Understanding Early Career Academics' Learning to Experience Teaching in Higher Education:

Integrating Theory and Empirical (Poetic) Work.

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Abstract

Abstract #1

How was *your* experience of teaching in Higher Education when you began lecturing? How come it was like that? I guess you could talk about it quite a bit uh… Well, other lecturers too.

I wonder what they'd say.

Abstract #2

Early Career Academics (ECA) often find themselves starting a lecturing position in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) without knowing how to teach and/or with limited comparable previous experience. This is by itself a difficult task to face emotionally and cognitively speaking, and it adds to the already long list of demands that ECAs face when freshly starting the role. This issue leads us to wonder how ECAs experience teaching in Higher Education. This broad question has been tackled by offering descriptions in the literature as mixed feeling and overall negative emotions. In turn, this project contributes to the field by looking into how experiencing teaching may itself be inscribed in a learning process.

Theory Work is undertaken to elaborate and argue for a constructivist and processual understanding of experience, emotions, and learning. Here, the argument is that experiences can be conceptually understood through

perezhivanie (Vygotski, 1994) to highlight how they are learnt and lead to learning, while elaborating how learning is itself an emotional experience. Then, the project moves towards the empirical (re)creation/production of the experience of teaching with ECAs through the Art-Based Research method of Poetic Transcription done jointly with the lecturers. The experiences are presented as an exhibition of collected poems, curated and commented on by the researcher following an entrance and three rooms structure.

Taking the theory and empirical work together, this project sheds some light on the experiencing of teaching as something that is learnt and worked-through as an experience. Here, experiences are complex as they integrate into larger processes. Thus, specific previous experiences and stories can be identified as anchors that relate to each other in particular ways for the reconstruction of the ECA's experiences of teaching: their purposeful conjunction is identified as the precursors of the lecturer's current way of (re)constructing the experiences of teaching.

Table of Contents.

Acknowledgements.

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With this thesis, I want to acknowledge that all my work has been in a sense a collective effort. This thesis is to you, to me, to us.

Author's declaration.

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

From this thesis, one journal article and one edited book chapter were published.

This thesis does not exceed the maximum word limit of 80,000 words.

Moreover, this thesis has been presented at different conferences and academic events, and so the feedback from many colleagues has been essential to critically develop some of the ideas constructed here.

Signature ....

Publications derived from work on Doctoral Programmes.

The journal article Sánchez, F., & Sebastián, C. (2024). Integrating Affection, Emotion and Aesthetics into a General Theory of Learning. *Theory & Psychology*, *34*(2), 233-256, https://doi.org/10.1177/09593543241229740 was built upon the Theory work 2.1, including parts 2.1.1, and 2.1.2, with some elements of part 1.1 and 1.2. They have been modified to serve the purpose of the journal article. The contribution of the second author represents around 20% of the paper, although if estimating solely the amount of handwriting that could be attributed exclusively to him the percentage may be lower. Still, as the work was a dialogical effort, any number such as this should be taken with caution.

On the other hand, the edited book chapter Sánchez, F. (2023). Research as an experience: A reflective exploration of art-based research and poetry for researching experiences. In J. Huisman & M. Tight (Eds.). Theory and Method in Higher Education Research (Vol. 9, pp. 63–83). Emeral Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1108/S2056-375220230000009004 takes from the Theory Work mainly on point 2.2, and some bits from part 1.1, 1.2, and 2.1.3.

Introduction

I consider myself fortunate. I began my journey in Higher Education with a career in academia in mind. Consequently, I became a teacher assistant on my second year as an UG – I couldn't do it fast enough! One of the many teachers that I assisted was an expert on adult learning, deeply interested in understanding teaching and learning as a process that is meaningful and transformational. I was a TA until my master's, when I started being a lecturer myself. After graduating I began working in Educational Development (ED) while continuing teaching. Learning is what I enjoy the most, closely followed by teaching. I would say that I usually feel curious about knowing more… this idea will return later.

I had the fortune of learning and teaching alongside people that felt the same way, working on the very field that I was teaching about: teaching and learning. The first point for this introduction is to reflect on the relationship between teaching and learning – or learning and teaching. It seems trivial, but ultimately this research is a call to reflect on the implied understanding that pushes us to put teaching first and learning second. Let us imagine for a bit that the reason for this unintentional yet meaningful ordering matters. As the field may take a causality approach to learning as a product, it could be that we tend to see teaching first, as it needs teaching for learning to happen.

A wild assumption then is that teaching is a causal precursor of learning. So, if some people are good at something it means that they learnt it well. Naturally then, the chances are there were good teachers-teaching processes that led them there. Conversely, the wandering mind could take that as a point of looking back and thinking about teachers as people that have learnt something well enough to be able to promote learning in others as a reasonable consequence of their own learning processes. With this, learning becomes the antecedent for good teaching, the assumption being that good teachers have learnt something well enough beforehand, which led them to be good teachers. The equation thus would become learning and teaching, and learning, and teaching, and so on and so forth.

A new take on the classic debate:

What came first?

Was it the chicken,

or was it the egg?

Learning and teaching are quite clearly very closely related to each other, in a recursive and dynamic way. Further, my experience has been that academically inclined people most generally like – love even – learning about their subjects of interest. At some point I thought that if I didn't speak three languages, read loads of books and papers, and listened to academically tailored podcasts, I wouldn't make it as an academic!

In my mind, academics feel deep passion for knowledge, and specifically for their subjects. Further, they often love many other subjects too. They feel curious. From that, my experience was that academically inclined people typically loved teaching, most commonly as a reflection of their own love for learning and their fields of knowledge.

While working in Educational Development, I was shocked that such wasn't the case for everybody else teaching in HE. They experienced teaching and the role of a HE teacher differently from me and the people I was used to work with. Suddenly I was having conversations with lecturers who said things like "I don't like teaching", "I wasn't trained for this", "If I am really an expert, I should also be the best teacher", amongst other things. For me, this was both a cognitive conflict as much as it was a professional challenge. Over time, I stopped seeing my work in ED as teaching and learning skills development and techniques, as learning outcomes and rubrics, curriculum transformation and other – very important – teaching and learning stuff, but as an emotional work: offering a way of feeling about teaching and learning to teach. The intuition here was that we not only learn how to teach as in skills and techniques, but we learn to teach as an experience. We learn to experience teaching in particular ways.

This doctoral research comes out of the realization that the field and I both might benefit from trying to understand the experiences of teaching in Higher Education, and the broad academic role as it relates to teaching. To that end,

firstly I propose addressing the context of teaching in HE, learning how to teach, and the broad academic challenges of Early Career Academics (ECAs) in their professional development as the stage for these experiences. Adding to that, a developmental view is considered as key, and so the research also looks briefly at some of the typical background of ECAs: their doctoral and professional experiences as they relate to their academic and lecturing work. From the literature on the emotions related to teaching and academic work in the early career, this dissertation goes further into looking at the experiences of learning processes, to look at potential bridges to better understand the issue at hand.

As the end of this first movement in the dissertation – Part I – the claim that follows will be that research shows a scattered field in terms of experiencing teaching and academic work, as well as learning as a process. Thus, the dissertation elaborates on the possibility of both being inscribed as a broader learning process: that of learning to experience teaching.

Part I will finish by stating the main research question of this work: How do Early Career Academics learn to experience teaching in Higher Education? As in a play, this sets the plot in motion.

The following section – Part II of this dissertation – will firstly address the theory work done to produce new conceptual understanding of the main research questions. Here, the idea is to develop the plot conceptually to build tension as the story may unfold. Then, a first moment of interaction and mutual transformation between the theoretical and empirical work will be developed. Part II will end with a theoretical discussion of methodology and how it needs to be understood and produced so that it is coherent with the theoretical work undertaken.

I understand knowledge as constructed, always a conjunction of researcher, project, the researched, audiences, and all other aspects (conceptual, temporal, material, political, socio-cultural, etc.) and actors that enable said production. Following Law (2004), I understand that methods produce the reality they want to understand, and so I see research as a creative enterprise that transforms simple objects into objects of knowledge. As a counterpoint to the theory work,

the dissertation will move to conduct some empirical work to produce research that may add more complexity into the issue at hand.

Part III will then carry on to the empirical work, first offering an outline of the methodology, the design, data production process, analytical approach and discussions of quality. Following that, the *results* and discussions from the empirical work will be presented as a curated exhibition. The rationale for that will be developed as a prelude to the exhibition. As an effort to present the empirical work in a way that is truthful to the artistic intention that inspired and supported it, the work is exhibited to be experienced as a conjunction of artistic and scientific work. Resembling an art exhibition, the curatorial approach to presenting and elaborating on the 'resulting data' leads to devising an entrance, and three rooms, and a final provocation as a structure for the exhibition. This is meant to be experienced in such a way as to recreate the tensions, contradictions and complexity of the experience and, in doing so, building up to a climatic point.

After that, Part IV will serve as a last movement for this oeuvre and offer an assemblage/ensemble of both theory and empirical work and how they together offer insights for addressing the research question and the issues raised up until this point. Some final remarks, limitations and future directions will be presented to close this journey, which most likely will open new questions and many possible roads to explore.

Broadly speaking, two major groups are being pulled into this research as interested parties. On one hand and directly related to the aim, Early Career Academics could find value both retrospectively and prospectively as this research intends to find meaningful ways of engaging and transforming the experiences of teaching. On the other hand, Educational Developers specifically and HEI management more generally should take interest in the work on this question, as it directly relates to the life and capacity of their teaching staff. As the research looks towards how the experience of teaching is learnt, the foreseeable implication of the development here would be that University professional services such as ED would have a better understanding of the work of their main target group, and better tools to foster particular – positive and

productive – ways of experiencing teaching as something learnt and open to transformation.

Furthermore, the experiences of teaching have gained some momentum as it has been conceptualized as emotional labour not only in HE (Salisbury, 2014), but in educational settings in general (Day, 2021). Elaborating on the experiences of teaching as part of a broader learning process is theoretically valuable for both educational researchers broadly and educational psychologists. As it stems from a processual and relational understanding of learning, emotions, experiences and knowledge production, this dissertation aims to offer some conceptual cleavages to support the work of constructivist, post-modern, post-qualitative and art-based theorists and researchers. The value of the theory work would come from the articulation of key concepts in learning under a Relational Epistemic Framework (Castorina 2010; Castorina & Baquero, 2005) which is argued to be a key foundation of said paradigms.

Furthermore, the empirical work as crafted in part III would be of particular interest to support the development of the field as it moves beyond description of a phenomenon into a possible reframing into a larger process such as that of learning to experience. Making sense of the scattered literature and empirical work is here done by articulating the conflict and contradictions in the complex process of learning to experience teaching. Moreover, it is supported empirically by a methodology that actively pursues the enrichment of the phenomenon studied as it is produced and transformed artistically. Here, the contribution is twofold as, at the same time and through the same movement, it constructs and reconstructs a complex and contradictory process as well as proposing a way for others to do so. In a sense, this research is productive not only for the aims of this thesis, but also for the participants, and for the people engaging with it over time. It has been intentionally crafted to be that way.

All in all, the main contributions to knowledge developed in this work arise both conceptually and empirically. Namely, these are to understand learning as an internally articulated cognitive and affective process; to understand that work and learning are needed to experience in certain ways; to consistently address a

complex experience without reducing complexity but developing it further; to understand how early career researchers learn to experience their teaching in HE the way they do as a collective working-through experience culturally and semiotically mediated though art and aesthetic work.

Taken as a whole, this thesis aims to be experienced just as much as it aims to rehearse and explore a way to do research following a Relational Epistemic Framework. The hope is that as the thesis unfolds, an experience is produced that is coherent and consistent with the research question, the ideas developed and the data created. It is meant to integrate and surpass uncertainty and contradiction just as the phenomenon researched may be understood as uncertain and contradictory. Such pretension is meant to be open ended, provisional and to be further discussed as an actualization of a larger process of collective and distributed knowledge construction.

Today was an ordinary day, not poetic at all.

There was no rhythm or flow,

the roses were not red but grey and dull,

yet the past came back to make sense:

> *I'm a big boy now, so I'll take some license.*
>
> *As Professor Prawn Trousers would say,*
>
> *think of words for the future kids to play*
>
> *when they look at things in past tense.*
>
> *I began here restricted, a naïve amateur.*
>
> *Now I can see some careful pockets of grandeur.*
>
> *Silly me, the more I do,*
>
> *the less I don't.*

Part I.

1.1 Context.

In this section, I will briefly outline the time and space this research occupies in the larger frame of the field. As such, I'd like to address who I am talking about here, as well as when and where. Context means for me pointing out some of the broader sets of relationships that are in play in my research, such that we can anchor our understanding within somewhat defined yet overlapping territories.

Here, the aim is to lay out different bits that compose the set where this play unfolds and hopefully make it coherent enough so that the actors' performances make sense, situated in specific spaces. As any stagecraft people understand, the set is not the same as the place it is referring to but a take on it. If the play unfolds in Lancaster, United Kingdom, it makes sense to bring about some of the most salient places and aspects of the city, enough to give the audience a feel that they are situated in Lancaster. Places like Dalton Square, Williamson Park, the river Lune or the canal would make an appearance, but we would not expect every part of the city reproduced there on stage. If the place is bigger, harder choices would have to be made. Picking just a handful of references for a place like Edinburgh is undoubtedly harder but, all in all, the craft would be well made if we get the feel of Edinburgh without having to spend loads of time recreating everything there. The intention in this section is analogous to that. The objective is for us to get a sense of the place and the actors: rather than doing an extensive review, this is an intentional crafting of an environment that supports the play unfolding smoothly.

Thus, firstly let's think of a common place: there is no doubt that all academic work is emotional to some extent. In a wide sense, the literature acknowledges that the learning processes academics face in their careers are inherently emotional in many different ways (Austin, 2014; Bloch, 2016; Gilmore & Anderson, 2016; Hollywood et al., 2020; Nästesjö, 2020; 2022; Salimzadeh et al., 2017; Salisbury, 2014; Stupnisky et al., 2016; 2019; Walker, 2017; 2018), yet that needs some unpacking.

Academic work in Higher Education typically means teaching and research, in a varying proportion depending on the post and institution. Up to this point in time,

research and teaching have been at the core of Universities' purpose (Clark, 2023), and yet their relationship is fundamentally dynamic and in motion, and thus is enacted differently in different institutions. In the past, Universities were mostly identified with teaching as their central role (Clark, 2023).

Even if just by exploring word meanings, it is easy to relate key concepts in the field such as professor to ideas like showing, telling, professing.

I wish I could be a professor

so I could profess my love

for you.

According to Clark, it is after the developments of German Universities in the nineteenth century that a model leaning towards research as the central role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) emerged. In the United Kingdom and increasingly all over the world, there has been a push to identify Universities as either research-intensive or teaching-intensive; the first would focus primarily on postgraduate education and research production and the second would focus on undergraduate instruction and professionalization (Breimer, 2005).

Still, this is not a clear-cut dichotomy as many Universities have different degrees of research and teaching involved in their functioning and staff structure (Thrift, 2022); the identification of institutions rests on tendencies, and so, the intensity of their focus shapes how the institution is presented. With this said, it is worth noting that currently in the UK the main source of income for a research university comes from teaching; in a sense, even in research-intensive universities, teaching is still a large motor of the institution, at least financially speaking (Thrift, 2022).

Currently, according to Thrift's analysis of the most recent statistics developed by Universities UK (https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/),

> of the 165,000 academic staff employed in the UK, 26 per cent are working purely in teaching (quite a few being on term contracts), 24 per cent

working purely on research (again with quite a few being on term contracts) and 49 per cent working on both teaching and research (and 1 per cent on neither!!). (p. 43)

This complex relationship between teaching and research certainly sets the stages where the actors of academia perform their work. It is useful to bring out some of the ways these interact to create working spaces for academics as it is evident that the work academics do would differ not only due to the specificities of the post but because of the focus of the institutions they are part of. Specifically in research universities, this is particularly interesting as arguably their main contribution would be to produce new and systematic knowledge, carefully attending to and reflecting on their nuances and implications. Yet, as Stensaker et al. (2017) note, "it may be a surprise that in many research-intensive universities, the systematic gathering and utilisation of evidence of what is working with respect to teaching and learning is often missing" (p. 13).

This adds to the already well stablished idea that not just in these universities but overall, research is valued higher than teaching (Bull et al., 2024; Cenamor, 2021; Elen et al., 2007; Geschwind & Broström, 2015; Robinson & Hilli, 2016). The literature shows that even when there are policies in place to address the equal value of both aspects of academic work, academics themselves do not see this to be the case and argue that research is more relevant for their career as reflected in promotion opportunities (Robinson & Hilli, 2016).

Following Geschwind & Broström (2015), it appears that the basic issue is the "perceived misalignment between institutional incentives for individual academic staff and the needs of teaching" (p. 70). For the authors, although the institutional policies try to equilibrate recognition, there are still fundamental issues that put research as more valuable within the academic work. To them,

Quality in research is significantly more rigorously evaluated and reviewed than quality in teaching. Ambitious but not (yet) established researchers are, therefore, discouraged from engaging too deeply in teaching-related activities. For established researchers, on the other hand, undergraduate teaching competes with other expectations, for example, to engage in the

training of new generations of researchers, in HEI management and to contribute to the international scientific community. Furthermore, time allocation decisions of all research-active staff are strongly influenced by the decisions of external funding bodies. (p. 70)

Among entering and established academics, the first arguably face a tougher challenge in this respect. As entering members of the field, early career academics (ECAs) in Higher Education Institutions are a particularly interesting subset of the academic community whose context has some particularities worth mentioning. ECAs are typically understood in the literature as junior academics that are five to seven years after either PhD completion or a permanent academic university employment (Bosanquet et al., 2017).

Still, transition to academia has become increasingly more complex, and thus ECAs are usually seen as overworked and overwhelmed (Hollywood et al., 2020), under-recognized and unstable in the labour market (Calderón & Sebastián, 2022), and both emotionally and motivationally struggling (Salisbury, 2014; Stupnisky et al., 2016; 2019). Coincidental but unsurprisingly, HEIs in Europe are starting to see a tendency in academics to move away and look for jobs outside the continent as the labour markets for novice academics gets increasingly more precarious, competitive and mobile (Djerasimovic & Villani, 2020; Khan, 2021).

