

Where is the Critical in Literacy?

Örebro Studies in Education 59



*Örebro Studies in Educational Sciences with an
Emphasis on Didactics 18*



ELIN SUNDSTRÖM SJÖDIN

**Where is the Critical in Literacy?
Tracing performances of literature reading,
readers and non-readers in educational practice**

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Abstract

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In many instances in society, educational and other, literature reading is emphasised as something that develops persons in positive ways. The present thesis explores this claim in relation to literature reading in educational practices. By tracing how values and critical aspects of reading are enacted, the purpose is both to problematize taken-for-granted truth claims about literature reading and to develop an understanding of the elements involved when reading, readers and critical aspects of reading are created. The studies focus on different educational practices; a teacher's narrative about grading, information brochures about reading to children and the policy and practice of a reading project at special residential homes for detained youth in Sweden. In these practices, the thesis explores where and when the critical takes place, in what constellations and with what consequences. The thesis draws on critical literacy, where reading is regarded as taking action and having self-empowering potential. However, with help of a pragmatic and material semiotic approach, the investigations steps away from what is taken for granted about reading and about what *critical* means, and instead reading, readers and the critical are analysed as transactional effects.

The studies show how students can be placed at risk by rationales for reading literature that construct and establish them as lacking of culture or as literacy inadequate. The thesis further shows that the critical in literacy can be ambivalent as well as multiple, and it can be enacted by both human, discursive and material actors.

Keywords: Literary Didactics, Literature, Critical literacy, Critical space, Actor-network theory, Special residential homes.

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List of papers

This thesis is based on the following papers.

Paper I

Sundström Sjödin, E., & Wahlström, N. (2017). Enacted realities in teachers' experiences: Bringing materialism into pragmatism. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 49(1), 96–110.

Paper II

Sundström Sjödin, E. (2017). Tracing reading to the dark side: Investigating the policy producing reading and readers in detention homes. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 39(6), 887–900.

Paper III

Sundström Sjödin, E. (2018). *Starless Nights*: Reading literature in a “critical space”. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Paper IV

Sundström Sjödin, E., & Wahlström N. (2018). The wing chair: Where is the critical in literacy? Manuscript submitted for publication.

Paper V

Sundström Sjödin, E. (2019). Creating the valuable: Reading as a matter of health and successful parenthood. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. Published online ahead of print, DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2018.1549703

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1. Introduction

In educational and other societal instances, there seems to be an unquestioned truth that literature reading is something that does good, something that even makes us better persons.¹ In particular, literacy has historically been regarded as key for individual and societal as well as moral improvement (see Graff, 1979). This thesis intends to explore this truth in relation to literature reading as educational content in school, and more specifically, to unpack the didactic² why question: What are the rationales for using literature as subject matter? However, the thesis does not aim to provide an answer to this question. Rather, the intention is to analyse what this question regarding literature reading *does* and how it works in practice — or put differently — what work it does.

Although the primary interest of this thesis is literature reading, it also connects to a more general discussion about literacy. This is induced by measurements and surveys which connect literacy to important individual and societal values, such as being democratic. In this discussion, literacy and literature reading are often fused together and intertwined.

The danger for education that I see enacted by the discourses, which seem to have a dominant position in the media and political conversation at the moment, is that they define one group of readers as the norm, while others are identified as less successful, less moral and less valuable. Michèle Lamont (2012) argues that there is an urgent need to understand the dynamics of creating worth in order to make visible the dominant definitions of value which sustain hierarchies: “What can be done to ensure that a larger proportion of the members of our society can be defined as valuable?” (p. 202). So in order to make visible and understand how power and marginalization works, we should also examine how values are made.

¹ This refers both to a humanistic ideal in scholarly work, where reading is said to provide for example moral or democratic capabilities (e.g. Nussbaum, 2003) and to the cultural and political debate (see e.g. interview with writer David Lagercrantz, in *Dagens Nyheter*, 2016-04-19).

² Throughout the thesis, I will use the concepts of *didactics* and *didactical* to describe the different elements which constitute teaching and learning. This usage draws on the Scandinavian and German scientific conceptualization and discipline *Didaktik* and not on the quite derogative way the concept of *didactics* is used in English, referring to highly static, instrumental and regulated teaching methods.

In Sweden, the public debate as well as the media coverage about Swedish students' reading abilities avalanched after poor 2013 PISA results (Pettersson, Prøitz, & Forsberg, 2017), and in the still ongoing public debate that has followed, reading has been connected to the most fundamental social abilities, to democratic citizenry, to emotional and intellectual growth and to cultural inclusion. What is often overlooked in these anxious debates is that the rationales, legitimations and valuations of reading, literacy and literature are constructs which are agreed upon, defined and decided by powerful groups (see Clarke, 2002; Edwards, Ivanič, & Mannion, 2009; Larson, 2007; Luke, 2000). There is a great risk in the situation, where truths and presuppositions about knowledge claims, such as the aims and goals of literature reading, stand uncontested. This might lead to a domestication of the citizen, where a rather narrow specific civic identity will be “pinning down” (Biesta, 2011) citizens, forgetting that these claims are political products and not a natural state. The problem with reading which this thesis addresses is not the act of reading as such or literature as such. The problem is rather when literature reading *as inherently good* becomes constructed as objectively natural and value-free. In particular, the naturalized construction of reading tends to produce literature reading both as an important and, equally, as a natural component in the ability of participating in a democracy.

In this thesis, the research interest about literature reading is twofold. First, drawing primarily on literature about reading in relation to marginalized youth, the thesis poses questions regarding dominant discourses about reading and literature, which, in a general and simplified manner, assert the values of reading and literature as beneficial for individuals as well as society as a whole. Second, drawing on literature on critical literacy, the research is driven by a curiosity about what reading can be, what “critical” potentiality the use of literature in education might have.

1.1. Purpose and research questions

The thesis focuses on the didactic relations between various components in the construction of literature reading as educational subject matter and on the effects and consequences which these relations enact. However, the didactical why question is addressed somewhat differently than the traditional didactical question of how certain education content and subject matter relates to the aims of teaching and learning (Klafki, 2011). Instead of asking what critical issues literature can or should provide, the

thesis investigates how “the critical” takes this shape. Instead of asking what value literature has or how it might become valuable to readers or students, the thesis explores in what ways this particular value is attached — and by whom, for what reason and with what consequences? I do not argue for a denial of value or for a disregarding of the importance of reading or of literature. Rather, I argue for another way of asking questions about its place in a didactic network: Where is value created? A theoretical approach, which draws on a combination of transactional realism and the material-semiotic tools of actor–network theory (ANT), has helped me investigate the moments, places and spaces where values and critical aspects of literature reading take place in educational practice and in what ways critical reading is enacted.

Just as the research interest presented above, the purpose of this thesis is twofold. By tracing and unpacking how values and critical aspects of reading are enacted in various educational practices, the purpose is 1) to problematize taken-for-granted truth claims about literature reading, and 2) to develop a relational understanding of the elements involved when literature, readers and critical reading are created.

More specifically, I intend to answer the following research questions:

1) What can actor–network theory linked to transactional realism add to educational research in general and to literary didactic research in particular?

2) How are reading, readers and non-readers created and conceptualized in different education settings (policy and practice)?

3) In what ways and in what relations are critical aspects of reading performed in text situations?

4a) How are various actors mobilized around public narratives about reading? 4b) In what ways do these public narratives connect to rarely questioned values?

The research questions are answered through five different studies. The theoretical and methodological research question number 1 is primarily answered in Study I, which explores where and in what way a teacher and her professionalism are affected by the material-semiotic processes in

which grading occurs. Although this study does not deal with literature reading, it is relevant to include in the compilation thesis, since it develops the theoretical and methodological framework which informs the rest of the studies and the thesis as a whole.

Research question number 2 is an empirical question, which is primarily answered in Studies II and III, reporting on studies about reading projects at special residential homes in Sweden. Both these studies also contribute to answering research question 4b. Study II examines a policy document describing a reading project in special residential homes as a case in which reading is perceived as having specific effects. Study III, an observation and interview study, explores the ways that critical aspects of reading are performed in a reading project at a special residential home in Sweden.

Research question number 3 is answered empirically in Study III and theoretically in Study IV, where a narrative about a reading chair at a closed ward illustrates how the critical in reading is performed in a text situation. Study IV is a theoretical exploration of embodiment and materiality in the context of critical literacy.

Finally, research questions 4a and 4b are answered in Study V, which is an investigation of the values enacted in the health-related information brochures about reading which are distributed to all Swedish parents at various times in their children's lives. The fifth study also contributes to answering research question number 2.

The material used in the studies is varied and rich and comes from a variety of settings and practices, both atypical and mundane, such as policy, classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers, newspaper articles and information brochures. As an entirety, the five studies answer to the overall purpose through different cases and from different angles.

1.2. Literature reading as part of compulsory education

Literature and literacy education currently find themselves within a regime of competitive educational assessments, which fuels worried debates about the civic and moral problems connected to literacy performances in and out of school. Literacy pedagogy has long been expected to play an important part in educating students into full and equitable social participation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Jewitt, 2008; New London Group, 1996; Vasudevan & Campano, 2009). Literacy is seen as an imposable commodity in the human resource model of education (Hamilton, 2016; Wahlström, 2016) and is accordingly used as a measurement of and a

surety for economic development and individual prosperity. This line of thinking about literacy has resulted, of late, in pupils' and students' lack of literacy skills being a topic of political and pedagogic discussion in many European countries as well as in the EU Commission (European Commission, 2008; Wahlström, 2014).

Swedish literature was established as subject matter in Swedish schools in the 1850s and was justified as something which would transmit nationalistic, moral and aesthetic values:

Literature education is and has for the most part been ideological in a broad sense, not only in its content but also in teaching methods and underlying values. Primarily, teaching literature is about literary socialization; however, a more general socialization — or upbringing, as it was long called — has also been the aim of literature education. (J. Thavenius, 1991, p. 39, my translation)

In the Swedish school reforms of the 1940s, new psychological findings formed the basis of pedagogic science, and the idealizing elements of literature education were reduced to give way to a psychological reading of literature, which meant the psychological and emotional effects which reading would entail (Román 2006). Insight, empathy and the value of beauty became catchwords, and literature was seen as contributing to citizenship education; the understanding of contemporary issues was encouraged rather than a historical orientation of literature (Román, 2006, p. 109). Educating democratic citizens has been the overall mission for Swedish education since the post-war period (Dahlstedt & Olson, 2013; Hultin, 2003), and it has been a most palpable task in curricula from that period onwards. Swedish has been considered a central subject when it comes to democratic education and socialization, not least the subject's humanistic and refined cultural components, such as literature.

In the 1980s, literature education was emphasized in school as an antidote to commercial popular culture and as a developer of language and taste. In the Swedish National Curriculum, Lgr-80³, the positive effects of literature on students' morality is emphasized, where good literature might provide answers to the vital questions of life and “create empathic and tolerant individuals” (Persson, 2007, p. 133, my

³ Lgr-80 *Mål och riktlinjer för grundskolan [Goals and guidelines for compulsory school]*.

translation). In today's Swedish National Curriculum, Lgr-11⁴, literature reading is primarily connected to the subject of Swedish; however it is also mentioned as central content in the subject of English and as "stories and other fiction" (Lgr-11, p. 78, my translation) in the subject of modern language.⁵ Why literature should be used as subject matter is described broadly:

The students will meet and acquire knowledge of literature from different times and different parts of the world [...] When meeting different kinds of texts, dramatic arts and other kinds of aesthetic telling, the students should be given prerequisites to develop their language, their identity and their understanding of their surrounding world. (Lgr-11, p. 247, my translation).

The national curriculum leaves quite a lot of room for teachers to decide why, what and how to work with literature as subject matter in school, in both the overall aims and in the course plan for Swedish.

1.3. The critical of literacy

The use of "critical" in this thesis has its base in critical literacy. The concept of critical literacy derives from Paulo Freire's pedagogy of reading as a politics of self-empowerment in which the learner is an active agent in transforming and acting upon his or her world. Freire says in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 31)

This transformation and liberation is the motivational force for pedagogy, according to Freire, and within this pedagogy, reading thus becomes reading the word and reading the world (Freire, 1970/1993; Janks, 2013). This entails that learning to read empowers you in the world but also that the content of what you read should empower you by providing insight and knowledge about power structures and language usage. "Critical" in this sense refers to keeping a critical attitude towards the power structures

⁴ Lgr-11 *Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet, 2011* [National curriculum for compulsory school, preschool and after school care.

⁵ The most common languages, which are taught as modern languages in Swedish schools are German, French and Spanish. Students should also be able to choose their mother language or Swedish, as a second language.

involved in texts; however, my understanding and interpretation of Freire's critical is also a critical as in being important and urgent, a radical transformation of the world and one's place in the world. Freire contrasts his liberatory education (1970/1993) with what he calls the banking concept of education: "Banking education is monological, problem-solving and constituted by teachers' views of the world. Liberatory education, on the other hand, is dialogical, problem-posing and constituted by students' views of the world" (Beckett, 2013, p. 50). Thus, reading can help students develop not only a critical understanding of how the world is constructed but also a realization of the students' ability and power to change the world. When I explore the critical of literacy and of reading, it is this liberatory education I address, where literacy might offer some kind of empowerment, subject-ness, transformation or activism. However, I do not decide beforehand that the critical is there, what it is made up of or by what actors it is manifest. In the studies of this thesis, the critical is regarded as transformational or empowering moments — a kind of burning effect of transactions where the critical is at stake. The explorations of the thesis are not guided foremost by the predictability of critical theory, but they turn to the making of the critical and what it means to be critical (see Lynch, 2008, p. 10). This means that focus is shifted from critical methods and critical abilities to moments which can be described as critical.

The understanding and use of the critical in the thesis is also strongly influenced by Jan Thavenius' (2003a, 2003b, 2005) and Magnus Persson's (J. Thavenius & Persson, 2003) concept, "radical aesthetics", where aesthetics is raised as a radical and democratic possibility in education. J. Thavenius (2003b) questions the view of aesthetic creativity and learning as being separate and critiques the weak aesthetic approach in schools. He claims that aesthetics in school is modest in its claims and possibilities, and he also argues that it is superseded in education by work and subjects which are considered more important. This modest kind of aesthetics is hampered when it comes to critically or creatively taking on new art forms, and it is uninterested in the content — "it does not ask why" (J. Thavenius, 2003b, p. 64, my translation). J. Thavenius suggests that school should be viewed as reasoning, critically and artistically performed public spheres in which students can make use of their freedom of speech: "The world of arts holds a critical and independent tradition that among other things has created a sanctuary for radical performances of humans and society" (J. Thavenius, 2005, p. 19). Thus, radical aesthetics has

tangible political and democratic ambitions, and in the sense in which I make use of the concept, radical aesthetics can be an example of what can be seen as a democratic education.

In the empirical exploration of critical aspects of reading literature, the policy and practice of a reading project at the school of a special residential home in Sweden was chosen. The reason for placing studies in this specific setting was not only that this was an educational space where questions about students “at risk”, democracy and education were brought to a head but also because reading, literacy and literature have been emphasized as important educational contents for these students (Gerrevall & Jenner, 2001; Hugo, 2013; Tett, Anderson, McNeill, Overy, & Sparks, 2012; Wilson, 2006). The case was chosen both as a critical case with strategic importance for the more general issues (see Flyvbjerg, 2006) and as a specific or atypical case, since, in its deviant way, it more closely defines the problem and argument by focusing on a marginalized population; it brings matters to a head. This has partly to do with the notion that strategies such as policies and standardized curricula, which are working to enhance literacy, often are related to discourses of adolescent deficit and family failure (Franzak, 2006; Vasudevan & Campano, 2009) and that at the bottom of the alleged literacy deficiency pile, one finds imprisoned people (Wilson, 2007). That is not to say that the issues this thesis addresses are of no relevance to literacy and literature instruction research issues in general. On the contrary, Bent Flyvbjerg argues that context-independent research runs the risk of keeping studies on too basic a level. To provide fuller and more in-depth knowledge, we need to turn to context-based case studies: “Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229). It is not a matter of making the case be all things to all people but of allowing it to be different things to different people (Flyvbjerg, p. 238). John Law and Annemarie Mol (2002) assert that cases must be taken as phenomena in their own right, although they can be instructive beyond their specific situation: “But the lessons it holds always come with the condition that, elsewhere, in other cases, what is similar and different is not to be taken for granted. It remains to be seen, to be experienced, to be investigated” (Law & Mol, 2002, p. 15). Drawing on Flyvbjerg’s arguments as well as Law and Mol’s, I claim that what reading, literature and literacy become and what they are supposed to bring becomes extra visible and problematized in this specific context.

The case was also chosen for a practical reason. The special residential home provides a unique opportunity to study reading, as the teachers at this school organize a full-time literary project every year where all students at the home and all the teachers (including the principal and study counsellors) read and work with a book for two weeks.

By studying how critical aspects of reading are enacted in this setting, in both policy and practice, the following thesis sets out to open up the black-boxed (Latour, 1987) apprehensions of reading, literature and literacy as a way to explore “the micro-links and rivulets flowing within and across what we take for granted to be this thing or that” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 148). Put in material-semiotic terms, the thesis thus aims to investigate how taken-for-granted values of and truths about reading literature take shape and find a hold and with what means and tools “the good literature” is naturalized and stabilized as matter of fact.

1.4. Investigating literature reading as a didactic aspect

In the longer run, this thesis aims to contribute to the pedagogic-didactic field in its dealings with educational content in relation to the rationales for this specific content. The scientific discipline of didactics deals with the theories and practices of education, of teaching and of learning. Thus, didactics includes both the theoretical bases and the didactic models from which we can understand and analyse education as well as the practical teaching and learning which takes place in classrooms (Wahlström, 2015, p. 97ff), and it explores the relations of education, teaching and learning. Didactic research covers vast areas of education, and they concern the societal functions of education, theories on teaching and learning, subject-specific didactics and issues of curriculum. The Scandinavian use of the concept draws on the German Didaktik, which is based in the German Bildung tradition (Hopmann, 2011; Klafki, 2000, 2011; Künzli, 2000). The philosophical concept of Bildung exceeds issues of acquisition of knowledge and skills to embrace the more existential questions of what it means to develop as a human being. The didactic issues of importance thus become why and how specific educational content can contribute to a Bildung process for individual students’ growing ability for self-determination, democratic participation and solidarity as well as for society as a whole (Klafki, 2011, p. 220; Wahlström, 2015, p. 100–101). The educational content is in focus, and the value of the content must be understood in relation to the specific students here and now. The choice of

content must also be understood in relation to the specific social and historical context in which education takes place (Wahlström, 2015, p. 102).

Didactic studies investigate certain didactic questions, such as: What content should be handled in education/teaching? What are the aims and goals of education/teaching? How can this specific content be motivated? Who is the student who is supposed to meet this specific content? How should teaching be planned, drawing upon the didactic questions posed above? The didactic questions make manifest how education, teaching and learning are constituted of complex relations between different didactical aspects (Wahlström, 2015, p. 97). To describe the various didactic aspects of teaching, the model of the didactic triangle has often been used (Hopmann, 2011). The classic didactic triangle consists of three corners representing content, teacher and student. In an extended didactic triangle (see figure), outer factors which affect education have been illustrated as framing the triangle. In this extension, consideration is given to the educational context: the classroom, the institutional context of the school and the societal context.

