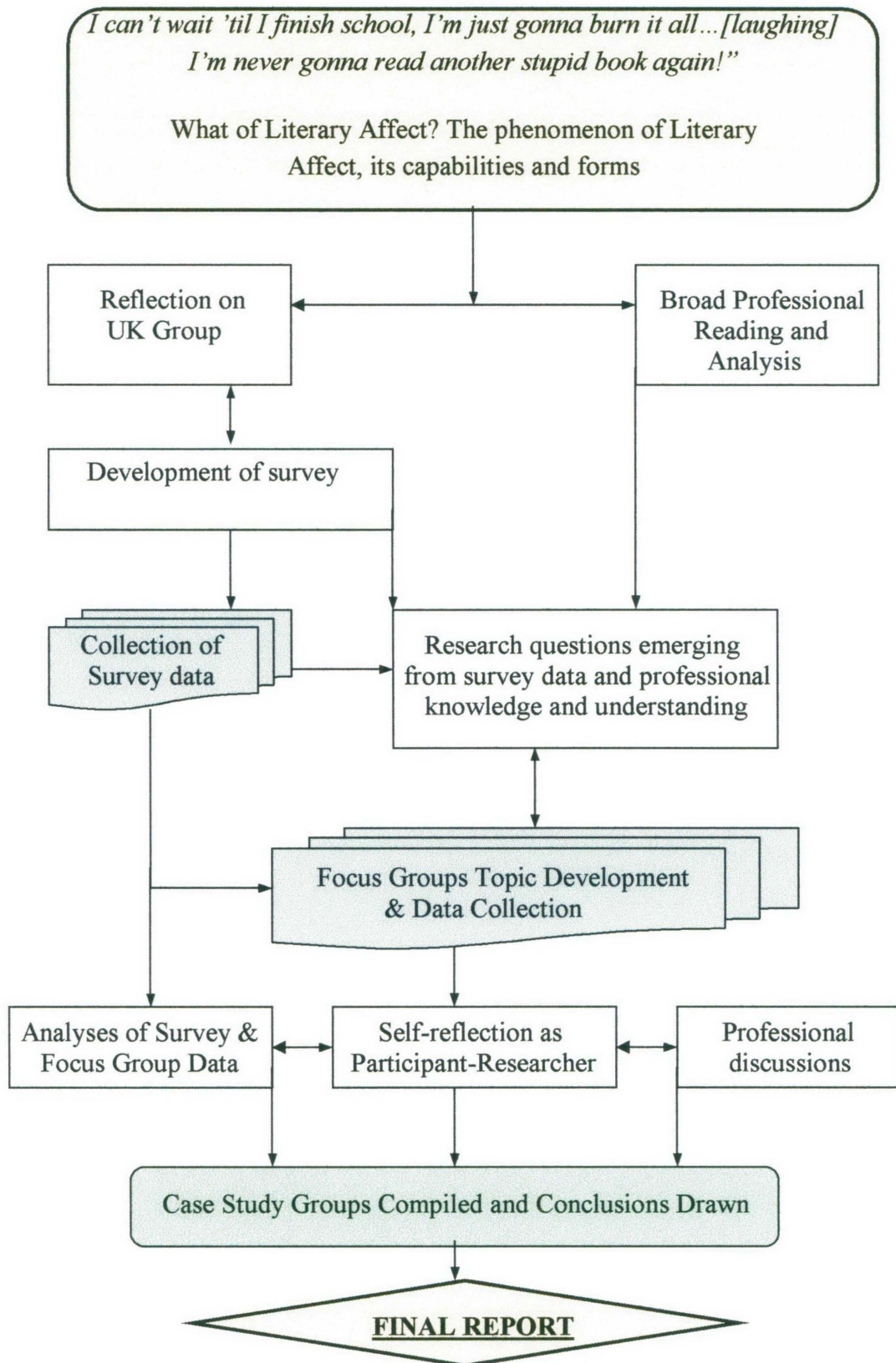
I can't wait 'til I finish school, I'm just gonna burn it all...[laughing]
I'm never gonna read another stupid book again!"

What of Literary Affect? The phenomenon of Literary
Affect, its capabilities and forms

Reflection on
UK Group

Broad Professional
Reading and
Analysis

Development of survey

Collection of
Survey data

Research questions emerging
from survey data and professional
knowledge and understanding

Focus Groups Topic Development
& Data Collection

Analyses of Survey &
Focus Group Data

Self-reflection as
Participant-Researcher

Professional
discussions

Case Study Groups Compiled and Conclusions Drawn

FINAL REPORT

Figure 3.2 Graphic Representation of Research Framework

i.iii) The Research in Context

Research was undertaken in the School of Education, at the University of New England in New South Wales. This is a rural city and the University comprises some 18,500 students, eighty per cent of whom study externally. Participants for the study are a mixture of external and internal students, in their first, second and third years of university, studying for degrees in Bachelor of Education (Primary), combined degrees (BA/BTeach), or Graduate Diploma of Education. Participants are categorised into three specific areas, depending on their student teaching level and intended teaching subject. Due to access to students studying externally, the demographics of participants are quite varied, for example from age twenty years, to mature age students at fifty-plus years and participants from all around Australia and beyond. These issues are considered further under ii) 'Selection of Participants'.

As all targeted participants were studying either primary or secondary education at the university, the survey and focus group issues were relevant to them in terms of their examination, in places, of syllabi and personal classroom experiences. It was also an opportune group with whom to reflect upon changes to literary study in the HSC, as the majority of participants were familiar with relevant syllabi.

i.iv) Methodology Employed

Study of literary affect and its capacity in readers' lives is an area that requires attention to patterns, themes and common categories discovered in data drawn from surveys and focus group records. Essentially, it was thus appropriate to employ a qualitative research paradigm to effectively address the emergent nature of issues raised by research questions. However, both qualitative and quantitative methods are legitimate, as application of both techniques often results in a more complete understanding of the topic (Babbie 2004:27-8). Therefore although qualitative data will be the primary focus, its analyses will include quantification of data via systematic coding to ensure validity and

reliability (Babbie 2004:292). This method is more amenable to survey responses, which were coded more easily than focus group discussions.

i.v) Selecting the Qualitative and Quantitative Research Paradigms

This research investigates individual experiences and any trends or patterns of literary affect; it is concerned with variables that either excite or weaken particular attitudes (Babbie 2004:17). It relies upon both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantification of data clarifies observations and gives precision, allowing statistical analysis and conclusions to be drawn. However, it may lose richness of meaning and therefore qualitative data is also heavily employed in collection and analyses. Using the combination approach allows advantage to be taken of the various strengths of each approach. This is reflected increasingly in social research studies, which contemporarily employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to tighten projects.

i.v.i) The Qualitative Approach – Focus Groups

Although qualitative research is normally concerned with events as they occur in their everyday setting, the paradigm is also applicable to and a logical choice for this study. This is due to the aim of qualitative research, that is, to gain understanding through the perceptions and experiences of participants, as it is participants who construct meaning according to their experiences, which in turn informs their identities (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:3). Such exploration is essential to the topic under research, which deals with individual experiences of emotional, psychological and physical affect and so is directly investigative of 'identity'. In particular, focus groups (one of the data collection tools employed in this study) are good tools to use when bringing qualitative data collection into the 'laboratory' setting (Babbie 2004:302). Using the qualitative research paradigm required special consideration of my role as researcher; there were varying degrees of 'participantness' available to me, along the continuum from 'full participant' to

'complete observer' (Marshall & Rossman 1995:60). As focus groups were semi-structured interviews, it was impossible to adopt either role at the extremes of the scale; a 'full participant' role disables the researcher from identifying him/herself as the researcher, and a 'complete observer' role disallows any interaction with the group under study and therefore no questioning or direction on the part of research is allowed. It was therefore logical that my role fell somewhere near the centre of the continuum, between the two extremes. Thus, I neatly avoided being defunct in the group so that relevant direction could be given, but I also had an observational platform to protect myself from influencing discussions too strongly. From this position, I could stand back and allow participants to direct their own discussions, based on their own experiences and thoughts, rather than allowing any authority I might attract as a researcher to incite particular responses from participants. Such a role succeeded in reducing ethical concerns pertaining to the 'full participant role', where participants are 'deceived' by the researcher as they do not know they are under observation, nor the true identity of the researcher (which negates informed consent). In relation to the 'complete observer' role, my position also lessened risk that full appreciation for what was being studied would not be realised; this, according to Babbie (2004:286), would have resulted in observations being 'more sketchy and transitory'.

The qualitative observations of this study are initially naturalistic, based on the assumption that participant experiences with the literary are a reality and are ready to be observed and reported as they really are (Gubrium & Holstein 2002). To take account of Bogdan and Biklen's (1998:4) definition that a 'naturalistic' approach takes the 'actual settings as the direct source of data', in this study the 'actual setting' is the individual, as their personal affect took place within. As such, the focus groups are ethnographic in nature, as the preliminary focus is on detailed and accurate description of participant experiences past, present and developing (Babbie 2004:289). It was therefore appropriate to consider this position in relation to reliability and validity of data, which is discussed under point iii) 'Data Gathering'. However, although interpretation of reality is acknowledged and understanding of participants' own experiences with literary affect is

not perfect, the qualitative research paradigm nevertheless establishes an understanding of experiences that distorts events the least (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:23-4).

Conscious of these observations, this study conformed accordingly to Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) five-feature model for qualitative research. As already discussed, the 'naturalistic' element was considered fulfilled with the individual as site or 'actual setting' for affective experiences (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:4). The second consideration was that of data form, as qualitative data 'takes the form of words and pictures rather than numbers' and is descriptive (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:5) or non-numerical (Babbie 2004:26). The focus groups and sections of the survey in this study indeed sought attitudes, judgements, observations, insights and experiences of participants, which were described particularly through using the questions, 'why' or 'how' and their derivatives. Such qualitative data in the focus groups were expressed orally, then transcribed word-for-word; qualitative aspects of the survey required expression in words. Although numerical data existed on the questionnaire, this was primarily demographic response for later analytical comparison and qualitative responses remain at the heart of the study, providing richness of data. The third concern for the qualitative model was that of process, which secures as much attention as the outcomes (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:6). In realising and reflecting upon literary affect and whether the phenomenon was occurring in readers' lives, the product, being whether it did or did not occur in variable situations, was not the only issue. Consideration had to be given to characteristics that led either to the affective event, or to non-affect. Accordingly, various aspects of literary texts were explored in relation to the value that participants placed on, for example character, theme, identification, or high and popular culture texts. Thus, the process by which literary affect did or did not occur was very much central to research, as well as regard for outcome of the occurrence of affect.