Typically, an academic's development and progression can be further contextualized through its relationship with concepts like Educational Development (ED), Faculty Development, or Continuous Professional Development, for the issue of teaching and learning and the broader developmental concerns of the academic career. The aim of ED arguably is "to develop subject-specific experts into excellent teachers" (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012, p. 17) and systematic reviews show that common topics in Educational Development often are outcome-related like developing teaching methods or skills (Phuong et al., 2018; 2020) provided within formal and informal settings like structured degrees (e. g., PGCAP), workshops, seminars and/or mentoring.

In general, it is relevant for academics to understand the broader institutional setting, as well as the political and economic frames which they navigate. The neo-liberalization and massification of Higher Education in the UK and Europe have meant that academics need time to learn the 'rules of the game', and for that it has become increasingly relevant to think about how induction processes may support their professional development as well as socialising them into the game (McKay & Monk, 2017). Even chatting with colleagues has proven to be useful to support early career academics as they navigate the system. As the authors mention, "conversations offer ECAs peer support to navigate the system. Sharing personal stories helps to flag issues for other ECAs allowing them to be avoided or addressed before they arise" (p. 1260).

In addition to that, consistently with the literature as previously stated, teaching has been identified as one of the major duties of early career academics across the sector. In a recent systematic review, Van Lankveld et al. (2017) pointed out that ECA identity is strongly related with their teaching. The increasing neo-liberalization of HE has been seen to be detrimental to teachers' identification with their teaching practice, to which the tense relationship with research adds more complexity and conflict. Furthermore, in the early stages of the academic career, teaching workload has been seen to negatively relate to perceived success in research, as it forces novice academics to postpone their research work (Cenamor, 2021).

As a first stopping point, it can be stated that the rising massification, marketization and competition in Higher Education has had a deep impact on how institutions structure their work and thus, on how academics understand and experience their academic life (Blackmore, 2015). Still, some have stated that academics can effectively sustain strong teaching identities despite these increasing challenges (McCune, 2021). As part of this complex scenario where different signs of achievement and performance are key indicators of success (Macfarlane, 2020), teaching has become a key challenge that ECAs face as they make their way into academia. Thus, recent literature sees this group as particularly vulnerable (Mula et al., 2022), yet it has been suggested that their

development and continuity in the field would benefit from engaging with strong and collegial departments and sub-units (Hollywood et al., 2020).

Further on setting the stage for the academic performances, on top of the already existing difficulties of getting into academia (Macfarlane & Jefferson, 2022) additional pressures have been identified. Proof of teaching experience, knowledge and – desirably – qualifications is increasingly required for novel academics to get a promotion or even to be appointed in a position (Ayres, 2018) albeit considered less relevant than having research experience (Jepsen et al., 2012; Mula et al., 2022).

In the UK, Advance Higher Education has set a framework for enhancing teaching and learning (T&L), and works with different HEIs to foster the improvement of T&L. Guiding this is "The UK Professional Standards Framework: for teaching and supporting learning in higher education" (UKPSF; Advance HE, 2011), which is "a comprehensive set of professional standards and guidelines for everyone involved in teaching and supporting learning in HE, it can be applied to personal development programmes at individual or institutional level to improve teaching quality" (Advance HE, 2020, UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) section, para. 1).

A Fellowship scheme can be pursued through Advance HE accredited institutionally-led ED programmes. By 2021, 123 institutions had been accredited by Advance HE (Smart et al., 2021), and "successful participants on these programmes will be eligible to be awarded one of the four categories of Fellowship; Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship or Principal Fellowship" (Advance HE, 2020, Teaching and Learning Accreditation section, para. 5). Reaching every category means that academics are at a certain level of proficiency in T&L, and progressing means an increasing focus on leadership, innovation and research.

With this given structure, there are deterrents and incentives for novel academics to enrol. The perceived higher value of research over teaching, challenges to their professional identity or lack of ability would be detrimental for engaging in ED (Botham, 2018; Lea, 2015; Robinson & Hilli, 2016; Spowart & Turner, 2021).

Conversely, pressures for recognition and marks of status foster engagement in such programmes (Fung, 2014; Peat, 2014; Spowart & Turner, 2021). Cathcart et al. (2021) have suggested that receiving the award "impacts on their sense of self, their practice, and their sense of belonging to a broader community of educators" (p. 10) but they go even further as they suggest that simply the application process itself can be beneficial for ECAs if it is done by engaging with the larger academic community. The authors state that at the early career,

> time spent on fellowship might be seen as needing to provide a return on investment. The institutional context shapes how staff perceive and respond to fellowship. […] It is clear from our analysis that connection with the community, peer engagement, and support are central to maximising the gains from the fellowship experience. […] The developmental potential of engaging in this largely self-reflective exercise is augmented when the impact is understood as inextricably linked to relationships with others, and as a platform for ongoing collegial networks and development. (p. 11)

With recent trends towards prioritizing academic performativity in mind (MacFarlane, 2020), some suggest that ECA engagement with teaching is a necessary part of their role but as stated, how this is structured and rewarded institutionally can vary immensely. At this point it is easy to agree with the idea that the experiences of teaching would benefit from a better collective and institutional recognition of teaching and teaching development, rather than it being just another tickbox for academic placement or promotion (Cathcart et al., 2021; Shaw, 2018; Spowart et al., 2016; 2019; van der Sluis, 2021; van der Sluis et al., 2016). As a warning sign, Hibbert & Semler (2016) have raised awareness in the UK of further challenges for teaching qualification programmes by suggesting that they have been losing credibility. Not only certified programmes have low perceived impact, but also informal learning has proven to be just as effective as formal training.

This broad and complex scenario sets the stage for what might be considered as the emotional and affective challenges of teaching and being/becoming a HE academic in the UK (Austin, 2014; Hollywood et al., 2020; Salisbury, 2014;

Stupnisky et al., 2016; 2019). Managing the emotions related to teaching has been considered the emotional labour of teaching in HE (Salisbury, 2014), and some of the ECA struggles arise from managing the demands of the teaching role plus the intrinsically emotional aspects of it (Austin, 2014). In this sense, how early career academics experience their teaching at the start of their journey in a broad sense would be complemented by how they experience academic work.

I recognise all of this.

I imagine you do too.

And yet.

I wonder.

(Taylor, 2019, p.5)

Implicit in this section are the stories that contribute to shaping early career academics: their most recent trajectories as doctoral researchers or as industry professionals. In a sense, becoming an academic is a transition for the person, from something else (doctoral researcher or industry professional), to academic (Emmioğlu et al., 2017; Cidlinska et al., 2022; Mantai, 2019; McAlpine et al., 2013; 2021). In other words, entering the academic field and teaching in HE is foregrounded in a previous experience that may or may not be related to teaching, while it might have something to do with either research or professional/community engagement which would serve as scaffolding to support the new academic role. Transitions as a concept is in itself a huge research field, which has been explored in many interesting ways to understand its role in learning and development (see for example Zittoun et al., 2013). This outline will not address the field in such an exhaustive way, but rather mark that a rupture and transition can be identified here, and should be explored further.

Typically, the doctoral period has been identified as the key transitional time before entering into academia for understanding academics' challenges and their career progression. At that time, work at a University or research post is often the

career pathway these group identify in their horizon, even if around half of doctoral researchers move away from academia (Castelló et al., 2020; Cidlinska et al., 2022; McAlpine & Emmioğlu, 2015; McAlpine et al., 2013; 2021).

From the research on PhD researchers, Bosanquet et al. (2020) point out that doctoral researchers often find themselves struggling to complete their thesis work in a timely manner while also working in casual teaching to bulk their CVs for future employment. As the authors suggest,

> activities outside PhD research are measured against benefit (for future careers) and cost in time 'lost'. Time is divided into tasks, e.g. ethics application, formal proposal, submission of drafts to supervisors, scholarship payment. etc., and other academic practices, e.g. teaching, supervising Honours students etc. In a casualised job market, a PhD is perceived as insufficient, and developing a professional identity is uncertain. The findings reveal anxiety in balancing immediate PhD requirements with the need to gain skills, experience and networks as aspiring academics (Mantai 2019). Students sacrifice time, money and wellbeing to make themselves more employable. Doctoral candidates who avoid time contamination and achieve timeless time do so because they actively, although not happily or willingly, say no to activities that may disrupt PhD progress, including teaching. (p. 745)

On top of this, the conditions of entry from both professional and doctoral backgrounds add to the experiences of ECA as identified in Van Lankveld et al. (2017). According to the authors, a broad feeling of loss of expertise and insecurity arise when people move from their previous fields into teaching, which adds complexity to this already precarious position as identified extensively in the literature (Boyce et al., 2019; Emmioğlu, et al., 2017; Grim et al., 2021; Hardwrict, 2021; Hill et al., 2019; Jespen, et al., 2012; Maynard et al., 2017).

Generally speaking, from the field of doctoral education, further aspects of the stage can be outlined relatively clearly: the experiences of teaching are inscribed within a complex process of transiting and learning for a role that has no necessary prior training before appointment. On top of that, the pressures for

providing proof of certified teacher training, which is still undervalued in comparison to research, plus making it in a highly competitive, demanding and precarious field of work give a wider perspective into the issue.

Knowing that this is the space that academics inhabit in their early stages of their career as they enter the field of Higher Education, it seems fitting to explore how teaching and learning to teach might feel according to the literature.

Within these fields of research, the argument here is that early career academics experience their role in different ways; still, the overall point is that the experience is mixed and conflicted. A counterpoint will be made again with the literature on doctoral training in its relationship to early stages of an academic career. Furthermore, the review will explore and synthesise some of the literature on how learning feels, looking to find parallels between both bodies of knowledge. There, the argument will be extended to include the idea that learning itself is experienced in different ways.

1.2 Literature Review.

Considering that academic work is emotional to some extent, it is relevant to address how the literature describes the emotional experiences of early career academics on the job. Thus, the first interesting body of literature to engage with is the emotional experiences of ECAs.

A great example of how the experiences and emotions in academia can be researched and explored is the work of Bloch (2016). Addressing the Danish context, her book showcases the messiness of the field. Within her research, she argues that the cross-cutting emotion felt is mixed feelings ranging from PhD fellows to Professors. Diving into the experiences of academic work offers a disjointed and even contradictory picture that is well reflected in Bloch's book. As she says,

> On the one hand, academics describe the pleasure, enthusiasm and passion they derive from their research and from fruitful cooperation with colleagues. On the other hand, they speak of the anger, disappointment,

resignation, envy, sadness and depression that are also part of academic life. (p. 136)

Negative emotions are found in teaching related activities for ECAs. Following the earlier discussion regarding ambivalence towards teaching due to a lack of recognition, here the literature suggests that such feelings are predominantly stress regarding teaching overload (Turk & Ledić, 2016), anxiety from feeling unfamiliarity and lack of control, and confusion due to lack of experience (Salimzadeh et al., 2017), fear due to job precarity and feeling overwhelmed by the work-load (Hollywood et al., 2020), uncertainty with their career progression (Nästesjö, 2020) and tension regarding their different and overlapping motifs and identities (Nästesjö, 2022). Some have referred to the limitations of dedicating the early years to teaching as it can limit the academic career progression by diverting focus from other tasks such as research (Robinson & Hilli, 2016).

On the other hand, there is also evidence for ECAs feeling positively committed towards their life in academia (Austin, 2014). Hollywood et al. (2020) describe ECAs feeling optimistic that in five years' time they will settle into academia and find their space, due to their faith in building academic support networks. Some academics talk about love for and happiness in their work despite the increasingly precarious conditions and marketized context (Oliveira et al., 2024).

Moreover, some research suggests that ECAs' emotions towards teaching are generally positive, especially when compared to emotions towards research, which tended to be negative (Stupnisky et al., 2016). Further research by Stupnisky et al. (2019) points out that ECAs tend to enjoy teaching, feeling satisfaction and pride amongst other emotions. This is consistent with other researchers that have pointed out that early career academics highlight a strong commitment to teaching, which has led Robinson & Hilli (2016) to state that "the word «devotion» was frequently used to describe this experience" (p. 158).

From this initial review, it is easy to see how the portrait comes out quite messy. Hagenauer & Volet (2013) offered a view from a sample of early career university teachers in Australia. As they state,

Comparing the frequency of negative and positive emotions showed nearly the same number of situation descriptions that could be allocated either to positive or negative emotional experiences. In terms of negative emotions, annoyance and insecurity were mentioned most frequently among various other negative emotions (see Figure 1). With regard to positive emotions, teachers consistently reported joy and happiness/satisfaction, followed by emotions such as hope, passion/enthusiasm and others (see Figure 2). (p. 247)

The figures they produced show quite clearly the wide range of emotions expressed by the same teachers: the most salient negative emotions were annoyance (44 accounts), insecurity (35), worry/concern (23), disappointment (20), frustration (18), anxiety (12), and then sadness, irritation, exhaustion, anger, dissatisfaction, boredom (each with less than 10 accounts); on the other hand, joy/enjoyment/humour (55), happiness/satisfaction (52), hope (32), passion/enthusiasm (15), and then excitement, relief, pleasant surprise, pride, and an overall good feeling (each with less than 10 accounts) (p. 247).

Without a doubt, these results are perfectly consistent with Bloch's (2016) idea of mixed feelings. In other words, again it can be said that this fields of research show many scattered and contradictory emotions as reflecting ECAs' experiences. Knights & Clarke (2014) offer to capture this as an experience of familiar strangeness with the academic work.

All in all, it is possible to agree with Bosanquet et al. (2017) when they state that "no singular objective definition encompasses ECA experience" (p. 900). Still, probably the best approximations to the issue derive from the work of Hagenauer & Volet (2013), and from the one by Bosanquet et al. To them, ECAs' experiences range from worry, frustration, uncertainty and insecurity, research pressure and academic success, difficult life and work balance, sacrifices, to happiness, love, passion and joy for their teaching work in academia.

Here, a space for further development can be identified: making sense of this contradiction and mixture within a broader span with a developmental,

processual perspective. In another way, to think about how all these findings can be integrated in a more inclusive sense – how does it come to be like this?

One noteworthy effort in this direction comes from Djerasimovic & Villani (2020). By taking together the ideas of teaching and research identities, they push for a synthesis of academic and non-academic backgrounds that concurrently foregrounds a complex and integrated personal identity for early career academics. In this work, the authors explore the idea that the contradictory experiences of teaching and research in ECA make sense as part of idealised notions of academic work even from before entering academia. Here, the competing demands of the early academic career produce identities that broadly support such discrepancies flexibly. These would be aligned with the specific community values and narratives present in the ECA's academic communities.

Although Djerasimovic & Villani do not offer a comprehensive explanation of how these identities are produced and reproduced, the authors present several elements that add value to this discussion. Firstly, it appears quite clearly that it is possible to find concepts that at least descriptively account for the broad range of experiences together and in a coherent way such as the notion of identity and sense-making. Secondly, the authors point to the community as a relevant actor in this articulation not just as a context but as an active participant. Here, the authors argue that academic communities can offer support to these contradictions as they would make sense within said groups. Still they are mindful that the wider sociopolitical and economic structures that frame HEI foment institutions not to offer support to incoming new academics, and even expects them to find it on their own, at times outside of the institution.

Lastly, the work of Djerasimovic & Villani offers some insight into where we should look for further understanding. To the authors, the doctorate is clearly the space where these relationships begin to develop. At this point, novice academics can build an idea of their academic work as an individual enterprise that may or may not be supported by a community or an institution. In their work they state that PhD researchers can even be optimistic while keeping a certain level of realism " – to the point of being cynical – about the necessity to reconcile

this optimism with a prospect of precariousness, […] seeking ways of preserving their autonomy and shielding their passion from being co-opted by unfair employment" (p. 262).

Having said this, it seems proper to look to doctoral education for a further understanding of the experiences of teaching and how they get to be that way. Elaborating on teaching as an aspect of the role that appears to be relevant in the early career, the distress already mentioned, generated by inexperience as much as by larger contextual pressures and constraints, is an interesting one to address as part of a developmental history for the academics.

Mindful of the magnitude of the research fields regarding doctoral education and professional development, a careful exploration of the literature focused on the transition towards academic life might offer interesting insights into the most recent experiences of those entering academia. It would not be surprising to affirm that teaching is something that needs to be practiced and thus, is learnt – like every other trade and profession. As such, it would make sense to think that another part of this issue arises because, on entering the academic field, ECAs might not have previous experiences related to teaching which in turn may shape the experience of teaching even before appointment.

In a research project developed in Australia, Jespen, et al. (2012) found that more than two-thirds of their sample of academics had little or no teaching experience by the start of their careers. Taken together with Van Lankveld et al. (2017), it would make sense that ECAs feel loss when entering the field of work. Contrasting with teaching, doctoral research training or professional/practice education would often address the challenges of research or professional/practice work, while not necessarily for teaching.

Even through a supervisory lens, the literature showcases how problematic this issue can be for ECAs. Following Jespen, et al. (2012), supervisors often deemed teaching as something that is unnecessary to learn while doing the PhD and that is better left to when they start a teaching role. In this field, Jespen et al. are a good example of research that shows how teacher training in doctoral education can be very precarious. Others have found the same issue in different degrees

and disciplines both in and outside the UK (Boyce et al., 2019; Emmioğlu, et al., 2017; Grim et al., 2021; Hardwrict, 2021; Hill et al., 2019; Maynard et al., 2017).

Although doctoral researchers acknowledge that time constraint and workloads are problematic when they take a teaching role (Muzaka, 2009), it is interesting to note that teaching is typically not discussed within the supervisory relationship (Jespen, et al., 2012). Still, PhDs often recognise the value of teacher training while they pursue their doctorate degree as a possible employability advantage for their current studies (Jordan & Howe, 2018) and their future career (Muzaka, 2009), and when they do get teaching time and experience in the PhD, they consider it to be emotionally positive for them (Emmioğlu, et al., 2017).