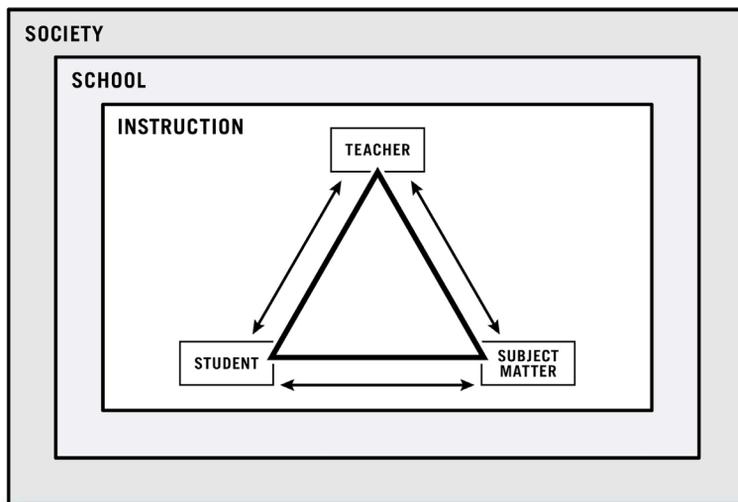


Figure: *The extended didactic triangle* (after Hudson & Meyer, 2011, p. 19)

What is most applicable about the didactic triangle is that it makes visible the relational foundations of education, teaching and learning as well as the ways in which these relations are dependent on the other parts of the triangle. However, when education is based on these three aspects,

other aspects of education risk being superseded. The relation between a teacher, student and content includes alliances and negotiations with a number of other elements and aspects, things which sometimes work against and fit badly within institutional and societal frames. The didactic relations of practice are therefore more complex than the model suggests, and we should acquire sensitive tools when studying them. The studies of this thesis are placed *inside* the didactic triangle, in the practice of education, and there, one can see an extended network of many different things, people, materials, texts, technologies and discourses.

Didactic competence implies making didactic choices based on these relations and their effects and consequences. These didactic relations should be explored carefully, with an awareness of the excluded as well as the included parts of educational practice. John Law (2004) says about doing research in practice, “If this is an awful mess ... then would something less messy make a mess of describing it?” (p. 1). In order to explore the messiness of reading practices, the studies in this thesis have primarily been inspired by and have made use of the material-semiotic work of ANT. Material semiotics is sometimes suggested as a better concept than ANT, since it better “catches the openness, uncertainty, revisability and diversity of the most interesting work” (Law, 2009, p. 142). However, in the thesis studies, I mostly refer to ANT, because the focus is on the assemblages which make up the critical in different situations. In the introductory part of the thesis, the kappa, material semiotics and ANT are referred to interchangeably.

1.4.2. Outline of the thesis

The thesis will proceed as follows. In the next chapter, I will present the previous research which the thesis draws upon, breaks with and adds to, from the interrelated fields of literature didactics, literacy and critical literacy. Chapter 3 presents and accounts for the theoretical approach and especially discusses the influence and use of some theoretical concepts in the studies. The research designs of the studies are presented in chapter 4, accounting for and explaining the methods and materials of each of the studies in turn. The fourth chapter also deals with some of the ethical considerations of the work, and the chapter concludes with a section about methodological considerations. In chapter 5, the five research papers included in this thesis are presented in brief summaries. Chapter 6, the final chapter, concludes the kappa by summarizing results and providing answers to the research questions. This is followed by a

discussion about the contributions of the studies, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the thesis's literary didactic implications.

2. Previous research

The research area for the thesis is primarily literary didactics; however, it overlaps with the neighbouring fields of literacy (new literacy studies; literacy and marginalized youth) and critical literacy. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the studies of this thesis and to present related literature and empirical as well as theoretical research from the relevant areas, research which I draw upon, break with and/or hope to add to with these studies. Since the research and scholarly discussion about the rationales for literature reading are often closely connected to curricular issues, I have limited the previous literary didactic research primarily to Scandinavian literature. The literature on literacy and critical literacy and the literature on marginalized readers which the studies draw upon is primarily international although heavily Anglocentric. The selection and limitations of this literature have been made based on proximity to the theoretical approach of the thesis.

2.1. Literary didactic research

The earliest Western theories on literature concern how, what and why literature should be used in education (Kearney, 2002), that is didactic theories. The use of fiction to explain and exemplify life and how to live can be found in Socrates' as well as in Aristotle's writing (Kearney, p. 3), and the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180 AD) asserted that in order to become citizens of the world, we cannot only acquire knowledge but must also develop a sympathetic imagination: "A capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien or other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us" (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 85). The part of literature didactic research which is relevant for my thesis is studies which focus on the why and for whom questions of literature education; in particular, the why question has been a focus for a substantial part of Swedish literary didactic research matter (Degerman, 2012; Arfwedson, 2006). In this section, I limit the presentation primarily to Scandinavian research which has discussed why literature should be used as educational subject matter.

Historical surveys of the rationales for literature reading in Swedish schools (J. Thavenius, 1991) show how literature, viewed as something which can form a universal subjectivity, has been used differently rhetorically and in practice (J. Thavenius, 1991, Persson, 2012). While the

rhetoric on literature is inclusive — literature and national cultural inheritance is available to everyone — the practice seems to have been segregating — literature education in schools has been differentiated according to social categories such as class and gender (Persson, 2012, p. 27). There is for example a long tradition of not including humanistic subjects in vocational education curricula or of giving them a hidden position, and there is just as long a tradition of keeping the humanistic subjects “pure” of any practical or vocational involvement (J. Thavenius, 1991, p. 357). This implies that there are different rationales for literature reading, depending on which learners the education aims at, and this has didactical consequences. These rationales position the learners more or less far from the goals or effects that are aimed for and invokes questions about marginalizing effects which the rationales themselves might have on certain students. Rationales for literature reading are often attached to issues such as the development of common cultural and historical references (see for example Smidt, 2016) and the acquisition of democratic skills (Langer, 2011; Nussbaum, 2003, 2010). The idea of literature reading being a democratizing force is tied to opportunities to develop abilities which ensure participation in a democracy, both in regards to literacy and language development and the development of empathy and the ability to see others’ perspectives. Atle Skaftun (2010) has studied how relationships between people unfold in language in dialogical discourse analysis, and he argues that literature reading can form a base in linguistic and communicative education with a focus on relations between voices within the texts and in the ways we shape and are shaped by participation in various discursive fields.

Scholars connected to the Pedagogic Group at the Centre for Language and Literature at Lund University during the mid-1970s conducted theoretical, historical, critical and empirical studies on literature reading as classroom activity (for example Malmgren, 1979; J. Thavenius, 1982). These studies focused on the use of literature in education, and they have been central and influential in the development of didactic literature research in Sweden, not least in its focus on Swedish as an experience-based subject and on the role which the content of literature plays here (Malmgren, 1979).

The literary didactic why question has been investigated in several practice-oriented studies in Scandinavia. Sylvi Penne (2012) provides teachers’ perspectives on literature teaching and their rationales for choosing texts. Penne’s study shows that teachers often reduce subject-

related demands to meet a lack of motivation by the students. An earlier example of such studies is Gunilla Molloy's (2002) investigation about how students perceive teachers' aims in literature teaching. Molloy asserts that the various answers to the didactic questions (what? why? how? who?) mirror conceptions about why literature is used as subject matter: "Didactics is accordingly about the values that lie behind the selection and structuring of teaching contents" (Molloy, 2002, p. 39, my translation). Drawing on her results, Molloy argues for a change in the instrumental ways literature is used in school, since her studies show that students are interested in reading about and seeking answers to foundational existential questions, for example about power, marginalization and sexuality (p. 309, my translation). However, these issues are often absent in the treatment of literature in classrooms; it seems that these issues are too sensitive or complicated. Molloy suggests that literature should be used in terms of taking on existential questions, societal problems and conflicts, and not least, problems and conflicts which arise in the classroom itself. Instead of learning about literature, the students should be offered the opportunity to learn through literature (p. 314), and in this way, the subject of Swedish can develop into a more pronounced democracy subject.

Several other practice-oriented literary didactic studies in Sweden show that although the aims to use literature in national curricula and course plans draw upon an explicit conception about literature as an active means of personal development as well as ethical, social-humanist and democratic education (Ewald, 2007, p. 27), it is used in traditional and skill-oriented teaching models in school, with a focus on reading and recalling (Ewald, 2007). This implies that the literature work mainly involves writing reviews or having tests on the literature which has been read (Molloy, 2002) or involves occasional and individual reading of selected personal books followed by review writing (Ewald, 2007) or aiming for cultural literary competence by acquiring knowledge about various literary texts (Olin-Scheller, 2006).

Peter Degerman's (2012) study of academic dissertations in literary didactics between 2000 and 2009 aimed to study the discursive formation of the literary didactic discipline through the relation between the theories and methods used in literary didactic studies. Degerman shows how this relation influences the foundational questions about the significance, function and value of literature in society as well as in education. Since reader-response theories (Rosenblatt, 1982; McCormick, 1994) have been

dominant in Swedish literary didactics since the late 1970s, the emphasis on why we should use literature as subject matter has consequently been focused on the subjective and individual experience of the reader (Degerman, 2012). Degerman argues that this can explain the focus, in the national curricula from that time onwards, on reading literature as subjective experience. He asserts that a manifest problem for literary didactics is the polarizing tension between the idea of literature as a specific kind of knowledge and of literature as a communicative instrument in learning situations.

By moving towards the first pole, literature risks that in its self-sufficiency — its peculiarity — it becomes irrelevant in education; by instead emphasizing literature as a tool in the "dialogic" classroom, literature becomes reduced in a way which makes it difficult to convincingly explain why we should read and study literature of all texts. (Degerman, 2012, p. 333, my translation)

Marie Thavenius's (2017) thesis tones down the conflicting standpoints between literature's intrinsic value and the use of literature. She asserts that the polarization is described as being sharper than it really is and that it is rather a question of difference in degree than in kind. However, she gives a thoughtful account of some of the focal points in Swedish literary didactics with respect to why literature is used in education; these points have induced discussions in the field. Apart from the ones mentioned above, there have also been discussions about literature's relation to reality, that is the factual use of literature as examples or illustrations which are used to explain other contents or parts of education (see also Penne, 2010). M. Thavenius shows that this is a more difficult issue to polarize; the use of literature to explain and explore reality is one way to make both fiction and reality meaningful (2017, p. 91). Here, literature can contribute with recognizable situations which can be met with in dialogue within our own life. In medical training programs for example fiction has been added to the obligatory course literature with the purpose of widening ethical perspectives and developing students' social competence (Pettersson & Ärheim, 2010 p. 27). Literature thus functions as a kind of stimulus which can lead to reflection and dialogue. The critique posed against this way of using literature is that the "fictionality" of literature is not addressed (Ulfsgard, 2015) and that fiction risks being handled in a positivistic way, that is measured with realist documentary measures (Malmgren, 1986).

Another discussion within literary didactics has been about the understanding of literature, connecting literature to instrumental and interpretative reading comprehension in line with demands set by assessments such as PISA and PIRLS. Although these different tensions and debates within literary didactics are important as background, it is not debates which I will engage in the following studies. However, the ideas about reading literature which are connected to or enacted by these previous studies, theories and debates are also made manifest in the materials of the studies of my thesis, and thus the thesis is relevant to relate to them. On the one hand, in my thesis, the discussion is more concerned with issues about what function literature is said to have in the classroom, that is the normative and theoretical part of literary didactics, than it is concerned with empirical descriptions about how literature is actually used in the classroom. On the other hand, the studies of the thesis explore in practice the ways in which various elements are involved in literature reading, that is how literature reading is made.

Magnus Persson (2007, 2012) has investigated rationales for literature reading and how the question of why to read literature has been handled in curricula, course plans and textbooks in three different arenas: in the subject of Swedish in schools, in the academic discipline of literary science and in the Swedish Teacher Training programme (2007, p. 9–10). Persson shows that literature reading is connected to moral development and that it is supposed to foster empathetic and tolerant as well as democratic students. He concludes that there are several different rationales for literature reading, for example experience and knowledge, language development and cultural as well as personal growth. However, he also concludes that literature education is still intimately interwoven with nationalistic apprehensions about Swedish national heritage and national identity. Persson (2012) develops his exploration of why literature should be read in *The good book: Contemporary conceptions on literature and reading*, where he critically disentangles the myth of literature as intrinsically good and the myth that by reading literature, one becomes a better person (p. 20). Persson's studies have been crucial to the present thesis because of their critical standpoint and also their variety of cases in which "the good literature" is constructed.

Literature reading in schools has also been connected to language and literacy development (Rosenblatt, 1995). In the next section, I will present related research focused on literacy.

2.2. Related literacy research

A poststructuralist move of the relationship between language and power has widened the concept of literacy and moved the focus away from a cognitive and psychological approach, instead viewing literacy as a social and ideological practice. Several literacy scholars in this tradition have included materials and matters in their analyses, examining the multimodality of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2015; Kress, 2000) and the reading context as local and situated. The by now well established new literacy studies (NLS) (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000; Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Gee, 2000; Street, 1984, 2003) have contributed to highlighting reading as a social practice and the significance of identity formation within literacy and adolescent literacy education. My conception of literacy draws on NLS, but with this thesis, I also hope to contribute to the field by adding a material-semiotic understanding of the way we can explore and analyse literacy and reading. Researchers within NLS have developed an understanding of how both literature and the reader themselves are being constituted and situated within reading as a social practice. And in the move towards a more material-semiotic understanding of literacy, literature and reading for example, I regard “reading” and “the reader” as assemblies of heterogeneous matter within these social practices for example bodies, minds, books, teachers, furniture, experiences, parents, ideas and pages. This localized, material and performative conception of literature and of reading is separate from any innate quality of the book itself, or for that matter, the reader him/herself.

At the end of the 1970s, the pioneering work of Harvey J. Graff (1979) challenged what he called the literacy myth. The literacy myth refers to the belief that the acquisition of literacy independently is necessary for and will lead to upward economic and social mobility, democratic ability and positive cognitive and moral development. Graff’s work was an important — and at the time new — critique of the social stratification and marginalization entailed by the attachment of such values to literacy. Scholars from literacy research, including those in the field of critical literacy, have increasingly challenged the marginalizing risks of omnipotent claims of literary discourses attributing remedial and enlightening qualities to literature (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2012; Baynham, 2004; Janks, 2010; Larson, 2007; Luke, 2004; Vasudevan & Campano, 2009). Scrutinizing and problematizing the societal legitimations and valuations of literacy and reading the studies in these

fields have made visible how people are positioned in problematic ways in relation to highly valued and, consequently, dominant literacy (Barton, 2007; Hamilton, 2012a), since these legitimations and valuations are always co-created with what it means to be legitimate, valuable and successful and thus, part of the ordering of society (see Clarke, 2002; Edwards et al., 2009; Graff, 2010; Larson, 2007).

Grounded in NLS while drawing on actor–network theory, Mary Hamilton's (2001, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2016) extensive literacy research investigates how institutions produce and privilege certain kinds of literacies and certain kinds of knowing and how literacy is represented in public narratives. Hamilton's results provide the studies of the present thesis with further perspectives on the ways in which power operates within literacy discourses and in the processes which construe the value of literacy. Hamilton (2012a) demonstrates how representations of literacy, such as numbers or metaphors, are embedded in everyday practices and are implied in the ordering of social life. These representations circulate in and coordinate social action and the actors involved. Of great importance is Hamilton's claim that metaphors which construe literacy as a thing rather than as a relational process "obscure how literacy is implicated in sustaining or disrupting relations of power" (Hamilton, 2012a, p. 136). The assertion Hamilton makes is that literacy studies need to further explore how public narratives about literacy take shape, how various social actors are mobilized around these narratives and how the narratives are connected to common, rarely questioned values, an assertion which has influenced the purpose of this thesis.

2.3. Related critical literacy research

Importantly, in the studies in this thesis, critical literacy is not addressed as an instructional approach, since the reading projects in the studies were not critical literacy or critical pedagogy projects. This means that the reading projects at the residential homes did not set out to decipher, unveil or re-examine texts which shape our worldview (Freire & Macedo, 1987) or to explicitly foster and develop the students' critical social awareness. In the reading projects which are explored in policy and practice, there is therefore no emphasized critique of texts or a questioning approach towards textual practices or to politico-economic systems. Nor is there explicit motivation drawn from critical pedagogy to transform or empower the students in relation to the society which has marginalized them in a concrete way. However, in the project, there were several

moments and instances where critical aspects of literacy emerged in connection to empowerment, transformation and resistance. The critical literacy research which informed the studies of these critical moments specifically pushed the analyses towards addressing and problematizing both the way in which literary and literacy education can reproduce oppressive and marginalizing structures of literacy and literature reading (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, 2016) and what counts as language. The social and cognitive consequences of literacy practices, both in theory and in classroom practice, have increasingly been at the core of these studies (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Turner, 1997). Hilary Janks (2002, 2013) has written about how different realizations of critical literacy always carry tendencies to privilege and marginalize particular perspectives, and this work helped the analyses address the different versions of the critical which were enacted in the studies. Vivian Vasquez's (2016) studies have developed the critical literacy notion of learning to participate in the world differently by focusing on student recognition and belonging to and being part of the world as empowering critical aspects. Together with students, she explores the textual practices which offer opportunities to learn about being other and about not having spaces, places or opportunities to belong (Vasquez, 2016). Both Janks and Vasquez emphasize that it is the work done after the deconstruction which is most important, that is doing something with what we discover in order for students to take action and participate differently in the world.

In recent years, several studies have expanded the concept of critical literacy to include performative aspects of literacy. Molly Blackburn (2003) brings together NLS and Judith Butler's (1999/2008) performance theory, which is that we perform our identity over and over again. Blackburn presents a broad conception of literacy as series of performances in which both worlds and words are read and written. Her explorations of the relationships between literacy performances and power structures make visible the ways in which literacy takes shape and how literacy has the opportunity both to reinforce as well as interrupt power dynamics. With the notion of literacy as performed, she sees hope for reading and writing for social change (Blackburn, 2003, p. 470), and she makes use of the dynamic movement of writing and rewriting the word and the world found in critical literacy: "I understand literacy to have this kind of vitality. In fact, it is this kind of energy I am trying to convey when I talk about literacy performances" (Blackburn, 2003, p. 469). In the studies of this thesis, not only literacy but "the critical" is also viewed as

something performed, and it can also be viewed as a kind of performed vitality or energy the way Blackburn suggests. However, while Blackburn attributes agency to readers and writers, I extend it to include materials of different kinds, as in in Study IV, where a reading chair is analysed as performative of critical literacy.

By introducing the framework of artefactual critical literacy, Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell (2011) explore cultural objects and materials as forms of expression. In this conceptual framework, NLS is combined with multimodal perspectives on literacy. Multimodality here refers to the assumption that “meanings are made through many representational and communicational resources, of which language is but one” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 246). Pahl and Rowsell include the role of materials and artefacts in critical literacy work and the ways in which material culture signals identities (2011, p. 134). However, in Pahl and Rowsell’s conceptualization, the material is still used, negotiated and handled by people and is not analysed as having critical performativity on its own.

In Elisabeth Johnson and Lalitha Vasudevan’s (2012) study, they make use of students’ situated and affective responses to everyday texts and analyse these as critical performances. They make the case that current definitions of critical literacy should be expanded to include a performance lens which recognizes more ways of performing the critical — embodied texts and responses such as speaking and gesturing, clothes and jokes. These kinds of critical performances allow youth to explore and expose ways in which power circulates, even when this exploration and even resistance to power do not cohere with the norms of the critical. The studies show the silent, taboo and sometimes inappropriate ways in which texts and responses are performed. Johnson and Vasudevan’s study has contributed to the studies of this thesis with the conceptualizations of critical performances; however, their study also contributes by broadening the notion of what can be perceived as critical moments, including unplanned and often disregarded moments in classrooms when these critical performances take place.

2.3.1. Third space as a critical space

The “third space” has been used as a theoretical concept by several scholars within critical literacy, often drawing on Homi Bhaba’s (1994) conceptualization, which refers to an interaction between different cultures, forming an in-between space in which identity becomes hybrid and ambivalent. For example Anita Wilson’s (2005; 2007) ethnographic

studies on literacy in prisons draw on Bhaba's third space as an in-between cultural space which bridges the gap between the outside and the inside world of prison. In this third space, Wilson asserts that prisoners might redefine themselves as students (Wilson, 2005).