Paralleling the concept of grounded theory, the fourth dimension for qualitative research is that it is inductive (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:6). At commencement of research, there were no particular hypotheses; rather, there was a desire to develop general principles of affect from specific observations of participant experience (Babbie 2004:25). As

grounded theory, this involved unfolding and comparing experiences in an attempt to generate patterns, trends or theory. The search was for responses regarding the phenomenon of literary affect, and was not initiated because of a personal belief that I, as researcher, held any answers as to the reasons for its presence or absence in various situations in the twenty-first century. At the outset with the UK Group, I did not have any professional background or experience with affect theory, nor did I possess knowledge about the changing nature of the literary in education; this conceptual and research knowledge had to be gained in order to piece together a much larger puzzle (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:6), to then deconstruct it and finally, to reassemble the parts into justifiable, reliable and valid observations and theory. The phases of the study thus developed professional and personal understanding, resulting in not only answers but also further questioning. The final dynamic of qualitative research according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998:7) is that the researcher is engrossed in how individual participants make meaning or sense of their lives. As already stated, the search in this study was primarily for meaning; how participants experienced and engaged with literary texts and why they individually perceived such affect or non-affect as so. Not only the process, but the affective outcomes were different, inciting different manifestations of affect in each individual. How participants realised and made sense of such events was the ultimate focus of the study, from which comparisons and contrasts were drawn to enable patterns and theory to emerge. Employing qualitative methods ensured maximum understanding of participant experiences:

> The most obvious aspects of everyday life in educational settings tend to become invisible because they are so habitual. These need to be rediscovered in order to understand...Qualitative methods...can provide the concrete detail needed for understanding.
>
> (Erikson, Florio & Buschman 1980 quoted in Borg & Gall 1989:407)

Appropriateness of the qualitative research paradigm is thus supported in this study by a diversity of tested theories and relevant literature. However, it remains obligatory to comment upon research ethics, and to consider validity and reliability issues surrounding the approach, which are discussed under points v) 'Reliability and Validity', and vi) 'Ethical Issues and Informed Consent'.

i.v.ii) The Quantitative Approach – Survey by Questionnaire

Although survey involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection, qualitative data were subsequently quantified through the process of decoding (explored under point iv 'Analytical Procedures'). Thus, there is need to justify the significance of applying the quantitative research paradigm. Through the process of quantification, survey data were manipulated into numerical representations of observations (Babbie 2004:396). These quantitative data have the advantages that numbers have over words, in that numbers are measures of some quality (Babbie 2004:26). Observations were converted into machine-readable numerical form via application to the SPSS data analysis tool (discussed under point iv 'Analytical Procedures'). This quantification process supports qualitative data, offering solidity of interpretation and manageability whilst maintaining original detail (Babbie 2004:418). Statistical comparisons of numerical data are much more readily available than those of qualitative data, which means various statistical analyses may be conducted to scientifically explore for example, correlation, distribution and averages. Along with qualitative data, this provided the study with a plethora of varied data, which are complementary and interrelated. It utilises qualitative and quantitative approaches to strengthen validity, and to take advantage of each approach rather than suffer a trade-off by only applying one method (Babbie 2004:27).

i.vi) The Participant - Researcher Role

The role of Participant-Researcher developed during the course of planning for focus group interviews. It was not any part of nor did it have any influence upon survey data collection. As already discussed and justified, my activity in focus groups was centred on the 'participantness continuum' (Marshall & Rossman 1995:60):
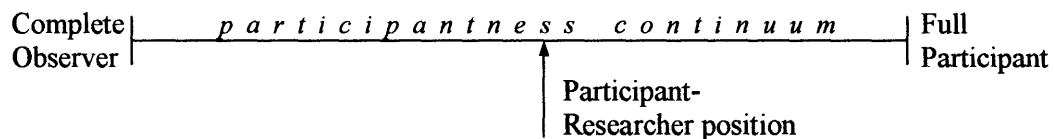
```
Complete |          p a r t i c i p a n t n e s s    c o n t i n u u m        | Full
Observer |_____↑_____| Participant
                                          Participant-
                                          Researcher position
```

Figure 3.3 Participant-Researcher Continuum

As qualitative research aims to be as natural, non-threatening and unobtrusive as possible (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:35), the role of participant-researcher and central position on the 'participantness continuum' was an idealistic one to take, serving three primary purposes:

1) It was natural that I would take some part in discussion, as participants were informed that the researcher would facilitate the discussion group.

2) As exploration of adolescent readings and experiences of affect may have rendered sensitive or personal discussion, I felt it appropriate to initiate discussion with some personal reflections, to set the scene and atmosphere of openness in discussion; this made the following focus group less threatening, as no one participant was required to speak of personal situations before I had done so.

3) In balance to this position, remaining at the centre of 'participantness' meant that I did not take full part in discussions when participants took leads. Thus, although I could guide discussions, I could also retract from the group and let discussions form naturally. As such, I could remain unobtrusive to participants' responses and directions for dialogue.

As participant-researcher I was also a learner and this required self-reflection, as it was a significant part of understanding the phenomenon of individual literary affective experiences and the capabilities of affect. This was undertaken through personal reflections as response to focus groups, and a brief recount of a personal experience with the literary that has resulted in affect. By reflecting on the focus groups in detail immediately after closure, the threat to trustworthiness or bias of data was reduced.

ii) Selection of Participants

The population from which participants were selected was student teachers studying at UNE. The element of this study population was that these student-teachers were all enrolled at UNE, in either a Bachelor of Education, (Primary), combined degree (BA/BTeach), or Graduate Diploma of Education, at the time of data collection (Babbie 2004:189). The participant group consisted of a small subset of the larger student population, as the study timescale would not permit enumeration of the full population (see point vi 'Limitations, Delimitations and Other Ethical Issues'). In total, there were fifty-six participants who were divided into three major categories: Secondary student teachers who sat their HSC prior to 1999 (eighteen participants), secondary student teachers who sat their HSC post-1999 (twenty-three participants), and primary student teachers who all sat their HSC post-1999 (fifteen participants). However, for purposes of comparison, data analyses deal with these figures as percentages.

The change in demographics from the UK Group to the research participants was borne out of desire to gather more rich and dependable data. After deliberations and consideration of relevant literature, it was decided that school leavers (as were the UK Group) would be difficult to target and may not be able to provide the wealth of data required. Also, data gathered from such participants may face issues of uncertain validity. Targeting difficulties became apparent as exploration of the school timetable and examination schedules of school leavers revealed a small percentage of free time in which the surveys may be conducted. This was time that, it was decided, would be more

readily taken up by the student with other personal activities or examination revision. With the HSC examinations looming, it was felt that it was unfair to exert extra pressure on these students, particularly as there was a good alternative option that was anyway regarded as potentially more fruitful. Aiming participant selection towards student teachers was deemed prospectively more lucrative from two perspectives. First, it meant that the study maintained focus within the education arena, as these participants were studying to become teachers themselves. Thus, these are participants for whom school (and perhaps subject English in particular) has had such an impact, so as to inform or incite their future career options in some way. It also opens the possibility for further longitudinal studies regarding how literary affect (or non-affect) manifests in practising classroom teachers, or how it may or may not be transferred from teachers to students in the classroom.

Secondly, and more significantly, is the wealth of experience and reflection on literary engagement or affect that older participants may draw upon, having already sat the new 1999 NSW HSC. As these participants have been lifted out of HSC concerns and *subject* English, affective experiences have had opportunity to materialise and be realised. Literature Review contemplations revealed the importance of this individual reflection, as often in-situ literary affects are forgotten.

It was also found that literary texts used in school English education attract a different identity to that of the broader literary world. Students of the literary lesson become a part of this narrow culture and would so reflect this in survey response; any literary affect could be attached to school experience and in particular to examination preparation. Accordingly, to investigate experiences of students who are still at school invites us only to examine the *educational* literary dimension and fails to take account of wider aspects of literary affect, including personal or private engagement. Not to include this significant dimension in the present study would render data that are very narrowly focussed within

classroom environs and would not fully address the intended scope of research, which is the occurrence of literary affect per se. It would also be a failing in terms of relevant and supporting literature, which clearly identifies the importance of personal literary response in providing the 'other' or 'something more' in the literary:

> However literature always seems to present itself in the final analysis as something *more* than the category or entity it is claimed to be, and as valuable for something *other* than the various personal or social benefits that are ascribed to it.   (Attridge, 2004:5)

In terms of validity, participants who have already sat the HSC are more at liberty to reflect upon wider personal experiences. They are no longer entrenched in classroom lenses and rather, literature serves individual and personal functions. It is this desired affect phenomenon that is targeted through this participant selection, which consequently renders more valid data.

For comparative analyses, participants were categorised into two specific areas, depending on their student teaching level:

1) Those who are specialising as a secondary English teacher and intend to teach English upon completion of their university degree, and;

2) Those who are studying to be primary school teachers and who are intending on pursuing this career upon completion of their university degree.

Despite the need for sampling, which limited the study population, sufficient data were collected for the purposes of study in terms of representativeness. To such end, it was important that the aggregate characteristics of the sample were closely approximate to those of the whole student-teacher population, although representativeness needed only to occur in relation to characteristics relevant to substantive interests of the study (Babbie 2004:189). This was achieved by using Equal Probability of Selection Method (EPSEM)

sampling (Babbie 2004:189), which meant that every individual in the study population was given equal chance of participating. It was attained through a series of comparable seminar presentations, which were delivered by myself as researcher, and which provided relevant information and an invitation to participate in only the survey, or survey and focus groups. There were, however, limitations on employing the EPSEM technique fully, which are explored under point vi) 'Limitations, Delimitations and Other Ethical Issues.'

Once the study population had been approached and given equal opportunity to participate, selection of participants was based upon individual decision to take and complete a survey, and/or to sign up for focus groups. This was purposive sampling, where the criterion was that members of the study population had to physically respond to the presentation in order to participate (Babbie 2004:183). As such, selection of participants derived from individual willingness to participate in the study. This was in accordance to the main premise of this study and ethical considerations, which required that participants make an autonomous decision to explore and reflect on their experiences with literary affect. As there is potential for sensitive issues to arise, this was the most appropriate approach to take. Additionally, it presents the study with a new dimension, if it is assumed that participants have experienced such an affective event (positive or negative) that has compelled them to participate. This is so even if reflection on the literary is believed to have had no affect previously, as by volunteering to participate, individuals are responding to a desire to take part (the affect), based on the topic (literary texts).

ii.i) Representativeness of the Sample

To enable data analyses and conclusions to be regarded as representative of the study population, the same or significantly similar distribution of characteristics must be present in the sample as those in the population from which the sample was selected (Babbie 2004:189). Demographics of the study population, i.e. the entire student teacher

community at the University of New England, enrolling in 2003, 2004 and 2005, was therefore established and compared to the study sample. As following analytical chapters deal with those student teachers studying to be primary or secondary teachers discretely, this demographic analysis also does so.

Table 3.1 Study Population Demographics (All UNE 2003-2005 student teacher enrolments)

	Primary Student teacher %	Secondary student teacher %
Male %	20.7	20.5
Female %	79.3	79.5

Table 3.2 The Study Sample Demographics

	Primary Student teacher %	Secondary student teacher %
Male %	20	24
Female %	80	76

As illustrated by the tables, the sample for study accurately reflects the demographics of the study population, the largest difference being only 3.5 per cent in the female secondary student teacher sample.

<u>iii) Data Gathering</u>

This study utilises two methods of data collection, as this combination allows advantages of each approach to be exploited (Robson 1993), as well as warranting the progressive development of data complexity and focussing-down at each level, from widespread survey data, to small focus groups and compilation of comparative case studies. Triangulation of data was also available, which strengthened reliability of data (Babbie 2004:113). The approaches adopted were survey by questionnaire and focus group interviews. Data gathered were triangulated and collaborated to produce sound and reliable case studies of the group categories.

<u>iii.i) The Survey Method</u>

The survey by questionnaire method was used to facilitate the descriptive, explanatory and exploratory nature of the study. To this end, a mix of open- and close-ended questions was employed, which generated a variety of qualitative and quantitative data. Given that data under collection were original and the study population was too large to directly observe, the questionnaire was an appropriate method to use (Babbie 2004:243). The context and purposes of the research are reflected in the survey technique, as well as it being practical for collection of data from a large population (Punch 1998:241). Questions were framed by and structured around literary affect and the forms it takes and related educational issues. The survey provided a large amount of data about the characteristics from a wide cross-section of the student-teacher population (Wallen 1991:290). Construction of the questionnaire involved consideration of introduction, instructions, question formulation and format, levels of measurement and quality of questions. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix One. As an ethical consideration, a participant information sheet (Appendix Two) was required to explain the general purpose of the study. This informed respondents about how information was used, allowing a more informed choice of participation, which was after all voluntary. Instructions regarding each question on the questionnaire were also given, providing

clarity and informing respondents of exactly what was required (Babbie 2004:255). To this end, instructions were easy to follow and clear-cut. Bias was avoided by ensuring that the questionnaire did not contain leading questions, or biased terms and/or items (Babbie 2004:247-9).

iii.i.i) <u>Ethical Considerations in Survey Method</u>

- Voluntary Participation – As previously commented, the premise of research was voluntary participation. Survey by questionnaire was grounded in ethics, as the criterion for selection of participants was that they must individually choose to take a questionnaire after researcher presentation on the purpose of study and description of what the survey entailed, including participant time commitment. This method ensured voluntary participation based on informed consent (Babbie 2004:65), as subjects had a full understanding of what was involved through researcher presentation, and through the 'Participant Information Sheet' sheet contained in the questionnaire pack.

- No harm to Participants – This ethical consideration presented two issues. First, as the target study population was receiving tuition from the research supervisors, it was necessary to ensure that students did not feel that non-participation would negatively affect or harm their studies or grades in any way. To prevent the occurrence of such harm, it was stressed in researcher presentations that participation or non-participation did not have any influence whatsoever upon university courses. Additionally, questionnaires were available after lectures, and the teacher-supervisor left the room before students decided to take the survey. This meant that supervisors did not have indication as to who was participating or not. The second issue concerned the nature of the study and its potential to 'force participants to face aspects of themselves that they don't normally consider' (Babbie 2004:64). Again, this aspect was ethically covered by the fact that participation was voluntary, based upon informed consent. Participants had to sign a consent form, which highlighted exactly what was involved in participation. Additionally, information was provided in survey packs and during

the course of focus group interviews as to the contact details of counselling offices and ethics administrators at the university. Participants were also given opportunity to direct any concerns relating to conduct of the research to the supervisors or university department. All participants understood and were reassured that they could leave the project at any time.