Specifically addressing gender differences in doctoral education looking forward to an academic career, Cidlinska (2019) stresses that there are significantly more demands for female junior researchers that are left unattended and unsupported in their career progression. Furthermore, the author points out that there is a significant lack of positive female role models in academia which may suggest why it is often more difficult for female early career academics to experience teaching positively. To her, it is key to offer examples of success not of "superwomen, the stars of their fields, 'tokens' (Kanter 1977) who typically present themselves as both super scientists and super mothers" (p. 381), but rather to provide different role models, plenty of advice and experiences. On top of that, Cidlinska suggests that a crucial way of improving the gendered experience of teaching at a doctoral level would be through sponsorships, as it would tackle

> the current 'invisibility' of women which is a major obstacle to getting a job and, thus, remaining in academia. At the same time, through engagement with relevant networks, sponsorship can support the positive development of women's academic identity and career ambitions. (p. 383)

Despite the challenges, teaching can be a good thing both personally and professionally for aspiring academics and so some argue that "the benefits of teaching outweigh the problems" (Jordan & Howe, 2018, p. 508). Enlarging on Emmioğlu, et al. (2017), they argue that teaching can be important for doctoral

researchers as they can feel self-recognition and recognition by others, feel that they are contributing, and that it is helpful for learning things and advancing their career profile. This is in line with Mantai's (2019) conclusions that teaching is one of the myriad of aspects that drive academic identity development at the doctoral stage; as such, teaching is relevant yet an usually neglected identity development space, that "creates new opportunity structures and enables possible academic selves through providing academic work experience and extending academic networks and relationships" (p. 150). All these things contribute to ECA development and continuity in academia and help them feel like they belong.

Therefore it seems that different levels of institutional effort to support teaching and teacher development during the PhD might account for the different ways that novice academics feel when they start teaching. At this point, it may be intuitive to agree with Hill et al. (2019) when they conclude that

> adequate preparation for those who will take on faculty work is a good investment, both for the individuals who will teach in a rapidly changing environment and need solid skills and abilities on which to draw, and for the institutions that will employ them and that have responsibilities for educating a diverse group of undergraduates (p. 1179),

and even to agree with Soomere & Karm (2021) in recognising that even informal conversations with academics can lead PhDs to learn about teaching as a place to think with others and imagine teaching scenarios and challenges.

In a sense, this is consistent with the idea that some people learn to be academics throughout their doctoral studies and some do not (Boncori & Smith, 2020). Here, an interesting conceptualization arises following Boncori & Smith (2020), as people "may have varied degrees of already established identity markers and knowledge due to their professional experience (the learned academics) which need to be reconciled with another set of learning experience (the learning academic)" (p. 272).

Instead of stating that these are two distinct categories, the authors point out that both coexist and blend differently in every doctoral researcher. To them the

learning academic would be a position towards academic work that entails trying and failing, questioning, reflecting and changing along their journey; in contrast, the learned academic would be a position where people are confident with their previous knowledge and do not engage in learning processes as they do not feel the need to change their practices. Interestingly, Boncori and Smith suggest that what is needed throughout the doctorate is to take both positions in varying levels at the different points of the journey. When taken fluidly, both ways complement each other in addressing the challenges, obstacles and emotions of the doctorate reflectively and constructively.

As developed so far, it could be surmised that teaching is only one aspect of an already emotionally demanding doctoral journey. As Bosanquet et al. (2020) point out

> There is a palpable sense of struggling with the different responsibilities and the immediate demands of teaching. Being new to teaching, and convening units in particular, intensifies time pressure. Those who have successfully attained teaching and research positions, or post-doctoral research positions, are often on contracts, and daunted by future work prospects. (p. 745)

Moreover, this exploration into doctoral education further signals a place for learning in the experience of teaching. The different ways in which ECAs experience teaching resembles the different and competing pressures for doctoral researchers. Even if descriptively, these two research fields appear to be similar in that regard, and thus support the initial idea that the experience of ECA exists not in isolation but as part of a process.

As such, this review of the literature would extend the work of Djerasimovic (2021) by suggesting that a key aspect of understanding the field is to think about 'doing academics' rather than 'being academics'. According to the author, the field urges us to "understand, theorise, and validate instability, ephemerality, and fluidity between positionalities and interrupt identity categorisations, such as 'academic', that do not serve [the] individual or the group" (p. 516). To that end, the author invites to explore other modes of doing research such as "photography

and photo-journaling, autoethnography, poetry, collaborative experiments (Taylor and Gannon 2018; Elliot, Reid, and Baumfield 2017), and research that recognises emotive and sensual aspects of academic work (Manathunga, Selkrig, and Baker 2018, 172)" (p. 516). More on this will be developed further elsewhere in this document.

For now, the point of interest here is that teaching is one aspect of the role that early career academics are not necessarily intentionally or formally prepared for before being appointed, contrasting with what research training in a doctoral programme or industry professional background would offer to a job-seeking academic. Instead, the role is something that is done, enacted and performed in relation to a myriad of constraints and possibilities, groups, institutions, identities and narratives. Thus, teaching becomes another thing that academics must learn sometimes in their doctoral education and sometimes on the job, but always with little support or incentives to do so in an intentional, formal, structured manner. As such, teaching is experienced in many ways, all related to a myriad of unfolding learning processes.

> I recognise all of this.

> I imagine you do too.

> And yet.

> I wonder.

>   (Taylor, 2019, p.5)

As something that is learnt, it can be fruitful to engage briefly with some of the literature on how learning feels, to see if that body of work is somewhat consistent with those that have been already explored. To that end, it is interesting to initially highlight the work of Barer-Stein (1987) who argues that learning means experiencing the unfamiliar. Facing unfamiliarity comes with feelings like surprise, panic, fear or anxiety. Walker & Palacios (2016) have added anger and joy, amongst others. The work of Barer-Stein is a great example of how the

(emotional) experience of learning can be understood and studied. She states that

> To shift from what is comfortable and familiar towards something that is none of these things, is difficult. It is also a choice to move toward the unknown; a position always clouded with anxiety if not fear. Above all, to make a choice to shift away from what is known and familiar, is a deliberate movement to the possibility of change. (p. 102)

Still, arguably the mainstream research on this topic has turned towards analysing if emotions foster or hinder learning (Dirkx, 2001; Loon & Bell, 2018; Pekrun, 2011; Walker, 2017). Diffuse research outcomes on the field have been synthesised in a recent literature review where Mustafina et al. (2020) argue that both positive and negative emotions can affect learning either positively or negatively. This idea, although an accurate representation of the field, is not particularly helpful.

Departing from that, others have chosen to embrace the idea that emotions are integral to learning and are part of the process (Walker & Palacios, 2016). Three good examples of understanding how different pedagogical approaches can "support the surfacing of difficult emotions in learning" (Walker, 2018, p. 3) can be found in recent literature. From a psychoanalytical approach, Gilmore & Anderson (2016) favour a pedagogy where the anxiety of/in learning is recognised as an opportunity to learn by tackling the defence mechanisms shown by learners and teachers in the process.

Coming from the Transformative Learning Theory framework (Mezirow, 1991; 2009), Mälkki & Green (2018) argue for working with the emotions that arise when people move beyond their comfort zone, as these would inevitably arise when challenging our 'familiar' ideas. Mälkki & Green see a way of integrating these emotions into the process by working with our disposition towards them, inscribed within a larger socio-cultural understanding of how we relate to our emotions.

Lastly, arising from the work done in Threshold Concepts (Meyer & Land, 2005; 2006), Irving et al. (2019) push towards exploring the idea of the learner being in a liminal space. Here, they elaborate on liminality as being the affective aspect of the learning process as it is triggered by working with threshold concepts. To them, aiding to navigate those feelings would be key to learning.

So far, exploring this body of literature suggests that, although some ways of 'dealing with emotions' have been outlined, a clear question here would be why learning is not experienced per se in a certain way, nor it necessarily fosters or hinders learning. Looking at how those specific relationships with the emotionalities in/of learning might have developed over time could provide further linkages as to why the whole process of first experiencing teaching and the academic role – in other words, experiencing learning for them – might be addressed so differently in the literature.

The development in this section points to a clear gap in research: although the phenomenon has been more or less described, and the experience of teaching and how to fulfil that academic role has been explored, further development could help articulate these experiences by understanding them as part of a whole, within its specific histories and relationships. The argument then will attempt to articulate them within a learning process.

Working towards including a learning perspective in these feelings of ECAs moves the question from *what* they feel to *how* those feelings could develop and have meaning for them. In a nutshell, a place for further expansion can be identified in placing those feelings felt by ECA while teaching and learning how to teach as a whole, in a learning perspective which would account for a relational experiencing of a process.

Thus, the task that emerges here would be to work out – theoretically and empirically – how to inscribe experiencing within a larger learning process that: a) can account for the contradictions, mixtures and textures of every experience, while b) offering a rationale for understanding common shared experiences. In other words, the aim would be to explore how people learn to experience in such a way that is specific to them, anchored in their histories and previous

experiences, while at the same time drawing on what is shared and collective. Understanding emotionality and learning as a whole experience would link with Timmermans' & Sutherland's (2020) argument that those entrusted with supporting academics in HE, should address their feelings of anxiety and failure in their academic work.

1.3 This study.

Following on from the context and the literature review, the point of departure for this thesis is to explore how Early Career Academics learn to experience their teaching in Higher Education.

As already stated, the field has come to a halt when asking *what* HE teachers experience while teaching, as it has effectively managed to describe their feelings and emotions. This has proven to be problematic as the empirical evidence has shown that these experiences are contradictory and complex: it is not a clearcut phenomenon. Thus, this research includes the *what* by looking into *how* experiencing teaching is itself inscribed in a learning process. In other words, this question aims at understanding the different elements that teachers articulate in describing their experience of teaching in HE.

The first argument that will be developed is that this question should be framed and anchored within a processual and dialogical understanding of experience and learning, following a constructivist learning epistemology. This will be developed conceptually first, as part of the Theory Work. Consequently, the question of how ECAs learn to experience teaching in HE opens the following corollary questions to be answered theoretically. They could be stated as i) how may learning feel? ii) how may learning be experienced? and iii) how may experience be learnt?

From that point, the research will provide data to put into dialogue with the theoretical work. Thus, the research will develop a second argument, that the experiences of ECAs as produced empirically should account for an array of emotions and feelings which should be coherent with the learning processes they are and have been transiting. Thus, the main research question leads to empirical

corollary questions regarding the participants learning to experience teaching in HE such as i) what do early career academics tell us about how they experienced teaching? ii) what do they tell us about how they felt while learning to teach? and iii) what do teachers tell us about how they make sense of their experience of teaching?

The great path has no gates,

Thousands of roads enter it.

(Reps, 1971, p. 93)

Part II.

2.1 Theory Work.

As previously stated, this thesis first undergoes theoretical work to argue for a processual and dialogical understanding of experience and learning, framed in a constructivist learning epistemology.

The starting point for this exploration is again the idea that early career academics experience their teaching and their role in different ways; thus, the overall point is that the experience is mixed and conflicted. To understand how these experiences get to be like that, the strategy proposed is to work – as in engage with and transform – the field from a conceptual standpoint and thus re-frame the literature according to this new perspective.

To that end, the first step is looking at the main concepts addressed by the research question: mainly, learning and experience. It is safe to say that these are intertwined with the broader disciplinary field of Psychology through concepts such as emotions, identities, motivations, beliefs, life-stories and development, amongst others; conversely, Higher Education, early career academics, doctoral education, educational development, to name a few, are typically considered to be inscribed in the discipline of Educational Research. Nevertheless, the field of educational research has often been described as lacking strong theoretical frameworks (Aswin, 2012; Tight, 2012).

Recent ideas such as "theory work" (Hamann & Kosmützky, 2021) depart from a theory deficit approach and look at how exploring different academic fields and working through them from different theoretical frameworks might lead to innovation and interesting discoveries. Certainly, such practice is not new. Exemplified notably in conceptual enterprises such as Habermas' re-reading of the work of Horkheimer and Adorno (Habermas & Levin, 1982), the book edited by Murphy & Costa (2015) regarding the use of Bourdieusean theory to re-work educational research issues, or the latest work by academics such as McArthur regarding a critical theory in dialogue with decolonial studies (2021) or her rework of assessment in Higher Education (2022), it is clear that old problems benefit from being looked at through different ideas and theories.

Here, different psychological theories will be used to re-work the literature on the educational research issue of Higher Education early career academics experiences of their role, and of teaching and learning. The main contribution of this work comes from offering a different way of understanding, and so re-framing the issue. All in all, the argument is that what we might be seeing through research is not the essential or distinct characteristics of experiences of teaching nor of a transition such as becoming an academic, but different possible points of a learning process that are constituted differently through different learning relationships and at different times and speeds.

Recapitulating from the previous section, this part of the thesis will address the three theoretical questions derived from the main research question, namely: i) how may learning feel? ii) how may learning be experienced? and iii) how may experience be learnt?

In this section, the first argument developed is that every learning process is an affective experience. Affect is central in experiencing learning as uncertainty. The main concepts of learning are articulated with a take on the reflection framework and a dynamic and social understanding of affection, emotions and aesthetic experiences, helping to integrate concepts like edge-emotions and liminal experiences into the learning process. These concepts support the idea that complex emotions play a central part in learning dynamics, while arguing for reflection as a self-regulatory movement of the learning process.

It is argued that there is no such thing as a merely cognitive learning process. Every time that people learn, they experience edge-emotions and liminal experiences. Furthermore, if the learning process occurs in educational settings, it is possible to think about learning experiences as being mediated by liminal affective techniques and so, open to transformation.

Next, experiencing can be thought of as something that is learnt and leads to learning through Vygotski's (1994) concept of *perezhivanie*. This way, the argument supports and complements the conceptual work previously developed regarding the learning process, in line with those trying to develop a General Theory of Learning from an integration of Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives

such as Sebastián (Sebastián & Lissi, 2016; Sebastián et al., 2021). Moreover, it aligns with those trying to argue for a metaphysics of change (Vassilieva & Zevarshneva, 2020) that is "geared to create the future" (p. 28) rather than capturing the past.

A brief theorical exploration of the concept of experience will be developed as a frame from which to move towards the concept of *perezhivanie*. As originally developed by Vygotski and inscribed in his work, this concept may prove to be useful towards internally articulating learning and experiences as conjunct processes. Through the concept of perezhivanie, it can be stated that experiencing is something that is learnt, built over time, and it transforms emotions and meaning making by working-through experiences collectively and mediately.

This shift in conceptualization might prove to be useful as it would turn the attention away from an individually focused idea of experience, and more towards experiences that are relational and constructed. The implications of such a turn are manifold, but above all would lead to paying attention to the myriad of learning spaces, processes and relationships that foster certain experiences of teaching as an Early Career Academic.

With perezhivanie, the contribution to the literature on how ECAs experience their role in general, and experience teaching in particular would be that such experiences of learning new things and roles are not clear-cut natural phenomena but are socially constructed, learnt over time, and may lead to further transformations for individuals and collectives. In this sense, the theory work will offer an alternative understanding, where the scattered findings of the literature on how ECAs experience such processes make sense as articulated through the concepts of learning, experience and perezhivanie.

We hesitate not

because we are unsure but

because we love our craft.

Together we work like none would do alone,

we can round a square into any elliptical form,

and we extend our little talks, reflections and stops,

the playful games we disguise as work.

Like friends from long ago we take a stroll

towards the puzzles we enjoy

to see how far we can go.

At times we may circle back to the start

but it just doesn't read like before.

The construction of a problem in adult learning.

Arguably, the issue of learning to experience teaching would fall theoretically into the field of adult learning, as it would encompass early career academics who are professionals, well educated, and often over certain age which would normally be considered adulthood. Still, this first assertion will prove to be problematic and in need of revising, as the field of adult learning may not be able to provide the framework to support a truly processual and constructivist understanding of learning.

Research on adult learning poses a problem for the psychology of learning as a whole: how can one explain the similarities and differences between the way

children and adults learn, especially when it comes to the same object of learning (e.g. reading and writing)? Andragogy (Knowles et al., 2005) is arguably one of the most widespread traditions in adult education worldwide. However, its answer to this fundamental question has been criticized empirically by Merriam et al. (2007), and both theoretically, ethically and, above all, epistemologically by Bourgeois & Nizet (1997/2007).

By establishing an essential distinction between the ways in which children and adults learn, andragogy makes it impossible to explain what is common to these processes. Consequently, it may be impossible to explain the processes of transformation and development from how children learn to how adults learn and, in general, the transformations of learning throughout life. For Bourgeois & Nizet (1997/2007), it is an epistemology that sustains cleavages between adult education and the education of children and young people; between research on children and adult learning; between sub-disciplines in the educational field; between traditions in psychology; between levels of analysis important for understanding human learning (intra-individual, interpersonal, organizational group); and between analytically oriented and prescriptive oriented work.

It could be argued that the andragogy approach is situated in a Split Epistemic Framework that is incapable of explaining the processes of human development and learning (Castorina, 2006; 2009; 2010; Castorina & Baquero, 2005). An alternative to this issue could be the one proposed by Bourgeois & Nizet (1997/2007). They call for an epistemological shift in which the question of learning at different moments of ontogeny is situated within the framework of a General Theory of Learning. Such would be one

> (1) Which is coherently inscribed in a general theory of human functioning and development and, very particularly, of cognitive development; (2) Which accounts for the nature of the learning process in general, that is, independently of the particular characteristics of the learner or of the learning context (3) Which allows for the identification of a priori variables susceptible of affecting this process, as well as the mechanisms by which they can act upon it. In reference to such a general theory of learning, we

can then ask ourselves without a priori about the role of some of these variables in different learning contexts, on different objects, and with different audiences of learners (Bourgeois & Nizet, 1997/2007, p.16).

Sebastián and Lissi (2016) and Sebastián et al. (2021) propose a general theory of human learning based on a Piagetian-Vygotskian synthesis. This synthesis critically develops the neo-Piagetian proposal of Bourgeois & Nizet (1997/2007). It is explicitly situated in the Relational-Dialectical Epistemic Framework that, as Castorina (2010; Castorina & Baquero, 2005) states, is necessary to explain human learning.

However, this proposal of a General Theory of Learning so far has not included an explicit development of the emotional and affective aspects of human learning. This is a shortcoming that is particularly noticeable in a context in which the emotional and affective aspects of learning have been discussed: as part of a broader understanding of student engagement (Loon & Bell, 2018; Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017), as a key element in learning (Booth, 2018; Mälkki, 2019; Mälkki & Green, 2018), or as an inherent aspect of the teaching experience (Chen, 2019; Zembylas, 2005), to name a few that have not been named before.

On the other hand, it is also fair to recognize that the "rediscovery" of affect in contemporary psychology has not necessarily led to an internal articulation of affect in the learning process. In the context of the affective turn that has taken place in psychology during the last decades, the study of the relationship between affect and cognitive processes has advanced but still has a long way to go. At least that is the conclusion of Haye & Carballo (2017) after reviewing 950 articles corresponding to a decade (2001- 2011) of the journal "Cognition and Emotion". Although contemporary research has explicitly moved away from mind-body dualism, a cognition-emotion dualism, which would be related to the previous one, is still dominant.