The third space has also been explored by Edward Soja (1996) to conceptualize the connected space of race, class and gender and the space where binary categories of material and social spaces are collapsed: "subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable" (Soja, 1996, p. 57). Interdependent with Bhaba's and Soja's conceptual uses, Kris D. Gutiérrez's (2008) third space implies a transformative learning environment in which students can "reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond" (2008, p. 148). While Gutiérrez's third space is focused on learning, Moje et al., (2004) make use of the third space from a content area literacy perspective, conceptualizing this third space as "the integration of knowledges" (p. 41). Moje et al. show how formalized institutions, such as canonical texts used in school, can be integrated with out-of-school literacy practices to form a third, and alternative, space (Moje et al., 2004).

Combined third-space theories within critical literacy suggest a space in which working with texts enables new and possibly more relevant literacies to develop, in turn strengthening students' literacies, identities and agency. Study III in particular draws on previous uses of third space to conceptualize a similar "critical space" in classrooms, since the study focuses on various "criticals" which are enacted rather than on the literacies.

2.4. Reading and marginalization, and non-reading as deficiency

Different scientific disciplines have raised literacy, in the sense of skill, as something crucial and critical to their field, for example linguistics, cultural studies, psychology and neuroscience (Franzak, 2006). This has had a large impact on how literacy and, by extension, literature reading is viewed, not only within the separate fields but also in how reading is regarded and handled in education as well as the way in which deficient readers are identified and defined (Myers, 1996, J. Thavenius, 1991). For example a medical model of diagnosing reading deficiencies which correlated the inability to read with a deficit within the child was largely abandoned by literacy researchers in the mid-twentieth century, when

models of instruction, such as readers' response, strategic reading and critical literacy, gained scientific weight (Franzak, 2006). However, the medical model of literacy deficiency continues to affect marginalized readers, something which becomes apparent in my second study (Study II). This model may have been subdued in literacy research, but it is still emphasized in policymaking and in various national literacy strategies to improve reading amongst children and adolescents (Gutiérrez, 2007; Irvine & Larson, 2007; Franzak, 2006). Judith Franzak (2006) refers to the US government's remedial focus when funding for adolescent reading is manifested in a communication from the US Department of Education in 2005, namely the "discovery of cognitive, perceptual, behavioral, genetic, and neurobiological mechanisms" which affect adolescent literacy learning and the "identification, prevention, and remediation of reading and writing disabilities in adolescents" (p. 213). Although most researchers who connect themselves with educational literacy issues would strongly dissociate themselves from this approach to literacy, there are surely researchers within psychology and neuroscience for example who would not.

The research field of adolescent literacy has both grown and deepened in a substantial way in the last 20 years and has shifted focus from individual performance and deficit to the ways in which literacy is constructed within social, material and cultural contexts (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009). In a thorough review of research on adolescent literacy, Vasudevan and Campano have examined the way in which risk is embedded in the identification of adolescents as low literate and "how institutionalized labels and policies seemingly designed to attend to risk unwittingly reinforce such labels, paradoxically placing students at risk" (p. 313). In line with Vasudevan and Campano (2009) and the NLS tradition, the studies in the present thesis are ways to challenge explanations which locate risk within students and families and instead to examine the way in which risk and deficiency are produced within educational practices in the way these practices construct readers and reading. This line of research also problematizes the ways in which literacy policies and curricula often make use of literacy as a "quick fix" while at the same time being permeated by discourses of adolescent deficit, family failure and remedial literacy. In explaining reading deficiencies by pointing to family or to other cultural or socioeconomic factors, these factors are framed as:

a hindrance not only to literacy proficiency, which is reduced to reading comprehension, but also to academic achievement overall. Home literacies and family discourses are set as far removed from the expectations and norms of school and framed as a challenge to overcome. (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009, p. 317–318)

In the thesis studies, the term “marginalized readers” is used, referring to students who deal with difficulties of school-based reading for different reasons and whose literacy practices do not align with the literacy expectations of school, something which carries implications for adolescents’ positions (see Franzak 2006, p. 212). Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore (2000) describe marginalized readers as:

[Those] who are not connected to literacy in classrooms and schools. Specifically we identify as marginalized adolescents those who are not engaged in the reading and writing done in school; who have language or cultural practices different from those valued in school. (p. 405)

There is a very important notion within this quote of what “marginalized” should be perceived as, which is the way in which these students have different literacy practices than those valued in school. James Paul Gee (2007) describes the correlation between language abilities and success in learning to read as hiding an important reality: “Almost all children — including poor children — have impressive language abilities. The vast majority of children enter school with large vocabularies, complex grammar, and deep understanding of experiences and stories” (Gee, 2007, p. 15). There is accordingly a great difference between language abilities and expectations with respect to reading as it is valued in school. Therefore, the use of the term “marginalized” is my perception of the marginalization which takes place within policy practice, the way the students are being created as marginalized in policy.

The belief that literacy can function as a remedial factor for individual students but also for society as a whole is evident in current literacy policies in many parts of the (Western) world, manifested in literacy programs and initiatives like the Reading First programme⁶ in the USA, the Reading to Learn (R2L) programme in Australia⁷ or the A Reading Class [En Läsande Klass] programme in Sweden.⁸ These literacy packages

⁶ <http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst>

⁷ <https://www.readingtolearn.com.au/#1450407041892-6ed76ff5-37c4>

⁸ <http://www.enlasandeklass.se>

were initiated as a response to a narrative of a reading crisis of all students in an educational context of assessment, standardization and accountability (Hamilton, 2001; Larson, 2007; Wahlström, 2014). While literacy research for example NLS generates new and wider conceptions of literacy and literacy events, educational practices around the world are faced with a rising amount of international comparison and measurement, fuelling the stories of a literacy crisis and generating literacy programmes which reduce literacy to “homogenous packages of functional skills” (Clarke, 2002, p. 109). This public narrative of crisis, especially concerning adolescents’ literacies, is fostered and further fuelled by adolescent literacy policies calling for intervention (Franzak, 2006), and these policies have often located the blame on inadequate teaching, unsupportive families and a general adolescent culture of moral decline (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009, p. 313).

Franzak (2006) argues that marginalized adolescent readers in particular are products of theoretical and policy concerns as much as they are results of individual learning abilities. She states:

Regardless of the context, one characteristic of policy is that it conveys an implied contract: You do X so that Y will or will not happen. In that sense, policy carries both promise and threat to those it addresses, and this highlights a salient point regarding policy: Policy is created by some individuals with the intent on imposing it on others. (p. 229).

Literacy and literary didactic theory as well as literacy policy directly affect the literacy and literature reading education which students receive, and we should be aware that different kinds of readers are produced and constructed here as well, more or less successful ones.

2.4.1. Scandinavian classroom studies involving specific groups of students

Although the cases of Studies II–IV are contextualized as specific and atypical, they can be related to several empirical studies about reading. Several Scandinavian literary didactic classroom studies have, with various approaches and different research questions, worked with atypical cases, focusing on students who can be described as marginalized from a literary discourse or who identify themselves as outside said discourse. In particular, these studies have attended to differences between vocational and academic programmes or gender differences, and often they focus specifically on boys’ reading. In her thesis, Gun Malmgren (1992)

investigates students' cultural and literary socialization for example at two different vocational programmes in upper secondary school. Malmgren shows both how the conditions for literary education differ prominently between different programmes and how sociocultural differences are reflected and confirmed in the students' literary socialization. Especially amongst the vocational students, the cultural and literary socialization apparently differs from the literary norms offered by school. Eva Hultin (2006) placed her ethnographic study on conversational genres within literature education in two vocational programmes in contrast to an academic programme, in which literature reading was considered a core subject. Hultin especially contributes with the concept of conversation genre as an analytic tool for researchers to use to make sense of classroom activities; however, it is also a didactic tool for teachers for reflecting upon their (literary) teaching practice.

Gunilla Molloy (2002) also placed the study of her dissertation in socioculturally diverse classes of compulsory school to explore gender patterns and orderings in literary classrooms. Molloy shows how constructions of masculinity have restraining effects on literature education, something she refers to as gender-impregnated reading. Christina Olin-Scheller's (2006) study shows that upper secondary school boys' experience of the subject of Swedish lacks relevance in their lives. Olin-Scheller infers that these boys' proficiency in multimedia for example is seldom given scope in the subject of Swedish.

Stig-Börje Asplund's (2010) dissertation deals with social and gender identifications in discussions about literature amongst boys at another vocational programme, the Vehicle Engineering programme. The setting is chosen because this is a group of students who, drawing on Malmberg (1992) and Olin-Scheller (2006), have a strong resistance towards literature reading and also to a larger extent have difficulties in meeting the grades in the Swedish subject. Asplund's study (2010) shows that a sense of community is created in the literary discussions, and this seems to be vital not only for the students' reception and engagement in the discussions but also for how they construct themselves as readers.

Taken together, several of these studies present an explicit resistance amongst boys towards the reading and literature they encounter in school (see especially Asplund, 2010; Malmgren, 1992; Olin-Scheller, 2006).

However, there have also been literary didactic classroom studies which have investigated students who are referred to as a high-achieving group of students. Gourvenec (2016) explores how students in upper secondary

education adapt to literary education practices, and of specific importance to the present study is the argument that students need access to all dimensions of a literary community practice, such as resources and core values.

2.4.2. Research on detained youth

Qualitative pedagogical and educational literature about school at residential homes in Sweden is sparse, to the extent that it can be viewed as a non-question for social workers as well as researchers (Wåsterfors, 2014; Andreassen, 2003). The research of interest seems mostly to be statistical studies about the occurrence or lack of schooling for youth in care or about their achievements at school. There are exceptions, however, such as Per Gerrevall and Håkan Jenner's (2001) research report about the possibilities of conducting education at detention homes in which reading is highlighted as particularly important. There is also Martin Hugo's (2013) research, where aesthetic subjects are emphasized as especially meaningful for this specific group of students as well as David Wåsterfors' (2014) ethnographic study about education in schools at residential homes.

A brief international (albeit Anglocentric) outlook shows limited research literature on qualitative studies of juvenile correctional education as well (Leone, Krezmien, Mason, & Meisel, 2005). The studies focus to a high degree on the correspondence between educational failure and juvenile delinquency (Krezmien, Mulcahy, & Leone, 2008; Rutherford & Nelson, 2005) and on the academic performance of incarcerated youth (Foley, 2001; Wexler, Pyle, Flower, Williams, & Cole, 2014).

There are a number of international studies on literacy and detained youth (e.g. Allen-DeBoer, Malmgren, & Glass, 2006; Coleman & Vaughn, 2000; Coulter, 2004; Hurry, Brazier, & Wilson, 2009; Krezmien & Mulcahy, 2008; Leone et al., 2005; Malmgren & Leone, 2000; Tett et al., 2012). While this literature in general is based on an improvement-driven idea about the direction of literacy development for this specific group of students, the present study does not take for granted any direction for development or investigation of how students can or should improve in certain approaches towards development.

2.5. Summary of the previous research

The purpose of the present thesis is to explore how values and critical aspects of reading are enacted in various educational practices in order to

develop an understanding of the elements involved when literature, readers and critical reading are created. The didactic why question has played a large role in literary didactic research, based on a discussion of why to read literature and why to use literature as subject matter in schools. In Swedish literary didactic studies, in studies about this research field and in studies on policy, it is obvious that this is not a straightforward question. There is emphasis on gaining knowledge through literature reading — it provides individual and personal capabilities and growth, and literature can also be used as a kind of input or stimulus for processing students' experiences. Earlier rationales for literature reading, such as Swedish cultural heritage and national identity, are still tangible in literature education (Persson, 2007).

From the neighbouring field of literacy research, I draw on studies which view literacy as a social process where both reading and (non)readers are constructed. This localized, material and performative conception of literature and of reading is separate from any innate quality of the book or the reader. The belief that certain values for example economic and social mobility and success come from being literate entails that people risk being positioned in problematic and predestinary ways. The critical literacy studies which inform the thesis address ways in which literature and literacy education risk reproducing marginalizing structures and privileging certain perspectives. In particular, the thesis draws on research which recognizes more ways of performing critical literacy than those mostly encountered in critical literacy literature, even when these performances are in tension with the norms of what “critical” traditionally means. Foremost, this thesis intends to add both theoretically and empirically to critical literacy studies by exploring the critical as effect rather than as a starting point for investigations. Instead of applying already formed theories or “big concepts” which form traditional explanation models, I have chosen to make use of a methodology for analysis which allows all kinds of actors involved in given situations to act and tell their stories. The theoretical development and conceptual use of “third space” within critical literacy has also been important.

The present thesis draws on a tradition of literary didactic studies which investigate reading amongst groups of students who are referred to as marginalized readers. In line with these studies, I have chosen to place three of my studies in the specific context of special residential homes to investigate the particular reading which takes place there. This case for my studies was chosen because in this context, the idea of “reading as doing

good” is particularly durable, which means that reading is assumed to be especially good, especially for this group of students. However, the focus of the study and the research question is on reading and on what reading becomes in this setting, not on the students or their development.

What is of primary interest for the present study is to explore the notion that literature reading and literature education have the ability to lift people and citizens to a higher level — of democratic capabilities, of empathy and of ethical development. This is important, since these ideas contribute to the conception that people who do not read risk not being able to “level up” to these important capabilities or values.

3. Theoretical approach

In the following chapter, I will outline the theoretical approach of the thesis which is used to explore the elements involved when values of and truths about literature reading take shape, to explore the tension between the empowering and marginalizing aspects of literature education and to explore the critical potentiality of literature. The theoretical framework is primarily built on ANT. However, in the studies, I combine ANT with pragmatism's transactional realism, since this concept has guided the analyses of moments in practice where reading becomes critical or valuable. It is the performative aspects of both approaches which have been of foremost importance to the studies of this thesis. To motivate the logics of choosing the theoretical strands primarily of ANT, I will sketch a rough and overall presentation of science and technology studies, from which ANT emerges, and will move on to describing the premises of ANT which I use in the studies. After that, the concept of transaction is described as well as how it relates to and complements ANT in the analyses of this thesis, followed by a section about how valuation can be studied within the intersection of pragmatism and ANT. Concluding the chapter is a discussion about how the critical is explored with the help of this theoretical frame.

3.1. The creation and naturalization of knowledge: Science and technology studies

In this section, I will broadly present the interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies (STS)⁹ to motivate why this is a relevant theoretical approach for the thesis to draw on. Since the 1960s, STS has drawn together a variety of scholars, including economists, computer scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, historians and sociologists, to explore the origins and consequences of science and technology. STS studies particularly make visible the massive and heterogeneous work required to make certain understandings of fact-making and rationalities stick as common sense, valid knowledge or scientific beliefs (Felt, Fouché, Miller,

⁹ STS can also be referred to as science, technology and society; however, they are often seen as two different directions within one single field; science and technology studies is said to be more prone to theoretical constructivist studies, while science, technology and society has a more activist stance (see Sismondo, 2008).

& Smith–Doerr, 2016; Hackett, Amsterdamska, Lynch, & Wajcman, 2008; Sismondo, 2010). STS is regarded as having started with Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of scientific revolutions* (1962/2012). With his theories, Kuhn challenged the beliefs and dominant views of scientific knowledge and the history of science and offered possibilities for investigating science as a social activity. According to Kuhn, science is merely what scientists do, and it can accordingly be investigated as collective work which produces a basis for the solidity of scientific knowledge and also for the constructed nature of that knowledge.

Hence, STS starts from a foundational assumption that all science and technology is social activity, which opens questions about how scientific truths and facts are created, stabilized and naturalized. My thesis draws on the STS field in the way it examines how knowledge of and facts about the world become naturalized (that is factual, closed and stable) and how a reading as subject matter is produced as a matter of course and thus is difficult to question. This also includes examining and problematizing the ways in which values and politics become invisible in this process (Latour, 1987, 1993). One of the premises for this thesis is that reading, and in particular literature reading, has been naturalized as something intrinsically beneficial. Thus, reading can be examined in the ways it is settled as a naturality by investigating what actors are part of stabilizing these truths or facts, through the stabilizing mechanisms of fact, science and truth-making (Latour, 2007, p. 120; see also Dussauge, Helgesson, & Lee, 2015). These mechanisms are negotiated and agreed upon by actors with specific interests and motives. Bruno Latour (1987) describes a naturalized object or phenomenon as something which has been black-boxed. The term is borrowed from cybernetics, where it is used whenever a piece of machinery is too complex:

In its place they draw a little black box about which they know nothing but its input and output. [...] That is, no matter how controversial their history, how complex their inner workings, how large the commercial or academic networks that hold them in place, only their input and output count. (Latour, 1987, p. 3)

I assert that reading can be regarded as black-boxed educational content. It is taken for granted and considered fundamental when teaching and learning and their position in education is rarely questioned. This implies, however, that the values and politics connected to reading and also to

literature reading are also obscured and taken for granted as something natural.

In the studies of this thesis, I intend to open up the black box of reading to see what the specific machinery of literature reading contains — the values, the politics, the interests — all the things which are obscured by the fact-making and truth-making processes. I do this by investigating literature reading in specific cases, in both mundane and taken-for-granted practices, such as information brochures from children’s health care, and extreme cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006), such as a literature project at residential homes for detained youth. In the studies of these cases, I address and explore how boundaries are set about what literature reading is or is not and what a reader is or not as well as the values which are enacted when these boundaries are set. Even when the educative intention is to do good, the perspective on what this “good” is can never be neutral, and it always comes with a construction of being bad. I can draw parallels between the interests of this thesis to Leon J. Kamin’s (1974/1990) critical work about the development of IQ tests in the US. Kamin shows how the early development of the seemingly objective Stanford-Binet IQ test, which is still in use in a fifth edition today, was infused by the ideas and sociopolitical views of the time for example those of eugenics.

The I.Q. test in America, and the way in which we think about it, has been fostered by men committed to a particular social view. That view includes the belief that those on the bottom are genetically inferior victims of their own immutable defects. The consequence has been that the I.Q. test has served as an instrument of oppression against the poor — dressed in the trappings of science, rather than politics. [...] The poor, the foreign-born, and racial minorities were shown to be stupid. They were shown to have been born that way. The underprivileged are today demonstrated to be ineducable, a message as soothing to the public purse as to the public conscience. (Kamin, 1974/1990, p. 2)

Kamin’s work can be placed within the core of early STS, and it illustrates well the importance of problematizing the measures with which we use educational issues to make judgements about social and societal competences for example literature reading. The theories about the world and the methods and measures with which we examine it are always intertwined, and they are also always political (see also Mol, 1999).

One of the most used approaches emerging from STS is ANT, which also has its roots in post-structuralism and feminist theory (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Law, 2004) as well as in ethnomethodology and its

studies of people “doing” social life (Clarke, 2002, p. 5). In the next section, I will present the theoretical concepts which have inspired and guided the studies of this thesis, primarily drawing on ANT.

3.2. Actor–network theory: A relational and performative approach

In order to develop an understanding of the elements involved when literature, readers and critical reading are created and settled and what actors are involved in these makings, I have turned to the material-semiotic tools of ANT and have combined these with Dewey’s concept of transactional realism, a concept which will be presented in the next section. ANT can be regarded as the analytic approach which I primarily build on, since it provides a way to analyse the performativity and dynamics of didactic issues of literature reading. It also makes visible how values and norms are enacted in these relations, and it illuminates the complexities, ambiguities and multiplicities of educational practice (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010).

Rather than being a coherent theory or methodology, ANT can be viewed as an array of practices, grounded in empirical case studies, which examine how networks of humans and non-humans connect to enact economic, political and social phenomena or effects (Johnson, 1988; Latour, 1987, 2007; Law, 2009). Latour explains that “this research does not deal with nature or knowledge, with things-in-themselves, but with the way all these things are tied to our collectives and to subjects” (1993, p. 4). On the one hand, it is not described as a theory, since ANT does not set out to explain how we can think about the world, but it is rather a methodology with which we can examine and explore the world. On the other hand, this particular way of exploring the world (for example by viewing all matter as connected in performative relations) becomes a specific way of thinking about the world. Theory and method therefore cannot easily be separated.