- Anonymity and Confidentiality – Given the nature of study, and the fact that survey data were to be pooled with focus group data in order to create case studies, anonymity was compromised. However, if participants chose to they did not need to state their name on the survey, and demographic data only would be used to categorise them for case study inclusion. Confidentiality of data was however guaranteed, which meant that only myself as researcher would have access to individual identification of responses (Babbie 2004:66).

- Use of participant time – Time taken up by participants for this study took time away from their personal studies. As such, questionnaires were limited to ten questions and on average would take only forty minutes.

iii.ii) Focus Group Interviews

The focus groups consisted of semi-structured interviews, where certain issues for discussion were selected on the basis of their relevancy to research (Babbie 2004:303). An outline of issues considered in focus groups is attached as Appendix Three. Flexibility was maintained so that participants were able to elaborate on individual and personal experiences, as Herbert and Riene Rubin explain:

> Qualitative interviewing design is flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather
> than prepared in advance and locked in stone.
>
> (Rubin & Rubin 1995:43)

The focus group interview method was necessary in order to fully address the research questions, giving the study access to information in participants' heads (Cohen & Manion 1994:272). Focus group interviews not only allowed the researcher to open up hypotheses and possibilities, but also the interaction of various members of the group drew out interesting and new ideas, which consequently allowed reconsideration of issues and development of new hypotheses and theories. Via group interaction and observation, literary affective experiences were more fully realised and understood (Babbie 2004:303). In some cases they even generated a renewed capacity for affect, which was fascinating to observe and added to the extent of the phenomenon of affect and asserted its ability for longitudinal personal impact.

In order to facilitate the focus groups and take up my role as participant-researcher, I had to develop skills as a moderator. I prepared by doing professional reading, and reflecting upon discussions with the UK Group. I also reflected on my professional background, which involved training in interview skills and group interviews. I was thus able to carry out facilitation of the groups without difficulty. Of particular significance, previous training had made me aware of the danger of 'groupthinking' (Babbie 2004:303), which may present a problem. However, potential for this to occur was overcome by an initial introductory session, whereby everyone had a turn speaking. Although discussions leapt up and strict order of speaking was by no means maintained, this introduced the expectation that everyone would speak, and everyone would listen at some point. It proved an effective strategy, and was coupled with sporadic interjections from myself directed at a participant who had fallen silent, such as "And Clare (actual names withheld), what do you think?" Such open questions gave all participants voice, but resisted over-directing the interview and bringing my own views too much into consideration (Babbie 2004:303).

Krueger (1988:44-5) has also noted that a disadvantage of focus groups is that the researcher may find it difficult to control the groups in guidance and direction of discussion and group dynamics. However, these concerns do not apply to this study, as I wanted to allow participants considerable freedom in directing discussion (Cohen &

Manion 1994:273), and group dynamics did not need to be similar; they in fact offered relevant and interesting comparison, particularly in subsequent case study compilation. Focus group interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed by myself as researcher. Transcriptions were subsequently checked against sections of original recording, both by myself and an independent professional person.

iii.ii.i) <u>Ethical Considerations in Focus Group Interviewing</u>

- Consent for audio-taping – As the study is based upon informed consent, it was necessary to inform participants that focus group interviews would be taped, and later transcribed for analysis. This was done before subjects had made a decision to participate, and required them to sign a consent form to state that they agreed with audio-taping procedures (Appendix Four). Thus informed consent was maintained.

- Ensuring realistic responses – In order to prevent or reduce the risk that participants may feel that they should respond in a certain way in order to please or support myself as researcher, I maintained my position in the centre of the 'participantness continuum', so that minimal personal reflection and beliefs emerged. There was, however, a limit to this, as I was acting as participant-researcher. A balance was however adhered to and, judging by data generated by the focus group interviews, researcher bias was not reflected. Discussions centred on participant deliberations and suggestions, and at certain times points made by myself were rejected or contended.

- Use of participant time – As mentioned, time taken up by research took time away from participants' personal studies. Aware of this, the study sought to obtain maximum results in minimal time. Focus groups were thus initially set to last under one hour and ideally, only forty minutes. However, one particular group had so many interesting discussions and wished to continue, spanning almost two hours. As the researcher, I can only count this as a positive outcome and the result of passionate literary affective experiences.

- Calculating a stance towards participants – According to Lofland and Lofland (1995:63), the researcher must consider whether it is ethical to develop a calculated

stance towards participants, or be consciously strategic in their relations (Babbie 2004:307). In this study, although the stance towards groups under interview was indeed calculated and involved consideration of when and where I would be 'participant' and 'researcher only', a stance towards individuals was not taken. My participant-researcher role in focus group interviews was necessary for reasons previously explained, and it did not actively single out individuals for specific interactions.

iii.iii) Unsolicited Data

As participant-researcher, personal reflections regarding literary affect emerged. This developed my understanding and aided in sorting out facts and conceptualising the study. Self-reflexive learning occurred through reporting of this data, which according to Yin (1993:97), constitute a valued and formal part of the overall study data.

iii.iii.i) Ethical Considerations in Unsolicited Data

- Objectivity – As participant-researcher, it may be difficult to look at data objectively. However, this issue was reduced by ensuring that other professionals reviewed the data and added comments.

iii.iv) Data Collaboration for Case Studies

Data collected through the aforementioned methods was finally analysed and organised to produce case study groups according to the teaching level of the student-teacher participants. Case studies were compiled of:
- Survey responses
- Individual comments from participants in focus groups

iii.v) Applying the Multi-Method Approach

Data gathered via surveys and focus group interviews provided opportunity to compare and contrast different groups. This multi-method research design proved an excellent way to offer comparison between student literary affect, and how different groups of students viewed the NSW HSC Senior English Syllabi. Such data allow comparisons between literary engagement in the educational sphere and the private literary experiences of participants. Not only this, but by compiling case study groups from data gathered, contrasts and similarities in literary affective experiences between different student-teacher groups became apparent. The various methods therefore supported one another and were complementary in their approaches to facilitating investigation of research questions.

iv) Analytical Procedures

Data were analysed to establish patterns and trends in literary affective experiences, and to offer comparisons and contrasts where the independent variable was group demographics. Case study compilations of student-teacher group categories offered contrast and comparisons, providing opportunity to cross-reference and explore different perspectives. As previously stated, both quantitative and qualitative data were used to add richness and validity and to better support conclusions. Quantified data from surveys were analysed via the analytical tool *SPSS*, and qualitative data were subject to coding protocols that were developed and appropriate to the nature and objectives of study (Babbie 2004:418).

iv.i) Quantification of Data through Coding and Application to SPSS

In addition to qualitative data, some data from the surveys were quantified and subjected to statistical analyses. To quantify a non-numerical concept, it was necessary to be

explicit about what the concept means. By focussing specifically on what to include in measurement of the concept, other meanings were excluded (Babbie 2004:27). Thus, the coding protocol was established after compilation of all data was complete. This allowed exploration of data, through reading and listening to audio-recordings, in search of comments that gave possible indications of literary affect (Miles & Huberman 1984). Coding protocols were thus developed for survey data quantitative analyses. As coding has an inherent disadvantage of losing richness or detail of data, it was desirable that the code maintained a good deal of detail which at analytical level may be combined, rather than to initially employ relatively few gross categories that had no way of recreating original detail (Babbie 2004:397). To maintain richness of data, each question was explored individually in separate analyses, and considered both the quantified statistical analyses (to which a number was allocated) as well as qualitative aspects of data. This cross-referencing provided richness and sound, well-developed data from which to draw conclusions. For example, a response may have number '2' attached to it, which refers to, 'Code Category 2' and may also have a qualitative string. The full codebook compiled is attached as Appendix Five.

iv.ii) <u>Coding of Qualitative Data</u>

Qualitative data particularly from focus groups, but also from surveys, was subjected to thematic codification (Appendix Five). These codes were developed from exploration of data after all collection was complete, and were discussed and carried out with two supervisors to verify reliability and help prevent any researcher bias (Babbie 2004:398).

Participants communicated via informal language particularly in focus groups, where some passionate discussions and debates meant that sentences were sometimes fragmented or disturbed. Ideas moved around very quickly, jumping from one to the next or from individual to individual. Survey responses were generally more coherent, consisting of full sentences or, where appropriate, a 'list' writing style. Transcripts from focus group interviews were written into the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing,

Searching and Theory Building (NUD*IST) computer program for analysis, which involved exploration of indicators of the following concepts:

- Specific literary texts mentioned by participants.
- Recognition of personal affect by participants.
- The reason(s) for the identified affect in relation to the literary.
- The result of this affect (psychological, emotional, physical, etc) of the identified affective experience(s).
- Affective experiences with literary texts from educational and personal domains.

iv.iii) <u>Triangulation of Data</u>

Use of the multi-method approach in this study allowed triangulation of data. This was valuable in terms of reliability and validity and to combat weaknesses of one particular research method by supporting it with other methods (Babbie 2004:113). In addition, triangulation also occurred in relation to analysis, as data were subjected to discussion and observation not only by the researcher, but other professionals as well. This reduced the scope of reliability and validity issues and concerns of researcher bias, which consequently gives data heightened courage of conviction.

iv.iv) <u>Summary</u>

Participants' experiences with literary affect and the forms it takes, their personal opinions and their interpretations of reasons for occurrence or abstention of literary affect were paramount in this study. Answers to research questions were thus structured around participant responses. Repeated reading and analysis of data and reflections upon observations made as participant-researcher allowed in-depth understanding of responses. Overall meaning was sought, followed by a deconstructive/re-constructive reading of comments, and finally exploration of comments in search of informed meaning. This

allowed effective interpretation, coding and analysis of data, which draws heavily upon specific quotes to maintain richness of data and to preserve the integrity of participant voices.

v) Reliability and Validity

Issues of reliability and validity were considered in relation to both quantitative and qualitative data. Reliability and validity concern the extent to which one may trust research findings.

v.i) Reliability

Reliability refers to the question of whether the same technique, applied repeatedly to the same subject, would render the same result each time (Babbie 2004:141). Due to the nature of this study, whose data comprise a myriad of complex and versatile records that have been subject to interpretation by their owners, in a specific context and in light of previous contexts, reliability strictly defined was not very high. However, the study did not seek to provide a model that could be repeated to attain the same results. Since human subjects have upon them many influences that alter the course of thought and attitudes, and since the literary affective experience was found to be longitudinal, often developing new meaning as its subject progressed in their experiences and events, it was readily acknowledged that 'reliability' per se would not be possible. Answers to questions of literary affect may theoretically continue to develop and change until death. Thus, reliability in this study is borne out of the evolved theories and hypotheses, which given the data may be replicated. Such reliability was strengthened by triangulation of data, which includes the multi-method approach and consultations with other professionals at various stages in the transcript, coding and analytical processes. By internally cross-referencing between results borne from quantitative and qualitative analyses, reliability was furthered.

v.ii) <u>Validity</u>

This study aimed to capture and report participant experiences of literary affect and their interpretations and reflections on such events. Validity reflects the extent to which measures employed reflect actual participant responses (Babbie 2004:143), or how trustworthy data is in terms of reporting of participants' opinions as they really were (Merriam 1988:167). Babbie (2004:144-5) suggests three types of validity to consider in exploring internal validity in this study, which are attended to below.

Face Validity	Reflects upon whether indicators of affect seem reasonable measures for the phenomenon. Indicators and coding protocols for this study were developed in light of professional reading and literature review considerations, and were discussed with other professionals, who collaborated with the researcher to produce agreeable and reasonable measures by which to assess and reflect upon literary affect. In addition, other measures involved purely qualitative analyses of participant data, which is valid as it is a direct reporting of personal literary affective experiences and reflections upon occurrences or non-occurrence of affect. The study therefore has high face validity.
Construct Validity	This validity explores the relationship of a measure to other measures within the system of theoretical relationships in the study. Within the study, regard was paid to how measures inter-related through the triangulation of data and reflection upon underpinning theory contained in the literature review.
Content Validity	Considers the extent to which the ranges of concept meanings are facilitated by measures. As concept meanings, i.e. coding themes were developed after data collection was completed and were informed by data, content validity is adhered to. Measures were that of participant experiences, from which coding was derived.