Current research understands cognition and emotion as independent and isolated entities that maintain relations of double negativity between them: both processes compete in the sense of mutual inhibition: "research currently focuses on the impact of emotion on cognition in terms of bias, or inversely, the regulation

and inhibition effects of cognition on emotion. Emotions distract thought and thus cognition, in turn, strives to keep them under control" (Haye & Carballo, 2017 p.116). In this framework, Haye & Carballo (2017) also note that the vast majority of papers were devoted to the relationship between emotions and basic cognitive processes, a growing number in the area of emotion regulation and very few focused on higher processes. The relationship between emotions and learning does not appear as an object of study in this review.

In this context, the argument is that an exercise of critique, analogous to that carried out by Bourgeois & Nizet (1997/2007) to andragogy, is a fruitful way forward in the task of solidly integrating emotions into learning theory. Analysing how and why one of the 'best theories available' may have problems integrating these aspects, would be a good starting point to understand what the underlying theoretical difficulty in question is. Such theory would explicitly name emotions as central to learning, but we would have to keep in mind that the question should not be solved by simply stating that emotion is essential in learning, nor by incorporating it as a variable or a factor of the transformation process.

For that purpose, the discussion will move to how Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory seeks to accomplish this integration. Starting with a critique of this effort, the argument will move to proposing a hypothesis of how this internal articulation between cognition and affection/emotion could occur, consistently with a processual and relational approach to human learning. Then, the elaboration will turn to the General Theory of Learning developed by Sebastián and Lissi (2016) and Sebastián, et al. (2021) to then unfold through the work of Massumi (1995; 2002), Stenner (2017), Larraín and Haye (2019; 2020), and others to account for the affective, emotional, and aesthetic experience of learning. Altogether, the aim is to provide one possible articulation between an epistemologically sound learning theory based on a historical-cultural constructivist approach, and the affective experience of learning.

The general argument here is that learning is felt as an ongoing experience of meaningful change that unfolds through the movement between the mediated sociocultural tools for collective interaction and the individual's currently

insufficient modes of operation. As such, it is a process experienced as being at the edge of previously articulated and systematized experience, leaving the learner going through a liminal experience, not fully available as a thought process. Hence, it is not fully available for reflection and learning. This experience of liminality of the learning process could be understood as an affective process, closely intertwined with the cognitive process.

In other words, during any given learning experience, the learner is not only dealing with the specific learning gap that led them to engage in the process, but at the same time, is experiencing, signifying, and articulating the ever-new experience of becoming, as a changing individual. This complex and dynamic understanding of the experience of adult learning could help to understand why people engage with or disengage from a learning process, adding a layer of complexity by stating that it is not just a matter of dealing with the cognitive, technical, and political challenges of learning, but with a broader experience of changing.

2.1.1 How learning feels.

The place of affection and emotion in the Transformative Learning Theory: A critique.

Nowadays, one of the major learning research programmes in educational theory is the one led by Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning (1991), a program that also has its origin in the question of adult learning. Mezirow's theory has made a very explicit effort to articulate the cognitive and emotional dimension in learning as per the following definition:

> Learning may be understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience to guide future action. Transformative learning may be defined as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 1991, p. 22).

First, we need to address the idea of transformation, that contrasts with *Formative Learning*. For Mezirow, the latter is a form of associative and cumulative learning process generated before adulthood: Formative Learning "occurs in childhood both through socialization (informal or tacit learning of norms from parents, friends, and mentors that allows us to fit into society) and through our schooling" (1991, p. 17), and then "becomes transformative learning in adulthood" (p. 18). This would lead to thinking that either i) humans learn essentially differently at different times in their lives, ii) the learning process itself is transformed to become of a transformative nature through a particular process, or iii) both types of learning are essentially the same and therefore both are associative/cumulative or transformative.

Bourgeois (2011) makes a sound argument against understanding any learning as *non-transformational*, especially within Mezirow's theory. To the author, any understanding of the learning process as cumulative in opposition to transformative should be disregarded as it could not be even considered learning. His critique leads to believe that the first two possibilities would not really be the case, thus aiming to inquire about the epistemic nature of this 'Transformational' Learning Theory, just as it has been addressed for andragogy.

According to Mezirow (1991),

> The idea that uncritically assimilated habits of expectation or meaning perspectives serve as schemes and as perceptual and interpretive codes in the construal of meaning constitutes the central dynamic and fundamental postulate of a constructivist transformation theory of adult learning. (p. 18)

These uncritically assimilated meaning perspectives could be regarded as the "Formative Learning" process, but then it is hard to understand them next to the statement that "making meaning is central to what learning is all about" (p. 21). It is even expanded by saying that "in transformative learning, however, we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to the old experience" (p. 21). A closer

look at these ideas could be useful, where a key element can be found in the author's definition of learning.

Mezirow[1] (1991) summarizes the learning process as

> [T]he extension of our ability to make explicit, schematize (make an association within a frame of reference), appropriate (accept an interpretation as our own), remember (call upon an earlier interpretation), […]. Learning always involves making a new experience explicit and schematizing, appropriating, and acting upon it. (p. 21)

If Formative Learning and Transformative Learning are explained by the same process, then Mezirow would be using association as the explanatory mechanism for learning in general. Following Pozo's (1989) critique of associationism, this is problematic because such an approach (in any of its theoretical versions) is unable to properly explain the (trans-)formation of meaning.

The difficulty in understanding meaning-making besides mere association and the conflictive conception of the learning process in the different moments of the lifespan, leaves the theory in a diffuse comprehension of the relationship between the subject and their environment for learning. In this sense, this associationist theory should be situated within the Split Epistemic Framework (Castorina, 2010; Overton, 2010), which assumes that forces or factors external to the psychological organism (biological or environmental) and essentially different from it mechanically causes change (development or learning). This kind of theory would not be able to explain properly the meaning-making process as a construction of an authentic novelty (Castorina, 2006; 2009).

This complicated epistemic background could also serve to explain why there are so many ways of understanding the role of affect and emotion within

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[1] For a summary made by Mezirow (1991), see page 32-33.

Transformative Learning Theory. Yet, a case still needs to be made about how Transformative Learning Theory has not been able to properly articulate affection and emotion with the learning process.

According to Mezirow's theory (1991), emotions are understood as interpretations – driven by association – of feelings, and a cause of meaningful transformation. The author defines the role of emotions as a thought process called "introspection" (p. 68), distinct from reflection, leaving it as a not-good-enough process for his transformative learning theory. Later, he states "that emotions are required for transformative learning, as cognition might not be enough" (p. 100), and even in later development from Mezirow (2009), affection and emotion are conceptualized as products of transformation (see page 22 onward), leaving them then as causes, factors, and products of learning. In all cases, emotions are understood as external and independent variables from the learning process (in the first two, emotions cause learning, in the third, learning causes emotions). This way of posing the question about the relationship between learning and emotions corresponds to the logic of "legitimate psychological explanation" (Brainerd, 1978 cited in Castorina & Baquero, 2005), which is clearly situated in the epistemic framework of the split (Castorina, 2010).

Even if further development has come from later Transformational Learning theorists, the general approach remains the same. As an example of such, Taylor (2009) acknowledges that it is the "affective ways of knowing" (p. 4) that helps identify the meaningful aspects of the experience for reflection, and so "affective knowing — developing an awareness of feelings and emotions in the reflective process — is inherent in critical reflection". (p. 10) Furthermore, he goes on to say that "by exploring emotional issues with students, the educator can address the dynamics that contribute to a resistance in learning, as well as potentially initiate a process of individuation" (p. 11). Adding to this, Taylor and Jarecke (2009) characterize the transformative learning process as emotionally charged, and so they argue that educators should promote safe spaces for learning, where students can explore new meanings that may give rise to discomfort or unrest; conversely, emotional experiences can serve as an impulse for transformative learning (Quinlan, 2016).

Summing up, it can be stated that, while in the core elements of the Transformative Learning theory are included critical reflection (distinct from introspection) and a holistic orientation (which adds the emotional and social dimensions into the cognitive understanding of learning), emotions continue to be seen as an unexplained, emergent factor or as an object (or product) of learning (Illeris, 2013). It can be stated at this point that Mezirow and his followers are not comprehensive or systematic in their conceptualization of emotion nor with the process by which it aids meaning-making, arguably due to the epistemic issues described with the theory as a whole. Analogous to the works revised by Haye and Carballo (2017), in Mezirow's theory affection and emotions are left unexplained and separated from the theorization of the learning process.

Although descriptively close to different constructivist learning frameworks, Transformative Learning Theory is not able to integrate affection and emotion into the learning process due to its position within the split epistemic frame. In the following paragraphs the argument will move towards a significantly different epistemic path. The initial hypothesis will be that for affect/emotion and learning to be properly integrated, the learning theory available should be able to explain learning without an associationist substrate and within a relational epistemic framework (Castorina, 2021; Overton, 2010), where meaning construction can be truly explained.

Towards a General Theory of Learning[2]: Integrating Piagetian and Vygotskian theories.

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[2] As mentioned before, the works from Sebastián et al. (2021) titled "The Vygostkian Contribution to the Construction of a General Theory of Human Learning" and Sebastián and Lissi (2016) both serve as a larger and sound argumentation to defend a General Theory of Learning, considering the necessity of a relational-dialectical approach defended by Castorina and Baquero (2005). The articulation of the Piagetian and Vygotskian theories is by itself a general theorical framework due to the epistemic grounds and purposes of both theories. The

In a constructivist framework, knowledge is constructed in the interaction between subject and object (Piaget, 1967; 1968/2007; 1975; 1981). Instead of talking about objects, we could even refer to the pair as knowers and objects of knowledge. An object of knowledge comes into being as the knower carries out certain actions that transform the object into an object of knowledge: something that is know-able. These actions that are possible due to the dynamic systems of transformations of the pair widen and/or consolidate their ways of knowing through differentiation and integration.

In such a way, knowledge construction entails an ever-dynamic movement of expansion and strengthening of particular ways of knowing. Over time, they can stabilize as cognitive structures that give recognizable forms to the conjunctions of knowers and objects of knowledge. This relational movement gives form to the progressive ways of knowing, as knowers can operate in increasingly dynamic and adaptive ways with a wider array of objects of knowledge. In other words, more objects become objects of knowledge through the actions that promote said expansion (Flavell, 1963).

Piaget calls equilibration this process of assimilation and accommodation (1975; 1981). As opposing pairs in the dynamic systems of exchange, objects can resist being treated as knowledge objects according to the knower's previous structures as a consequence of a gap or vacuum, or a confrontation or contradiction. Under certain circumstances, this can prompt a cognitive conflict, which in turn disposes towards the transformation of the previous structure through a process of accommodation (Piaget, 1975).

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aim of this thesis is not to revisit their conceptual discussions but to present the salient elements of their framework to construct and understand the learning process and therefore will necessarily miss some interesting points and arguments in favor of parsimony. For any other interest in the specific or meta-theorical discussions undertaken for this notion, please refer to the aforementioned authors.

So, a structure is in conflict when it cannot operate and its possible actions do not allow it to adapt sufficiently to the environment; due to this, it needs to accommodate itself and, therefore, to transform, executing a dynamic self-regulatory movement to transform the exchange system that keeps it alive. An important aspect to bring to light here is that within this framework, not every experience of cognitive conflict will promote transformation. Cognitive conflict needs to be experienced as a conflict that makes sense to the knower, as it challenges the current partially successful adaptation with their environments. That is why meaning-making mobilizes the knower to achieve some sort of provisional resolution to the conflict by engaging in a learning process, implicating his learning, biographical and identity trajectories (Bourgeois, 2009).

Nonetheless, following the issues raised by Castorina (2006) about the emergence of novelty in the Piagetian framework, how does a person construct new ways of operating that are actually new? This is when we turn to Vygostkian theory.

Following Vygotsky (2008), every operation that someone realizes on their own at some moment in their trajectories, was previously achieved within a social space. He states that any operation is initially carried out in a social space of joint action, and can later be carried out alone; so, people act as if they were still with others, reconstructing the collective practices by guiding themselves, their own action, in the way others have guided it in the past in said conjunction. In a sense, individual construction means to progressively reconstruct the way in which people operate together.

This process of dynamic reconstruction and appropriation of psychological operations previously experienced in an interpsychic plane is known as "internalization" (Vygotski & Luria, 1930/2007), but it does not necessarily mean that every or any collective practice will be appropriated in the future by the individual. Within this framework Vygotski (2008) suggests the need for the configuration of a "Zone of Proximal Development" through the relationship with others.

44

Here, this space is created as a conjunction, a dynamic system of exchange, and thus is not predicated of a subject 'alone' but of a knower that knows of and within a particular set of relations at a given time and place. In that sense it is situated within "the characteristics of the socially defined system of interactions" (Baquero, 1997, p. 141-142), and throughout the history and development of thought processes. Interestingly, the collective practices that can lead to individual reconstruction are such that can be recognised by the individual through the form they take within the collective. In that sense, they are formed and trans-formed.

In a take on the Vygotskian notion of concept, Larraín and Haye (2014) state that concepts in-form thought as they are "generic ways of generalizing experience through which thinking and speaking subjects make a difference in their social and conflicting stream of experience" (p. 475). From their reading, accordingly to the Vygotskian framework:

> The way people generalize depends upon how they use signs, we would say that the way in which people generalize depends upon the discursive practices in which they participate and have participated; people with different histories of discursive practices will use words differently to unify things in a generalized way (p. 469).

Larraín and Haye's understanding of meaning-making that rests on the notion of concept as a thought process has important consequences for a constructivist learning theory. The sense of continuity and consistency that follows the transformational process in meaning-making would rely on a sustained and unfolding internalization of mediated activity through a given speech form. This would account for a key feature of learning: the awareness of passage and stability in meaning construction as a trans-formation.

Taken together, learning can be understood as the dynamic process of expansion and consolidation of cognitive structures that is brought about through mediated joint actions in a specific socio-cultural space, which paves the way for and supports new expansions and consolidation of structures in the future. Summarizing, Sebastián and Lissi (2016) argue that

[T]he participation of a subject in a collaborative thinking activity where is operated with a certain knowledge structure (a certain way of generalizing using words specifically) can be internally reconstructed and thus transform the knowledge structures with which previously the subject was operating with and had entered into cognitive conflict (p.37).

So, the learning process encompasses novelty insofar as it is a joint activity, where the operation is predicated for the bigger psychological unit distinct in form/structure. This is argued by Sebastián, Vergara and Lissi (2021), who state:

[T]he knowledge structure required to perform the task is not yet operating in the less advanced subject, but it is in the cognitive unit that is generated when the two subjects act together. Thus, those more advanced structures that are expected to stabilize in the subject at a given moment do not come only from the subject or only from the environment (from the more advanced subject, in this case) but from a system of activity constituted by the interaction between subject and environment (p. 24).

As a process, learning does not happen "right off the bat", not once and for all. For learning to take place, there must be mediated conditions in which cognitive conflict is promoted and, furthermore, spaces in which the conflict is sustained; in other words, it is mandatory that the cognitive structures are challenged and that the subjects do not get discouraged in the process given the malaise and difficulty that this conveys (Bourgeois, 2009).

Learning would entail taking a position regarding the outer socially mediated practice where individual transformation takes place from the reconstruction of joint activities; the position taken can also be of conflict or uncertainty about the learning experience, including the cognitive conflict itself.

So, based on the General Theory of Learning summarized and reconstructed here, for transformation to take place it is necessary that socially and symbolically mediated possibilities of action are being offered and sustained in time. Concurrently they must be based within the limits of previous knowledge structures so that they can be deconstructed and socially reconstructed into

something truly new, thus generating a progressive advance and active construction of knowledge.

Therefore, this process of significant change necessarily entails an experience of vacuum, gap or 'hiatus', a sort of suspension in stability due to the processes of deconstruction of previously constructed meaning and concurrent reconstruction of collective mediated activities. This would be the "conflict" part of the "cognitive-conflict" concept. Experiencing this gap as a tension in meaning-making could foster the search for stability/self-regulation either through persisting in learning – and so, changing – or by disengaging from the learning experience – and by doing so, trying to retain the stability of the previously constructed meaning-making. This will later be analysed as the affective dimension of the learning process.

Extending on the General Theory of Learning: Reflection and meaning-making in learning.

Delving further into this constructivist comprehension, to Bourgeois (2009) learning requires some degree of reflection. Creating sense out of a cognitive conflict experienced in everyday activities requires that the person knows what structure is operating at a given moment and how it relates to the problem presented: in other words, to be aware of the relationship between a specific action and a determined situation that resists its realization in a feedback of sorts. Moreover, this means not just noticing what already is, but unpacking the operation and its potential (Berger, 2004).

As an example, higher education teachers learn to teach by reflecting on their own experience as students (Yuan, 2017). This has become a well-known problem among educators in different educational levels both in formal (Guerra, 2008; García & Sebastián, 2011) and non-formal settings (Sánchez & Berger, 2019), and has led to a wide range of research in HE (see Ashwin, 2015; Rogers, 2001; Wald et al., 2012). Reflection, thus, has been identified as a turning point through which teachers can begin to change their ways of teaching – to learn – adapting to new and more attuned methods (van den Bos & Brouwer, 2014).

In general, reflection for learning has been defined and conceptualized in many different ways over the years (to expand on the matter, at different levels of analysis, see Boud et at., 1985; Calderhead, 1989; Moon, 2004; Rogers, 2001; McCabe & Thejll-Madsen, 2020). An important amount of research has been carried out, all reporting the many advantages reflection has in the learning process (McCabe & Thejll-Madsen, 2020).

Amongst the many related ideas and overlapping definitions, a broad concept of reflection is understood here as an integration of different elements drawn from the previously referred articles addressing the concept. For this argument, reflection is based on the experience of doubt, challenge and uncertainty, and guides the subject towards achieving a specific goal; it is situated in dialogue with the socio-material means for thought that allow the learners to be progressively more aware of their actions and their foundations, and so to achieve greater self-determination and freedom[3].

In a nutshell, a working definition of reflection for learning here can be understood as the effects that the learners' actions – both internally and externally oriented – have upon themselves, their beliefs, and practices; reflection would always be found in a swing of thought oriented towards oneself and towards others, in the sense of ideas or practices and their effects on subjects themselves and their environment, in recursive and interdependent ways.