ANT, as well as other material-semiotic approaches, develops insights from post-structuralism and the linguistic turn about relationality and performativity. However, ANT expands the concept of performativity as a way of thinking not only in relation to language but also thinking about materiality (Fenwick & Edwards, 2013; Mol, 2002). Thus, while in semiotic theory, meaning is acquired by words giving meaning to each other, ANT extends this notion and asserts that all entities, human, material and discursive, acquire their qualities in relationships with other

entities (Law, 2009; Law & Mol, 2002; Law & Singleton, 2013). This implies that the present studies draw on a relational and performative conception of literature and reading, referring to a perception that what constitutes the world is what is taking form and shape through its performance in webs of relations.

That for example a reader is created in discursive relations and has performative effects is neither a very new nor a very controversial standpoint. Erving Goffman's (1959/2006) introduction of the language of theatre to stage social inquiry developed the ways in which social studies addressed human subjectivity and identity, implying that identities are not expressed; they are performed. However, this conceptualization of performativity implied that there was a backstage where the real identity could hide away and that there were deeper truths within the psychology of human minds which sociological research could not address (Mol, 2002, pp. 35–36). Annemarie Mol (2002) introduced the concept of enactment to refer to the performativity of actors — human as well as non-human — and treating something as enacted means focusing on how it is made in practice.¹⁰ The concept draws on earlier conceptualizations of performativity,¹¹ but to avoid the theoretical chafes in these earlier conceptualizations, Mol choose the verb “enact”, “that resonates with fewer agendas” (2002, p. 41). She explains, “Like (human) subjects, (natural) objects are framed as parts of events that occur and plays that are staged. If an object is real this is because it is part of a practice. It is reality enacted” (p. 44). This means that the studies of this thesis focus on how actors cooperate to produce certain effects for example the ways in which technologies affect teachers' room for action (Study I), how reading and certain readers are produced in policy (Study II), how human and non-human actors cooperate in producing critical aspects of reading

¹⁰ For more thorough accounts of the notion of performativity within material semiotics and ANT see Asdal & Marres (2014), Fenwick & Edwards (2013), Law (2009), Law & Singleton (2013) and Mol (2002).

¹¹ Poststructuralist theorists, such as Butler, have addressed performativity in the construction and maintenance of identities in linguistic and non-linguistic communication and action, going beyond specific speech acts. In Butler's (1990/2008) use of performativity, when examining the doings of gender identity, she did away with the separation of people's identity and the practice of performing them: “My argument is that there need not be a ‘doer behind the deed,’ but that the ‘doer’ is variably constructed in and through the deed” (Butler, 1990/2008, pp. 194–195).

(Studies III and IV) and the actors involved when reading becomes a health issue (Study V). Reality and the actors who take part in it are analytically treated as relational effects which are enacted into being.

Importantly, in ANT, what counts as an actor can only be decided in interaction: “Actors are entities, human or not, that happen to act. They are not given, but they emerge in relations” (Law, 2004, s. 102). This means that whether the actors are human, discursive or non-human, they are viewed and studied as effects shaped by the assembled relations, thus, the reciprocal concept of actor–network (Latour, 1987; Law, 1999/2006). Humans are not presumed to have a higher status or more power to act than non-humans, according to the rule of generalized symmetry (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2007), which means that all entities in cooperating networks are allowed agency: “Everyday things and parts of things — animals, memories, intentions, technologies, bacteria, furniture, chemicals, plants, and so on — are assumed to be capable of exerting force and joining together, changing and being changed by each other” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 3). This does not mean that everything has the ability to act equally strongly or in the same way. An important part of investigating networked assemblages is to discover which actors are more powerful and are able to make the network strong or durable and which actors weaken a network. Latour states that it is not a question of applying “some absurd ‘symmetry between humans and non-humans’. To be symmetric, for us, simply means *not* to impose a priori some spurious *asymmetry* amongst human intentional action and a material world of causal relations” (Latour, 2007, p. 76, italics in original). It is not always the human action, intention or agency which brings about the strongest or most durable effects. For example in Study V, the analysis shows that a reading chair has the capacity to bring about critical effects in a classroom situation.

In the next section, I will describe how ANT has been combined with John Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy and especially how Dewey’s (1934/1980) concept of transaction has contributed in analysing moments and events which have critical potentialities in the studies about reading.

3.3. Transactional realism

In the studies, ANT is linked with the transactional approach of John Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy, because this combination has elucidated the ways that critical moments of reading are situated and contingent and are created in the complex relationships amongst various actors. The

conceptual use of transaction has been important in analyses of moments and events in reading practices, to understand what the actors become in relation to each other and in their encounter with each other and how they change in this encounter. It has also been useful when determining what is a critical moment in the material and in addressing the specific meeting of the actors involved in creating these moments.

Dewey's view of nature and natural matter brings with it a particular form of realism, as he understands the terms "change" and "temporality" to be inherent in the concept of nature. All matter is subject to change — it is not regarded as a constant but as a more or less stable continuity. Stable matter is stable because it changes relatively slowly (Westbrook, 1991). This "provisional" realism is tangible in Dewey's term "experience", where he comprises an understanding of an objective world "which enters into the actions and sufferings of men and undergoes modifications through their responses" (Dewey, 1917/1985, p. 6). In the studies of this thesis, this notion is referred to as transactional realism (Rosiek, 2013). Transaction implies that what we are is always settled in relations. The concept is characterized through "the dependence of life upon being parties in transactions in which other human beings and 'things' are also parties" and in which language constitutes a crucial part (Dewey, 1949/1991, p. 243).

One of Dewey's examples of the way the concept works is the relation which is produced in the meeting between a buyer, a seller and merchandise. These actors only make sense in relation to each other, they become what they are in relation to their meeting with each other and they change in the process (Dewey, 1949/1991). In this concept, objects and subjects are understood as created in contingent relations to each other — in transactions. This means that boundaries distinguishing individual entities are permeable and that individuals and their social, political, cultural and physical environments are constituted by their reciprocal influence on each other. The actors which connect and relate change and come out different than before they meet. Rosenblatt (1982) uses the concept of transaction to examine the transactional qualities of the literary encounter between reader and text, something she argues cannot be found isolated in the text or the reader but in the particular reader during particular circumstances. In the studies of this thesis, the literary text is considered to be one actor of many different ones. The concept of transaction is useful in the analyses in the way it conceptualizes how

different aspects of education become relevant in relation to each other and how this occurs (see also Östman & Öhman, 2010).

Dewey's philosophy shares quite a few theoretical aspirations with ANT. Both approaches are anti-essentialist and regards entities as having no inherent qualities or values; instead, these are acquired in and through relations with other entities. The transaction concept shares close points of similarity with ANT's enactment, and just like in ANT, analyses of transactions do not beforehand decide on whether individual, social or institutional aspects are most important for an investigation; rather it is how they relate which is in focus. However, while ANT allows the non-humans the ability to act in transactions on the same level as humans, Dewey does not give the environment as active a role in transactions as ANT does. However, practice — and what becomes real — is constituted by the transactions of no-matter-what-kind-of-actors without beforehand deciding on what becomes of importance and what makes the biggest difference. In Dewey's words, things or materials “express the ways in which things act upon another and upon us; the ways in which, when objects act together, they reinforce and interfere” (Dewey, 1934/1980, pp. 100–101). A consequence of allowing materials a more symmetrical position in analyses is that things or material processes which are part of the assemblages or networks have substantial critical and political performativity, a “politics of what” (Mol, 2002, p. 172). The purpose of such an approach is to move beyond regarding materials as naturalized artefacts and to recognize their normative, political — and critical — dimensions.

In the thesis, there is no exact and distinct demarcation line between the concepts of reading, literacy and literature; instead, the thesis addresses a performative conception of these three. This means that what reading, literacy and literature become in practice is not decided on beforehand; it is created in transactional relations. This implies in practice that when students are addressed, in both policy and practice, as in need of literature for specific reasons, then specific rationales and valuations are co-created about reading as an activity, about what it means to be literate and about the specific didactic role which literature has in education. In the studies, I have chosen not to separate the concepts of reading, literature and literacy but instead to allow them all to be present in analyses and sometimes to be intertwined.

3.4. Valuation as performative practices

In line with the theoretical framework, Study V especially addresses how reading is valued. This means that value/values are not seen as prefixed and intrinsic entities but as something made in the processes and practices of valuation. Valuation studies examine the work required when turning people, things and social activities into numbers for example. This type of study is a problematizing exploration of the process of quantification itself — of numbers which suggest objectivity and transparency, “strengthened by the historical relationship between numbers and rationality, objectivity and control” (de Wilde and Franssen, 2016, p. 505; cf. Hacking, 1990; cf. Porter, 1995). This approach within STS to studying values has garnered increasing attention lately, in theoretically informed empirical studies which investigate the values and beliefs embedded in the practices of (e)valuation, what these practices contribute with and how they affect and influence contemporary society (Asdal, 2014; Dussauge et al., 2015; Fourcade, 2011; Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013; Strandvad, 2014). This line of investigation is unwilling to separate and distinguish between value and values in a traditional sense, where value is connected to the measured (for example economic) desirability of objects and values are connected to what is seen as good, proper and desirable. Thus, values are perceived as inseparable from their active articulation (Dewey, 1913, p. 269; see also Muniesa, 2011) and as “enacted, ordered, and displaced rather than as fixed and constitutive forces” (Dussauge et al., 2015, p. 268).

In *The public and its problems* (1927/1991), Dewey articulates his notion of a public as a contingent phenomenon drawn together by problems at hand, rather than as a consistent mass of bodies with various wills, waiting for problems or opinions to gather around; problems thus provoke publics to take shape. Just as values are not treated as stable and predefined, neither is “the public”. It is a gathering of actors, human and other, concerned with the consequences of a transaction, of a shared problem “to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for” (Dewey, 1927/1991, p. 16). What valuation practices do is not only make reading and literacy measurable for example; they are also performative in that they contribute to creating a public which can form around and agree upon a problem and its solutions. Valuations are thus part of social ordering, and they provide powerful contributions to the organization of the way we think and make sense of social phenomena (see Hamilton, 2016). When investigating how valuation processes are part of the ordering of society, the networked

analysis which ANT can provide illuminates what assemblages are required to form a public matter of concern: “A project of social ordering is more or less powerful dependent on the size of the network of actants (both people and things) that gathers around it” (Hamilton 2012a, p. 13). Stabilizing mechanisms of truth-making and fact-building, such as values and measurements, are created, negotiated and agreed upon by actors with specific interests and motives, a gathering of problems as well as publics (Marres, 2005). In other words, it is not given by nature who is concerned by the issue of (non)reading; the construction of the problem also includes the construction of a recipient, a need or a lack which needs to be attended to. And the same goes for the quantifications and the measurements of reading. When reading becomes measured in vocabulary, or in amounts of words, the value of reading can become stabilized (cf. Muniesa, 2007) and naturalized (Latour, 1987; 1993), and a recipient can more easily be agreed upon and identified.

Study V unfolds the valuation processes which have preceded making reading a health issue, where information brochures about reading are regarded as outcomes of specific valuation processes. An important concept which has inspired and helped the analysis is that of *folded valuations* (Helgesson, 2016; Helgesson & Lee, 2017; see also Edwards et al., 2009). This analytical concept is used to illustrate the ways in which different values and valuations are co-created and hold together and strengthen one another. For example this can include the ways in which the number of words a seventeen-year-old has at his or her disposal and democratic values fold together in the texts of the brochures to enact specific views of reading connected to class, citizenship, poverty and culture (see also Hamilton, 2016, p. 4).

3.5. Critical as performed and as multiple

In the studies, I have set out to explore the critical potential of reading. How can the theories outlined above about transactional performativity be understood in relation to views of reading as a critical endeavour? Central for the thesis is an understanding of performativity as a material-semiotic practice, including both human and non-human agency. The way the thesis addresses “the critical” corresponds to the way in which different forms of marginalization, oppression and exclusion are embedded in discursive, material and embodied educational practices (Postma, 2012, p. 138). From this perspective, current definitions of critical literacy can be expanded to include a performance lens which

recognizes embodied texts and responses. Students perform critical literacy as aesthetics in ways which “are underrecognized, may defy rationality, or transgress teacher expectations for the politically correct or classroom appropriate” (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012, p. 35; see also Janks, 2002).

ANT together with the transactional approach makes visible how critical moments of reading can be understood as situated moments created in the complex relationships amongst various and sometimes surprising sets of actors. They can be regarded as political in the sense that they can be empowering or marginalizing. Or as shown in my studies, they can be ambivalent and multiple — they are often both empowering and marginalizing at the same time. An important feature of ANT is this very sensitivity to multiplicity, ambiguity and other contradictory aspects of practice (Law & Mol, 2002; Mol, 2002; Woolgar & Lezaun, 2013). In line with Mol’s conceptualization of multiple realities (Mol, 2002), Study III explores the possibility of analysing the critical as multiple, which means “more than one and less than many” (Mol, 2002, p. 55; see also Law, 1999/2006). The realities enacted in practice affect each other and cannot be completely separated; the ways in which the critical is performed intertwine and overlap, and they are therefore less than many. However, they are also more than one, since they are different versions of the critical which are sometimes in tension with each other and cannot form a whole. “Multiple” in this conception does not mean multiple representations of the same reality but different versions of the real.

The studies in this thesis have not used traditional critical issues as starting points for the investigations but have treated them analytically as performative effects. Since the outcomes of transactions between different actors are not given beforehand, they might take unexpected directions. In particular, in Study III, it is this very openness to what the effects might be which has guided the empirical analysis in order to make sense of aspects of the critical which are ambiguous and contradictory and do not seem to cohere or correspond. However, this openness is not the same as denying the ubiquitous nature of traditional critical issues, such as racism or class or gender oppression, but affirms that these “may appear in different forms in particular contexts” (Postma, 2012, p. 138). ANT does not separate and decide beforehand whether phenomena are social, cultural, psychological, economic or educational, local or global, micro or macro. Instead, these are categories or scales which are made in networked practices, and “the local is all there is” (Fenwick & Landri, 2012).

This has implications for how power is addressed in ANT. Instead of dealing with power structures as given beforehand, ANT approaches power issues from another direction: “When anyone speaks of a system or a structure, ANT asks: How has it been compiled? Where is it? Where can I find it? What is holding it together?” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 19). This reasoning is not the same as stating that structuring systems, such as capitalism or neoliberalism, and oppressive forces, such as ethnicity, class or gender, do not exist or can be overlooked in research. Rather, as Jan Nesper (1994) notes, “It would be a mistake to emphasize the fluidity of the world without noting that it flows at times in very deeply worn channels” (p. 15). It is a matter of exploring how and where these forces or powers are enacted and especially where they become marginalizing and oppressive. ANT provides a way to ask analytical questions about power from a different direction than traditional critical theories, and as we look at how the ordering and classification of the social is produced, “we can begin to think about how things could be different” (Clarke, 2002, p. 109).

Study V addresses issues of power from the intersection of analytical recourses between actor–network theory and governmentality studies (Asdal, 2008). Here the exercise of authority is studied as relational, and critical questions are posed about how problems are defined, by and for whom and for what purpose (Sundqvist & Elam, 2009, p. 11). The concept of governmentality originates from Michel Foucault (1978/1991) and contributes to the analysis by making manifest the power involved in the production of whom and what should be governed and what their lacks are (Milani, 2009). The concept provides a frame for understanding how expertise offers specific formulas to solve problems and to create *mentalities of rules* which will govern individual and collective conduct (Rose, 1996; Rose & Miller, 2008). For power to function, the links between actors must be created and maintained; power is viewed as an effect of these links. ANT offers a means to examine the different and sometimes unexpected ways and mundane places where power operates between these links. Accordingly, the analytical question which has been posed throughout the studies of this thesis has not primarily been what the critical aspects of reading are but instead, where they can be found.

3.6. Summary of theoretical approach

In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical approach which is used to unpack and explore how values and critical aspects of reading are enacted

in various educational practices in order to develop an understanding of the elements involved when literature, readers and critical reading are created. The theoretical perspective which the thesis primarily builds on is ANT, which is a method for investigating how networks of humans and non-humans connect and cooperate to enact economic, political and social phenomena or effects. The thesis regards literature reading as a black-boxed activity which is taken for granted as a natural good, and ANT provides a way to explore what actors are part of naturalizing reading through the stabilizing mechanisms of fact, science and truth-making (see also Latour, 2007, p. 120).

In the studies, I combine ANT with pragmatism's transactional realism, since this conceptualization has guided the analyses of moments and events in reading practices where reading becomes critical or valuable. The combination has been vital for the analysis as a help to understand what the actors become in relation to each other — in their encounter with each other — and how they change in this encounter.

The way the thesis addresses “the critical” relates to the way in which various forms of marginalization, oppression and exclusion are embedded in discursive, material and embodied educational practices. The critical is accordingly viewed as an effect, and critical moments of reading are viewed as situated moments which are created in the complex relationships amongst various and, at times, unexpected sets of actors.

In the next chapter, the materials and research methods of the various studies will be presented, all of which draw upon the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined above.

4. Research design, materials and method

My thesis is a combination of a theoretical interest in how matter becomes naturalized and stabilized as truths and facts and an empirical interest in literary didactics and in students who risk becoming marginalized in education. It is thus both theoretically and empirically driven. This means that in line with the ANT-inspired theoretical approach presented in the previous chapter, the thesis studies set out to follow and trace what happens in the empirical material. However, this involves placing a particular theoretical as well as empirical focus on the relations and transactions between different kinds of actors including mundane things which might be taken for granted.

In the five studies of this thesis, I make use of various research methods. Both Studies I and IV explore theoretical and methodological issues, and consequently, theoretical questions are posed. The theoretical and methodological concepts worked out and used in the first study guided the studies which followed. The second study uses an ANT-inspired text analysis when examining a policy document. The third study was ethnography inspired, using observation, qualitative interview and text analysis of the various documents, pictures and written student material collected. The fifth study was also an ANT-inspired text analysis of health-related information brochures. In what follows, I will describe the materials and methods of each of the studies separately, and because the amounts of data differ between the studies, the sections in which they are presented will also vary. ANT studies are usually conducted with very large amounts of empirical data, so I do not claim to have done classic (if there is such thing) ANT studies. The limitations on the amounts of data enabled me to do several studies within my project, but all the studies are strongly inspired by material semiotics and the ANT way of thinking about performativity and networked relations. Thus, my thesis poses questions in line with this thinking.

4.1. Study I

The first study is reported in the article “Enacted realities in teachers’ experiences: Bringing materialism into pragmatism”, written together with Professor Ninni Wahlström. It is a theoretical exploration of the links which can be drawn between transactional realism as a pragmatic view and material semiotics, here represented by actor–network theory. In particular, we explore how temporality in transactional realism can

facilitate a broader understanding of factors which form different overlapping networks for teachers, potentially affecting their room for action. The theoretical discussion in the study is illustrated by an interview in a major Swedish newspaper with a teacher describing her work with grading and some of the more difficult problems she faces in that work.

Our illustrative case was selected because of one very obvious material actor which was involved in the narrative of the teacher, which was email technology. The most important theoretical concepts from pragmatic philosophy, which became the basis of our investigation, were Dewey's understanding of experience and his conceptual use of transaction (see more about this concept in the previous theoretical chapter). Other concepts which were important for the analysis were drawn from ANT and were primarily the concepts *translation*, *mediator* and *intermediaries*. The analysis was conducted in the following way. First the actors in the narrative were identified, actors which took part in enacting the teacher's reality when performing her work according to the narrative. The actors which were included were the ones from the teacher's narrative, which we could place in a network which enacted her reality when grading.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, actors are defined by how they perform in networks, and their relation to other actors can be analysed by *tracing* them. Tracing implies following actors through the connections in networks and describing the processes which generate ordering effects (Latour, 2007; MacGregor, 2004) as well as visualizing the marginalizing forces which are part of the networks. Grades were traced in a network of teachers, principals, students and parents, but the network also consisted of non-material actors, such as computers, e-mails, parents' titles and various places and spaces which all generated ordering effects.

Once the actors were identified, we traced how grades and the activity of grading travelled in the network, and we asked analytical questions about the connection of actors: Where are the actors placed? How are connections made possible or made difficult? What relations are emphasized or obscured? If for example we discovered that grades or the teacher's work with grading appeared in the principal's office or in the home of the teacher, we analysed the entities which caused grades/grading to move there and in what way they had appeared, that is whether they had changed when they appeared in new spaces. This part of the analysis thus involved discovering in what ways the actors behaved or functioned as intermediaries or mediators and the ways in which events and objects were changed in transactions between actors.