<u>Figure 3.4 Internal Validity in the Research Study</u>

(Adapted from observations made in Babbie 2004:144-5)

In addition to these internal validity factors, validity was ensured through triangulation of data, the multi-method approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, professional discussions regarding literature review concepts, data collection and analytical procedures. In focus group interviews, validity was also checked by sporadic participant-researcher interaction with participants, for example, "so you mean that..?" or, "could you repeat what you just said" or, "can you expand on...?" Validity is widened by the very nature of focus group interviews, which allowed the researcher to be at the scene of data, 'gaining insights into the nature of human affairs in all their rich complexity' (Babbie 2004:307).

It is also necessary to reflect upon external validity. As mentioned under reliability issues, this ethnographic study did not seek to provide a model that could be replicated per se. The uniqueness of this study, not only in terms of the myriad of individual affective experiences but also in relation to context, makes transferability impossible. However, validity can be gained from the possibility of replicability in resulting theory and hypotheses. The study also provided in-depth detail of participant responses, which allows understanding of specific qualities informing the study and consequent case study formulations.

vi) Limitations, Delimitations and Other Ethical Issues

Although ethical considerations have been commented upon during the course of this chapter, it is necessary to explore further ethical issues along with limitations and delimitations of the study.

vi.i) Limitations

The study was limited in terms of time and resources. Research had to use what was available, and restricted the participants to those studying at the University of New England. A larger scale study was not possible due to lack of time. Also, in employing the EPSOM sampling technique, the study was limited in that not all participants were present in the information sessions. The EPSOM strategy was employed as far as possible, however it could not take into consideration those students who were not present.

vi.ii) Delimitations

Despite the study only focussing on students at the University of New England, a broad range of people was involved as many students study externally all over Australia. Due to residential schools, I had access to these students as potential participants, thus broadening the gaze of the research. Also, using the student teacher group was beneficial, as it was assumed that they would most likely exhibit affective experiences (as many have chosen a career in teaching English). If anyone will experience affect through literature, these are the most likely candidates.

vi.iii) Other Ethical Issues

As the supervisors to this research were course coordinators and lectures to the participants, certain ethical guidelines were adhered to. Survey responses were viewed in the first instance by myself only and, only after translation into quantitative and qualitative data (which was anonymous) was it viewed by the supervisors. Participants were reassured that participation or non-participation would not affect their studies, and the focus groups were also run without supervisors present to maintain participant anonymity.

vii) Conclusion

The multi-method approach employed in this study allows for full and comprehensive data gathering, which is well-rounded and has the potential to offer rich and diverse information. By considering the issues of design, ethics, validity and reliability, and limitations and delimitations in the Methodology, the study is aware of its weaknesses, of which it can be cautious and perhaps avoid, and strengths, upon which it may draw. The methods chosen are sound for the undertaking of this study.

IV.

CASE STUDIES: LITERARY AFFECT IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STUDENT TEACHERS TODAY

This chapter draws upon the survey data to investigate contrasts and comparisons between literary affective experiences of primary student teachers and secondary student teachers in contemporary environments. Trends and patterns, and differences and similarities, have been explored and commented upon. Such exploration has developed two distinct case study groups, which illustrate the nature of literary affect and how it has impacted upon group participants. In this section, the groups are referred to as 'Primary Teacher Group' (PTG) and 'Secondary Teacher Group' (STG). In order to allow an understanding of the constitution of the group, a profile of each group is first provided. The chapter then explores each group in congruence, as this approach best facilitates focus on the case studies, which compares the groups' experiences.

i) The Primary Student Teacher Group

The profile for the PTG is as follows. All participants in the group are 19-25 years of age and thus have sat the NSW HSC under the new 1999 English syllabus. All participants in the PTG are studying internally at the University of New England, having enrolled in 2003, 2004 or 2005. There was a gender bias in the group, which is illustrated in a pie chart on the following page:

PTG Participant Gender
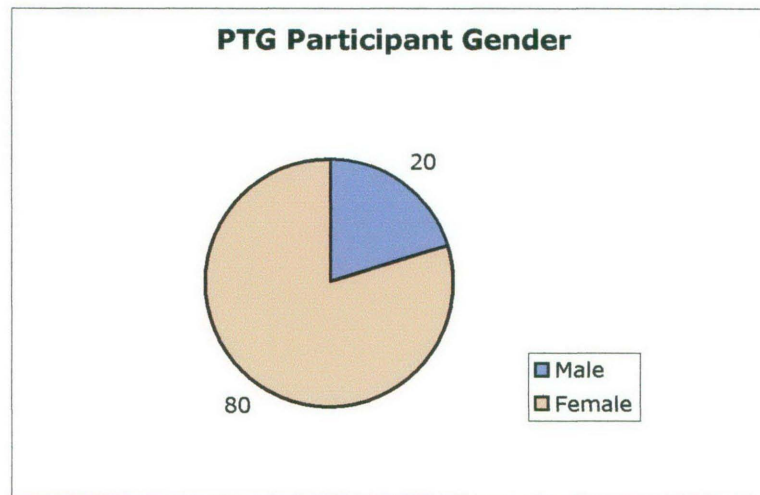
Figure 4.1 Gender in the PTG

ii) The Secondary Student Teacher Group

The profile of the STG is as follows. Participants in the STG have a dispersed age range, from 'under 20 years' to '56-60 years':
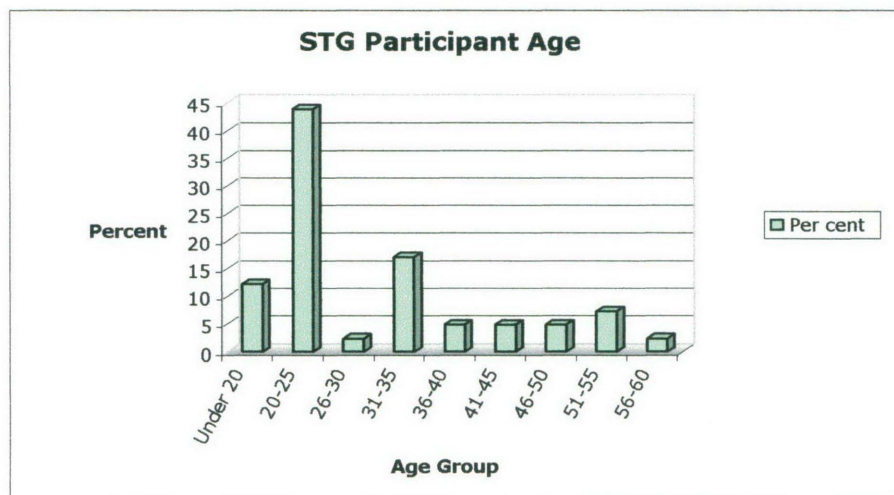
STG Participant Age

Figure 4.2 Age Dispersion in the STG

This chart illustrates age dispersion, which has a possible range of 40 years (60 - 20). However, the mode is '20-25 years' age group at 44 per cent, and all participants falling into this age category offer directly comparable data with the PTG. Of the STG, 56 per cent sat the HSC post-1999; 37 per cent sat the old HSC, with the final 7 per cent not responding. The year range for the 37 per cent of students sitting the old HSC was from 1971 to 1994. There was a gender bias in the group comparable to that of the PTG:
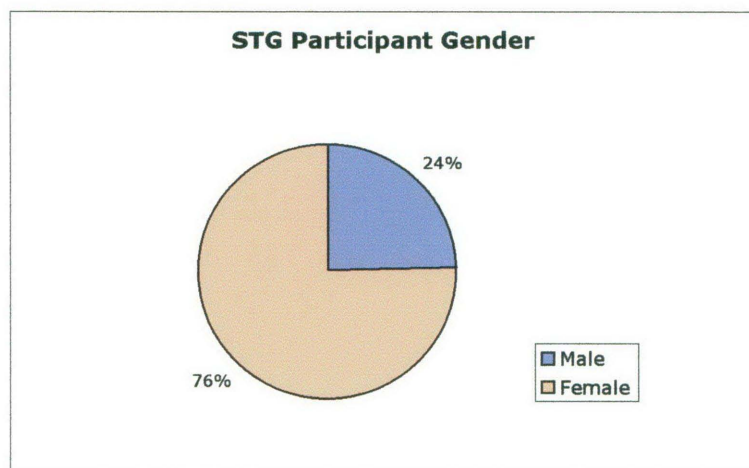
Figure 4.3 Gender in the STG

Comparison of these groups as case studies of primary student teachers and secondary student teachers and their affective experiences provides a good opportunity to start this research phase, to offer insights into and interpretations of the occurrence and nature of affect.

iii) Issues Under Investigation

There are a number of issues to develop and explore through case study data analyses:

1) What are the trends or patterns of literary affective experiences in each group?
   - Which texts have influenced participants?
   - How have affective experiences manifested themselves in participants?

- Are literary texts a significant part of participants' lives?
- What elements of literary texts do participants find (dis)engaging?

2) What comparisons and contrasts can be made between student teacher groups?

- Are there differences between the Primary and Secondary student teacher groups in frequency and nature of aesthetic and affective experiences?

Investigations into such issues allow overall conclusions to be drawn in the final chapter. In particular, data analysis and explorations in this chapter provide insights into the implications for literary affect and its survival in contemporary arenas, particularly primary and secondary education. To this end, focus in this chapter is upon the nature of literary affect in each of the student teacher groups, and comparisons and contrasts between groups. This is the principal issue under analysis, as it is important to first establish the nature of literary affect in contemporary times and in these two arenas.

As this initial chapter of analysis concentrates upon literary affect *today*, it is necessary to first refine the STG in terms of age; that is, to explore only those participants in the 19-25 years age bracket, who have sat the current English HSC and thus represent affect in young people *today*. Filtering the STG in such a way also allows for comparative group dynamics, as all the PTG are 19-25 years old.

Thus this chapter utilises all data gained from the PTG surveys, but only employs STG data that is from participants aged 19-25 years (this is a significant proportion of the group, at 56 per cent). These groups will be referred to as PTG and STGa, respectively. We therefore have two groups with comparable statistics, as all participants are in the 19-25 years age bracket, and there is a comparable gender balance between groups (of the 19-25 year-olds in the STG, 22 per cent were male). Additionally, this means that all subjects studied the new 1999 HSC English examination between 2000 and 2005. Reliable and valid analyses and comparisons may thus be drawn, as the variable dynamics between groups have been reduced, which avoids bias. If the two groups are not significantly similar in profile, then comparative analyses and conclusions are open to dispute.