By incorporating the earlier theoretical development of learning, it could be stated that the sense of uncertainty and relationality between the learner and the learning situation as an unfinished process would motivate a certain awareness

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[3] In line with Vygotski's thesis (2008; Vygotski & Luria, 1930/2007) about the development of voluntary control and awareness thanks to the learning of sign systems that make it possible to make thought the object of thought. This thesis is also consistent with Freire's (1971/1998) postulates about the development of critical consciousness, within the framework of liberating education.

of the learning process as it unfolds. This conception of reflection is distinct from the concept of metacognition, as it is reflection on the interaction, on what Sebastián et al. (2021) refer to as the system of activity.

Here, reflection would mean the process of becoming aware of the movement of the system of activity, describing the thought processes as a sort of self-regulatory action or feedback. In a sense, this idea would be analogous to the awareness needed to engage in any learning space. As stated in Gallardo & Sebastián (2016)

> [T]he practical "decision" to participate or not, to engage in the specific learning activity (a choice that is not necessarily assumed to be conscious or rational), is the culmination of a complex and active mediated development process, which demands: a) a dynamic system of exchange relating the specific learning situation with internalised practical modes of performed actions, useful for getting engaged in it and b) the use of means of support or transformation in order to initiate and sustain the motivated action: self-instructions, positive mood, beliefs about intelligence (Dweck, 1999), among other forms of self-regulation (p. 295).

Having said this, it has been acknowledged that the perception of difficulties or constraints to change may lead to the conclusion that reflection is not enough, and so discourage it altogether (Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012), supporting the hypothesis that reflection needs to be socially constructed, as the means to think about oneself often comes from socio-cultural practices.

Up to this moment, the argument has led to an understanding of reflection as a self-regulatory movement, consistent with the emergence and unveiling of conflict in the equilibration process, and therefore could be integrated as a key feature for learning not just drawn from other empirical backgrounds but phenomenologically and theoretically coherent with the broader General Theory of Learning.

Affection, emotion and aesthetic experiences as constitutive of human learning

Recognizing the conflictive nature of learning and the tensions it entails does not just challenge the learner from a cognitive perspective, but rather from a holistic perspective. Coherently, some studies have argued in favor of raising awareness about the affective nature of learning, adding complexity to the conceptualization of the whole process (Barer-Stein, 1987; Fossa & Cortés-Rivera, 2023; Loon & Bell, 2018; Mälkki, 2019; Quinlan, 2016).

Here it seems appropriate to discuss a general way of understanding the concepts of affection and emotion, extending into the concept of aesthetic experience for a further exploration of some research literature in adult learning. Then, a re-reading of some research done within the framework of the transformative learning framework will serve as a conceptual anchor to argue in favour of an affectively liminal and edge-emotional understanding of learning.

In line with Teo (2015), and consistently with the General Theory of Learning elaborated earlier, subjectivity is based on a relational background and "needs to include agency, reflexivity, and praxis, as well as the body and the possibilities of resistance, and, of course, thinking, feeling, and willing." (p. 246). This axiological inclusion of both 'mental and physical' elements in a relational manner towards understanding subjectivity, sets up the necessity of including other aspects of the learning experience for its proper comprehension.

According to Greco and Stenner (2008) there are several ways to account for the emotional and affective aspects of experience and subjectivity, that vary throughout history and between different theoretical perspectives. Next, some distinctions are presented between the two.

Through the dynamic, ever new, and diachronically bounded experience of learning, the events that unfold elicit a suspension of the subject's explanatory systems, and so emerges the inexplicable. In Massumi's understanding (1995), this could be called *intensity*, corresponding as/to affect; as such, intensity can relate to its qualification in a manner of interference or resonance, reduction or increase.

For Massumi "linguistic expression can resonate with and amplify intensity at the price of making itself functionally redundant" (p. 84) and therefore, in a sense, affect is limited to its actual expression while being its unactualized – virtual – potential. Following Stenner (2017) affect is virtual in the sense that "the virtual is an undifferentiated potential whose openness is necessarily closed down as soon as it is actualized as some concrete occurrence or entity." (p. 209).

In this emergent movement, the focus is on the process itself, prior to the actualized coding or signification. In a way, the affective experience is that of passage, prior to the reconstruction of a resting movement, finalized and so transformed (Massumi 2002).

On the other hand, Massumi (1995) proposes that emotion is

> [T]he socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized (p. 88).

This conception of emotion can be complemented with Gilmore and Anderson's (2016) psychoanalytic view, where emotions are more than an individualized reaction to a specific event, but interpersonal, situated, and collective experience. Similarly, DiPardo and Potter's (2003) Vygotskian perspective supports this view in such that "emotions develop in concert with the whole of a person's cognitive and social life, continually constructed through social interaction and progressively internalized" (p. 320).

Following their reading of Vygotski, Larraín and Haye (2020) state that through form and imagination, discourse and socio-cultural means transform the affective experience. Here, the cultural means *par excellence* for systematizing and transforming affection would be art, not simply by enabling spaces for expression but by organizing and generalizing them and making them available to be responded and contested. In a sense, through the art-form, affect can be per-

formed in a specific mediated manner that is recognizable as emotion. To the authors, emotions that "are individually felt but socially shared aspects of our bodily experience, become publicly organized in such a way that we can have an experience of them by taking a perspective toward them" (p. 804).

Elaborating on the idea of aesthetics, Larraín and Haye (2020) claim that "with aesthetic experience, emotions become more than just bodily states: they become objects of experience." (p. 804). Every human action presupposes an aesthetic dimension as it produces future oriented meaningful actions to be realized (Tateo, 2017). Meaning is constructed into the artwork from the work of experiencing it, and conversely artwork as structured and coherent objects created from muddled and disorganized experiences becomes a device for meaning-making (Grierson, 2017) through transforming an experience. More on this will be elaborated later.

For now, emotions as a transformation of affection through specific culturally mediated forms can open up the idea of devising particular ways of feeling and experiencing that are themselves learnt and developed relationally and over time. In this case, the way we feel about learning can be transformed through art and aesthetic production.

To Larraín (2015), aesthetics can be broadly understood as the sensory dimension of meaning-making, materialized from social, historical, and conventionally fabricated semiotic forms. Thus,

> [A]esthetics, as a dimension of discourse, plays a crucial role in experience insofar as it is a mode of affecting through which it is possible to take a position toward emotions, and some hidden aspects of social life. The aesthetics of discourse produces emotions and affects through the semiotic fabrication of artificial compositions, which form conveys emotional value that is not easily conceptualized and needs to emerge in an individualized way. In this sense aesthetics is a mode in which particular co-affections occur. One may say that rhetorical and logical aspects of discourse provoke some sort of affection (are other modes of

affecting) while aesthetics provokes others, in the same stream of life. (p. 150).

Further, aesthetics plays such a central role that according to Larraín and Haye (2019) the self is constructed "as an effect of the aesthetic activity involved in everyday discursive life." (p. 8), underlining that aesthetic activity, as the production of new means and finished objects, promotes both the experience of alterity and of singularity in the ongoing and technical process of becoming.

In all the concepts mentioned above there has been some research undertaken over the years to establish their relevance in learning: a good example is Loon and Bell (2018), who argue that learning's effectivity relates partially to the learner's feeling and emotions while learning. In their research, they related emotion with motivation for learning, and they established that changes in emotions (positive or negative) ultimately change skills development, and therefore, those who adequately regulate their emotions may also be more effective learners. This argument matches the overall idea that positive emotions relate to better outcomes and positive general learning experience (Quinlan, 2016).

From another perspective, concerning the central role of aesthetics in psychological dynamics and emotional elaboration (Larraín, 2015), their role in learning processes has been related to the formation of articulated concepts out of affective experiences. These concepts "become available for later reflection and further learning" (Grierson, 2017, p. 1247).

Thus, aesthetics has been highlighted as a way of enhancing learning (Tordini, 2018), broadening thought processes (Gulla, 2018), and of fighting standardization and opening the learner to discovery (Greene, 1980). More recently, Doddington (2021) has argued in favour of an educational practice based on aesthetic experiences as a way to "both promote human flourishing and foster better forms of cohesive and enriched social living" (p. 273).

By understanding the complexity of affective experiences and their relevance in learning processes, this theory work argues for an integration of affection and

emotion into the General Theory of Learning, where learning is understood as a truly novel experience and a change process that is transformational and meaningful by definition. The processual mode of understanding affect, taken together with the relational and socially constructed conception of emotions and the role that aesthetic experiences have in meaning-making as a tool for thought leads to a plausible introduction of these aspects as part of the overall learning process while maintaining its relational epistemological solidity.

How does learning feel? Conceptual articulations and bridges

As discussed earlier, Transformative Learning Theory, alongside its own problems, understands affection and emotion as playing different adjacent roles in learning, both not being integrated to it within the central dynamics of the process and therefore left as a surplus (even if a possibly beneficial one). It has been argued that the reason for this problem lies in its positioning in the epistemic framework of the split. Therefore, in order to take advantage of some of the powerful intuitions that have been developed in this thesis about the role of emotions in the framework of learning, it is necessary to re-read some of its proposals from the relational epistemic framework in which the General Theory of Learning presented is situated.

Within Transformative Learning theory, Illeris (2013) points out that the learning process should always try to get people out of their *comfort zone* (a concept further developed in Mälkki, 2010); this would mean that people are partially engaged and partially willing to disengage as change may endanger their identity and bring about chaos and anxiety. If this assumption is accepted as part of the General Theory of Learning by resting on the concept of equilibrium, it would lead to understand learning as a paradox, a contradiction of desirable and undesirable cognitive and affective experiences.

As stated by Mälkki (2010),

> [W]hen we are able to maintain the coherence and continuity of our meaning perspective, we may be seen to be functioning on a comfort zone. Correspondingly, when this is not the case, we are out of the comfort

zone, or at the edges of it. Furthermore, I propose the term edge-emotions to refer to the unpleasant emotions which arise at the edges of the comfort zone, that is, when the meaning perspective becomes challenged. (p. 49)

Understanding comfort zone from the General Theory of Learning as the operation of the current knowledge structure of the learner when assimilation preponderates, edge emotions would be another dynamic in the effort of conserving the identity of the structure/learner, thus giving a specific place to affection in learning. In her own words, Mälkki (2010) follows Damasio suggesting that "challenging this continuity can be experienced as a threat to the functioning of the organism" (p. 53).

The effort to avoid edge emotions and stay close to the limits of the current knowledge structure would explain the necessity for reflection to learn, that is, to recognize the self-regulatory movement, make the conflict conscious and interrupt the tendency of meaning-making (Mälkki & Green, 2018). Although this would suggest that reflection is not a pleasant or an easy thing to carry out regularly and that it is even a threat to the current functioning of the learner, it would also mean that reflection is a type of work needed to transform affect in the experience of learning in a way that promotes learning.

If we re-read these ideas from the framework built so far, this notion of a necessity for reflection would help to further integrate what was previously stated as affect and emotion. Both would account for similar phenomena, but emotion could be referring to affects that are culturally traversed, transformed in a certain way that makes them recognisable, controllable, workable, conscious, etc. Thus, the point of reflection as becoming conscious of the conflicts would also serve to explain how 'conflicting affects' are transformed into complex emotions. This will be explored more later in this section.

2.1.2 How learning is experienced.

As we can see, Transformative Learning Theory theorists treat edge-emotions as an individual mechanism affecting the learning process, neglecting the socio-cultural nature and construction of the emotional experience. At this point it is

productive to turn to another perspective that deals with the experience of meaningful change and borrow the anthropological concept of liminal experiences as a socially supported and affectively charged transition.

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1967) characterizes transitional beings as polluting[4] because they are "neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; […] and are at the very least "betwixt and between" (p. 97). In times of liminality, individuals are deprived of previous habits, thoughts or feelings, and alternatively forced to reflect upon what may be.

To Stenner (2017), liminal experiences happen "during occasions of significant transition, passage or disruption" (p. 14). They can be understood as "becomings" (p. 14) and are experienced "in a paradoxical logic that is both 'both/and' and 'neither/nor'. […] [L]iminal occasions tend to be highly affective in nature because they are formative moments of great significance: leaps into the unknown." (p. 15). The idea of being 'both/and' and 'neither/nor', resonates both with the relational-dialectical understanding of Piaget's transformation process in knowledge structures and with the conflicting affects involved in learning.

Thus, these edges of dynamic and moving ways of understanding are the "most precarious – and important – transformative space" (Berger, 2004, p. 338). While being on the edge of knowing "relative certainties of one's previous conceptual system dissolve as one moves into a liminal zone" (Green, 2012, p. 209), thus encompassing two alternatives, the insufficient previous knowledge structure and the yet-to-be known. As a liminal experience, this is a process that anyone just "must go through" (Stenner, 2017, p. 24).

According to Stenner (2017), the spontaneous processes of transformations as liminal experiences "throw us, as it were, into an unpredictable, ambivalent and

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[4] See Douglas, P.M., & Douglas, M. (1996). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015811

volatile situation and condition" (p. 23). On the other hand, liminal experiences can be devised through "liminal affective technologies" (p. 24), like a ritual or rite of passage, "that helps us to navigate and manage spontaneous liminality" (p. 25). These techniques, like rehearsing and practising collectively, would mean a possible pathway to systematically internalize collective ways of experiencing uncertainty through rehearsing/preparing for the transition (Zittoun & Stenner, 2021), experiencing in advance with others via performed practices to progressively appropriate a way of experience individually.

The author states that

> To be concerned with process and liminality is to insist that the transitions, borders, gaps, voids, fissures and movements between states, positions, systems and disciplines are not nothing but are crucial zones or space/times in which new forms are created and experimented with: the quick of culture. Between the liminal and the ordinary there is an incessant weaving of the fabric of a living, psychosocial culture (p. 25).

By integrating the ideas of edge emotions and liminal experiences, the proposed re-work would be that the learning process (as operating beyond the edge of current knowledge, individual and/or collective) is also leaping beyond the edge of articulated and systematized experience and therefore rendering it as liminal: not fully available as a thought process/utterance, and hence not fully available as a learning material because it is not yet constructed or signified as an emotional *and* cognitive experience. An amendment to this would be via the mediation of liminal affective technologies, and thus strengthening the place of collectively mediated practices for learning.

In line with Stenner (2017), the learning process would be utterly affective, where "the realm of the 'this is not' (the not quite, not yet and no longer) is celebrated

as the liminal zone of real becoming" (p. 209) [5]. For a person, to cross the threshold that leads to learning means also moving past the affect involved in the preservation of previous self and knowledge; in other words, every equilibration process is affective in the sense that it unveils the struggle between adapting to the new and going back to the prior – the un-adaptative.

The potential to integrate an affective understanding of learning into the transformational experience would be through art and aesthetics as a technical effort to articulate experience into a shared, *reflectable* learning material: emotions. This way, the argument is that although learning can feel in a particular way – uncertain, strange, anxious – it does not need to stay like that as it can be collectively appropriated and transformed. That leads the way into noting the self-regulatory movement in the learning process when affect is still rendered as virtual intensity and the general meaning-making is suspended as it is being transformed with others.

This idea follows that of Stenner & Zittoun (2020) of devised liminal experiences (liminality 1) in relation to spontaneous liminality (liminality 2), where "art and life reciprocally interpenetrate one another" (p. 245), through Stenner's (2017) concept of liminal affective technologies.

Re-reading Massumi's (2002) concept of affect from a relational epistemic framework, because the liminal experience is occurring it cannot be understood as a pre-divisible affective experience, it is not an antecedent, cause, or independent variable of learning. In fact, learning can be understood as liminal only if it is also understood as a constructive and generative process that is not self-contained from the start to its end point, being truly open, and so, in need of closure, which is exactly the experience of cognitive conflict described by the

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[5] Noting that "affectivity is, in one sense, a constant: it does not just appear in situations of disruption or transformation, but threads through our lives at every conceivable point." (Stenner, 2017, p. 239)

General Learning Theory. At a certain level, learning may always feel uncertain and confusing.

In contrast, to make this experience bearable, as proposed by Vygotski (1925/2007), the social technique of emotions that is art would allow negative and positive feeling to be combined in unitary and manageable experiences for human beings and thus transform the experience of learning in situated, mediated cultural ways such as enjoyment, curiosity, playfulness, etc. Art would enter as a social-cultural affective technique to aid the construction of meaning, sense, and direction of the unknown in its *unknowability* and thus, enabling reflection as a means for learning that is both emotional and cognitive.

The experience of conflict for learning, cognitive and emotionally.

This theory work proposes that every learning process is, in itself, an affective experience. As such, there would be no such thing as a merely cognitive learning process. Every time people learn they are feeling edge-emotions and experiencing liminality. Furthermore, we argue that if the learning process occurs in an intentionally structured setting, it is possible to think about such learning experiences being mediated by liminal affective techniques.

It has been stated that affect takes a central place in the unfolding experience of change, conflict, and contradiction as uncertainty, and so, it should be accounted for in the dynamics by which the learning process is understood. If learning is experienced as confusion and uncertainty and, at the same time, it also requires engagement through 'positive' emotions, what has been developed here is a way to sustain that for learning to take place, there has to be some form of complex emotions in which opposing, and even contradictory 'valence' can make up and be integrated into the same experience. Here, this is what art and the various cultural forms would produce: transforming uncertainty into curiosity (understanding that in curiosity, uncertainty and the desire to be involved coexist in an articulated way).

Of course, the hypothesis that has been conceptually articulated here should be the subject of further research, both theorical and empirical. The transformation

of complex emotions that would be characteristic of the various processes of human learning should also be investigated carefully. Quite possibly this development of the emotions in/for learning could partially explain the transformation of children learning into the way adults learn, in a way that is consistent with the proposal of general learning theory.

In contrast with Transformative Learning Theory by Mezirow and his followers, the argument here has tried to conceptualize both affect and emotion, and learning from a dialectic-relational epistemic framework (Castorina, 2010), and with that, the proposed way of integrating them internally has been suggested as the way that they participate in the same process, as part of the experience of conflict and uncertainty for learning. The first question of how learning feels thus turns into how learning is experienced, as experience can arguably articulate contrasting and even conflicting feelings into a coherent and complex experience.

Overall, it is proposed that emotions are not merely individual but also collective and always mediated pathways to conceptualize and understand affective experiences. Following a Vygotskian perspective (DiPardo & Potter, 2003), they are learnt but they also must be transformed and integrated into the stream of experience in such a way that they can be used for reflection. The means for doing this is by incorporating affective liminal devices into the experience of learning as an aid for sustaining cognitive conflict and mediated collective practices that are unfamiliar for the learner.