Intermediaries and mediators are moving entities which perform different functions in networks in accordance with the interests and rationalities they represent. Intermediaries transport meanings without translating or changing them in any way; the output is the same as the input. Mediators, on the other hand, “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (Latour, 2007, p. 39). A mediator, irrespective of how simple and uncomplicated its form appears, always exceeds its condition and produces complex meanings, which can lead to a multiplicity of (contradictory) directions (Latour, 1999, 2007). Hence, the teacher in the empirical example is a part of a complex network in her work with grading, and in the conceptual study, we examined the ways in which the grades performed in the different relations or transactions which the teacher encountered.

4.2. Study II

The second study, reported in the article “Tracing reading to the dark side: Investigating the policy producing reading and readers in detention homes” aims at unpacking a “black-boxed” (Latour, 1987) conception of reading by studying how reading, readers and non-readers are conceptualized in relation to young people taken into custody. In order to examine this question, a policy document, in the form of an action plan describing the aims and implementation of a reading project at all Swedish special residential homes, was analysed. The eight-page-long action plan (see Table 1) was sent from the National Board of Institutional Care [Statens Institutionsstyrelse (SiS)] to the Swedish Arts Council [Kulturrådet] as part of a grant application for the reading project.

Table 1. *Structure and description of the action plan*

Part & page	Headline	Content	References
Part 1 (pp. 1–2)	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Presents the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS) and its mandate • Describes the students in SiS's care • Presents the school organization within SiS • A list of SiS's target group and descriptions of the students' problems 	<p>Laws (LVU; LVM; SoL; LSU)</p> <p>Regulation 1983:28</p> <p>Gerrevall & Jenner (2001)</p> <p>Svensson (2009)</p>
Part 2 (pp. 2–3)	Reading Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents the scientific assumptions and theories behind the project • Presents the purpose and benefits of the project, closely linking to research. 	<p>Gerrevall & Jenner (2001)</p> <p>Svensson (2009)</p> <p>Reading to Learn - R2L (Multilingual Research Institute, 2010).</p>
Part 3 (pp. 4–5)	SiS's future school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the aims and visions for SiS's school in the future and of the reading project as part of those visions 	<p>Bamford (2006)</p> <p>Svensson (2009)</p>
Part 4 (pp. 5–7)	At present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the present aesthetic work at the special residential homes, the reading that is done there and the partnerships with external cultural institutions • Practical account of the project • A figure of the working process of the project (p. 6) • Presents how the students will be involved with the organization of the project 	<p>Svensson (2009)</p>
Part 5 (pp. 7)	Aims of the reading project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the aims of the project 	
Part 6 (pp. 7–8)	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the delegation of the various organizational assignments 	
Part 7 (p. 8)	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents how the project will be evaluated 	
Part 8 (p. 8)	Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents the budget of the project in a table 	<p>Attachment 1 (<i>Researcher's comment: Not part of this study</i>)</p>

The reading project was intended as a part of a national “Creative School Initiative” [Skapande Skola], aimed to develop and emphasize cultural and aesthetic work in schools, and it was intended to encourage further collaborations between schools and cultural organizations.

The action plan referred to and based many assumptions about the students, their school situation and the benefits of reading on a few Swedish and international research reports, and accordingly, these were included in the analysis (see Table 2) and were analysed in the same way as the action plan. However, the action plan (in bold in Table 2) constituted the predominant and most important data in the study.

Table 2. Documents of the study

Name of Document	Purpose	Author
Handlingsplan för Skapande Skola 2011 [Action plan for Creative School 2011]	Description of a reading project sent to the Swedish Arts Council, as part of the national Creative School project	The head of office at the Department of Development of Care and Treatment at the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (2018)
<i>Kommunikativ pedagogik och särskilda ungdomshem [Communicative pedagogy and special residential homes]</i>	Research report on pedagogy and schooling in special residential homes	National Board of Institutional Care (2001), research report no. 2, Per Gerrewall and Håkan Jenner (Eds.)
<i>Att utveckla läs- och skrivförmågan bland elever på särskilda ungdomsben: Ett försök med särskilda insatser, [Developing reading and writing abilities amongst students at special residential homes: An Attempt with special efforts]</i>	Research report on special efforts made to increase reading and writing abilities amongst students at SiS	National Board of Institutional Care (2009), research report no. 2, Idor Svensson
<i>Report on the Reading to Learn Project 2009–2010</i>	A report on school-based action research	Multilingual Research Institute (2010), Stockholm Education Administration
<i>The wow factor: Global research compendium on the impact of arts in education</i>	An international comparison and standardization of arts projects from 170 countries	Anne Bamford (2006)

The analysis was conducted in the following way, First the actors which were enrolled and which could be connected to reading were identified in the documents. These were for example students, home environments, future success, books and vocabulary. When the actors were mapped, they could be organized into three categories which stood out as particularly interesting in the material in relation to my research question. The categories were: (a) effects or expected outcomes of reading/the reading project; (b) deficiencies which reading/the reading project were intended to correct and (c) methods and instruction with which the reading project was to work. The next step of the analysis was to analyse what function the connected actors had, and the following analytical questions were posed: Which actors are doing what? In what way? In relation to what or whom? How are connections made possible or difficult?

The concept of *boundary object* played a particularly important part in the analysis. A boundary object is a thing which connects different collective actors while allowing them to maintain their differences, including different ways of regarding and interpreting the boundary object itself. Star and Griesemer (1989) describe boundary objects as “objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites” (p. 393). It is the plasticity and adjustability of the concept of “reading” which manifests itself in the analysis, and the actors connected to the construction of “reading as doing good” can fill it with meaning without waiving, changing or adjusting themselves in the process. This means that different collective actors can refer to the same object without adapting to each other.

As results of this analysis, three networks which produce different kinds of reading were drawn: the learning network, the remedy network and the aesthetic network. The networks were of course not possible to completely separate from each other; they overlapped and were interdependent in various ways.

4.3. Study III

The third study, reported in the paper “Starless nights: Reading literature in a ‘critical space’”, explores the ways in which different versions of “the critical” in relation to reading are performed in educational practice and more specifically, in a reading project at a residential home. Informed by critical literacy, the critical of literacy is regarded as transformative and empowering effects of situated and performative relations between sets of

different actors — human, material and discursive. Accordingly, the critical also includes the actions and performativity of books, course plans and curricular issues, furniture, drawings and more.

As soon as the Ethics Examination Board had approved the study, I contacted the head of the institution at a special residential home. This specific residential home was chosen since the school at the home has had organized reading projects for their students almost every year since 2011. The head of the institution then put me in contact with the principal at the institution's school. The principal in turn invited me to observe and participate in both the planning meetings prior to the reading project and in the reading project itself. One of the teachers was specially assigned to have contact and take care of me before, during and after the project. The curiosity and warmth with which I was welcomed in the work of the reading project, by the principal and the teachers, considerably helped me and made my introduction and relation to the students so much easier. Before the reading project started, there was an information meeting with all the students at the school, and in this meeting, the teachers informed the students about my presence during the project.

Throughout the study, I was inspired by ethnographic methods for data collection, consisting of observational data, such as field notes, qualitative interviews with students and teachers, meeting minutes and documents, pedagogical material and written student material as well as photographs. In this section, I will begin by accounting for the collecting phase of the study, and after that, I will describe the analytical process.

4.3.1. Observations

In the ethnographic tradition, there is an emphasis on phenomena and events being best studied in situ (Creswell, 2013) with observations which, on the one hand, need a clear research design and, on the other hand, need an openness to events and things which the observer does not know beforehand. I entered the ethnographically inspired collecting phase of the study with the overall and quite open research question: What can the critical in literacy be, and where can I find it? In this way, I brought into the study an interest in issues raised by critical literacy. However, as a way to organize the data in line with the study's didactic interest in teaching matters, I decided on four broad didactic aspects upon which I would primarily focus as the data was collected. These were inspired by the didactic triangle, with the addition of curricular aspects (see Westbury, 2000), and they included attitudes towards reading (student), teaching

strategies (teacher), definitions or limitations of reading (subject matter), and curriculum. I divided pages in my field notebook into four squares with these foci as headlines, and in my making notes in these squares after each day, a first sorting of my material began. After only a few days' observations, it became apparent when structuring the notes that the didactic aspects were interconnected, and they were difficult to separate into four categories. However, this problem became a starting point for the analytical work later on.

The observations started as I was invited to take part in the initial planning meetings prior to the project and in the morning meetings which took place every morning during the project. Throughout the project, I conducted observations in four of the reading groups, for a total of 20 hours. In addition to these in-class observations, I spent coffee breaks and several lunches with the students. I participated in three initial planning meetings prior to the project, and I took part in the teachers' morning meetings and, together with them, decided on what reading groups to participate in. Thirty students and 13 teachers took part in 5 different reading groups with 4–7 students and 2–3 teachers in each. A novel called *Starless nights* [*Stjärnlösa nätter*] by the Swedish author Arkan Asaad (2012) was read aloud in the groups. On the first day of the project, I started by visiting all the reading groups and introducing myself and allowing the students to ask questions about my work and study. I was amazed at the friendly, polite and curious welcome I received from the students, which was grounded in the information the teachers had given before I came. It probably also helped that the students knew that I had worked as a teacher at a special residential home before and that they understood that I was there to study the reading project and not them specifically.

The teachers and students were very flexible and allowed me to come and go freely amongst the groups. The observations were documented in continuous field notes which were rewritten and expanded after each observation. In the mornings before the reading started, during coffee breaks and at the end of each day, I had several informal conversations about books and literature with several others, both students and teachers, and these were recorded as field notes or memory notes. In the classrooms, I sometimes sat at the same table as the students and teachers, and sometimes I sat at a table apart from them, depending on when I entered the class. I tried to disturb as little as possible; however, sometimes I experienced the fact that trying to be a non-participant observer (Creswell,

2013) disturbed things more than if I sat amongst the others and was more a part of the group. I made notes of physical settings, participants, activities, interactions, conversations and my own behaviour (Creswell, 2013). I also made notes about the ways in which the materialities in the classroom interacted with people for example stress balls, chairs and the view from the windows.

During the four months following the project, I returned to the residential home on several occasions, where I was invited to take part in an additional eight hours of in-class observations of Swedish lessons, which focused on literature. Within this period, I also conducted qualitative interviews with four students and six teachers.

4.3.2. Interviews with students

In the months following the reading project, I conducted formal in-depth interviews with four students and six teachers. While the interviews with teachers were tape-recorded and transcribed, the student interviews were documented in written notes for reasons of confidentiality. These notes were expanded with memory notes after each interview, in which I furthered and developed my thoughts about the conversations I had with the students.

At the beginning of each interview with the students, I informed them about the purpose of the interview, that their participation was voluntary and that I would not make any notes about personal details. They were also informed that they could end the interview at any time, and if they wanted to withdraw from participating in the study, they could also do so at any time before the research paper was written. The students were asked to come up with a name which I would call them in my notes and in the research paper later on. This was a pleasant way to start the interview, and the names the students came up with always involved a story beyond the name itself.

In a similar approach as with the observations, the interviews were semi-structured qualitative interviews (Patton, 2002, p. 343) with open-ended questions, for the purpose of not predetermining the direction of the answers (Creswell, 2013, p. 163). This means that I loosely followed an interview guide and let the conversation be steered by what the students brought up. However, as a way to structure the notes, I was more bound to the interview guide when I interviewed the students than when I interviewed teachers, since I did not audio-record the interviews with students. Hence, the analysis of the student interviews relied on notes

written during the interviews and on expanded notes after each interview. The interview guide also helped the conversation not drift too far from the subject of reading and the reading project. The interviews took place in the school's library or in classrooms, and they lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

4.3.3. Interviews with teachers

In-depth interviews were conducted with six teachers, and I had informal conversations with several others. These informal conversations played an important role in the overall material. It was these conversations which made me reflect in certain directions, ask certain questions, make conversation with specific students during coffee and lunch breaks and approach specific students about work they had done, written or drawn during and after the reading project.

Before each interview, I informed the teachers about the purpose of the interview and that participation was voluntary. They were also informed that they could end the interview at any time and that if they wanted to withdraw from participating in the study, they could do so at any time before the research paper was written. I specifically informed the teachers that the study was not intended to assess individual teachers.

The interviews were prepared with an interview guide; however, I started most of the interviews by asking “Why do you have a reading project at this school?” and letting the conversation take off from there. I did not consider it to be a problem that the interviews took a different shape with either the students or the teachers, since I was not interested in comparing the informants’ answers but rather in having different stories about the reading project and about reading at this school. The interviews with the teachers were tape-recorded. They lasted between 35 minutes and one hour and resulted in 92 pages of transcribed material.

4.3.4. Analytic work

In the initial work of sorting and arranging the empirical material, that is transcription of interviews, rewritings of field notes and memory notes, and in the sorting and overall reading of the data, I looked for instances or moments of critical reading in the material. My understanding of “critical” has been informed by critical literacy as instances of empowerment and transformation but also of resistance. In this way, the analysis can be said to be both empirically and theoretically driven,

allowing the data to lead the way while making use of the specific way of viewing events and actions which critical literacy provides.

The passages in the data where such aspects of reading could be found were initially selected, marked and categorized into the same four didactic categories which I used to sort my field notes in the observation study: attitudes towards reading, curriculum, teaching and limitations of reading. These categories could consist for example of observed or narrated events or episodes where students expressed a positive attitude towards reading, refused to read or simply stood up and walked away. They could also be situations and narratives where the curriculum was referred to or seemed to play a crucial part, where specific didactic moves were made by the teacher or where definitions of reading literature or of readers were made, that is when reading was said to provide something specific or a reader was something specific. Examples of the last category could be when reading is claimed to provide a larger vocabulary or when someone defines him/herself as a reader or a non-reader: “I don't read books, I only read Donald Duck” (Interview notes 2017-04-19). However, not only students, teachers and other humans are seen as actors who might create actions that fit into the categories; these actors can also be books, curricular issues, furniture, drawings and others.

In the following part of the analytic work, I did close readings on instances in the selected material and identified the actors which were part of the transactions where critical moments of reading were enacted as well as identifying which parts they seemed to play in the transactions — how they affected each other. The problem I had experienced when organizing my field notes in the “didactic squares” during the time I was doing fieldwork, that is the intertwined relation between the themes, became a starting point for and a guidance in the empirical analysis. In accordance with the study's theoretical and methodological approach and its openness to what the critical might be, this implies that it became particularly interesting to make sense of things which seemed not to cohere or correspond or which were ambiguous and contradictory.

The selected instances of critical reading were analysed with the help of three concepts which are central in ANT and are therefore used as analytical tools to understand what elements are involved, their relation and the effects of their transactions. These concepts are 1) relationality, 2) heterogeneity and 3) viewing the critical as an effect of work made in practice. Relationality refers to the ways in which the actors involved become identified as parts of a network of transacting elements —

defining and shaping each other. Heterogeneity refers to the way in which the analysis takes into account the importance and agency of a variety of actors, human and non-human. Viewing the critical as an effect means that for the critical to be enacted, the links between actors must be created. The critical, where students become empowered and can take action, is thus viewed as an effect, or rather as multiple effects, of these links, in which power becomes visible and operates in different and sometimes unexpected ways.

As I set out to explore the critical as multiple, the analysis was furthered to moments and spaces in the material when ambiguous and contradictory ways of performing the critical happened simultaneously or were allowed to work at the same time. In this way, the different practices of performing the critical are presented as multiple, since there are different versions, which are sometimes in tension.

4.4. Study IV

The fourth study is reported in the paper “The wing chair: Where is the critical in literacy?” written together with Professor Ninni Wahlström. With the help of a teacher from the closed ward at the residential home in Sweden in which the story takes place, a narrative about the wing chair was written. This narrative about the wing chair was then analysed as containing several “text situations”, which means situations involving text which had the potentiality to enact critical — and radical — aspects. We mapped these text situations as assemblages containing all sorts of different actors, human as well as non-human, by asking the following questions: Who or what are the actors involved in the text situations? In what ways do they relate to each other? Once three different text situations were selected and mapped, our questions became more detailed: How does the chair affect the student? The student's body? Where is the teacher placed in this situation? The book? And where — between what actors — could we detect critical potentialities? Thus, the analytic questions we posed were not primarily what the critical aspects of reading were but were instead where (in what situations and relations) they could be found.

Dewey's (1925/2008) concept of experience contains human action and the material; the subjective and the objective; action and undergoing — all as a whole. The analysis was guided by the concept of potentiality. The potentiality of actions and experiences, that is the unrealized individuals' potential experiences, is thought of as outcomes of transactions between

objects, and thus, potentialities can never be known until after the transactions have occurred. The concept of potentiality was a way to operationalize the transactional approach in the analysis by focusing on the possible outcomes of transactions. The concept or radical aesthetics was a way for us to operationalize a “futuring” of multiple realities, that is to imagine radically different futures.

The human body becomes important in the assemblage, and in the analysis, we paid attention to what bodies actually do in specific environments and what they have the potentiality to do. Following Sullivan (2001), bodies are understood as action and habits expressing discursive meaning. In the article, the approach of including the body as one amongst other elements of materiality in a discourse of texts is called transactional performativity, that is an understanding of performativity as a discursive practice, including both human and non-human agency.

4.5. Study V

The fifth study is reported in the paper “Creating the valuable: Reading as a matter of health and successful parenthood”. The paper is an empirical exploration of the values enacted in health-related information brochures about reading. The empirical material of this study emerges from a larger body of material consisting of government information and policy documents; interviews with writers, politicians and researchers; documents and video clips from news and social media; and personal communication sources. From this larger material, two different kinds of information brochures, one from public health care and another from a private initiative parental organization, were selected. In these brochures, reading is evaluated and translated into for example word comprehension, vocabulary, democratic abilities and health.

The analysis was conducted in the following way. First the different actors at play in the texts were examined for example libraries, parents, books, Swedish writers, the vitamins metaphor, research results and more. The theoretical approach in the study was that the ways in which reading was enacted in the case, whether in numbers or through other materialities, was always a co-production of actors. When analysing these actors’ relation to reading, I thus asked the question: How do these actors contribute to enacting certain values of reading? Second the connections between the valuations and values in the texts was analysed as well as the ways in which they folded together, for example between the amounts of words a seventeen-year-old has at his or her disposal and democratic

values. This part of the analysis involved examining how stabilizing mechanisms, such as quantifications of reading and vocabulary, help enrol some actors while excluding other possibly relevant actors (Hamilton, 2012a). Enrolment (Callon, 1986, p. 196) refers to the social and material work required to make actors connect and perform in networks, and this analytical concept helped the analysis make visible the deficiencies and lacks produced in relation to the solutions suggested to solve the public problem of non-reading.

4.6. Ethical considerations

The researcher has the overall responsibility to make sure that the studies maintain a good quality and are ethically acceptable. Accordingly, research ethical reflection needs to be a part of a researcher's everyday work (www.codex.vr.se/forskarensetik.shtml; SOU 1999, p. 4).

Research carries ethical responsibilities not only towards the participants involved in studies but also towards the research field. This means that the researcher's ethical relation to the research assignment is stressed. Research ethical principles often referred to and discussed in relation to this are Merton's CUDOS principles (Gustafsson, Hermerén, & Petersson, 2005). The first ethical principle is that of communalism (C). This means that the research community and society should have the right to share research results. Thus, there is an ethical responsibility to present and publish one's work, so that new knowledge is supplied and so the community of researchers can examine, pose critical questions of and further the research.