The final group that emerged from group dynamic analyses is the mature student-teacher group who range in age from 26 to 60 years and will be investigated in a discrete chapter, which explores affective experiences of participants who studied the current compared to the old English HSC. However, the first three analysis chapters will concentrate and focus upon literary affect *today*, and will maintain distinctions between the PTG and STGa, in order to facilitate answering the title question, Literary Affect: Alive or Dead?

iv) Literary Affect in the Case Study Groups – PTG and STGa (19-25yrs)

The first concern for the groups was their school experiences with the literary, and the (in)ability of those experiences to bring about any literary affect. The first survey question therefore focused upon whether experiences were positive or negative. The following graphical representations illustrate data from the PTG and STGa, and are divided gender specifically in order to draw as much detail as possible.
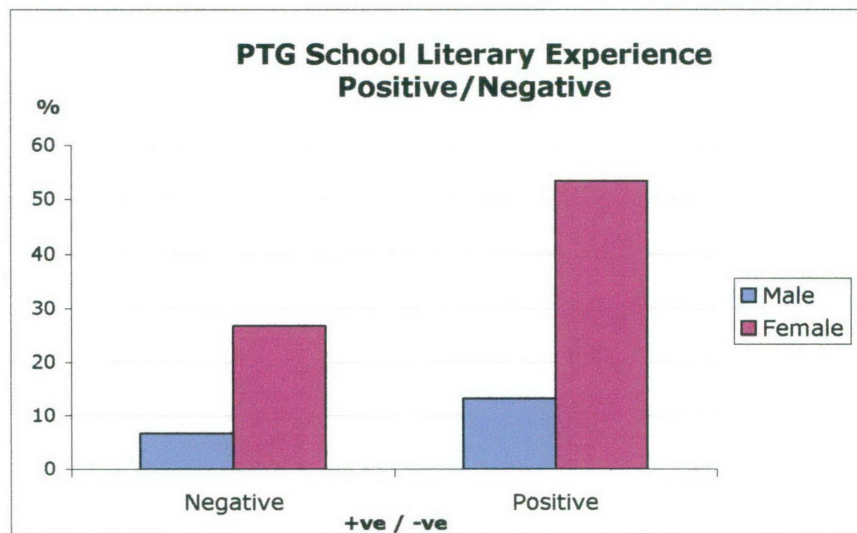

Figure 4.4 School Literary Experiences in the PTG

79

As illustrated, the PTG group had a higher percentage of positive school literary experiences than negative, with the ratio being approximately 2:1. From this graph, comparisons can be made between gender by converting each gender group into a percentage. It was found that percentages of negative and positive school experiences were exactly the same, being 67% positive, 33% negative for both male and females.
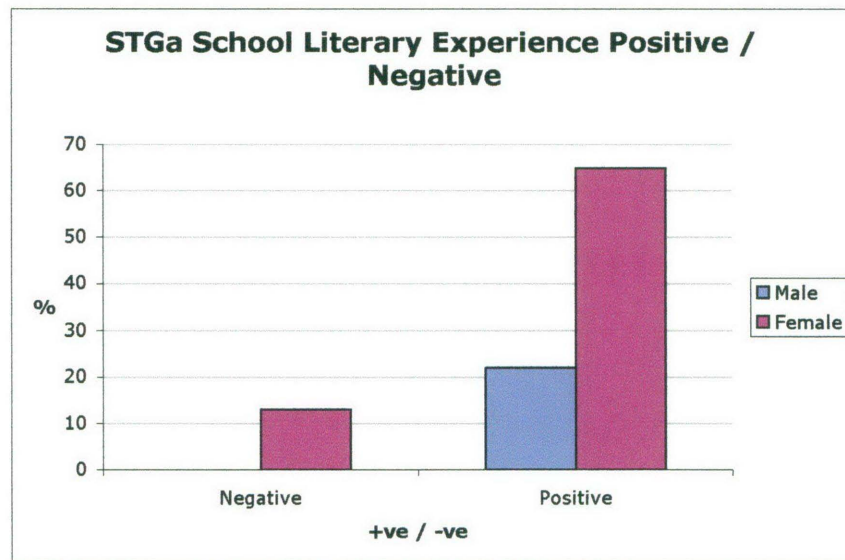

Figure 4.5 School Literary Experiences in the STGa

The STGa group illustrates a similar trend to the PTG group, with positive literary experiences at school outweighing negative experiences. However, for the STGa group these figures are more significant, with a ratio of 5:1 positive to negative experiences for females and zero per cent of males having a negative experience. In this group, males had 100 per cent positive experiences, whilst females had 83 per cent positive experiences. The positive response rate for secondary student teachers (19-25yrs) is thus significantly higher than positive responses for primary student teachers, and is particularly higher for male students. These may prove significant data upon which to theorise whether the choice to specialise in secondary subject English education or to go into Primary teaching, where the focus is not upon literary education, is affected by personal literary educational experiences. It is thus necessary to explore survey question six, which

enquires whether literary experiences influenced participants' decision to teach. The following pie charts illustrate data for each student teacher group, offering easy comparison of data.
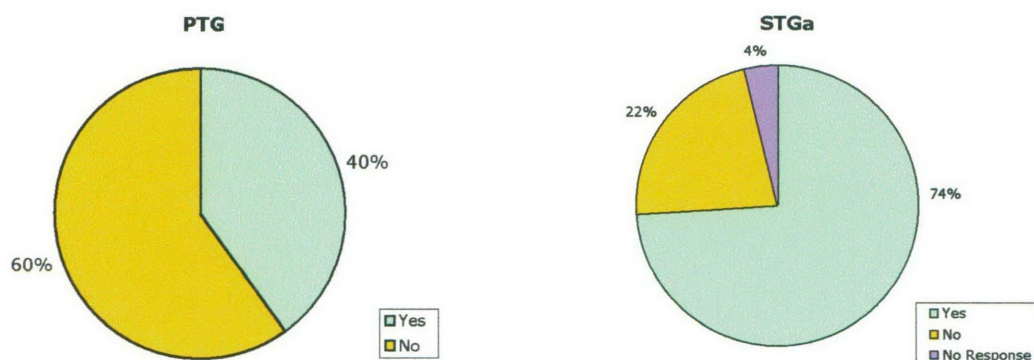

Figure 4.6 Literary Experiences Influencing Career Decision to Teach

As the pie charts illustrate, there is a clear and significant discrepancy between the two groups, where the PTG has a much higher percentage of participants not attributing their teaching decision to their personal literary experiences. The affective dimension of literary experiences is far greater for the STGa group, 74 per cent of whom attribute their experiences with the literary to their future career decision to teach English. In summary, this is indicative of literary affective experiences that have been so influential and powerful as to warrant 74 per cent of STGa participants founding their career decisions upon them. As illustrated, this is a far lesser per cent for the PTG, of whom 40 per cent agree that literary experiences have influenced their decision to teach. Nevertheless, this is still evidence for literary affective capabilities, as 40 per cent is substantial. As a comparative analysis between the PTG and STGa, however, and returning to analysis drawn from the positive/negative school experiences with the literary, it can be seen that secondary student teachers in this case study have experienced more influential literary affect, which has reached into their future career desires and decisions. For 60 per cent of the PTG, their literary experiences were not an influencing factor when deciding their

career path, which is indicative of a lower affective dimension in their literary experiences. This is further evidenced in the qualitative survey responses, some of which are radically different depending upon whether participants are in the PTG or STGa. The following pages offer comparison for selected responses for survey questions from participants in each group, to illustrate the fundamental differences between literary affect in the PTG and STGa.

Survey Item	PTG Responses	STGa Responses
Q6. Has your experience with literature influenced your decision to become a teacher in any way? (Please explain)	"Not really. While a love for reading is important, it has not really affected my choice to be a teacher." *(male)* "No." *(female)* "No."*(male)* "No, I really can't remember many text from my schooling" *(female)* "No! If I had an interest in literature I would become a high school teacher. I do like children's literature just not novels etc" *(female)*	"Yes. I think because of enjoying what texts have to offer and what we can learn through them, I wanted to teach people" *(male)* "Yes. I'd like to share literature with other people and get them to make literature come alive for themselves – when literature worked for me it was the best thing ever!" *(female)* "Absolutely! My HSC literary experience is why I decided to be a teacher. Texts are amazing and I wanted to show others (students) what immense value can come from a piece of writing." *(female)* "Yes. I fell in love with books, novels, plays, film, the drama and characters. I want to share that with others. I want to show people a way of discovering the world and life through books." *(female)*

Survey Item	PTG Responses	STGa Responses
Q10. Are literature and teaching English important to you? Why?	"Yes, important to be literate to operate successfully in society" *(male)* "Yes. I feel that students should learn English/ literature as it is an important aspect of school. Allows students to move beyond ordinary literature by analysing and critiquing the underlying concepts (also about life)." *(female)* "Yes. Literature is often central to effectively teaching English. Appropriate texts must always be selected depending on the targeted audience." *(female)* "Yes. Need to teach it to kids. It is an important part of being successful in our society" *(male)* "Yes. Providing students with enjoyable learning experiences when teaching English will ensure students engage during the lesson." *(female)* "Yes. Obviously. It is perhaps one of the most important aspects as it allows other	"Yes. For cultural understanding, escape, to expand my own mind and enjoyment in seeing what can be done with language" *(female)* "I am passionate about teaching English and helping students gain understanding of literature. Literature helps us to decipher but also escape our world. English as a subject is hugely important in securing life long learning and its elements make reading texts a lot more interesting." *(female)* Absolutely. Literature is my passion and teaching is also my passion. There is nothing that I would rather be doing/ studying. Literature has shaped and enriched my life and taught me things no person could teach me." *(female)* "Yes, very. Without literature my world would be dull and lifeless. Literature has taught me an awful lot about life and the world, and I want to show students how literature and English can enhance their worlds." *(female)*

	knowledge more available." *(male)*	
	"Yes – because everyone needs to learn it to live and succeed in our country, and I understand that taking on the job as a teacher I must teach students English and that is why it is important to me. Because I realise that to be literate will help you your whole life and it is the job of teachers to help students learn English." *(female)*	

KEY for Item Q10

        Demonstrates and focuses upon personal love of literary (evidence of affective experiences).

        Demonstrates understanding of external importance of the literary in teaching and society.

Figure 4.7 Survey Responses from PTG and STGa: Literary Affect and Participant Decision to Teach

The previous charts demonstrate fundamental differences in the ways in which literary affect has occurred in the PTG and STGa. The first section, which displays a selection of responses for question six from the survey, illustrates the importance of the literary in shaping participants' career decisions. As shown, negative responses for the PTG suggest non-affect in this arena, whilst responses from the STGa unequivocally proclaim literary experiences as extremely important in their decision to become a teacher. This highlights the occurrence of literary affect and its considerable impact upon these participants, for one of whom literature 'was the best thing ever!'.

Highlighted sections pertaining to question ten serve to illustrate the themes that occur in participant's responses. As analysed, the PTG demonstrates an external awareness of literary study and its importance in society and teaching. These responses relate to teaching goals of subject English and rarely offer any indication of personal affective experiences with the literary. Contrary to this, the STGa group responses pertain very strongly to the personal affective dimension of the literary, and are strong testament to occurrence and survival of literary affect. They also offer insight into why literary experiences have been affective, offering explanations of literature's ability to 'escape', to 'expand the mind' and 'enrich' ones life. According to STGa, such are the affective dimensions of the literary, where one participant believes, 'without literature my life would be dull and lifeless'. Evidently for such participants, and particularly for a high percentage of the STGa group, their literary affective experiences are manifest in future career path and commitment to literary teaching and learning. In relation to the PTG, this affect is also documented for forty per cent of participants. Although this figure is not as high as the STGa group, it is nevertheless significant and thus these responses cannot be ignored. However, participants of the PTG who expressed that their experiences with the literary had played a part in their future career maintain a focus upon *literature in and as education*, their own affective experiences allowing them to see a need to *teach literature* and thus responses were of the following sort:

Q6. Has your experience with literature influenced your decision to become a teacher in any way? (Please explain)

"I am very interested in teaching English and literature, as I feel it is vital for students to learn about" *(female)*

"Yes. It is my desire to teach literature in a more exciting and engaging way…to interest students and give them a love of literature" *(female)*

"Yes! I want to have a positive influence on my students' experiences with literature – to develop a lifelong love of reading and their critical literacy skills" *(female)*

Compare these responses with the previous STGa responses, which are more inclusive of personal affective experiences, ones which may accord to such a term as *aesthetic affect*; where literature has "come alive" and affect is centred around literary texts as "amazing" entities, somewhat separate from purely educational arenas. Desire to teach in the STGa group is derived from personal textual engagement: "I wanted to show others (students) what immense value can come from a piece of writing". Although responses from the PTG do mention "lifelong love of reading" and literature, they are very much embedded in the teaching experience, where the first concern in all the above quotes is for *teaching* or the *students*. This emphasis is very different in perspective from, for example: "I fell in love with books, novels, plays, film, the drama and characters. I want to share that with others. I want to show people a way of discovering the world and life through books" (*female*, STGa), where the literary and personal are the focus, not teaching.

The literary affective experiences of 40 per cent PTG and 74 per cent STGa have therefore proved significant in career choice, although the trends for affective dimensions in the two groups take differing perspectives. The resultative teaching levels, being primary or secondary, may be a consequence of this difference; although the manifest

result is that these participants have chosen a teaching career and they openly attribute this to their literary experiences. The phenomenon of literary affect is thus evidenced.

The decision to teach as a result of personal literary engagement however was not the only product of literary affect. Responses in both the PTG and STGa illustrate other significant affect, including alterations and reactions in individual psyche and personal being. Such capability is more suggestive of occurrence of the aesthetic dimension of affect and how literary texts have been personally important, as separate from the educational importance they have assumed in participants' lives. The survey Questionnaire allowed reflection upon the literary experience as detached from educational perspectives. This was achieved by introducing the two arenas, 'personal choice' and 'school reading' (survey question two.) as unique and distinct from one another. Following this model throughout the survey items, participants were first invited to reflect upon their schooling experiences, and then in question nine, turn to respond in terms of personal and life experiences.