Coming back to the notion of reflection, here it would be a self-regulatory movement at the heart of the learning process by understanding it as the way in which the learner sustains awareness of the learning process when learning and suggests that for any learning theory to be comprehensive of the experience it must account for a dynamic that explains the affective experience of learning integrated to the whole process.

In Gilmore and Anderson's (2016) view, "learning involves more than cognitive accommodation and assimilation" (p. 695); it involves all the learner's ways of experiencing life. Here, we could agree with them since emotion can be

productive or unproductive as a result of the collective emotional practices that are involved in learning. On the other hand, we would not be talking about eliminating, suppressing, controlling, or managing emotions of any valence for learning. In contrast, the discussion would move to complexly integrating emotions into the work and experience of learning since contradictory emotions - typically those of negative or positive valences - are part of the learning itself.

Learning would always feel, at least, affectively uncertain since in order to learn it is necessary to 'produce' and experience some conflict. The experience of learning should not be understood as an extra factor interfering with cognitive learning or an aid for easy remembering (as in Mezirow, 1991), but as a tendency to preserve previous ways of knowing that feel comfortable and make the world understandable (Mälkki, 2010), and therefore, as a tendency to conserve previous knowledge structure and/or disengaging in the learning process, as a meaningful experience of conflict. Now, what is interesting is how this uncertainty is indeed experienced and, therefore, how it is worked-through and transformed semiotically and collectively.

Thus, learning is an invitation to give into the transitional contradictions and conflicts of changing something that has worked in the past (Bourgeois, 2009; Mälkki, 2020). As experienced by the learner, learning "is more like travelling trackless ways illuminated only by commitment and the anticipation of discovery" (Barer-Stein, 1987, p. 100), if it is not well supported affectively.

In the words of Barer-Stein (1987), "learning in everyday life may be expressed as a process of experiencing that which is different or unfamiliar. The briefest personal reflection will reveal to each of us that we do not learn what we already know" (p. 89). In this sense, learning deals with what is at the edge of current knowledge, and so, encompassing an affective experience of unease or unfamiliarity which is a constitutive aspect of the learning process; learning is a liminal experience of difficulty, transition, and disruption, in other words, of conflict.

Moreover, learning is "a choice to move toward the unknown; a position always clouded with anxiety if not fear. Above all, to make a choice to shift away from

what is known and familiar, is a deliberate movement to the possibility of change" (Barer-Stein, 1987, p.102) and so, it requires pedagogical support not just in a cognitive sense.

Through the understanding of learning as a liminal experience of change and transition, it can account for both the affective and cognitive dimensions together as a process. As a deep dive into the unfamiliar, it is at the same time and for the same reasons an experience of un-actualized potential and of disequilibrium that needs to be sustained by cultural practices and/or socially mediated tools for transformation and integration into prior structures.

So we can state that a sound cognitive understanding of learning is not the only aspect required to understand the broader phenomenon of the learning experience. A synergetic integration and profound understanding of affect that is inherent in the meaning-making process should inform any pedagogical intervention intended to bring about change in others, as affection is inexorably bound up in the process of learning. Art, as a cultural medium, would make it possible to articulate, to synthesise these complex emotions necessary for learning. Further theorical and empirical explorations will be done in this thesis later on, to address ways in which the experiences of learning can be devised and transformed to support complex emotions. Still, art and experience are concepts that if explored systematically can provide more insight into the learning processes.

For now, the argument has been that the experience of learning can be transformed through liminal affective devices as emotions are transformed by art through form and imagination. As such, structured educational settings (whether formally organized or not) can provide such means of transformation in specific, contextually relevant and intentional ways. As clues for further theoretical and empirical exploration, a case could be made to dive into the field of art-based educational and research practices, or playful stances to learning (Mukherjee et al., 2023), to address ways in which the experiences of learning can be devised and transformed to support complex emotions. Furthermore, rereading the work in epistemic emotions and epistemic cognition (Muis et al., 2018; 2021;

Nerantzaki et al., 2021) as something that is formed and transformed culturally could be worthwhile as it could lead to further integration of both fields of inquiry through a complex understanding of learning.

If learning is indeed an experience that can be produced and devised, the next argument developed here is that experiences should be able to be learnt and lead to learning. Up to this point, the concept of experience has been used relatively loosely, and thus it may be wise to take time to address it carefully. To that end, a closer look at the concept of experience will be developed.

What is an experience.

Beginning to explore theoretically the concept of experience begs to recognise that it is a difficult one to express, and many have tried. John Dewey argues that *an* experience "is heightened vitality […] is the fulfilment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things." (1934/1980, p.19). Still, 'ordinary' experience does not constitute an experience because in common life there are distractions and dispersion: "we start and then we stop, not because the experience has reached the end for the sake of which it was initiated but because of extraneous interruptions or of inner lethargy." (p.35). In contrast, *an* experience has a sense of discreteness, unity and completion: "we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences." (p.35).

To Dewey, experience may be analytically addressed but because it has a distinctive quality, a wholeness to it, it can't be understood exclusively from its components. The stable and dynamic quality that resists the analytical characterization of experience has also been identified by Larraín (2015), drawing from Bakhtin and Vygotski. To Larraín, experience "is the unity of a social situation and how it is interpreted in a continuous and always evolving process of constructing self and personality." (p. 150). The Vygotskian implications of such understanding of experience will be further developed later on here, but for now it is important to look closely at the dialogic aspect of experience argued by Larraín, that is clearly contrasting to the primarily embodied understanding of

experience (Thorburn & Stolz, 2023). To her, experience is not detached from discourse: experience is discursively mediated and therefore, the way in which an experience is lived is already culturally and semiotically transformed through speech.

Furthermore, Ziarek (2001) also offers an understanding of experience that is materialized in a linguistic structure but is still open-ended in relation to its representation. In its occurrence, the newness of the experience remains incomplete given that it "is not a temporal punctuality or an instant of presence but, instead, a dynamic and open-ended field of forces, whose historicity prevents experience from closing into representational constructs, psychic spaces, or lived instants." (p.13). An experience then is to be understood as a process after completion and through representation /mediation, but in a dialogical movement that secures its historicity, dynamism and future transformability. With this view – in contrast with the "empiricist" and cumulative understanding of experience – experience would be a relational process. As Stenner (2017) puts it

> Each actual occasion of experience, no matter how complex and creative, and whether physical, organic, conscious or social, is constituted as the event it is by virtue of the fact that it can form a process by way of connection with comparable events that precede it (in its immediate past) and follow it (in its immediate future). An actual occasion of experience is thus a minimal unit of process (the actualization of an object in process of becoming) which provides the 'present' for what is always a broader manifold of past process giving rise to future process. (p. 123)

By considering the dialogical movement in experience, Haye & Larraín (2013) argue that it "implies that human experience has a fundamental rhetorical aspect, because it means that everyday experience is addressed towards others within an ideological field in the form of a reply." (p.137). Interestingly, here a distinction appears drawn from adding "human" to experience. In a sense, it is foreshadowing again the crucial role of mediation to experience while showing a possible way of understanding that there may be such a thing as un-mediated

experience – like a certain phenomenological understanding of experience (Cresswell & Haye, 2018).

With Larraín (2015), experience could be understood as "a process of affection, or active contestation to another" (p.149). Affection – taken from Spinoza – would involve not only the encounter with others in the stream of life but an implied sense of alteration. This idea of affection wouldn't require mediation; hence, this way of understanding experience as affection is another characteristic that may be thought of before mediation as a process, and that would be transformed through speech.

Following Larraín, *an* experience then, would not only be characterized by its transformation though the cultural-dialogical structure of an utterance/reply, but would also be,

> "A flow constantly interrupted (caused) and disturbed by other bodies. […] The source of my experience is the interaction with other bodies. […] Experience is the flow of responses and reactions to me as another. Experience, as by the other's counter-movement." (p.150).

Taking the overall conception of an experience as affection with a reply structure suggests that an experience (a) is a process of affection that is transformed by cultural and social mediation and thus essentially emotional (as further developed in Dewey and Larraín), and (b) has a contrasting quality, a sense of unity and closure. A tentative way of conceptualizing un-mediated experience would be as an unfolding process, but to have *an* experience we require some sort of mediation to structure it and relate it to other experiences through said structure.

Here a first point can be surmised to later think about an experience as something that is learnt: arguing that a key aspect of an experience is that it is transformed leads to thinking that there could be different ways of having an experience. This idea will be further explored in the coming section.

For now, the idea of experience as mediated and transformed would imply that two types of experiences might be depicted: the un-mediated experience (something like "unfolding" experience) and an experience that is constructed. With this, it can be provisionally surmised that an issue with some conceptualizations of experience would be trying to understand the first without the second, as if in a split. That is just another way of getting to the same point as in Cresswell and Haye (2018). In this work here, an experience is made to be a process that is transformed, yet it carries the core characters of experiencing.

Still, building upon Cresswell and Haye, they address the concept of experience through their reading of William James. For them, James "accounts for knowledge and consciousness from an ontological conception of experience as the ever-changing and multifarious field of existence, in opposition to an epistemological justification of experience in terms of supra-empirical forms endowed with universality, unity, and impassivity." (p.323)

The twist that they argue with James is that "thoughts and things exist, both in the basic mode of relations and transitions among other thoughts and things, especially temporal relations (of continuity) that make each thought and thing a part of an open subprocess" (p.323). Emphasizing the idea of relations as a key aspect leads them to propose that experiencing as an active process "essentially involves multiple perspectives that contextualize each piece of experience into different series or stories drawn at different scales and upon different interests" (p.324) and thus helps to integrate the notion of quality from Dewey with the mediated, dialogical and rhetorical notion of an experience as the structure of reply within a larger and articulated series.

With them, experience is understood not in relations but as relations, thus paving the way to think that the distinctive quality of an experience is that of a new relation, a new reply that was not there before but that is semiotically constructed and can be integrated as an experience. Through the mediated structure, a new experience would be constructed as qualitatively distinct from the others as its relation to the others; in a dialogical movement granting its beginning and ending without losing the newness of the experience.

Back to our initial case of ECA experiences of teaching in Higher Education, this theoretical consideration of the concept of experience would be key to further understanding the complexities of it. When we address the experiences of teaching, it could be argued from this perspective that we are exploring experiences not as facts of life but as relations, semiotically entangled yet distinct from each other and thus, encompassing past, present and future experiences, open and dialogically constructed. Commenting on Cresswell and Haye, they conclude that

> Experience is not about fixed and complete objects, but of processes and tendencies. Experience is not, like consciousness, the condition of the *presentation* of things, but the general name we give to situated and thus unrepeatable events at the same time passing and emerging, existing not in the single dimension of actuality but in the multiple relations with that which is already gone and that which is yet to be born. Experience is experience of change and continuity, not of states and categorically clearcut presences (phenomena). […] So we do feel relations among aspects of experience, and these transitive feeling, themselves the bases of abstract relations, are the main building blocks of experience. (Italics on the original, p. 325-326)

So far, the argument has addressed how an experience is both a process and developed as such. Still, further refinement of the argument needs to be made to unpack the conceptual relationship between experience and the learning process. Up until this point, it could be stated that in an experience there would be a certain ongoing construction. Experiences are constructed as relations to each other, are dialogical and a whole.

In other words, from what has been outlined this far, it could be argued that *an experience is always constructed*, and thus involves a learning process. With this, all early career academics experiences of teaching in higher education, their role and learning for it would be constructed as an experience. Yet, that doesn't fully account for the conceptual implications of experiences being learnt. A key

concept to elaborate on that argument is *perezhivanie*, as developed originally by Vygotski (1994).

2.1.3 How experience is learnt.

> *The sounds of strangeness,*
>
> *an a with an I be sound.*
>
> *Listen to know the truth*
>
> *while you are;*
>
> *pulls it all together.*
>
> *The sameness of things*
>
> *that I know.*
>
> *I know that*
>
> *I know as.*

Learning to experience and perezhivanie.

Perezhivanie is a notoriously underdeveloped concept in Vygotskian Theory (see Blunden, 2016; Vassilieva & Zavershneva, 2020; Veresov, 2019), and thus some caution is warranted when addressing it as it comes at different points of his work (Zittoun & Stenner, 2021). Being inscribed within the larger epistemology of the cultural-historical tradition and in relationship with other concepts, perezhivanie appears in the work of Lev Vygotski (1994) as "a prism which determines the role and influence of the environment on the development of, say, the child's character, his (sic) psychological development, etc." (p. 341). To Vygotski, perezhivanie is "an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics, which are represented in the perezhivanie" (p. 342), but this needs further exploration.

Unpacking this concept for the English speaker, Blunden (2016) argues that perezhivanie is different from the empiricist (and traditional) idea of experience given that experience as the accumulation of facts or mere lived history has another word in Russian – opit. Perezhivanie, in a sense, relates better to Dewey's notion of an experience (Hohr, 2013); yet, considering its etymology, the word carries a sense of "over-living" or "re-living" with a nuance of coping, working-through, and catharsis.

According to Blunden, perezhivaniya – plural for perezhivanie – must be processed, they must be worked over with a unifying quality: thus, "a perezhivanie is both an experience (in the sense in which Dewey explained) and the "working over" of it." (p. 277), it is "not just what *happened* to you, but what you *did* [...] how you worked over them and gave them meaning" (italics in the original, p. 278).

In the words of Vassilieva and Zavershneva (2020), perezhivanie would be the "labour of experiencing" (p. 26), which is perfectly consistent with Baquero's (1998) understanding of the notion of work in Vygotski as the active, voluntary and conscious transformation of nature, and thus both the product of and condition for the increasingly voluntary and conscious behaviour of the individual. Interestingly, this notion of work allows us to think about asserting dominion over experiencing. In a sense, this would lead to thinking about work as a practice that produces specific subjectivities.

Still, going back to the above quotes from Vygotski, Blunden argues that "unity" means not an aggregation but a relation: "unity is the intersection not the union, those aspects or features that are both personal and environmental." (p. 278). On the other hand, the idea of a "prism" is argued to be a metaphor by Veresov & Fleer (2016) and Veresov (2019), where reflection is turned into refraction, but here there are some further articulations needed too.

One issue to be aware of is that Vygotski was trying to build his theory and concepts from a dialectical perspective derived from Hegel, Marx and Engels, amongst other influences (Castorina & Baquero, 2005). That means not simply understanding a term like "intersection" in an everyday or mathematical sense

(like in Set Theory) because intersection here is not meant to channel thinking of a definite and common element, aspect or quality that is shared by two groups or more. Arguably, intersection in that sense leads to think about the element as preexisting the intersection.

On the other hand, refraction has a connotation of a split between what is, before and after the effect of the prism. Within the Vygotskian theoretical background, a perezhivanie – a working-through experiencing – probably shouldn't be understood as the "distortion" of an objective reality into a subjective experience nor an interaction of two things that might exist independently – like the refracting effect of a prism upon a surface – but as a mediated technical effort for constructing a meaning that is relational and is developed in a specific cultural setting. In a sense, this means thinking about both personal and situational characteristics as in a dialectic need which in turn would lead to thinking about the necessity to think about perezhivanie as transformative.

By the same rationale, the idea of an intersection falls short of the relational-dialectical thinking under which the theory was developed. Moving beyond the idea of an intersection would mean to argue for a way in which perezhivanie does not exist as the common and shared element of individual and environment but as something that exists *because of* such intersection. In other words, perezhivanie is constituted only as it is both individual and collective; it is not something that is independently individual and collective and simply happens to intersect both. It is constituted as a dialectical relational need of surpassing the duality of individual and environment in experiencing.

Perezhivanie would then be a working-through experiencing and a conjunction – instead of an intersection – of the individual with the (socio)environment; the collective has already been instrumental in establishing the material conditions that shape the way in which the individual can perezhivanie through the appropriation of cultural means of participation, which in turn generates the conditions for a specific manner of working-through the experience. Here, individual and collective are equally necessary and constitutive of the way of perezhivanie. This might lead to thinking about perezhivaniya that are learnt.

The uniqueness of a perezhivanie would be a product of a systematic learning process: the idea of unity as argued by Blunden can be better explained as a conjunction considering that perezhivaniya are distributed, predicated of a dialectic relation. They are the ongoing results of internalization processes, where the idea of a "unity" is already predicated of the mediated relationships in interpsychic spaces, in which the individual can actually have a working-through experience with an other by engaging in culturally mediated joint activities. In other words, the idea of unity with respect of totality can be understood as an experience that is distributed in an interpsychic space, where the specific experience would not be possible outside of it or in a different interpsychic space as it would be necessarily relational.

With Veresov (2016; 2019; Veresov & Fleer, 2016), perezhivanie might be understood not just with the concepts of unity/unit but as a unit of analysis in the Vygotskian sense (Castorina & Baquero, 2005). This mode of thinking would mean asking what is the whole/unity that is divided into units, or what is the particular property in need of explanation. Here, units share the properties of the unity – like molecules *of* water. Understanding that the social situation of development could be thought of as learning, learning could be considered as the unity encompassing different complex processes and elements. It would make sense then to affirm that the property of such a social situation is to be the source of development, as learning would be the source of development for Vygotski.

Then, perezhivaniya can be understood as units of analysis in the sense that they are further irreducible units that carry the property of being ongoing learning interactions, activity processes that transform experience: they are the conjunctions of selves in particular social interactions, in the specific ways of learning to/from experience over time. In that way, they are molecules of learning as they are a working-through of experiencing within a particular social conjunction. Perezhivanie is a working-through learning experiencing that carries on the properties of such unity in a relational understanding: it is predicated of the different specific relationships between the individuals and their

internalization processes, and the specific and mediated socio-cultural interactions leading towards such and other internalization processes.

In that particular sense, an experience understood as perezhivanie is learnt: it is a unit of the larger dynamic learning process transforming experiencing. Furthermore, perezhivanie as a concept would transform the study of experiences as it would provide a theoretical framework to increase the complexity of it. Understood as perezhivanie, an experience would carry on the properties of the learning processes unfolding in its dialectical transformation; it would bring together the past, present and future of the experience and the learning implied in it. Perezhivanie would be the taking, the dominion of experience by transforming and appropriating it in a relational dialect sense, just as much as for Vygotski concepts transform thinking.