The second principle regards universalism (U), which means that scientific work and the validity of the results should be assessed by scientific criteria only.¹² The third principle of disinterestedness (D) implies

¹² The criteria which assess scientific work, however, are always situated and constructed and can never be neutral, according to the theories which inform the present thesis. Donna Haraway (1991) writes, "I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. Only the god-trick is forbidden" (Haraway, 1991, p. 195). Instead of applying a god-trick of objectivity, Haraway suggests an embodied and situated ethically responsible standpoint, acknowledging the particularities of the world more than the universalities — the god-trick — since these are always agreed upon and settled by power.

that the researcher should not have other motives for research than contributing with new knowledge, and the fourth principle concerns organized scepticism, which means that the researcher should constantly question and scrutinize but wait to draw conclusions until the results are solid. In relation to this last principle, it has been of importance to subject the studies in the thesis to critical commentary at seminars as well as peer reviews, all of which have forced me — and helped me — to motivate the conclusions of the studies. Apart from my work having been presented regularly at seminars, it has also been presented at several conferences, which has helped me validate both the analyses and the findings with other researchers' critical feedback and input.

These CUDOS principles were proposed in the 1940s, and the life and work conditions of researchers have changed since then. However, these principles are still a basis for discussion about research ethics, especially concerning issues of honesty and openness (Gustafsson et al., 2005).

In theoretical studies, there are often other ethical issues apart from the more traditional issues which are raised in empirical studies dealing with teachers and students. In Studies II and IV particularly, where action plans describing a reading project and information brochures, respectively, were analysed, an ethical issue was not only to properly represent the texts which were analysed but also to represent the good intentions of the texts. The theoretical literature used to form a basis for the conceptual framework of the studies was validated by making use of other researchers' readings and interpretations, to further and support my own analyses.

In the empirical studies the primary ethical question concerned the students. Students at special residential homes can be regarded as vulnerable and exposed. They have been taken into custody by government authorities, as they are considered at risk of causing injury to themselves or others, or they are sentenced to serve time in accordance with various laws.¹³ Many of the students also have a problematic school history (Hugo, 2010, 2013), and a high percentage also have diagnosed reading and writing disabilities (Hugo, 2013; Svensson, 2009). One important ethical consideration of the project has therefore been not to expose the students to further marginalization by assuming or focusing on

¹³ Care is provided under the terms of the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (LVU), the Secure Youth Care Act (LSU) and the Care of Substance Abusers (Special Provisions) Act (LVM) (<http://www.stat-inst.se>).

problems, difficulties and failures. Instead, the educational content — reading and literature — is the actor which is traced in the reading project, and the focus of the observations and interviews was on the relations in which reading becomes meaningful or critical. The opportunity to study literature reading in this specific context was motivated by the particularity of the reading project as well as by the particularity of the school, where questions about the benefits of education were brought to a head.

The design of the third study took concrete form as an application for the Ethics Examination Board was written six months prior to the project. In the work of planning and writing this rather extensive application, I had to take into account the laws and guidelines, not only the ethical guidelines for research but also guidelines about the confidentiality involved when working at these homes. This helped the study to be based on ethical considerations in both its design and execution. The Ethics Examination Board approved the study, and as the fieldwork started, I signed the National Board of Institutional Care's form of professional secrecy. No names of students, teachers or places were written in any documentation; nor was any personal information or data about students handled in the study. Therefore, the risk of students' being identified is considered to be very low. The questions in the interviews focused on reading, literature and the reading project, and the informants were made anonymous in notes and documentations. Gender and ethnicity were not regarded as relevant to the study, and students made up names of their own choice, as long as these names could not be traced back to their real names.

The students were informed about the research project several weeks before the project started. They were also informed that taking part in my study was voluntary, that they could withdraw from participating at any time and that they needed to sign a written consent in which there was more detailed information about the study as well as my contact information. The teachers also signed a written consent. In the observation and interview study, one of the greatest challenges was making sure that I was a welcome — or at least acceptable — addition to the students' schooldays. The teachers helped me enormously in this respect; they had prepared the students well beforehand, and I was met with interest and curious questions when I first arrived, even from the students who declined to participate in the study. There was much flexibility with the time of the student interviews. This was considered important, as I wanted

the students to have plenty of time to become acquainted with me in order to be comfortable during the interviews. This reduced the risk of students' feeling discomfort during the interview, as both positive and negative experiences of school and reading were discussed.

4.7. Methodological considerations

Qualitative studies seldom aim for generalizing conclusions, and there is a strong critique of using the language of positivistic research, which is not congruent with qualitative work (Creswell, 2013). The selection of material was purpose-related in the studies of this thesis, in line with qualitative research, which aims to thoroughly explain and understand phenomena. Some qualitative researchers instead discuss the quality of interviews in terms of transferability and credibility (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Making use of an ANT-inspired approach does not differ in this respect from other qualitative studies. The cases of educational practices in this thesis do not aim at conversion into a universal critical strategy, since the complexity and particularity of each study were addressed and acknowledged (see Postma, 2012). However, although the cases were situated and were analysed as situated, this does not mean that the studies do not have credibility or that their importance cannot be transferred outside of these situations and particularities.

As Law and Mol (2002) argue:

There are other ways of mobilizing specificities that do not have to do with detail. One is to present cases as not being representative of something larger — into which they neatly fit. It is to take all cases as phenomena in their own right, each differing slightly in some (unexpected) way from all the others. Thus a case may still be instructive beyond its specific site and situation. (p. 15)

The studies of this thesis can be transferable in the sense that they might relate to similar events or critical moments in education and might sensitize research to unrecognized aspects of these events: “They may suggest ways of thinking about and tackling other specificities, not because they are ‘generally applicable’ but because they may be transferable, translatable” (Law & Mol, 2002, p. 15). Hopefully the studies of this thesis will generate new ways of asking educational and literary didactic questions about critical issues, power and marginalization. All the studies of this thesis have been accepted as papers

and presented at major international conferences, and all have been submitted to and peer reviewed by relevant academic journals. To varying degrees, the process of having papers accepted to conferences involves thorough peer reviews, and the process of having a paper accepted for publication in highly ranked journals even more so. This implies that the papers have been carefully reviewed and critically scrutinized upon several occasions, in various contexts and by experts from different but related research fields, processes which have been difficult and quite scary but also constructive and inspiring.

Credibility also concerns the analytical methods and theoretical perspectives. Both in relation to the informants and to the research reports, the ambition was to thoroughly account for the theoretical perspectives of the study and to provide transparency about how the material would and could be analysed. The observations and qualitative interviews are limited by my not having been able to see or make notes about everything which was said or which took place. However, for confidentiality reasons, I chose not to record observations or interviews with students, as there were risks of mentioning names or places which could result in identification. All information is thus filtered through the researcher, and it is my apprehension and interpretation of events which is the basis not only of the analysis but also of the collecting of material.

The analytical processes have by no means been straightforward paths, and here, too, it has been my decisions as researcher to limit as well as interpret the material. In the analyses, the materials were tried and retried, and in the processes of turning the studies into publishable articles, quite large amounts of work — literature studies, analytical processes and results — were delimited to meet peer review and journal standards. In the more empirical studies in particular, I have aspired to allow the empirical material to lead the way in the analyses, even when it did not fit into the organization and categorizations of the analyses. For example in Study III, it was the ambiguity and messiness in the ways in which critical reading was enacted which led the analysis to the various versions of the critical which eventually became a result. However, this was also the result of limitations and interpretations made by me, based on theoretical assumptions. The analysis was hence both empirically and theoretically driven, and in relation to the research questions posed in the study, the steps of the analysis were considered relevant.

A study about reading at residential homes could also have been based on critical questions focusing on gender, class and/or ethnicity. Such

studies have been conducted both in the context of special residential homes (e.g. Silow Kallenberg, 2016) and in relation to reading in ordinary school forms (e.g. Asplund, 2010; Molloy, 2002). However, the aim of this thesis was to approach “the critical” from a more open-ended angle. Instead of using critical issues as given explanation models, I have explored how critical aspects are situated and relationally produced in practice.

5. Summaries of the studies

In the following chapter, the research papers of the studies of the thesis are summarized. The summaries focus on the results and discussions of the papers, since both theoretical and methodological issues were developed in previous chapters.

5.1. Paper I

Title: Enacted realities in teachers' experiences: Bringing materialism into pragmatism

First author. Co-authored with Ninni Wahlström. Published in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*.

The first article is a theoretical exploration of the links which can be drawn between transactional realism as a pragmatic view and material semiotics, here represented by ANT. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the contemporary discussion of a realist perspective in curriculum research, in order to see how perspectives of transactional realism and materialism can contribute to a more complete understanding of factors within and outside the institutional environment of school, all of which potentially affect teachers' room for action. The research questions in this paper are: How can we understand "the social" as a temporal assemblage of material and non-material factors? What factors and phenomena are gathered as the social for the teacher in our empirical example?

The theoretical discussion in the study is illustrated by a newspaper article — an interview from a major Swedish newspaper with a teacher describing her work with grading and some of the more difficult problems she faces in that work.

The theoretical framework is based on John Dewey's view of transactional realism and actor-network theory. Dewey (1925/2008) was engaged in the reconstruction of realism; however, he argued for a "piecemeal realism" (Westbrook, 2005, p. 40). This means that there are things which are existentially real, but they are not real in any essentialist way; instead, they are "contingently real objects" (Sleeper, 1986/2001, p. 147). Dewey's piecemeal realism, especially elaborated in his concept of experience, is characterized by the significance of time and space. The

temporality and contingency of space have an affinity with the ANT understanding of “the social” as exceeding time and space in the performance of the social. ANT examines how heterogeneous networks made up by human as well as non-human actors connect and manage to hold together to enact economic, political and social phenomena or effects. Within this approach, reality is regarded as being enacted in practice: “Ontologies are brought into being, sustained, or allowed to wither away in common, day to day, sociomaterial practices” (Mol, 2002, p. 6). This means that various objects, including human subjects, will take different forms in different places and practices.

In line with the theoretical framework, the exploration of the empirical example, the story of the teacher Susan, was entered into with the assumption that all the actors which make up her experience when grading — human or non-human — are able to affect each other, to act upon each other. Instead of asking “What do teachers do when they make a judgement about grades?”, a more relevant question was “Where are grades?”, implying that entities of grading take different forms in different places. The purpose of such an approach is to move beyond regarding matter and materials as naturalized artefacts and instead recognizing their normative and political dimensions.

Neither ANT nor transactional realism understands “the public” as a thing with demarcated borders. The public is a gathering concerned with the consequences of a communicative transaction, of a shared problem. The public is always in the making, always changing in terms of size and affairs. When we ask “Where are grades?”, we are looking at what assemblages become visible when gathering a more heterogeneous set of actors into the analysis of what constitutes the social. In Susan’s case, the public — in terms of parents, students and the school system — is invading her private life. These actions are political in the way they are traced to new associations, designing new assemblages. The empirical example draws attention to the role of technology — in this case email technology — and the analysis illuminates how the boundaries between the private and the public are displaced. In the case of the teacher in the narrative, there is parental power over school and teachers’ work, which is problematic, but it becomes most crucial for the teacher Susan when this power spreads into spaces where she becomes diminished by it, giving her less room for action. Email technology is not a silent or a neutral artefact in this network, which stands outside of the social and the public. It is a

mediating part of it, and it plays a significant part in changing the teacher's professional role and sphere.

As a result of the theoretical exploration, the argument is that in order to understand the complex levels of aspects which influence teachers' actions, it is necessary to start from the local and from there to trace the human and material factors which may affect teachers' room for action. When material factors such as technology are left out of what constitutes the public and are accordingly treated as non-political and natural matters of course, it becomes harder to question their place and agency. Latour suggests that politics is about "drawing, deciding, and proposing a cosmogram with a certain distribution of roles, functions, and agencies to humans and non-humans" (Latour, 2011, p. 7). What the common world is and what role the technology should play in it are questions for the public to engage in and to experiment on with care and caution.

5.2. Paper II

Title: Tracing reading to the dark side: Investigating the policy producing reading and readers in detention homes

Single-authored. Published in *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*.

The article reports on a study of a policy document, an action plan describing a reading project at all Sweden's special residential homes. The action plan was authored by the National Board of Institutional Care [Statens Institutionstyrelse (SiS)] and was sent to the Swedish Arts Council [Kulturrådet] as part of a grant application for a national culture project called the Creative School project [Skapande Skola].

In numerous policy contexts, literacy is highlighted as a key to students' development and as foundational for their achievement in school (Edwards et al., 2009). Fuelled by an international climate of competitive educational assessment (PISA) the debate about literacy performance is often permeated with anxieties about the civic and moral consequences of students' shortcomings and deficiencies, both for students as individuals and for society as a whole (Gorur, 2013; Serder & Ideland, 2016). Reading is important; there is little doubt about that. In fact, reading might be the most hegemonic and unquestioned positive aspect of education which can be found. But it is so unquestioned and matter-of-

fact that it might be seen as black-boxed — naturalized. But when things or ideas become naturalized, we often forget or hide the fact that they are constructs, that they are defined and influenced by powerful groups (Clarke, 2002; Larson, 2007) and that they simultaneously create a backside — a dark side to these truths or naturalities — in this case, about the people who do not read.

The purpose of the study is to open up the black box of reading by examining how reading and (non)readers are conceptualized in relation to young people taken into custody. The research question is: How do various actors produce reading and the deficient reader in a policy document? Actor–network theory (Latour, 2007) is used as an analytical and methodological approach to call attention to the way ideas, values and knowledge about literacy are produced in policy (Hamilton, 2012b).

The reason for choosing the specific case of a reading project at special residential homes is not only that this is an educational space where questions about students described as “at risk” abound and where questions about democracy, citizenry and education are brought to a head, but is also that literacy and literature are specifically emphasized as important educational content for these students (Gerrevall & Jenner, 2001; Hugo 2013).

At first glance, the action plan does not appear to be inconsistent. However, by closely tracing *reading* in the document and by examining the actors connected to reading, it turns out that the seemingly coherent policy document produces different versions of what reading is, with different educational implications for what reading will lead to and different understandings of who the reader and non-reader are.

In the various ways in which reading is produced, there are always marginalizing effects involved, and a dark side of reading is produced alongside the non-reader. This dark side of (non)reading is transacted in various ways, first in the transferable view of reading and learning in which the passive student is created, second in the decontextualized view of reading in which the deficient student is created and third in the quick-fix, remedial style of reading which is expected to tame the inner beast via certain reading strategies. The study illustrates an example of how power relations are obscured when reading is turned into policy as well as how matters vanish which could be considered critical.

As a result of the study, I argue that reading in the action plan has become a boundary object (Star & Griesemer, 1989), a plastic concept loose enough to unify different social worlds. This plasticity situates the

idea of “reading that does good” in a hegemonic position. The different social worlds which are connected in the action plan — the refined literary world, school, psychological accounts of reading skills, democratic demands of citizens and medical accounts of literacy deficiencies — do not merge into one, change or adjust themselves to agree upon what reading is and what reading will do in the reading project. They maintain their strong positions; consequently, reading is expected to fulfil the various aims of the various social worlds: reading can both develop language and prevent students from resorting to violence; it can enhance learning and offer a relaxed atmosphere; and it can activate the students as democratic citizens and provide cultural fosterage. Reading becomes an omnipotent solution to a disparate set of problems.

5.3. Paper III

Title: *Starless Nights*: Reading literature in a “critical space”

Single-authored. Manuscript submitted for publication.

The paper reports on an empirical study of a literature project at a residential home for detained youth in Sweden. Informed by critical literacy, the purpose of the study is to explore the ways in which versions of “the critical” in relation to reading are performed in the project. The research questions are: How are versions of the critical enacted in the reading project? How can ambiguity and contradiction of the critical contribute to studies of critical literacy?

The study draws on a transactional approach and is analytically inspired by actor–network theory to trace and unpack the ambiguous and at times contradictory ways in which the critical is enacted in the observations and interviews with students and teachers.

Critical literacy studies address and problematize the ways in which literary and literacy education can reproduce oppressive and marginalizing structures of literacy and reading (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, 2016) and what counts as language. However, at the same time, there is an idea within critical literacy that reading can function to transform the lives of students and empower them to stand up to oppressive structures (Freire, 1970/1993; Janks, 2010; Luke & Freebody, 1997). The study aims at investigating this inherent tension in critical literacy between a critical approach to hegemonic discourses of remedial and enlightening qualities

of literature and the idea that reading can develop and transform students in empowering ways.

To explore how the critical is performed in practice in this specific literature project, the study is inspired by ANT. The critical of literacy is regarded as transformative and empowering effects of situated relations between a diverse set of actors — human, material and discursive — which means that the analyses also include the actions and performativity of non-human actors, for example books, course plans and curricular issues, furniture and drawings.

The reading project in the present study took place during a period of two weeks in winter 2017. Thirty students and 13 teachers took part in the reading project in different groups where the book, a novel called *Starless nights* [*Stjärnlösa nätter*], by the Swedish author Arkan Asaad (2012), was read aloud in the groups. Ethnographic methods were used for data collection, consisting of observational data, such as field notes, as well as interviews with students and teachers, meeting minutes and evaluations, pedagogical material and written student material and photographs as well as students' drawn and written work.

The empirical analysis made visible how critical versions of reading were performed differently in different relations. The critical effects of reading were at times difficult to align and make coherent. Therefore, I explored the possibility of thinking about the critical as multiple (Mol, 2002).

The analysis shows that the critical can be empowering and oppressive at the same time. That is it can align with or refuse to align with dominant literacies or institutionalized expectations of development and improvement. In light of the findings, the paper discusses two different versions of the critical which are enacted in the material, and, although not completely separate, they are in tension with each other.

Critical one involves instances of empowerment by transformation, development and growth. Critical two involves empowerment by resisting transformation. However, this resistance does not prevent participation in the reading project. In light of the results, I argue that a reading project of this kind can be viewed as a critical space, where new ways of performing critical aspects of reading are made possible and where opposing and conflicting positions on education meet. In this space, the ambiguous parts of both critical one and critical two are allowed to take place, and there is room for different kinds of readers to take part in reading in different kinds of ways.

5.4. Paper IV

Title: The wing chair: Where is the critical in literacy?

First author. Co-authored with Ninni Wahlström. Manuscript submitted for publication.

The fourth paper is a theoretical and conceptual exploration of the critical performativity of things and bodies within the context of critical literacy. Education, and not least literature education, always has the potential of offering unpredictable critical moments in the student's encounter with different forms of text situations. A narrative about a reading chair at a detention home for young male offenders in Sweden illustrates what might be seen as "the critical" in reading and where the critical can be found, that is in what relations critical aspects of reading are created.

"Critical aspects" imply moments and instances when the critical is something burning and urgent. These moments are not taken for granted or regarded as settled beforehand; instead, they are understood as situated ruptures or political moments created in complex relationships amongst various and sometimes surprising sets of actors.

The purpose of the paper is to explore how the critical in reading is performed in a text situation with the potential to be challenging, transformative and liberating but also to encourage resistance. The research questions are: How can materiality contribute to studies on critical literacy? How can material elements be understood as performing critical and urgent situations?

The study draws on an intersection between the transactional approach and ANT, and it outlines a transactional performativity with which we analyse text situations which involve relational assemblages of students, reading and furniture, specifically focusing on the performativity of a reading chair. The analytical approach thus involves how relations are created, mobilized, sustained and challenged in various situations, and it distributes agency to a range of actors.

Critical literacy is an educational approach which interprets, questions and transforms literacy practices to include more people, making more people heard and count as valuable. With its foundation in Paulo Freire's (1970/1993) critical pedagogy, critical literacy studies focus on the transformative aspects of learning, on learning as taking action and seeing oneself as an agent with self-empowering potential. The analysis is guided

by the concepts of potentiality and radical aesthetics. Potentiality is a way to operationalize the transactional approach by focusing on the possible outcomes of transactions, while a conceptual use of radical aesthetics offers possibilities for imagining ourselves and the world in alternative ways.

The conceptual reasoning is illustrated with a story about a reading chair in a classroom of a closed ward at a detention home in Sweden. The chair in this story makes visible the things and technologies with which teachers ally in order to enact reading and the sometimes unexpected performativity of these things. The story also invites us to think about embodied critical literacy, and it makes visible the potentialities but also the power structures which are enacted when reading, in being one kind of reader or another, and in who is accepted in a literary assemblage. The chair performs a power which cannot be ignored, and the student needs to position himself in one place or another in this assemblage, enacting different effects with empowering or marginalizing potential.