Survey question two therefore initiates this section of analysis, to explore the relative affect that participants in each group have had in terms of personal and school reading, and to determine where emphasis lies. To this end, participants were asked about three texts from their adolescence that had impacted upon them, and these could be from school or personal choice. The categories 'personal' or 'school' had to be stated after the text. Thus by inviting participants to consider texts in such a way, responses are assumed to be those of texts that had affected participants in some way. Frequencies for 'personal' and 'school' choice can thus be compared where affect most or least assumes itself, or whether there is a balance of affective experiences occurring in both the educational and private lives of student teachers. Comparisons are also made between the PTG and STGa. As is illustrated, however, there were difficulties with this question as a significant number of participants did not respond in terms of whether their stated texts were from personal or school reading. Results are illustrated as follows:

PTG

24%

49%

27%

Educational
Personal
No Response

STGa

25%

37%

38%

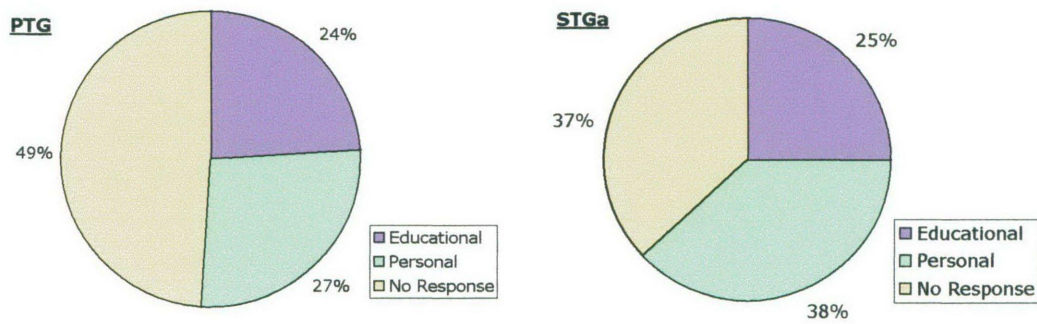Educational
Personal
No Response

Figure 4.8 Comparison of Location of Literary Texts in the PTG and STGa

Despite the large percentage of participants from both groups who did not respond, the charts provide valid data for manipulation, so that valid comparison may be made. To this end, 'no response' participants are eliminated and percentages for each group were re-worked, giving the following pie charts:

PTG

47%

53%

Personal
Educational

STGa
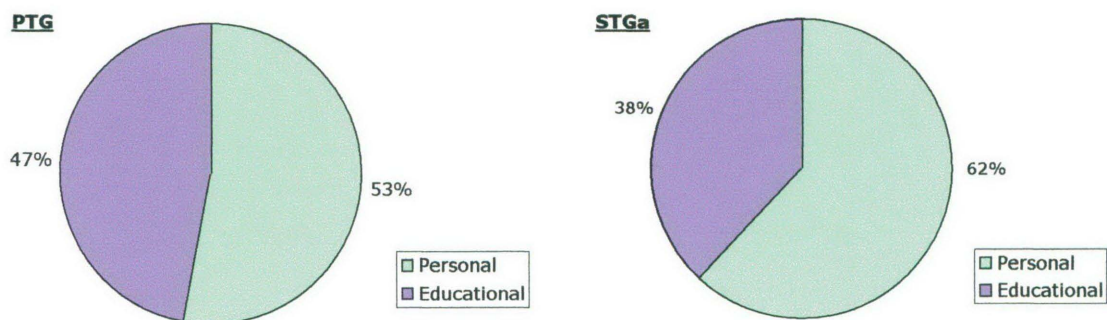
38%

62%

Personal
Educational

Figure 4.9 Re-working of Location of Literary Text Data for Comparison

As shown, both sets of data privilege the 'personal choice' arena. However, distribution of each group is significantly different. Whilst the PTG does not illustrate a very high imbalance, the STG conversely focuses much more upon personal choice texts as more affective, at 62 per cent.

The STGa have found a significantly higher percentage of affect from their personal experiences, compared to the PTG. As personal choice is indicative of the aesthetic dimension of affect, i.e. individuals choose that which is appealing to them, the data suggest that the STGa may experience a higher level of aesthetic affect. In contrast, the higher percentage of educational affective literary texts mentioned by the PTG is reflective of a higher appreciation for the literary *in education*, which supports previous data analyses. However, within the PTG the balance (although only slightly) still favours personal choice texts. Thus, this implies that affective experiences across the groups are more likely to occur when personal choice is considered, or when individual aesthetic needs are met.

However, this should not denote that this aesthetic affect does not occur in educational arenas; significant percentages of affective experience from 'school choice' texts, particularly in the PTG provide strong evidence to the contrary. Across the two groups, a collective total of 42.5 per cent of affective texts are attributed to 'school choice', demonstrating that affective and aesthetic needs are clearly being met in the educational environment, and nearly as well as in personal choice.

Such influence from educational literary engagement is paid further testament in survey question nine, which invited participants to reflect upon time(s) in their lives where literary engagement or experiences have been particularly important, in affective ways (e.g. emotionally, psychologically, spiritually). Although responses concentrate upon the personal dimension, some participants draw upon their schooling and ensuing literary engagement to fully respond.

Data from this question were essentially qualitative, however, coding of the text allows quantification for analysis. The following various categories were devised, illustrating the result of affective literary engagement:

1 = 'Literary texts have been educationally important'

2 = 'Literary texts provide a lens through which the world is explored'

3 = 'Literary texts have aided my emotional development'

4 = 'Literary texts have provided me with socio-cultural awareness'

5 = 'Literary texts offer me escape, alternative experiences and/or freedom'

6 = 'Literary texts reassure me I am not alone / provide 'friends''

7 = 'Literary texts aid my psychological /spiritual development'

8 = 'Literary texts have affected my religious beliefs and views'

9 = 'Literary texts have been personally relevant'

10 = 'Literary texts challenge my perceptions'

11 = 'Literary texts enable me to explore my weaknesses'

12 = 'Literary texts make me a stronger person'

13 = 'Literary texts aid imaginative and creative development'

14 = 'Literary texts allow me self-expression'

As each category was mentioned, so the respective number was recorded. Figures illustrated in the following tables show the amount of times each aspect was recorded by participants in the PTG and STGa. Bearing in mind that group sizes are not comparable, these data have subsequently been calculated in percentage format to provide comparative analysis.

Survey Question 9

When and how literature has been important in participants' lives.

PTG Data –The PTG provided 23 responses. Totals for each category are as follows:

Table 4.1 How Literature has been Important in the PTG

Category	**Frequency**
Educationally Important	2
Lens through which the world is explored	2
Aided Emotional Development	3
Provided Socio-Cultural Awareness	2
Offers escape / alternative / freedom	6
Gives reassurance not alone / 'friends'	2
Aids Psychological / Spiritual Development	1
Has affected Religious views / perceptions	2
Has been Personally Relevant	2
Challenges Perceptions	1
TOTAL	23

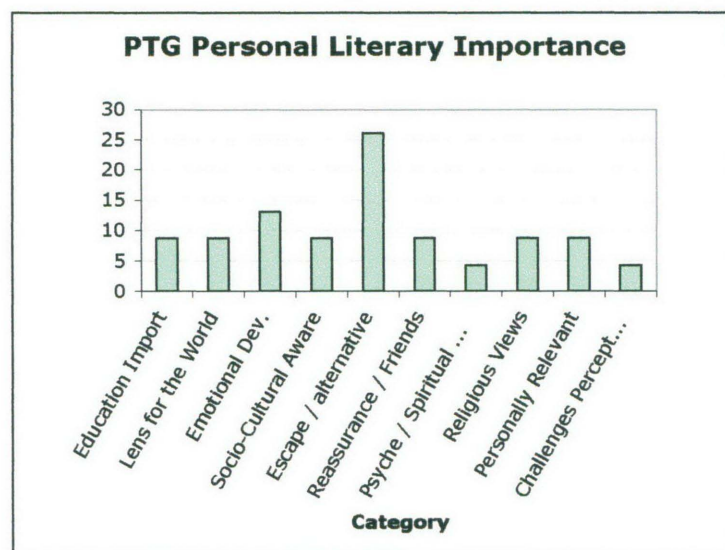Data are graphically presented in percentage form to offer comparison to the STGa:

Figure 4.10 How Literature has been Important - PTG Percentage Results

STGa Data – The STGa gave 73 responses. Totals for each category are as follows:

Table 4.2 How Literature has been Important in the STGa

Category	Frequency
Educationally Important	3
Lens through which the world is explored	6
Aided Emotional Development	11
Provided Socio-Cultural Awareness	4
Offers escape / alternative / freedom	11
Gives reassurance not alone / 'friends'	6
Aids Psychological / Spiritual Development	2
Has affected Religious views / perceptions	0
Has been Personally Relevant	6
Challenges Perceptions	6
Allows us to explore our weaknesses	3
Makes us stronger people	10
Aids Imaginative development	3
Allows self-expression	2
TOTAL	73

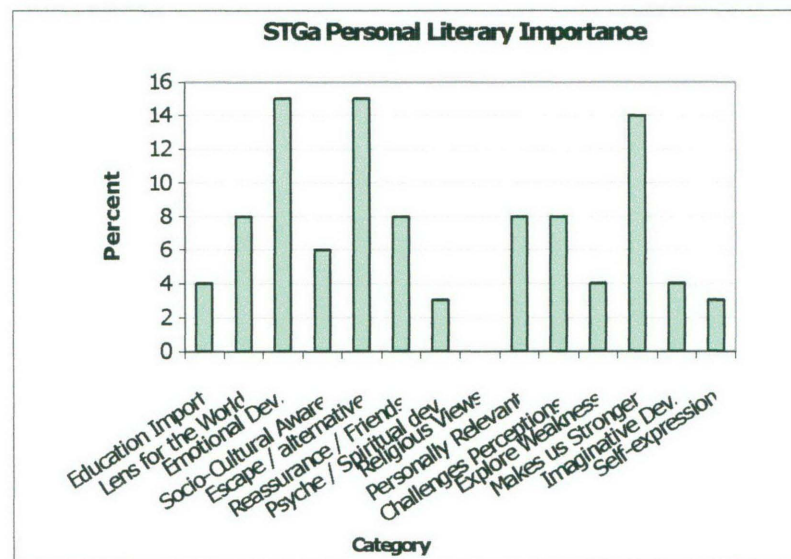Data are graphically presented in percentage form to offer comparison to the PTG:

Figure 4.11 How Literature has been Important – STGa Percentage Results

Comparatively, both the PTG and STGa have attributed a high percentage of importance to the affective capability of literary texts to 'offer escape/ alternative worlds/ freedom'. The significance of this result is reflective particularly of theory surrounding fantasy literature, but in general can be attributed to literary texts in their ability to provide this 'otherness' and 'escape', where the reader is offered veracity and an opening 'into the widest spaces' (Jackson, 1981:22). As Matthews explains:

> Fantasy enables us to enter worlds of infinite possibility...The breathtaking sweep of its scope can be awesome and even frightening... [it] unites timeless mythic patterns with contemporary individual experiences. Its stories...are *about* the relationship between the individual and the infinite. (Matthews, 2002:1)

This aesthetic, that is infatuation with the imagined 'widest space', evidentially is a significant proportion of the result of affective experiences through the literary, particularly for participants in the PTG, where 26 per cent of responses state that the affective experience has allowed freedom or escape from reality. Responses in the STGa, however, are more varied and demonstrate the need for other factors that are equally important affective outcomes, such as affective experiences that resulted in 'emotional development' and building of 'personal strength'. Such reported abilities of literary texts further confirm occurrence of literary affect in psychological and cognitive forms. In terms of 'educational importance' in this question, although percentage of participants mentioning this category was relatively low, PTG responses still have a higher response rate, at eight per cent compared to four per cent in the STGa.