At this point, the literature mentioned in Part I on ECAs' experiences of their role, and of teaching, plus the literature on learning for them, and how learning is experienced come together as part of one complex process in perezhivanie. Moreover, taken together, the descriptively scattered and conflictive fields start to make sense. If these experiences are both learnt and learning processes in themselves, what might be missing from these bodies of literature is not so much the 'what' as the 'how' they came/are coming to be like that, in each specific setting and accounting for the various relationships – although some of them possibly being similar enough to be recognized as more or less stable and predictable, coming from particular sets of relationships. The conceptual movement proposed here would be to think about the transformation of experience as perezhivanie, and thus looking for the way experience is appropriated and transformed as such.

Re-working these ECA experiences through the concept of perezhivanie would entail understanding them as experiences that are constructed and being constructed at a particular time, and thus experienced in particular ways. Each time we research the experiences of teaching – as in this case – we could fall into the illusion of unpredictability as we would find such diverse responses. In turn, with this theory work, an alternative argument can be provisionally

72

suggested to address this issue: studying experiences as perezhivanie also means studying learning unfolding as perezhivanie.

Specifically, here it can also be hypothesised that some ECAs have not necessarily undergone intentional learning processes that offer specific and/or productive ways of experiencing teaching in particular and their role as teachers in general. As a result, the field finds them experiencing this process in many different ways, more or less productive, more or less conductive to good teaching, more or less aligned with academic well-being, and more or less leaning towards feeling uncertainty, etc. The point here would be analogous to that of Baquero (1998). Learning as a formal practice would be a systematic and intentional way of producing subjectivities through the specific work relationships; as such, the systematicity and stability of structured practices would produce relatively systematic and stable subjects. The lack of such could potentially offer an explanation as to why the field is so scattered.

Through the theorical re-work done here, the value of perezhivanie as a concept is that, because it was developed under a relational epistemology (Becerra & Castorina, 2015; 2021; Castorina, 2009; 2010; 2014; 2020; 2022), it offers an understanding of experiences as something open, dynamic, unique and ever-new, as well as historically constructed and – even – devised and produced. Moreover, these ideas would closely relate to the General Theory of Learning as developed by Sebastián (Sebastián & Lissi, 2016; Sebastián et al., 2021), through their work on articulating key concepts in learning theories from the Piagetian and Vygotskian frameworks, and with the theory work already developed on how learning feels like as an ongoing, dynamic process through a constructivist perspective.

Here, perezhivanie is a working-through learning experiencing where the individual is becoming with the different situated 'environments' as being internalized at that time (development), is working as him/herself (lived experience/consciousness) and is working-through with others in a specific social situation (learning). Thus, perezhivanie is a working-through experiencing that exists because of and leads to learning.

Perezhivaniya can be understood as processes and as actualizations; in the same way that word meaning is a process and develops, they can also be understood as the actualization of such a process at a moment in time. In a sense, this accounts for the stable and dynamic character of an experience. Thus, the quality of the experience would not be intrinsic, opaque, and mysterious, but dialogically mediated and socio-culturally constructed as it is unfolding and in transformation; it's the specific relationships that constitute perezhivaniya at different temporal speeds and at different structural levels. Instead of discouraging the study of experiences, this theory work is an invitation to consider the many complexities of the phenomenon from a relational perspective.

Implications for empirical research of an experience.

As stated in the previous section and framing the theory work carried out here, early career academics experience teaching in HE and their role as something which they have not been necessarily or sufficiently prepared for, which adds to an already challenging and demanding job. Being an academic requires doing a fair amount of emotional labour for various reasons, one of which might be because of the different and unpredictable ways in which institutions provide emotional support for the demands of the role – if they provide any.

The current field of ECAs' experiences of teaching, learning and their role at the start of their trajectories might come across as confusing or convoluted, if it is not properly understood in its complexity. The argument developed here is that early career academics learn to experience teaching in the way of perezhivanie. The rationale so far has been that learning is an essentially emotional process. The emotionality of learning can be understood as the suspension of explanatory systems, in a conflicting experience of change and continuity. Thus, edge emotions and liminal experiences provide a way of understanding how learning feels; in this case, ECAs are learning to teach and to be academics, amongst many things. Teaching then is experienced as something that is being learnt; that would account for why both fields look so alike: for this case, they are essentially addressing the same larger process.

Still, the experience of teaching can be devised just as the experience of learning can be devised. ECAs have learnt how to experience learning and thus how to experience teaching. The argument then moves to state that thinking about this phenomenon as perezhivanie is a better way to address the issues within the field. With this re-work of the phenomena of experiencing teaching, learning and the academic role in general, experiencing can be theoretically thought of as something that is constructed and learnt, as well as constructing and leading to more learning. In particular, the overall claim of this theory work is that the experience of teaching is learnt as perezhivanie. Put differently, people collectively and mediately work-through their experiences of teaching in HE, and thus transform and appropriate them as well as learn to/from their experiences.

Through the theory work developed here, a distinct issue in educational research may have been provisionally addressed through psychological theory, by inscribing it within the scope of the General Learning Theory, Vygotskian cultural-historical theory, and the multiplicity of academic voices that have followed him and extended his work.

As part of a meta theory that is future oriented, an interesting implication arises for those working in the field of Educational Development, Continuous Professional Development, Faculty/Academic development, and/or for those working with early career academics in general: the way that academics experience teaching as part of their role can be intentionally devised and produced, in a way that aligns with both the literature on teaching and learning and on academic wellbeing. This way, the aim would be to think of ways in which academics can work-through the experiences as they unfold and thus appropriate them and construct them consciously.

In other words, academics could learn how to experience their teaching, even when they have very little or no *actual* experience – actual experience as opit, in the Russian sense. With perezhivanie, it is interesting to think of experience as mediately and collectively constructed. Experience re-worked as something learnt and constructed, transformed and open to further transformation, is a

particularly interesting way of addressing the dynamic, changing and already challenging work of ECAs in HEIs.

Understanding these experiences as perezhivaniya allows both practitioners and researchers to think about collectives that are both learning for the role, learning to teach and learning to experience such processes, while working-through such experiences. Later here, the discussion will address how to research said processes in a way that is coherent with the conceptual work and epistemological framework of perezhivanie, and the literature described.

A further reflection from this theory work points to the importance of providing real opportunities for doctoral researchers to have teaching experiences as part of doctoral programmes (Jordan & Howe, 2018), mentoring and formal or informal development (Boyce et al., 2019), and to take part in collective practices where teaching is at the centre, to learn ways to experience teaching and their role in a positive, productive manner. Any of the above would provide interesting developmental opportunities for ECAs as they would be able to take part – even if small – in conjunct, collective ways of experiencing teaching, that they could then draw from for later reconstruction and appropriation of how to experience teaching, learning and their role and thus transform their experience as they experience it.

This reasoning is therefore in line with McCune (2021), in stressing the importance of novel academics taking part in discursive, dialogic, relational practices that can be later internalized as ways of thinking about themselves, their teaching, their role, and their learning processes.

Theoretically speaking, the focus so far has been to look at experience as learnt: as a unity that is distributed and constructed relationally. The critical understanding of the notion of an experience as developed so far by articulating it with the experience of learning helps to shed light on the whole process while also providing insights into the issue developed earlier. If experiencing is itself learnt and conducing to learning as we experience it as perezhivanie, it makes sense that neither the experience of the role, of teaching and of learning are univocal or easily predictable. We need to understand the development of such

a way of experiencing within a larger process. Possible avenues for future exploration would be a closer integration of the ideas developed here with the General Theory of Learning developed by Sebastián (Sebastián & Lissi, 2016; Sebastián et al., 2021).

The mediated character as well as the developmental, relational and processual background of an experience must be attended to carefully as it may be easily referred to as incoherent actualizations of a unity that we neither fully understand nor address. Corollary inquiries here raise questions about how an experience can be understood through research as it would be susceptible to be transformed both intentionally and/or unintentionally through it.

Yet, this re-work might also come with some implications and limitations when referring to research. Saying that experience is learnt and can produce learning leads to thinking about it as open to change. In turn, that could lead to a certain relativistic view on research and a decrease in its value and purpose. In a sense, some might say that an experience is always distorted by research and therefore never truly accessible. In a way, this theory work would support that reasoning by implying that an experience could change due to the interactive-ness of the research process and elaboration through dialogue. Entertaining that idea, the problem might turn into the epistemological bases of research paradigms for researching experiences.

Additionally, a challenge to this idea of constructing experiences would be to address the identification of sameness and relatability of experiences. In other words, an issue here could be how to make sense of collective and recognizable experiences that are shared by a group or cultural unit. This would require further discussion, but tentatively it could be hypothesized that the recognition of common experiences is not something predicated on the experiences themselves but on a relatively stable structure that makes such experiences shared and recognizable in a group. Arguing how that is something that is devised is a clear extension of this work, that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The issue at hand regarding the different ways of experiencing teaching, learning and the academic role as outlined in this thesis has been tentatively and

provisionally addressed. Summarizing, it could be stated that experiencing teaching, learning and the academic role are not clear-cut natural phenomena but part of a larger relational, socially constructed learning process.

One salient implication is that academics do not have experiences once and then remember them, as if they were set in stone. The argument of this work is that experiences are constructed and reconstructed socially and internally every time people work-through them in a form of perezhivanie. Here, experiences are not closed off, they are open and constructed as relations through speech and as emotional working-through learning experiencing conjunctly with others in a specific social situation.

If ECAs work through experiences once, they might be one thing, but if they work them through again at another time, with other people, or after something else has happened, they could become something else. Because experiencing is not only cognitive but affective in nature, we feel experiencing differently as well. Experiencing can be transformed, it changes. Thus, doing research to describe it might be providing a less than partial view, as it would be trying to reify something that is dynamic, trying to objectify experiencing as something that exists on its own, rather than acknowledging that it is an ongoing production.

Here, the literature could be better interpreted as a token of how these people have learnt to experience teaching, learning and their role *thus far*, rather than offering insight into the 'true phenomenon' of how early academics experience teaching and their work in HE as a clear-cut experience.

The value of such a shift would be to suggest that academic development moves from thinking about such processes as experiences that are necessarily experienced in a particular way, towards thinking about how ECAs can learn to experience teaching and their role differently. By exploring a way of theoretically inscribing the experiencing of teaching and academic work within a larger learning process, this work could prove to be useful to those trying to support academics as they experience learning how to teach and/or learning how to be an academic.

2.2 A methodological reflective exploration.

Having extended the theory work into methodological considerations, a space emerges for a reflective exploration of methodologies for researching experiences.

The following section reflectively explores the idea of doing Art-Based Research (ABR) through poetic methods for studying the experience of teaching, learning and working in Higher Education. Recapitulating the literature on Educational Development to exemplify different ways of experiencing learning, this chapter serves as a counterpoint to researching experiences of learning from a phenomenological approach. The fundamental reason for this is that the basic epistemological assumptions of phenomenology would limit our understanding of experiences of learning and thus, other methodological options seem to be worth exploring.

To that end, the exploration elaborates on the relationship between knowledge production, speech and experience, all circling around the notions of research method and construction. Here, the aim is to reflect upon an understanding of research that is aligned with a dialogical and relational conceptualization of the experience of learning.

Finally, an argument will be outlined that suggests conducting research as an experience. Taking from Dewey (1934/1980), Kvale (1994), Law (2004), Scheurich (1995), Talmy (2011) and others, this exploration will present the idea of studying the experiences of learning by way of producing/devising experiences through arts. With the notion of art as experience from Dewey, the argument goes to Art-Based Research in a general sense, and poetry in particular, as a sound and coherent alternative way of researching learning as an experience. Thus, this chapter explores the possible theorical-methodological contributions of thinking about and doing research understood as an experience through art.

Research for me is finding

things I wasn't looking for,

people who love to be lost,

another friend for the road,

the voice I hear when I'm cold,

burning out the midnight oil,

untangling a tale of old,

words I've never dreamt before.

The starting point for this section is that if we understand the learning process as an experience, some methodological considerations arise in qualitative research.

To illustrate that point, I will return to Educational Development (ED) as an example. As a quick summary of the previous exposition, Educational Development refers to different support services provided to teaching staff in Higher Education (HE) regarding a range of issues from developing teaching and learning skills to the broader developmental concerns of the academic career. Recent systematic reviews by Phuong et al. (2018; 2020) show that ED often focuses on developing teaching methods or skills. Yet, literature has also increasingly begun to acknowledge that those learning processes that academics face in their careers are inherently emotional (Austin, 2014; Bloch, 2016; Gilmore & Anderson, 2016; Hollywood et al., 2020; Nästesjö, 2020; 2022; Salimzadeh et al., 2017; Salisbury, 2014; Stupnisky et al., 2016; 2019; Walker, 2017; 2018).

Having taken a closer look into this latter part of the literature in ED, the review arrived at the point of realising that faculty experience teaching and learning for the role in different ways. The experiences here are more broadly understood to include teaching and learning how to teach as part of a larger transformation. The muddled and even conflicting field of experiencing learning in Educational Development is well illustrated by Bloch (2016). She argues that, within the context of her research, we can find mixed feelings ranging from Postgraduate Researchers to Senior Lecturers regarding learning for their academic position.

All the way through the literature review, it became clear that this contrast rings true throughout the field. Stress (Turk & Ledić, 2016), anxiety (Salimzadeh et al., 2017), fear and feeling overwhelmed (Hollywood et al., 2020), uncertainty (Nästesjö, 2020) and tension (Nästesjö, 2022) are just a few examples of how experiencing learning for the different demands of the role has been described 'negatively' in the field. Conversely, positive commitment (Austin, 2014), optimism (Hollywood et al., 2020) and enjoyment and satisfaction (Stupnisky et al., 2016; 2019) are examples of positive ways of experiencing it. The captivating issue here is that these opposing ways of experiencing all revert to the 'same phenomenon': teaching at the early career that has little to no preparation or experience. In other words, we are looking at a proper learning process – one that could also be referred to as learning how to teach in HE – and which could be inscribed in the larger process of becoming a HE teacher.

Working towards understanding this learning phenomenon, several researchers have argued for and tried to study lived experiences from a phenomenological approach (Finlay, 2012; Kraus & Friesen, 2019; Lumma & Weger, 2021; Neubauer et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2009; Van Manen, 2014; 2016). From the broad research field of phenomenology, a good exploration of different ways for researching experiences is provided by Lumma and Weger (2021). They present examples of doing research distinguishing between first-, second- and third-person research methods based on ideas like external/objective and internal/subjective dimensions of experience.

According to Lumma and Weger, third-person research refers to taking an external observer position to study a phenomenon. On the other hand, second-person phenomenological research means doing things like interviewing to access experience; it is second-person in the sense that it is trying to access someone else's experience mediated through the interview process (see Petitmengin, 2006). Lastly, first-person phenomenological research refers to methods that focus on directly studying subjective experiencing from an internal perspective. To them, first-person methods are the best way of researching experiences because,

> [I]f a person is only partially aware of the nuances of an experience, it might not easily be possible to infer these aspects of an experience through third-person measures. Therefore, we suggest that more subtle and pre-reflective aspects of a subjective experience (e.g. the unfoldment of an experience) require that a person herself can be aware of this internal dimension of an experience. Some first-person methods and practices including mindfulness can guide people to become aware of more subtle facets of an experience (Lundh, 2020). (p. 2)

These research distinctions from Lumma and Weger offer insights into the epistemological assumptions of phenomenology. Still, it seems fitting to extend into some other ideas regarding phenomenological approaches before addressing such assumptions.

Going back to the Higher Education field of Educational Development, an interesting example for researching the experience of learning through phenomenology can be found in Garner and Bedford (2021). Studying preparedness and professional development for early-career nursing faculty, they asked their participants questions like,

> "How would you define the term unpreparedness? What did it feel like to be unprepared to teach? How did you handle a particular situation where you felt unprepared? How did you know what to do and how to do it?" (Quotation in the original, p. 2)

Although the authors acknowledge their positionality and own prior experiences, they still declare that "maintaining receptivity to the phenomenon required the researchers to separate themselves from the research questions' direct focus during the interview process and then refer back to their own experiences during the analysis process" (p. 3). Thus, a clear view of the primacy of the subject or participant is revealed, which arguably might be a defining characteristic of the phenomenological approach. Access to the phenomenon is here implicitly intertwined with such distinctions as first and second-person research.

From the field of Distance Education, Becker and Schad (2022) take on the different schools of thought in phenomenology to offer an exploration of a framework for phenomenological research that provides further details of the core constitutive aspects of this research approach. For them, phenomenology deals primarily with descriptions,

> In other words, the goal of the phenomenological researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any preconceived notions while remaining as true to the facts as possible. […] Put simply, phenomenology is an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it. (p. 298).

Furthermore, the authors elaborate on their understanding of phenomenology where

> [P]henomenology asks us to consider the ontological presence of a being before considering the epistemological presence. Traditional scientific and social scientific research designs and methods tend to shy away from looking at the subjective aspects within a study, but phenomenology calls researchers to move towards understanding the lived experience of the subjects. By getting to the lived experience, the goal of phenomenological researcher is to understand how to interact and get along, which is a nuanced understanding of humanity. Not only do phenomenological methods allow us to look at the lived experience, but the ultimate hope is that it reveals the pre-predicated consciousness, thus allowing a natural attitude to come through and be fully realized. (p. 299).

Contemporary views on ontology and epistemology would arguably contest the philosophical framework that is implied in phenomenology from Becker and Schad's understanding. Following Castorina (2010), the ontological dualism derived from Cartesian philosophy is the basic assumption in many mainstream theories and research methods. From it, an epistemological split between subjectivity and objectivity, sensory experience and theoretical reason has come to be the dominant epistemological framework in a myriad of scientific

approaches. To Castorina (2020), mainstream theoretical and research frameworks would account for such distinctions whether from a dualistic, naturalistic, or individualistic position.

An interesting exploration here would be to use the idea of Epistemic Frameworks developed by Castorina as a way of analyzing the core assumptions of phenomenology according to Becker and Schad. The idea under examination is that phenomenology is trying to describe the experience of learning by accessing the most pristine individual experience, avoiding distortion by the researcher and by predicated (that is to say, mediated) consciousness. Thus, their effort would be describing, to find truthful phenomena that exist on their own, un-distorted and unmediated. By doing research on individuals, the intention is to understand a phenomenon that occurs in an unmediated way, regardless of any subjectivity.

Such an intention would align with what Castorina calls the Split Epistemic Framework (SEF; Becerra & Castorina, 2021), and it might be the basic assumption that sustains phenomenology as argued by Becker and Schad (2022). In a SEF, the external and internal, the objective and subjective, work in parallel lanes as there is no internal relation between them that can surpass the split. With both planes being essentially different, truth is objective residing in the 'objective world' and people distort it in their minds with their subjectivity. In other words, subjective knowledge is only truthful regarding its accordance with the objective world.