In light of the result of the analysis, we argue that using the transactional approach linked with ANT pushes the boundaries of what can be included in studies about critical literacy, which not only reveals where the critical aspects of literacy and reading might be found but also reveals the objects, places and spaces in which power is enacted and where it risks becoming oppressive and marginalizing for students. With the story of the wing chair, we want to add another critical dimension to the discussion about literature reading — where the critical is urgent and radical and where the critical in literacy consists in whatever might draw the reader into the world, be it a book, a teacher or a chair.

5.5. Paper V

Title: Creating the valuable: Reading as a matter of health and successful parenthood

Single-authored. Published online ahead of print as part of a special issue in *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. The special issue has the title “Politics by other means: STS and research in education”.

The article reports on a study of health-related brochures about reading, distributed to all parents in Sweden at various times of their children’s

lives. Poor Swedish PISA results, particularly in 2013, resulted in increasing demands to improve Swedish children's reading habits, and public healthcare has stepped in as a strong actor promoting reading. Drawing on an emerging field of valuation research within interdisciplinary science and technology studies, this study aims to explore the way in which values are co-created together with valuations in health-related information brochures about reading.

The educational research field has an important task in scrutinizing and problematizing the societal legitimations and rationales of educational phenomena constructed as efforts to foster a healthier, more successful and valuable population, because these legitimations and rationales are always co-constructed with what it means to be legitimate, valuable and successful, and therefore, they take part in the ordering of society (Clarke, 2002; Graff, 2010; Larson, 2007). I especially draw on the work of Hamilton (2012a, 2016), who suggests that literacy research needs to further explore how public narratives about literacy take shape, how various social actors are mobilized around these narratives and how they are connected to common and rarely questioned values (Hamilton, 2012a).

The empirical data in this study consist of two different kinds of information brochures distributed to all Swedish parents of children aged 0–7. One kind of brochure is delivered by public healthcare and the other by a private foundation aiming to promote health issues amongst school children. The brochures aim to create better opportunities for children to succeed in school and society by encouraging the parents to read more to their children.

The study demonstrates how the lack of reading books is enacted as a public health problem which requires prevention of public healthcare. Several public actors are involved in this networked process — public health care and public libraries but also private actors for example writers and fast-food chains. Health thus functions as a stabilizing actor in the process of determining the value and importance of reading, and in this process, the public problem of the non-reading of books becomes a private matter for families to solve. In this way, reading becomes an issue which cannot be left to schools alone, which implies that parents must become responsible for solving the problem of non-reading.

There are also evaluations and numbers involved in stabilizing and naturalizing reading as a public problem, translating reading for example into word comprehension, vocabulary, democratic abilities and health.

The study shows that these evaluations and numbers are co-created with rarely questioned values of morality and health, enacting specific and limited versions of parenting, reading and books. It demonstrates how the reading habits of the white middle class become naturalized as the norm of health, morality and success for everyone. The analysis also shows how instances of health-promoting intentions of doing good can in effect risk being marginalizing by viewing specific people as less valuable. The way in which reading is naturalized hides the political and ideological negotiations behind the settlement of the truths about reading books. Books are enacted as crucial not only for children in their language development and vocabulary acquisition but also for establishing a caring relationship between parents and children.

However, at the same time, this naturalization of ideals obscures or makes invisible the political issues relating to children's different opportunities for managing and succeeding in school. The exclusion of school from the production of reading as a matter of health reinforces an idea that this is an issue of individual choice while reducing other explanations such as social class, poverty, equal access to the Swedish language, allocation of resources, equality and integration and the sense of belonging to society.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This thesis deals with the literary didactic why question: Why is literature used as subject matter in education? However, the thesis does not set out to answer why literature should be an educational content or to provide answers to a debate about why reading and literature reading is important. Instead, the various studies of this thesis set out to unfold and explore literature reading by studying what reading becomes within the why question, that is within the rationales for literature education. As said in the introduction, instead of asking what value literature has or how it might become valuable or critical to readers or students, the thesis explores the ways in which this particular value is attached. It particularly explores how the rationales for literature reading position people more or less far from the stated goals, defining one group of people as the norm while others consequently are defined as in need.

Instead of placing the studies of the thesis in the well-structured corners of the didactic triangle, I chose to place the studies in the messy midst of the triangle. Here I have opened up analyses for other actors than the traditional teacher-student-content to take part in enacting a network of didactic elements of literature reading. From that position, I have seen possibilities for exploring the taken-for-granted and often neglected elements which take part in teaching and learning and what values and critical issues they enact. From there, I have been able to ask where — in what relations — I can find values or critical potentialities of reading.

In this way, the thesis aims at two things. First it aims to problematize and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about literature and about the (non)reader. Secondly the thesis aims to explore the critical potentiality of reading and specifically where these potentialities can be found in practice. Study I analyses the mixture of human and material factors in a teacher's work and shows both how these affect her work in a diminishing way as well as what politics they entail. Study II describes what reading becomes in policy and what different elements cooperate in producing these readings. The study then moves on to show what implications these constructions have for students who are described in policy as in need of reading and literature. Study III shows how different "criticals" can work side by side in reading practice and that when allowed to do so, they can offer a possibility for more students to work with literature in a critical way, with less risk of marginalization. Study IV shows how assemblages of bodies, materialities and potentialities involved

in text situations offer new ways of exploring critical and radical enactments of reading. Study V describes how values of reading and parenthood are created together with valuations.

In this chapter, the research questions are answered by addressing them in turn. Thereafter, there is a discussion about the thesis's theoretical and empirical contributions to pedagogic research on literary didactics and critical literacy. As a conclusion to the thesis, some of the possibilities and potentialities I see in future literature didactic research are addressed.

6.1. Answers to the research questions

6.1.1. What can actor–network theory linked to transactional realism add to educational research in general and literary didactic research in particular?

This research question is answered theoretically in Studies I and IV. These articles can be viewed as the theoretical and methodological basis for Studies II and III. In Study I, links between transactional realism and actor–network theory are explored. An interview with a teacher about her work with grading helps describe how different factors form overlapping networks for teachers, potentially affecting teachers' room for action.

There are several points of resemblance between ANT and Dewey's transactional realism, and there are also differences, which are more thoroughly accounted for in the theoretical chapter. An important intersection between transactional realism and ANT is constituted by the recognition of the influence and performativity of non-human elements. Here, ANT goes further in giving performative agency to matter and materials by emphasizing their political effects. On the other hand, transactional realism contributes to ANT's understanding of "the political" as performativity. More specifically, pragmatism brings the insight that change and renewal constitute conditions with political relevance without deciding beforehand the spaces of "the public" or the consequences of "the political". With an understanding of power as effect rather than cause (Clarke, 2002; Latour, 2007) and by asking the analytical question "Where?", Studies I and IV in particular show how power relations become visible in new spaces and involve more than human actors.

Study IV also connects pragmatism and ANT, and the theoretical and conceptual analysis shows how the critical of literacy takes different shapes in different text situations, depending on the actors which are part

of the assemblages. The critical stands for moments which are radical and urgent, political, challenging, transformative and liberating. With a more symmetrical analysis of the diverse elements involved in text situations, the study allows agency to a more diverse set of actors and, as a consequence, opens space for nuanced accounts of reading, readers and the critical aspects of reading. Accordingly, this study pushes the boundaries of what can be included in studies about critical literacy. While making use of pragmatism's future-oriented concepts of potentiality, meaning the different possibilities which different transactions might entail, the study shows how it is the material actors which most tangibly perform power structures in text situations, which, in turn, makes visible various potentialities.

As a result of the studies, the thesis argues that this combined approach contributes to educational research and literary didactics in its emphasis on the performativity of materials and matter in investigations about what constitutes an experience, because this emphasis illuminates new relations and spaces where power operates, not least when it operates in oppressive ways. Through the theoretical approach, the studies also make visible where "the critical" takes place, in what moments, in what relations and with what consequences. This line of investigation contributes in broadening what is regarded as critical matters in critical literacy research.

6.1.2. How are reading, readers and non-readers created and conceptualized in educational settings?

This question is tangible in Studies II–V. In Study II, however, the specific and explicit aim is to unpack a black-boxed conception of reading by studying how reading, readers and non-readers are conceptualized in relation to young people taken into custody.

Study II makes use of the insight drawn from previous research that policies, however well meaning, can function counterproductively, establishing readers as lacking culture and as literacy-inadequate, since policies and by extension educational practice are grounded in different understandings of who learners are and should be. In line with these previous studies (Franzak, 2006; Irvine & Larson, 2007; Larson, 2007; Vasudevan & Campano, 2009), Study II shows that in the various ways in which reading is produced, there are always marginalizing effects involved, and a dark side of reading is produced alongside the non-reader. First it is enacted in a transferable view of reading and learning in which a

passive student is co-created; second it is enacted in a decontextualized view of reading in which a deficient student is co-created and third, it is enacted in a quick-fix, remedial style of reading expected to tame “an inner beast” via certain reading strategies. The different ways in which reading becomes black-boxed as something intrinsically beneficial in the document are possible because here, reading functions as a boundary object — a plastic concept, loose enough to unify different social worlds. It is this very plasticity which contributes to black-box reading, which means that reading becomes stabilized as an unquestionable and natural good. The study also shows how power relations are obscured when reading is turned into policy as well as how matters which could be considered critical vanish.

Although research question 2 was not particularly emphasized in Study III, the reading project of that study was also a practice in which reading and readers were enacted for specific purposes. Here, reading became a way to develop by risking losing face and daring something new. The ways in which the teachers of the school took part as well as the involvement and performativity of such mundane actors as furniture became of critical importance.

In the student interviews, reading was connected to family, to being read to, to future possibilities and to identification. One student told me that he used to read a lot before the eighth grade and that he reads a lot and enjoys reading at the moment but that he never has become a reader. To him, a reader is someone who constantly reads and who reads the proper books. To be a reader seems to contain something apart from books and enjoyment. It seems to involve a transaction in which some students do not or do not want to take part.

In Study IV, the situation of reading in an elegant reading chair causes an unexpected refusal from students. The transaction of students and the chair and a book creates a kind of reader which the students possibly do not want to align with.

In Study V, parents' reading aloud to their children is connected to being healthy and successful and becomes a measure of good parenthood.

To conclude, this research question can be answered in a twofold way. First, when reading is used as educational content, the rationales for using it this way create a specific form of reading and specific readers. However well meaning, this creation is always co-created with the lacks and needs which reading supposedly attends to. Making reading a functional,

measurable and strategic skill risks the creation of an instrumental and harmless version of reading, which has little critical importance.

Second, literature reading often emerges in the material as something which is larger than a transaction between a student and a book. It contains more elements, which have different and sometimes unexpected effects —empowering as well as marginalizing.

6.1.3. In what ways and in what relations are critical aspects of reading performed in text situations?

This research question is answered primarily in Studies III and IV. Study III explores empirically the ways in which versions of the critical in relation to reading are performed in educational practice at a residential home. In Study IV, a narrative about a reading chair at a closed ward of a residential home illustrates critical and radical performances of text situations.

The result of Study III shows that multiple versions of the critical are enacted in the reading project, and although they cannot be regarded as completely separate, they are in tension with each other, meaning that they are difficult to align and make coherent. The critical version of reading in the study's conceptualization of *critical one* involves personal development and growth, taking risks and opening up to others by sharing oneself and becoming part of a reading community. These instances often seem to connect to personal challenges for the students: to discover, to discuss, to reflect, to read out loud and to understand. In critical one, there is a distinct direction to the development and growth of the students; they are supposed to move in a certain direction (growth) from a certain point of departure (lacks). This implies a view of their original point of departure as in need and deficient (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009), and it can be problematized that students need to align with hegemonic views of reading and literature to develop, with a risk of reproducing marginalizing structures (Janks, 2010; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Vasquez, 2016).

Critical two, on the other hand, includes being allowed to have critical agency in one's own individuality and peculiarity. This version of the critical emerges in the material when reading has empowering effects without necessarily including change or transformation of students, in instances where students take control of reading situations in their own way and are critical, resist or reject transformation. This involves moments when reading is used as a means to hold one's ground or to

address and talk back to power (Freire, 1970/1993). Critical two does not result in transformation foremost of the student but of the surroundings.

The study shows how rejecting ways in which students perform literacy can be examples of critical performances allowing them to explore how power works and their own agency (see also Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012). These critical performances involve a number of complex relations between a heterogeneous set of actors, and the performances stretch beyond rationales of what reading and readers are and conceptualizations of what critical literacy implies.

As a result of the analysis of the two criticals which are in play in the reading project, the study argues that a reading project of this kind can be viewed as a critical space, where new ways of performing reading and critical aspects of reading are made possible and where opposing and conflicting positions on education meet. Accordingly, the ambiguous parts of both critical one and critical two are allowed to take place in such a space. In this space, the students are offered an opportunity to reformulate themselves as readers and in their relation to reading and literature (Wilson, 2005, 2007). A heterogeneous set of actors take part when creating a project in which both “criticals” can work together, making the students risk and dare to participate, and mundane elements such as furniture become of importance. The reading project makes room for the students to transform into new kinds of students and readers. However, it also makes room for students who refuse to transform by empowering them in their own right. It is a space where it is accepted to take part, succeed, fail and refuse.

There are also actors which seem to reduce or remove critical aspects of reading, actors which reduce reading to individual and assessable achievements and thus predefine the outcomes of the project in non-critical and limiting ways.

The same research question is addressed and answered in Study IV, which analyses what elements might be seen as performing the critical in reading and thus explores where the critical can be found. The study shows not only where critical aspects of literacy and reading might be found but also the objects, places and spaces in which power is enacted and where it risks becoming oppressive and marginalizing for students.

In Study IV, another critical dimension is added to the discussion about literature reading, where the critical is urgent and radical, a rupture in what is accustomed and comfortable. The story of the wing chair invites us to think about the performativity of things and technologies which

teachers ally with in their work as well as the at times unexpected ways in which these things and technologies perform. The chair not only has the capacity to transform the student into a reader, it also has the potential to make reading critical and the act of reading radical. The radical aesthetic act is to imagine oneself in a different position in the world, whatever that position is.

The study also makes visible the embodied critical literacy (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012), the potentialities and the power structures involved when reading and when being one kind of reader or another as well as who is accepted in a literary assemblage.

6.1.4. How are various actors mobilized around public narratives about reading books? In what ways do these narratives connect to rarely questioned values?

A theoretical contribution from Study I which relates to this research question is the temporal and contingent view of the public and of public problems which both pragmatism and ANT proposes. The public is always in the making, always evolving in terms of size and affairs (Dewey, 1927/1991). For something to become a matter of public concern (Latour, 2007), it requires practical work and the enrolment of strong and trustworthy allies.

Apart from this, research questions 4a and 4b are particularly answered in Study V. This study is an empirical as well as theoretical exploration of the values enacted in health-related information brochures about reading. Study V shows that in Sweden, reading books has become stabilized as a matter of public concern in part through the alignment and cooperation of a number of strong and trustworthy public as well as private instances for example public health care. The study also shows that ideas about reading books become naturalized and stabilized as facts in part by being translated into numbers. Book reading is translated for example into word comprehension and vocabulary, and it also becomes a measurement of democratic abilities and health. The way in which reading is naturalized hides the political and ideological negotiations behind the settlement of the truths about reading books. The study also shows that these evaluations and numbers are co-created with rarely questioned values of morality and health, enacting specific and limited versions of parenting, reading and books. In this way, the reading habits of the middle class become naturalized as the norm of health, morality and success for everyone.

In the process of shaping and controlling people's behaviour to achieve certain aims and of making this control desirable for both the ones acting as “rulers” and the ones who are “ruled”, this relation can be understood in terms of governmentality (Rose, 1996). In particular, the so-called *ABC drops* brochures from children's health care – Barnvårdscentralen (BVC) can be regarded as links between healthcare as authority figure and parents as individuals. The way in which reading books for their children is presented as reasonable and naturally desirable for parents, by enacting morality and health, can be regarded as means which makes parents govern themselves.

As a result of Study V, the thesis argues the following. First, reading becomes a private issue for parents to solve in the home environment, and in this network, school is excluded. Second, the way in which reading is put forward as a solution to different problems, such as insufficient vocabulary or academic failure, obscures other important explanations for children's different opportunities in managing and succeeding in school and society, such as the allocation of resources, equality and equal access to the Swedish language. Third, the intention of creating better readers and more successful students can in effect be marginalizing in the sense that it relies on narrow definitions of reading, readers, parents and success, and it consequently leads to specific people being defined as less valuable.

6.2. Contributions

The findings of the studies of this thesis imply two especially important things. First they point to the necessity for literacy and literature didactic research to, to a higher degree, unpack and problematize the norms and values involved in the discourses about literature reading as educational subject matter. Second, in order to meet the risk of marginalization through hegemonic presuppositions about readers and non-readers and about reading and literature, school has the opportunity to make use of literature reading as a critical space.

6.2.1. Unpacking a black-boxed comprehension of literature reading

The thesis contributes with theoretical as well as empirical studies to the work of previous studies which also problematize the discourses of reading which define one group of readers as the norm while others are identified as less successful, less empathic, less democratic and less valuable (e.g. Franzak, 2006; Hamilton, 2012; Irvin & Larson, 2007;

Janks, 2010; Vasudevan & Campano, 2009). With this thesis, I argue that research on literature and literacy didactics to a greater extent needs to problematize taken-for-granted ideas about the values involved in the didactic “Why?” and “For whom?” questions of literature education. Otherwise there is a risk that the rationales for reading literature have marginalizing effects.

The pedagogic idea or belief that reading is important and beneficial is not problematic in itself. On the contrary, all education is based on ideas and beliefs about certain kinds of development and growth, individual as well as societal. As beliefs or ideas, the conceptions about proper reading and good readers might be an important didactical element in literary education.

However, as we create intentions and goals for education based on these ideas, there is always the risk that downsides of these goals are co-created, what I describe as a dark side to the beneficial rationales for reading. We need to be aware and more explicitly to address these co-constructions of dark sides of education, since these beliefs entail not only an idea about the good person but also of the less good person. An empirical contribution of the thesis is how policy co-constructs a dark side of reading together with the aims and goals of a reading project. This co-construction implies that specific students are viewed as lacking and in need of reading. Books and reading are given a position allowing them to compensate for these lacks — an insufficient home, insufficient literacy and language and insufficient behaviour. Here Study V contributes as well, with examples of the ways in which “reading to your children” becomes constructed as a given naturalness connected to health and good parenting.

Most importantly, the thesis shows that when rationales, beliefs and ideas are dressed in numbers and seemingly objective scientific facts about language, empathy and democratic abilities, they become problematic. These beliefs and ideas are not innocent, and they have tangible effects, especially on people who, within this way of describing the ways of the world, become marginalized. Since the view of the objectivity of numbers as indicators of truth can be regarded as hegemonic, there is a risk that some students’ reluctance, indifference or incapacity to read literature is turned into an objective, scientific fact of being inferior. This is why I argue that it is important for literacy and literature didactic research to problematize and scrutinize these facts, since they become naturalized and stabilized as truths by actors with specific interests. The assertion here is

that the already-reading classes cannot alone set the standards and rationales of what reading and literature is and can be for all students.

6.2.2. Tracing literature reading to a critical space

A theoretical and methodological contribution to the literacy field is the way in which the studies attend to relational and ambiguous practices of literary education. The thesis contributes to both the critical literacy field and the literary didactics field in the way it empirically and open-endedly explores what the critical in reading can be and in what relations it is performed. The research involved in this discussion expands the conceptual use of critical literacy to recognize more ways of performing the critical (Blackburn, 2003), such as embodied critical literacy (see for example Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012; Camangian, 2013) and artefactual critical literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011). Study III particularly shows how critical reading can be interpreted as various versions of the critical. One version of the critical involves empowerment and transformation through personal challenges for the students in accordance with a clear direction for development and growth. Another version of the critical allows the students to participate in their own peculiarity, even when they hold a critical attitude and resist transformation.