It is also interesting to note that the final four categories mentioned by the STGa do not feature at all in PTG responses. These categories, which include 'exploration of personal weaknesses', 'personal strength', 'development of the imagination' and 'self-expression' are reflective of intrinsic personal development, which suggests the affective event is instilling psychological alterations and freedom. Participant testimonies to ideas of

imagination development and self-expression, along with psychological and emotional development, and the literary as a lens through which the world is viewed are underpinned by literary theory, where:

> We see the world through the literature we read... Then we act in the real world on the basis of that seeing. Literature is a use of words that makes things happen by way of its readers.   (Miller, 2002:20)

According to During (cited in Miller, 2002:20-1) this occurs when the reader has capacity for 'literary subjectivity'; or in the present case, for literary affect. As graphically illustrated, there are disparities between the PTG and STGa in terms of their affective experiences with literary texts, although there is continuous evidence of its occurrence in the lives of student teachers. It was however interesting to compare specific responses qualitatively not only between groups but also within groups, to explore the individual diversities that render defining and valuing literary texts and their affective capabilities so extraordinarily problematic.

Qualitative responses from the PTG ranged somewhat in their content, and were suggestive of limited literary affective experiences on one hand, and a high level of engagement and literary affect on the other. In the STGa, all responses indicated occurrence of significant affective experiences. At the minimum in the PTG, twenty per cent of participants failed to respond to the question whatsoever, which suggests a lack of personal affect. In contrast, the STG's non-response rate was only four per cent.

Despite the wealth of categories drawn upon in this question, the PTG had thirteen per cent that mentioned experiences only in relation to education, indicating that for these participants the affective dimension of the literary is inherently linked to the educational environment. Although the importance of literary texts and their affective qualities are noted, emphasis in these responses was solely upon teaching and learning; no extensions into personal literary spheres are recalled. It is perhaps a victory for subject English,

however, in light of contemporary controversy, that these participants specifically underline the affective aesthetic in their educational environs, which are evidentially providing for occurrence of literary affect and personal learning development. For example:

> During the HSC I enjoyed studying texts…I really enjoyed reading the stories that extended me, in thoughts and concepts.
>
> (Male, completed HSC 2003)

> The study of literature in the HSC was helpful to me when I began my uni degree as I already knew how to analyse and critique texts, as this was part of my English units. (Female, completed HSC 2003)

And for one particular participant, the educational literary experience became a 'personal joy', which aided social and emotional development and understanding through aesthetics and affect:

> *Literature for me has been more of a personal joy for me, rather than a learning chore. I enjoyed reading short novels such as 'Choose Your Own Adventure' and the 'Goosebumps' series in my teens. I think me wide reading in my teens helped me cope with social and emotional issues – this was enhanced through school, experiencing texts such as 'The Green Mile', 'Lord of the Flies', 'The Shawshank Redemption' and 'Looking for Alibrandi'*
> (Female, completed HSC 2001)

Responses from the PTG also illuminated the importance of genre in providing an affective experience, where adventure texts and conspiracy texts were advocated. Such genre concerns were linked to participants' psyches, where literary affect was a vehicle by which desires and understanding were realised via literary enjoyment. Responses also advanced an emotional affective level, where literary affect had been important for some participants in personal emotional development, for example from specific issue management, to inclusion, to enjoyment and freedom from reality:

> *Anna's Story* – the story of Anna Wood, a young girl who died from drugs;
> it was important to me because I learnt about drug use, how it affects you
> and your family.   (Female)

> Obviously during adolescence I was influenced heavily by literature,
> learning that I was not the only one out there in the world.   (Male)

> Growing up books were my 'haven' where I would go to escape troubles.
> I'm grateful for having literature in my life.   (Female)

Finally for the PTG, the philosophical capabilities of affect and occurrence of this dimension as a form of literary affect is evidenced in one response, which neatly unfolds the *X-factor* of literature for the individual; the 'magic' of literary engagement that has power to 'open up a virtual reality' (Miller, 2002:21) and offer alternative perspectives, and the aesthetic of timeless and universal knowledge:

Literature has always been a positive aspect in my life and is very important to me. I love reading stories and relating to the characters in books. I really enjoy being wrapped up in a book and looking into the lives of the characters and reflecting them to my own life experiences. Reading literary texts always makes me evaluate my life and evokes thoughts about the lives of others.

(Female, completed HSC 2002)

Such a response stands as strong evidence not only for occurrence of literary affect in contemporary literary environs, but also the continuing value placed upon notions of affect and aesthetics in literature, which are evidentially crucial to personal development. The above statement relates to all literary experiences, educational or personal, and is thus indicative of continuing commitment to affect and aesthetics in new English syllabi, and consequently in popular culture literary texts as well as in canonical literature, and; in critical literacy, which embraces approaches to the literary that deal with, for example, the 'evaluation' of life and 'evocation of thoughts about the lives of others'.

Responses from the PTG are unmistakably diverse, touching upon the plethora of circumstances for literary affect. The above response is comparable to responses from the STGa, which were generally longer, more in-depth and offered more descriptive lessons in individual participant aesthetic and affective experiences. Compared to the one response that touched upon the philosophical aesthetics of affect in the PTG, the STGa expounded a wealth of such responses that deal with philosophical issues relating to the psyche, emotions and attitudes:

I struggle to think of any time when literature hasn't been important. I feel that every text I've read has had some influence on me, and affected thoughts, emotions etc. *The DaVinci Code* made me more critical, *Animal Farm* encourages my attitudes to equality; The *Lord of the Rings* has made me look more at the world as it is... Literature has been a major part of my life since Year 10 and is very linked to my personal being.

(Female, completed HSC 2002)

Literature has been important in everything I do! Especially with music, I could not list in my lifetime what I have drawn from literature and music! They expose our weaknesses, make us stronger people and allow us to understand fellow human beings and make us worldlier.

(Male, completed HSC 2003)

In tough times, identity crises etc. I will read a feel-good fantasy. It gives me strength when I follow others [characters] journeying through rough times but succeeding in the end. Any inspirational novel works in the same way. The 'curtain of death' in Harry Potter made me think philosophically about death... I like 'wake-up call' literature... stuff that pushes my boundaries and teaches me new ideas about life.

(Female, completed HSC 2001)

The majority of responses in the STGa pertained, from their various perspectives, towards engagement with literary texts and the affective experience as aids for personal experiences and development. Nearly forty per cent of responses included notions of the affective literary as a support for personal issues and as a vehicle for personal growth. The following table highlights these points, and various individual problems that have relied upon literary texts for guidance, support and understanding:

Table 4.3 Literary Affect and Personal Development

Issue	Literary Affect
Death	"*At Mornington* helped deal with death…because it was something about reality but disconnected from it." "Emotionally certain types of literature helped me through many tough periods in my life, like the death of a friend in Y12" "When a close family member died, books became an escape from reality but also a search for meaning and understanding… *April Fools Day* by C. Bryce – true story… was a reassurance that other people experience the same situations and react in the same ways. It challenged my perceptions of 'normal' and 'right and wrong'."
Sickness	"I had to take a year off school. During this time, literature was my only contact with the world. I loved experiencing the journeys of other characters, and lived through these characters."
Gender	"…studying *Looking for Alibrandi* came at a time when I was undergoing development and considering what it is to be 'female'. *Looking for Alibrandi* covered this theme and made me feel more comfortable in my own skin."
Relationships	"[I had] relationship problems, it [literature] lets you escape from reality and experience something different for a change."
Isolation	"I lived in Japan for a year, spoke no Japanese and had an awful time in the first 6 months. During that time I used literature as an escape… devouring everything I could lay my hands on. It kept me sane when I thought the world was falling down on me."
Self-Esteem	"There was a time in my life when my self-esteem was very low…*Mediator* and *All American Girl* gave me ideas and scenarios that I wished I could be in and this, even if only for the duration of the book, made me happy again".

Managing Personal Development	"In Year 10... the text *Maestro* positively impacted on my life... I found a common ground between myself and the main character. We were both naïve and solely gifted in one area – the piano – and the pressures surrounding this led to little development in other areas... The character [eventually] realises the importance of experiencing more than this straight and narrow path... This influenced me to take chances... and forced me to become a stronger person and express my need to take pleasure from many activities not just the one thing."

The above responses offer deeper insights into similar kinds of issues as outlined by the PTG. The wealth of diverse literary texts, dealing with a variety of issues and experiences, is reflected in these responses, all which find the affect of emotional or personal development in their engagements. Clearly, the emotional or psyche dimension of literary affect is very much alive and an invaluable resource in educational and personal literary arenas.

In comparison to the PTG, literary affective experiences in the educational arena are also specifically illuminated in STGa responses. Of the group, 26 per cent mention 'HSC' or 'school reading' in their answers and in relation to the affective dimension, the result is most commonly an alteration in attitudes or views, challenging of perceptions or acquisition of knowledge and understanding, for example:

> ... through various texts read in class e.g. Gwen Harwood, Othello, Macbeth... my attitudes alters after reading the texts... they have qualities that we learn from. (Female, completed HSC 2003)

These responses expressed positive views on subject English, as an arena for literary engagement and affect in the forms of personal understanding and development, where 'in high school I read a lot of adolescent fiction – Libby Gleeson, Isabelle Carmody – I used to love letting my imagination run wild... I enjoyed being in the world of books' (female, completed HSC 2001). The STGa responses also placed much emphasis upon literary escape, where literary engagement involves transportation into another world or dimension as a form of 'relaxation', 'escape', 'comfort', 'losing oneself' or to 'get away from the boredom or problems of the 'real world' and learn and relax in another!' (female, completed HSC 2000).

As illustrated, experiences and affective dimensions of literary engagement are diverse between groups and also within groups. As such, a more detailed exploration of textual dynamics for each group was conducted, along with analyses of how specific texts have generated affect. In order to deal with analyses, responses to question five and questions two and three from the survey were investigated.

To develop a general picture about the types of textual features that each group idealises in their personal notions of what constitutes 'good' literature, question five required respondents to list what is important to them in a literary text. Responses were again coded into categories and frequencies recorded. It is necessary to note that not all coded categories appear in PTG data, as these categories were not mentioned by the PTG. It is interesting to note at the outset that this is suggestive of the different nature of literary affective experiences in each student teacher group.

PTG: Coded responses to survey Q5: *What is important to you in a literary text?*

Frequencies for each category were recorded:

Table 4.4 PTG What is Important in a Literary Text

Category	Frequency
Theme	3
Relatable Characters	7
Language Style	4
Descriptive / Strong Imagery	2
Fluid / Interesting plot	8
Relate to Text	2
Reflects Personal Experiences (identify)	7
Offers Learning	1
Changes/challenges Perceptions or Views	2
Easy to Understand	2
Imaginative / Creates mystery/suspense / engaging or compelling	10
Operates on Many Levels	2
Moves you Emotionally	3
Contains Pictures	1
TOTAL RESPONSES	54

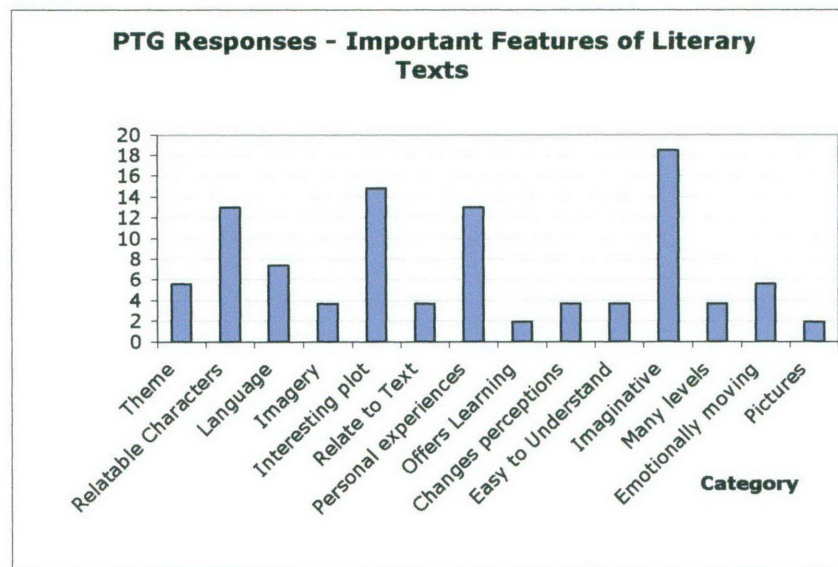From the total responses, results are illustrated in graphical form in percentages:

Figure4.12 What is Important in Literary Texts – PTG Percentage Responses

STGa: Coded responses to survey Q5: *What is important to you in a literary text?*

The frequencies for each category were recorded:

Table 4.5 STGa What is Important in a Literary Text

Category	Frequency
Theme	5
Relatable Characters	10
Language Style	10
Descriptive / Strong Imagery	3
Fluid / Interesting Plot	10
Relate to Text	2
Reflects Personal Experiences (identify)	12
Offers Learning	3
Changes/challenges Perceptions or Views	7
Easy to Understand	5
Imaginative / Creates mystery/suspense / engaging or compelling	5
Operates on Many Levels	2
Moves you Emotionally	1
Contains Pictures	0
Contains love/relationship theme	3
Deals with human nature	1
Explores values / morality	1
TOTAL RESPONSES	**80**

Out of the total responses, the results are illustrated in graphical form in percentages on the following page.

STGa Responses - Important Features of Literary Texts

A bar chart titled "STGa Responses - Important Features of Literary Texts" with y-axis from 0 to 16 and categories along the x-axis: Theme, Relatable Characters, Language Style, Imagery, Plot, Relate to Text, Personal Experiences, Offers Learning, Changes Perceptions, Easy to Understand, Imaginative / eng..., Many Levels, Emotionally moving, Contains Pictures, Love theme, Human nature, Values/morality. X-axis labelled "Category".
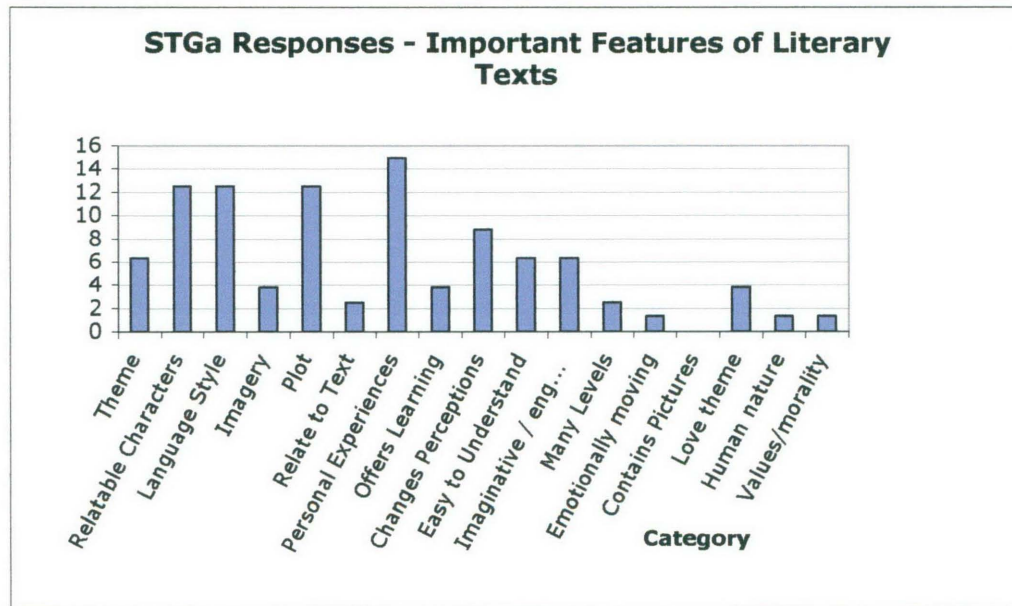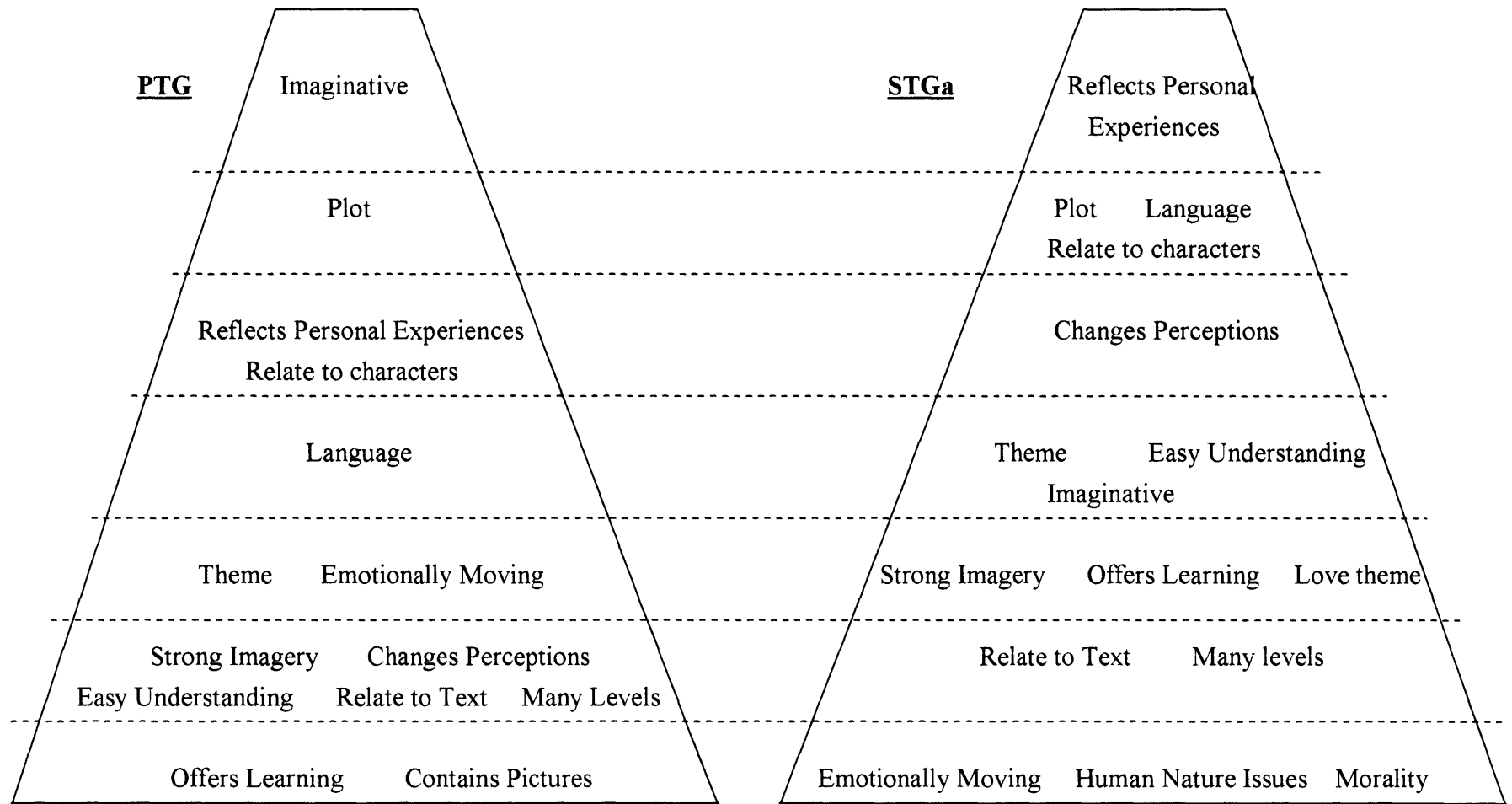
Figure 4.13 What is Important in Literary Texts – STGa Percentage Responses

As the above bar charts illustrate, the two groups are quite diverse in their category responses, with the PTG responses favouring the 'Imaginative /Creates mystery/suspense /engaging or compelling' category and the STGa favouring the 'Reflects Personal Experiences (Identification)' category. The following diagrammatic representation illustrates contrasts between the two groups in their views about what is important to them in a literary text (see following page).

Table 4.6 Comparative Pyramid Tables for PTG and STGa – Important Features of a Literary Text

The following hierarchical pyramids illustrate the responses for each category, going in ascending order from the categories that attracted the lowest percentage at the bottom, to the highest percent response at the top. This diagrammatic representation offers easy comparison between the PTG and STGa.

PTG

Imaginative

Plot

Reflects Personal Experiences
Relate to characters

Language

Theme   Emotionally Moving

Strong Imagery   Changes Perceptions
Easy Understanding   Relate to Text   Many Levels

Offers Learning   Contains Pictures

STGa

Reflects Personal Experiences

Plot   Language
Relate to characters

Changes Perceptions

Theme   Easy Understanding
Imaginative

Strong Imagery   Offers Learning   Love theme

Relate to Text   Many levels

Emotionally Moving   Human Nature Issues   Morality

The personal aspects of literary texts, that is how a text relates to its reader in terms of identification, is of high importance in both groups, as the 'reflects personal experiences' and 'relatable characters' categories are in the top three levels. This is particularly true of the STGa, whose participants place 'reflection of personal experiences' at the very top with 15 per cent of participants mentioning the category; and 'relation to characters' in the second bracket along with 'language style', each making up 13 per cent of responses for the group. Although the PTG place these amongst their top answers, emphasis is not as potent, as they rank only third tier in the pyramid diagram. The highest-level importance in the PTG is attributed to 'imaginative' (that is, the creative, fantasy or surreal; the beyond-the-normal, the original) aspects of texts (18.5%), with 'plot' coming a close second (15%).

Since previous analyses and comparisons between groups have thus far suggested a more powerful level of affect operating in the STGa, these diverse findings are particularly interesting and may be indicative of conditions that are more or less inductive of the affective experience; i.e. what the individual values in a text may have bearing upon the incitement and occurrence of affect. It is interesting that two of the top responses for the STGa indicate the importance of aspects of the participants' *own person* being in the text; that is, 'reflects personal experience' and 'relatable characters'. Importance is attached to literary texts that deal with experiences and characters that are easy for the reader to identify with, which pulls the reader directly into the text and, it is assumed, incites a high level of engagement and affect. Aesthetically, 'seeing of oneself', that Narcissistic impulse, allows the reader to be more drawn or compelled to a text and it thus becomes more pleasing, or more aesthetic.

In contrast, the PTG attach more importance to personally external elements of literary texts, the top two responses being 'imaginative' and 'interesting plot'. Although affect is evidently gained through creative or imaginative processes contained in the text, which may include for example plot, characters, setting or theme, and; through engagement with a compelling and interesting plot, which may for example leave the reader hanging on every chapter, unable to put the text down, these are not directly internal or personal

experiences for the reader; rather, they are situated *outside* the reader's personal being, external events that are *received* through the senses. This differs from the STGa top categories, which due to their personal relation to, or identification with, the reader incite not merely a *receiving* of text, but an *experience* of it, or text as *event*. Thus, although many responses take a list format (as required), in qualitative responses from the STGa, we also find, for example:

> "I have to relate to the text, the problems I have in life or situation I can relate to must be in the text for me to fully enjoy it. Perhaps that's why in my adolescence and now I enjoyed so much Donne's cheeky poetry such as *The Flea* or *To His Mistress Going to Bed*...
>
> (Male, completed HSC 2003)

> [It is important that] by the time you finish reading the text you have learnt something or your way of thinking about a particular issue or aspect in your life has changed.   (Female, completed HSC 2003)

> Relevance [is important] to me, if I can't relate to the text it makes it much harder to read. Moral value, whether positive or negative, and something that challenges – challenges me philosophically, morally and technically.
>
> (Female, completed HSC 2001)

PTG responses conversely reflect engagement in receiving the text and the aesthetics and effective dimensions of this aspect, rather than an intrinsic transposition of literary text upon their person, into their being and experience as an event of which they are part. PTG responses therefore are reflective of how the text is received and what is important in this process. For example:

Question: What is important to you in a literary text?

Interesting storyline. Keeps the reader thinking / guessing. Builds a vivid picture in your mind through the effective use of language features.

(Female, completed HSC 2003)

Language, plot, characters, adjectives [that give] descriptions of every- one /place /thing.　　　　　　　　　　(Female, completed HSC 2003)

Writing flows – like poetry. Clever, witty writing, good topic to my interests and story line, character development... 　　(Male, completed HSC 2003)

I love it when a book sucks you in, you can't put it down. It consumes your day. They have to link to your emotions. 　　(Female, completed HSC 2003)

Again, different levels or dimensions of the affective experience operate in the PTG and STGa. These initial findings strongly identify and evidentially confirm existence and occurrence of literary affect, in its various forms, in both PTG and STGa. Data prove that for these groups, the phenomenon of literary affect is very much alive today. The following chapter moves further into the nature of aesthetics and affect, to investigate the command of literary affect in a variety of texts, in pursuit of a response to the question, *where* is literary affect alive? To further the research and in light of the differences noted between the PTG and STGa, analyses will keep these groups discrete.