The thesis also contributes to both a theoretical and empirical discussion on literary didactics and critical literacy with its focus on often neglected and taken-for-granted elements which make up didactic situations, not least those which involve reading literature. No matter whether these elements are human, material or discursive, they need to be handled in educational practice as well as research, since they all contain and enact values, politics and criticalities which affect students, teachers and subject matter. Several studies in this thesis show the multiple and contradictory ways in which reading is enacted, including materials and bodies, discourses about reading and literature, future expectations, and potentialities.

Drawing on the conceptualizations of “third space” in critical literacy (Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje et al., 2004; Wilson, 2005), Studies III and IV in particular show how literature reading can be viewed as a *critical space* in which there is room for different kinds of readers to take part in reading in different kinds of ways; reading can be expanded to include more shapes and forms of reading and arts as well as more assumptions about reading and readers. In this space, reading can be used as a way to critically explore the world and the students’ positions in the world, as

traditional critical literacy already does. In this space, teachers and students cooperate with books and furniture, with ideas about reading and with future expectations. They tinker with (and are tinkered by) curricular issues, assessments and learning outcomes. This space is a shared endeavour amongst all the elements which take part in it, and it is more allowing and open than average or normal schoolwork.

To conclude this section, I believe that the thesis can be of interest to the broader pedagogic and didactic research field, because of its theoretical and methodological approach, in which the studies interfere with an inherent (and quite unproblematized) tension in critical literacy between a critical approach to hegemonic discourses of remedial, enlightening qualities of subject content, such as literature, and the idea that reading can develop and transform students in empowering ways. This practice-based approach can be deployed in a range of educational research, especially in examinations of the ambiguities within knowledge practices and the intertwined nature of knowledge creation, power and politics.

6.3. Concluding thoughts on literature reading as action

Literature reading in school is a topic of debate, and it is not just addressed in these debates as something which should have a prominent place in education. Voices have been raised promoting the reduction of fictional reading and the giving way to more factual content in order to raise students' PISA results (Melin, 2016). This argument has been encountered and criticized in scholarly as well as public debate, and although I agree that it might be problematic to use literature reading as a means of assessment for measurable reading abilities, I do not agree that it should give way as educational content in school. On the contrary, I argue that literature reading and other aesthetic contents should have a more pronounced position in school, however, motivated with more sensitive rationales and not used as functional means for measurable aims. Drawing on previous research which shows that students often do not relate to the literature reading offered by schools (Asplund, 2010; Malmgren, 1992; Olin-Scheller, 2006), there seems to be a greater need for a more situated and open approach to literature. Accordingly, sensitivity here refers to a more allowing approach towards the students, to literature and to other didactic elements (Molloy, 2002).

By studying the different elements which make up reading and readers, I have seen that what constitutes reading and readers in many ways is a

question of materialities. It is not only the materialities which teachers need to ally with in order to make students want or dare to become readers, as shown in Study III; nor is it only the materialities which are co-creators of the “proper” reading, as in the case of Robert in Study III or as performed by the wing chair. I mean that reading and being a reader has a kind of material and discursive property in itself. Reading (the proper) books provides people with a higher value, according to certain valuations and norms. But the question now is whether school should take part in the naturalization and stabilization of turning these norms into facts.

We cannot say exactly what literature reading provides us with, which is why we also cannot say exactly what results from not reading literature. We do not know what other and new media or forms of art might be considered significant for individual and societal development and growth in the future. However, in an educational system which for the moment is preoccupied with knowledge acquisition and assessable knowledge, we should create more spaces where students can explore and develop themselves and their position in society — critically but also more freely. And literature and other forms of art might provide that. As J. Thavenius argues:

School should be a vital part of our culture. For that to be possible, we cannot only regard it as a deliverer of given knowledge and values [...] School does not provide exciting input in the cultural debate where every significant part of cultural life should be discussed and debated. (2003b, my translation)

J. Thavenius sees a role for aesthetics in education, namely in assuming a broadly perceived aesthetics and allowing it to be foundational in all educational activities and subjects. This aesthetic will draw upon curiosity and questioning, contradiction and insecurity, the kind of radical aesthetics which can be found in different forms of art.

I align myself with J. Thavenius’s claim that school can become a more active and vibrant part of both public and cultural debate and that arts as subject matter can play an important part in this democratic endeavour. Literature and arts might function as the critical in literacy, and they might constitute a subject of their own, although they can still be included as subject matter in other more established school subjects. Literature as a broad concept, including all sorts of fiction, poetry and art forms, has the unique possibility of being free of truth claims, effectiveness and assessments. With a more open — and critical — approach, literary

didactical work can become a back door to inviting other cultural and art expressions into education — the radical aesthetics which can make students and school take a more active part in a vibrant cultural society in which more people count as valuable.

Sammanfattning på svenska

I många sammanhang, både inom och utom skola och utbildning, finns en idé om litteraturläsning som något oproblematiskt gott. Vi ska läsa litteratur för att träna, inte enbart språkliga och kulturella förmågor, utan även demokratiska och empatiska förmågor. Det finns en risk i att inte problematisera dessa på många sätt dominerade diskurser om litteratur och läsning, nämligen att en grupp läsare definieras som norm medan andra blir identifierade som mindre lyckade och värdefulla och med sämre demokratiska och empatiska förmågor. Tron på den goda litteraturen och litteratur som undervisningsinnehåll behöver givetvis inte vara fel. Flera vetenskapliga studier (se exempelvis Bamford, 2006; Nussbaum, 2004; Langer, 2011; Rosenblatt, 1995) visar tvärtom att det finns goda skäl att framhålla läsningen som viktigt innehåll i undervisning. Problemet blir när litteraturläsning som något *i sig självt gott* blir konstruerat som en neutral och objektiv naturlighet, som är fri från värden. Det blir ytterligare förrädiskt när tron på den goda litteraturläsningen kläs i siffror, eller blir naturaliserat som sanningar om demokrati, hälsa och framgång.

Genom att undersöka hur värden och kritiska aspekter av läsning skapas är syftet med avhandlingen dels 1) att problematisera förgivettagna sanningar om litteraturläsning, dels 2) att utveckla kunskap om de olika element som är inblandade när läsning, läsare och kritiska aspekter av läsning iscensätts. Studierna tar plats i olika utbildningspraktiker, i policy och praktik, i en lärares berättelse om betygssättning, i vardagliga broschyrer om läsning från exempelvis Barnavårdscentralen (BVC), och i mer atypiska miljöer, som läsprojekt med inlästa ungdomar på särskilda ungdomshem. I dessa kontexter undersöker avhandlingen var, när och hur kritiska aspekter av läsning tar form, i vilka konstellationer och relationer och med vilka konsekvenser. Kritiska aspekter kan här innebära ifrågasättande av givna antaganden, normer och strukturer, men även *kritisk* som i en brännande aktivitet och ett angeläget innehåll.

Den teoretiska utgångspunkten för studierna är *critical literacy* (Freire & Macedo 1987; Janks, 2013), ett perspektiv där läsning ses som ett sätt att stärka elever att aktivt ta del i och plats i ett samhälle. Critical literacy används dock i avhandlingens studier på ett delvis nytt sätt. Med hjälp av ett pragmatiskt och socio-materiellt angreppssätt, främst genom actor-network theory (ANT), utgår inte studierna från förutbestämda antaganden om vad läsning eller det kritiska i läsning är eller har möjlighet att vara. Istället analyseras läsning, läsare, icke-läsare och det

kritiska som effekter av transaktioner mellan olika människor, diskurser eller materialiteter.

I fem studier redovisade i forskningsartiklar utforskar denna avhandling således konstruktioner av litteraturläsning, läsare och icke-läsare i utbildningspraktiker av olika slag. Mer specifikt undersöks hur värden om läsning tar form och får fäste – hur idén om den goda litteraturläsningen naturaliseras och stabiliseras som fakta och sanning.

Artikel 1: Enacted realities in teachers' experiences: Bringing materialism into pragmatism

Artikeln är samförfattad med Ninni Wahlström. Studien är ett teoretiskt utforskande av mötet mellan transaktionell realism från pragmatisk teoribildning (Dewey, 1949/1991; Westbrook, 2005) och materiell semiotisk teori, här representerad av ANT (Latour, 2007). Studiens syfte är att belysa hur transaktionell realism och materialism kan bidra till en fylligare förståelse av de faktorer inom och utom skolans institutionella omgivning som påverkar lärares handlingsutrymme. Den teoretiska diskussionen illustreras av en intervju med en lärare i en etablerad svensk dagstidning, där hon beskriver sitt arbete med betygssättning och de svårigheter hon möter i detta arbete.

I linje med det teoretiska ramverket utforskades det empiriska exemplet med antagandet att alla aktörer som är medskapare av lärarens erfarenheter har möjlighet att påverka och handla, vare sig de är mänskliga, diskursiva eller materiella. Genom detta angreppssätt tog vi hänsyn till materialitetens och teknologiers normativa och politiska dimensioner istället för att enbart betrakta dem som naturaliserade artefakter. Istället för att fråga hur betyg sätts, ställde vi den analytiska frågan: ”Var finns betygen?” Därigenom flyttades fokus från enbart mänskliga handlingar till att undersöka vilken form betygen tog i olika relationer och på olika platser. Med hjälp av det empiriska exemplet visar studien hur exempelvis e-mailteknologin påverkar och i detta fall begränsar lärares handlingsutrymme och professionalitet. Därmed understryks att teknologier inte kan ställas utanför det som tillåts utgöra den sociala eller politiska sfär där lärarens erfarenheter formas.

Artikel 2: Tracing reading to the dark side: Investigating the policy producing reading and readers in detention homes

Studien är en textanalys av ett policydokument – en handlingsplan som beskriver ett läsprojekt på samtliga Sveriges särskilda ungdomshem.

Handlingsplanen författades av Statens institutionsstyrelse (SiS) som del i en ansökan till Statens kulturråd om bidrag till ett Skapande skola-projekt.

I policysammanhang betonas inte sällan literacitet och läsning som grundläggande för elevers utveckling och färdigheter i skolan (Edwards, Ivanič, & Mannion, 2009). Läsning är så pass förgivettaget i flertalet sammanhang att det kan betraktas som naturaliserat, det vill säga att man undantränger det faktum att det är konstruerat: definierat och normerat av inflytelserika och starka aktörer (Clarke, 2002; Larson, 2007). Syftet med studien är att undersöka hur läsning, läsare och icke-läsare konstrueras i relation till omhändertagna ungdomar.

Analysen är inspirerad av ANT (Latour, 2007; Star & Griesemer, 1989) för att söka förstå hur idéer, värden och kunskap om läsning och läsare samproduceras i dokumentet (Hamilton, 2012b). Genom att spåra läsning visar studien att det till synes koherenta dokumentet producerar olika versioner av läsning, med olika implikationer för vad litteraturundervisning förväntas leda till och med olika förståelser för vem (icke)läsaren är. I de olika konstruktionerna av läsning finns det marginaliserande effekter, och en mörk sida av läsning produceras tillsammans med icke-läsaren. Tillsammans med en syn på läsning som överförbar kunskap skapas en passiv elev; i en dekontextualiserad syn på läsning skapas en bristfällig elev; och i en syn på läsning som en läkande "quick-fix" skapas en elev vars inre behöver tämjäs med hjälp av särskilda lässtrategier. Studien visar hur läsning blir ett allomfattande medel som ska lösa en mängd svåra och disparata problem, och också hur maktrelationer göms och kritiska effekter försvinner när literacitet och läsning görs till policy.

Artikel 3: *Starless Nights*: Reading literature in a "critical space"

Artikeln redovisar en etnografiskt inspirerad studie av ett läsprogram på ett särskilt hem för omhändertagna ungdomar. Med utgångspunkt i critical literacy är syftet med studien att utforska hur det kritiska i läsning iscensätts i observationer av läsprogrammet och intervjuer med elever och lärare. Mer specifikt avser studien att undersöka en spänning inom critical literacy mellan ett kritiskt förhållningssätt till en syn på läsning som en kur och som upplysning (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, 2016) och en syn på att läsning kan utveckla, stärka och förändra elever (Freire, 1970/1993; Janks, 2010; Luke & Freebody, 1997). Studien bygger på ett transaktionellt perspektiv och är metodologiskt inspirerad av ANT (Law,

2009; Mol 2002). I analysen undersöks de mångtydiga och ibland motsägelsefulla sätt som kritiska aspekter av läsning iscensätts på.

Studien ägde rum under två veckor i februari 2017, då 30 studenter och 13 lärare deltog i ett läsprojekt på ungdomshemmet. Boken *Stjärnlösa nätter* av författaren Arkan Assad lästes högt i olika läsgrupper. Materialet samlades in med etnografisk metod, bestående av observationer i form av fältanteckningar, intervjuer med elever och lärare, mötesanteckningar och utvärderingsblanketter, pedagogiskt arbetsmaterial och elevarbeten, samt bilder och teckningar.

Studien visar att det skedde olika versioner av kritisk läsning under projektet. För att förstå hur dessa ibland motsägelsefulla versioner av det kritiska tog plats analyserades det kritiska som multipelt (Mol, 2002), det vill säga att de olika kritiska praktikerna kan ses som multipla i det att de är olika versioner, som ibland dessutom är i motsättning till varandra. Trots detta överlappar och sammanflätas de olika versionerna och går därför inte att separera.

Analysen visar att det kritiska kan vara både stärkande och förtryckande samtidigt. Det kan handla om att elever rättar sig eller vägrar rätta sig efter rådande institutionaliserade och dominerande literaciteter (Barton, 2007) om vad läsning är och hur läsning sker. I artikeln ställs två olika versioner av det kritiska mot varandra. Critical 1 innebär att elever stärks genom förändring och utveckling; Critical 2 innebär att elever stärks genom att vägra förändring. I ljuset av analysens resultat argumenteras för att ett läsprojekt av detta slag kan fungera som en kritisk plats, där olika versioner av kritisk läsning möjliggörs och fungerar ihop och där olika sorters läsning och läsare tillåts ta plats på olika vis.

Artikel 4: The wing chair: Where is the critical in literacy?

Artikeln är samförfattad med Ninni Wahlström. Studien syftar till att teoretiskt utforska var, alltså i vilka relationer, det kritiska kan uppstå i undervisning som innefattar läsning. Det kritiska ses som en rubbning i det som kan ses som förgivettaget och familjärt, en omvälvande affektivitet. Studien utgår teoretiskt från en performativ och transaktionell förståelse av didaktik, men också av läsning och litteratur. Här undersöks hur även materialiteter och kroppar tar del i att iscensätta det kritiska i läsning (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012). Analysen illustreras av en berättelse om ett klassrum med en läsfåtölj på en låst avdelning på ett särskilt ungdomshem. Genom att analysera olika möjliga textsituationer i berättelsen som hopsamlingar, assemblage, påvisades en mängd olika

element som tillsammans iscensätter kritiska effekter. Analysfrågor var: Vilka erfarenheter möjliggörs i textsituationerna och vilka möjligheter förhindras?

Analysen visar att läsfåtöljen blir en särskilt stark aktör i olika textsituationer. Stolen iscensätter elevers läsande kroppar och ger potential att hävda en ny position som läsare, en position som dessa elever möjligtvis varit exkluderade ifrån.

Genom att expandera gränsen för vilka objekt som kan inkluderas i studier om critical literacy visar analysen nya relationer där det kritiska kan ske. Samtidigt visar den också i vilka objekt och på vilka platser makt iscensätts och var denna riskerar bli förtryckande och marginaliserande för elever.

Artikel 5: Creating the valuable: Reading as a matter of health and successful parenthood

Studien är en textanalys där värderingar av läsning är i fokus. I kölvattnet av dåliga PISA-resultat kom ökande krav på att förbättra svenska barns läsvanor (Kulturrådet, 2015). Här har ett flertal aktörer klivit in som läsfrämjande, exempelvis bokförlag, författare och bibliotek, men också pappersbruk, snabbmatsrestauranger, public service-TV och barnhälsovården. I studien analyseras två olika typer av hälsorelaterade informationsbroschyrer som har stor spridning bland föräldrar i Sverige med barn åldrarna 0–7 år. Den ena broschyrserien kallas *ABC-droppar* och distribueras av Barnavårdscentalen (BVC). Den andra kallas *Föräldraboken* och distribueras av en privatägd stiftelse, som kostnadsfritt delar ut broschyrerna till Sveriges skolor. Båda broschyrerna avser att uppmuntra föräldrar att läsa högt för sina barn för att därigenom ge barnen bättre förutsättningar att lyckas i skolan och senare i livet och samhället.

I studien används teori om hur värderingar görs i praktik (Dewey, 1913; Dussauge, Helgesson & Lee, 2015; Fourcade, 2011) samt en teoretisk skärningspunkt mellan ANT (Latour 1987; 1993) och governmentality-teori (Foucault, 1991, Rose, 1993; Milani, 2009). Med hjälp av Helgesson & Lees (2017) begrepp ”folded valuations” analyseras hur värden och värderingar samproduceras, bland annat genom att läsning översätts till siffror i broschyrerna.

Analysen visar hur bristen på högläsning görs till en hälsofråga som kräver prevention från hälsovården. Hälsa, tillsammans med värderingar och mätningar, fungerar som stabiliserande faktorer i värderingen av

läsning, och i denna process blir icke-läsning av böcker ett samhälleligt problem som förväntas lösas i den privata sfären av hemmet. I ljuset av analysens resultat argumenterar artikeln för att stabilisering och naturalisering av värden förknippade med bokläsning reducerar andra sätt att förklara barns olika förutsättningar att klara av och lyckas i skolan. Individualiseringen av problemet bidrar till en idé om att förutsättningarna för att lyckas i skolan handlar om individuella val. Andra förklaringsmodeller som klass, fattigdom, jämlik tillgång till språket, ekonomisk fördelning, jämställdhet och känslan av att tillhöra samhället osynliggörs.

Diskussion och avslutning

I denna avhandling avhandlas litteraturundervisningens didaktiska varför-fråga. Avsikten är dock inte att försöka svara på frågan varför litteratur används som undervisningsinnehåll eller delta i en debatt om litteraturens värde i undervisningen. Istället bidrar avhandlingens artiklar sammantaget till att veckla upp och utforska varför-frågan, det vill säga litteraturläsningens rationaliteter, genom att studera vad läsning och läsare blir i relation till denna fråga.

Istället för att placera mina frågeställningar i den välstrukturerade didaktiska triangeln (se s. 22) så har jag placerat forskningsfrågor och analysfrågor i triangelns mitt, i undervisningens röriga praktiker. Från denna position har studierna visat möjligheter att utforska förgivettagna och ofta förbisedda element som tar del i litteraturundervisningens praktik. Här har andra aktörer än de traditionella lärare, elev och innehåll tagit plats i analyserna för att undersöka var – i vilka möten eller transaktioner – kritisk potential i litteraturläsning kan uppstå.

Studiernas resultat bidrar sammantaget till framför allt två saker. För det första pekar de på nödvändigheten för literacy-, critical literacy- och litteraturdidaktisk forskning att fortsatt och i ännu högre utsträckning problematisera normer och värden som produceras och reproduceras i diskurser om litteratur som undervisningsinnehåll, för att undvika att elever marginaliseras. För det andra visar framför allt artikel 3 och 4 att skolan har möjlighet att använda litteraturläsning som en kritisk plats där elever kan utvecklas, och därmed möta risken för marginalisering.

Vi kan inte med säkerhet veta vad litteraturläsning ger oss, varför vi inte heller med säkerhet kan veta vad vi inte får genom att inte läsa. Vi vet heller inte vilka nya medier och konstformer som kan sägas bli viktiga för individuell och samhällelig utveckling i framtiden. Men i ett

utbildningssystem, som i nuläget är sysselsatt med kunskapskrav och mätbarhet, borde vi skapa fler möjligheter och platser för elever att utforska och utveckla sin egen plats och position i samhället – kritiskt, men också kreativt. Litteratur och andra konstformer har en unik möjlighet att vara en del av detta. Detta förutsätter, menar jag, att litteratur och konst tillåts vara fria från effektivitets- och bedömningstänk, och därigenom ge möjligheter till elever och skolan att vara en aktiv del i ett demokratiskt kulturliv, i vilket fler människor räknas som värdefulla.

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