Moreover, Creswell and Haye (2018) add that phenomenological approaches have meta-theoretical problems derived from their understanding of true phenomena as subjective in an enclosed sense, unmediated, inaccessible and beyond language. From their reading of Bakhtin, the authors point out that it is possible to avoid the epistemological individualism and naturalist ontology of phenomenology through conceptually engaging with language. Alongside their reading of William James, Creswell and Haye provide an interpretation of experience as made possible by a technical and dialogical articulation of experience through speech.

Thus, in line with Creswell and Haye, phenomenological approaches try to understand experience as an unmediated phenomenon and so the end goal is to understand it in that essence. Yet, Creswell and Haye argue that experience does not exist in such a way, but is essentially mediated and relational. With this reasoning, the argument of mediation behind distinctions such as first-, second-, and third-person research would lose some grounds. Here, no experience could be un-mediated as it is articulated through speech.

Simply put, issues arise when trying to research experiences under some phenomenological approaches because, at their core, they understand experiences as somewhat "in-accessible" to others and even to ourselves as being unmediated. With Creswell and Haye, a possibility to conceptually distance research on experiences from a phenomenological perspective might come from exploring an alternative that puts a dialogical framework at the core of both the conceptual theorization and the research process.

With the exemplary case of the different ways of experiencing learning for the role in Educational Development, it becomes evident that description from individuals is not enough to account for experiencing learning as a phenomenon occurring naturally beyond the participants. Up until now, phenomenological approaches have not been able to account for a clear natural phenomenon but have shown a myriad of different ways of experiencing one phenomenon. One way of addressing the issue within an SEP would be to say something like *the experience of learning is one, under such and such conditions, and another under such and such other conditions.* In other words, the effort would go to controlling variables to find out why it is different in different conditions. From this, the differences in experiencing might be caused by the researchers not properly knowing the conditions under which a particular way of experiencing would become predictable, or to the participants not being able to properly access their own lived experience.

An argument to contest that rationale is that the difficulties in addressing the phenomenon of experiencing learning can be traced back to the epistemic assumptions that support the different research methods. With phenomenology

as an example of a research method situated in a Split Epistemic Framework, I wander about how a research method framed in an alternative Epistemic Framework would address the issue. Furthermore, the questioning moves even deeper to reflecting on the conceptual implications of such a framework.

An alternative Epistemic Framework.

Conceptually speaking, there are alternative understandings of experience that might be situated in a different Epistemic Framework such as Dewey's (1934/1980) or Creswell and Haye's (2018), to name a few. To them, experience is not something 'set in stone' but it is an ongoing process, open to change through mediated practices. In other words, if we go over an experience in research, we are re-creating it and thus changing it as we go over it.

It is interesting to explore how a research methodology could recognize and integrate such understanding as a condition of possibility for researching the phenomenon, as an in-development production. Such an idea would invite us to think differently about our Epistemic Framework. We would require a method that understands that the concept/phenomenon under research is being produced by the method, by and when researching it. Also, it would have to acknowledge that the concept/phenomenon does not exist on its own but as a product, created and recreated in relation to research.

Describing such phenomena is not a bad or unnecessary thing but it would come with some limitations. Here, the argument would be that the exemplification of phenomenology provided holds assumptions from a Split Epistemic Framework. In particular, it has led us to believe that the way people experience learning exists as a phenomenon unmediated and beyond the people experiencing and thus, we could understand it by accurately and unbiasedly describing. As such, phenomenology would not take into consideration the openness of experiencing as an ongoing process, effectively in-construction.

Thus, the argument that is explored here is that doing research for understanding the experiences of learning would require a Relational Epistemic Framework (REF; Becerra & Castorina, 2021), as experiencing might also exist relationally.

86

Following Castorina's (2020) alternative solution, we could situate our theories and research in a Relational Epistemic Framework. The issue would be understanding that "in a relational framework, the researchers adopt the strategy of seeking to construct systems that are irreducible to the previous ones and that coordinate the opposites, in the form of a dynamic synthesis" (p. 159). Examples of such theories are Piagetian and Vygotskian learning theories (Castorina & Baquero 2005), or Dewey's (1934/1980) and Creswell and Haye's (2018) understanding of experience. Here, we will explore how a method derived from a Relational Epistemic Framework might be an interesting alternative for researching learning as an experience.

To that end, firstly the argument will elaborate on the relationship between knowledge production, speech and experience, all circling around the notion of research method and construction from a Relational Epistemic Framework. This point will lead to argue for the need to carefully attend to how experience might be researched differently.

The argument will conclude by presenting a possible rationale for doing research as an experience with Art-Based Research (ABR). Taking from Dewey (1934/1980), Kvale (1994), Law (2004), Scheurich (1995), Talmy (2011) and others, this exploration presents the idea of studying learning-as-an-experience as an experience by producing/devising one through art. With the notion of art as experience from Dewey, the argument will go to ABR as an enticing way of producing a unit of analysis with a type of data that would be aligned with the Relational Epistemic Framework, mindful of the tensions raised in a mediated take on research production.

This elaboration may be radical in the sense that the researcher might not be interested in communicating information but in crafting and expressing experiences. Art-Based Research could be a better way of understanding the different ways of experiencing learning by offering an understanding of both experience and research as dialogically constructed through speech, within a Relational Epistemic Framework.

Instead of attempting to describe others' experiences, Art-Based Research offers ways of creating and recreating the experiences under research. In this way, ABR epistemologically provides a possibility of understanding the experience of learning as something that is mediated and open to change, while methodologically crafting ways of participating in the experience of learning through art.

With this exploration, an interesting avenue opens for thinking not only about the research process but also about the 'product' of it as an experience. That might mean not only discussing the experience with participants and describing it, but also working-through it with them, experiencing it, while crafting a way for others to do the same with the research product.

By the end, the argument would be the following: to study learning experiences as an experience, the researcher could try to devise/produce an experience. Hence, the suggestion following the work of John Dewey would be that such research could be done as art, understanding art as an experience.

2.2.1 Approaching the study of experiences.

As has already been stated, the semiotic process produces and transforms experience dialogically, so a deeper understanding of the linguistic/semiotic basis of qualitative research for understanding experiences is required.

From a representational understanding (Stenner, 2017), data is made to resemble a phenomenon or concept; in a way, the idea is to get closer to knowledge albeit considered as objective or subjective in nature. In turn, Stenner advocates for a processual understanding of knowledge. Following him, (a) knowledge – the object(ive) of research – is constructed and "is part of a process of composition involving the pair experience/expression and, ultimately, is not just datum for experience, but also the expression—or objectification—of experience" (p. 123). Moreover, (b) the subject is turned into the actor that materializes experience: quantity ('the objective') "enter our knowledge only through a complex spectrum of processes of experiencing that requires the very living creature" (p. 129).

Through the relational basis of productive activity, this processual understanding relates to the REF argued by Castorina (Becerra & Castorina, 2021) as such would position knowledge production as a dynamic synthesis of the opposites object and subject. Following James (1976), "subjectivity and objectivity are functional attributes solely, realized only when the experience is 'taken,' i.e., talked-of, twice, considered along with its two differing contexts respectively, by a new retrospective experience, of which that whole past complication now forms the fresh content." (p. 20).

At this point, it could be formulated that researched knowledge would be (a) a product of dialogical activity, neither objective nor subjective but predicated of a relation (it is relational) and (b) a mere point of the different processes ongoing at a given time, place, and circumstances. Additionally, knowledge objectivation, typically a reflection of representational thinking, would be produced though speech; thus, we would need a relational and processual understanding of speech and how it relates to knowledge.

Such a way of understanding can be found in the notion of dialogicity (Zittoun, 2014), where the knowledge construction, being relational, is predicated of the specific relationships produced through dialogue; that is, through speech. For Zittoun, a dialogical perspective leads to understanding the development of knowledge through semiotically mediated activity, in relationship to the social world, past interactions, past spaces and physical environments, language, concepts and representations, as well as cultural means, all of which have been internalized in a specific way.

When thinking about mediated activity, the underlying propositions argued may be extended to that of Larraín and Haye (2014) on their comprehension of concepts and speech with James, Vygotski, Bakhtin and Volosinov. With James, concepts are not entities but "processes or activities of the mind" (p. 461) and "thoughts in themselves" (p. 462). This basic point leads Larraín and Haye to consider that meaning is not in the word but in the utterance, and that meaning "depends on the continuous and ongoing process of appropriation of past thoughts." (p. 463).

From this idea, they depart into the Vygotskian framework regarding concept development. In line with a processual understanding of knowledge in relationship to speech, Larraín and Haye state that meaning unfolds in the specific uses of speech. For them,

> According to the author, word meaning is a generalization, that is, a particular mental operation concurrent with a specific use of signs. […] [E]very use of a word involves a generalization, but to generalize is to conceive of some situations as similar to other situations, and there are many ways in which this can be done. From our reading of Vygotsky, generalizations are intellectual activities that unfold in the uses of speech. (p. 464)

The use of speech for meaning making provides specific and systematic ways of constructing 'shareable' knowledge. In such a way, Larraín and Haye say that, with Vygotski

> As an operation, […] concepts are involved in the functional use of the word. This means that concepts are what they are because of their function in social life and not because of their place in the language system. In fact, using a concrete word or utterance does not correspond directly with a particular concept. To have a word is not to have a concept. Concept, as a generalization, is the specific mental path in which thinking unfolds in a specific use of language. (p. 465)

What is key to take from this processual understanding of concepts is that, for Larraín and Haye, concepts develop over time through culturally mediated practices. This argument turns knowledge into something constructed and developed over time: it is the specific ways of participation through speech. To them

> "[T]he way people generalize depends upon how they use signs, we would say that the way in which people generalize depends upon the discursive practices in which they participate and have participated; people with

different histories of discursive practices will use words differently to unify things in a generalized way. (p. 469)

From the discussion of the dialogicity of knowledge production through speech, the previous statement about research can be transformed. Now, it can be stated that researched knowledge is a developmentally constructed product of discursive activity, considering concepts as a way of appropriation of relational, cultural and historical practices. In other words, through speech we actively participate in knowledge production/sharing, but speech as a unit can be treated in different ways.

With Bakhtin and Volosinov as a theorical background, Larraín and Haye argue that

> [S]peech genres constitute the compositional constraints of human thinking determining the formal aspects of this movement. Moreover, speech genres are already generalizations of previous social interactions—not necessarily those that have been experienced by a given thinker, but those that are culturally transmitted among speakers along with each specific social activity. Thinking as unfolding through inner speech moves according to the dynamics of social activities. We generalize according to the generic way people generalize in generic types of social activity. Those activities enable and constrain in specific manners the way we generalize and the way we articulate different generalization movements. (p. 472)

Taking the different scientific discourses as ways of generalizing, every technique would produce and transform speech with a particular way of researching an experience. Therefore, they would take a specific position towards the construction of different ways of understanding the researched phenomenon all of them related to the past relational appropriation of speech. With Larraín and Haye it is reasonable to state that all research activity would be rhetoric, where the particular way of addressing the research concept/phenomenon is part of a rhetorical activity of expression,

[E]very utterance involves the work of a sort of rhetor: a presentation of a perspective, that is, not of a representation but the presentation of a movement direction, a tendency, a possible change in the flow of experience, a virtual positioning move. Irrespective of their persuasive power, utterances consist of rhetorical activity. (p. 473).

Thus, a key issue in doing research for understanding an experience as developed earlier would be to frame said research within a rhetoric, a specific participation in speech that allows and fosters such a complex understanding. At the same time, a rhetoric that is aligned with such an understanding might vouch for a relational conception of knowledge. With it, knowledge production would be a provisional understanding that is related to a larger system of relations and structures of collective and personal conceptual appropriations through speech.

An understanding of data as an object in research based on a dualistic and representational rhetoric arguably would lead to internal methodological issues when doing research on a dialogically and relationally framed concept like experience, as they would also inscribe rhetorically such a partition throughout the researched concept. Provisionally, it can be stated that the dualistic rhetoric (taken in Split Epistemological Frameworks) that is the base for some research methods like phenomenology might have provided a structure that in turn could have led into a split understanding of experience, leaving out some of the complexity of the concept.

Qualitative research methods for studying experiences.

Up to this point, we have explored a way of understanding the meaning-making process in research as a processual, relational, and dialogical production, as a rhetorical basis for doing research in/for learning as an experience. For this case, the argument would be that knowledge construction is a specific achievement of the different ongoing and overlapping rhetorical movements constitutive of the research endeavour, and thus, is relational.

The next step in the argument is to explore a way of thinking about the rhetorical aspects of qualitative inquiry that is coherent with the aforementioned rationale.

For this, we will try to provide some support for understanding knowledge as a relational construction – for example, by dialectizing rhetorically the object of research and the researcher. Fortunately, for some time now several issues have been raised regarding core aspects within the typical rhetoric of qualitative research. Two interesting elements that have gained attention for this are interviews and transcription.

According to Talmy (2011), speech is often considered to be a mere tool or resource for collecting information: the generated data is positioned as revealed facts, ideas or experiences from interviewees. Thus, "data contamination must be obviated; explication of interview data necessitates content or thematic analysis, simple summary, and/or straightforward quotation, either abridged or verbatim, that is, the data can 'speak for themselves'." (p. 25). In this sense, the author points out that qualitative methods usually ascribe to a representational understanding of speech and turn discourse into decontextualized linguistic elements that later are recontextualized into another place.

The very process of decontextualizing and recontextualizing units of speech immediately goes to show the relational character of research as a practice, as the power to do such transformation resides in the negotiated and creative exercise of inquiry performed by the researcher.

Regarding the interview process, Kvale (1994) points out that it "is literally an inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a common theme. […] Knowledge is neither inside a person nor outside in the world, but exists in the relationship between person and world" (p. 44). As a dialogical practice, data from interviews would be constructed relationally as it unfolds in the conversation as "answers are oriented to, shaped by, and designed for the questions that occasion them; as well, answers are built on *previous* questions and answers the respondent has been asked and has (not) answered over the course of an interview" (Talmy, 2011, italics on the original, p. 31).

The relationship is clearer when taking a closer look at the dynamic of the interviewer and interviewee through the conversation and how it is turned into text. With Kvale (1994), both are creators of the later written text. In a sense, "the

interview text is thus not a pre-given literary text, but emerges in the same process as its interpretation; it involves both the creation and the negotiated interpretation of the text. (p. 50). Trying to go even further, Kvale states that "interviewing is a craft that is closer to art than to standardized social science method" (p. 84).

With Rapley, it makes sense to argue that we "cannot escape from the interactional nature of interviews, that the 'data' are collaboratively produced" (2001, p. 318). The concept of data as typically sustained within a SEF, would need some rethinking to properly understand the relationships that are in place in the knowledge production endeavour.

Delving further into that point, looking into transcription might help further develop the argument. Transcribing spoken word into text might in itself be a form of analysing (Henderson, 2018; Kvale, 1994; Roulston 2010, 2011; Scheurich, 1995). By understanding the selective necessity of the research practice, analysis would begin with the selection process of what is depicted in the transcript and how that happens (Henderson, 2018).

In that sense, transcription is nothing other than a common practice for representing discourse, that "is embedded in our theoretical assumptions about research, reflects ethical decision-making about how we represent others, and is a political act" (Roulston, 2010, p. 105). Thus, by taking a closer look at the interview and transcription process, the researchers could be seen "as not only involved in, but constructed by and constructing, the research processes in which they are participating" (Henderson, 2018, p. 144).

Furthermore, the produced data is again transformed and reshaped in the data analysis. The interaction is turned into a distinct construction of the researcher, although narrated as if it was directly taken from the interviewee. Taking from Scheurich (1995)

> [The] use of the technical procedures, adopted to reproduce the systematic rigor of the scientific method, masks the "intractable uncertainties" and the unstable ambiguities of linguistically communicated

meaning. The decontextualized interview text which is transformed through the coding process becomes that from which the conventional researcher constructs his or her story. […] This research representation, in relation to the actual conversation between the researcher and the research "subject," is a "rhetorical reduction of complexity to simplicity, of differential relations to firm identities" (p.241).

From a relational perspective, the restrictions imposed by methodology (like the transcription, the objectives and intended audiences) would act as counterparts to the researcher, as the frontiers that could analytically separate the interviewer from the interviewee, the spoken words and interaction from the written text would intertwine by mutual implication in the developing product of research. The role of the researcher as an active constructor would be shown even in the simplest spaces, as "asking a follow-up question within an interview demonstrates the interviewer's analysis of what has been said" (Roulston, 2010, p. 105).

These ideas start to shape a way of understanding a possible underlying relational epistemic framework for research. The study itself through its different components, like the aim and theorical background, the researchers with their own understanding and position towards research, the methods with their rules and conventional procedures, and the audiences, would all play different parts in the meaning-making production of research as they relate to each other in specific ways. In accordance with this, Angrosino (1998) writes

> [T]he rendering of a life as a story – an artifact, a text – means that it has been filtered through at least two consciousnesses. It is no longer simply the internal memory of the person who lived the life; it is also the narrative record of the question I asked about it and the directions in which I subtly or otherwise led the person to speak. There is also an implicit third consciousness – that of any potential audience for the story. (p. 32)

Even the ways in which qualitative methods seek to address issues like the 'objectivity' or quality of data can be scrutinized under the proposed relational framework. Ideas like triangulation, sustained field work and/or member checking

would be adding 'more consciousnesses' – as Angrosino says. Thus, they probably should be reconceptualized from the objective/subjective dualistic/split rhetorical divide into wondering about how these procedures are instrumental in subtracting or adding complexity through their dialogical positioning towards the research project at hand.

The argument developed thus far would be quintessential to every methodological procedure for knowledge production through research. In line with the ideas of Brinkmann (2014), it might be reasonable to say that data "are always produced, constructed, mediated by human activities [...] If this argument is valid, we should not talk about data, but about creata, that is, about the taken, constructed, and selected—rather than the given" (p. 721).

Thus, the rhetorical movement developed so far can be summarized as the following: scientific knowledge, is a provisional product of the research process, constitutionally constructed through the relation of its components. Unpacking this, it could be stated that whatever knowledge is constructed, it always carries the characteristics of a unity of researcher, project, the researched, audiences, and all the other aspects (material, socio-cultural, etc.) and actors that are distributed in said production. In particular, "methods, their rules, and even more methods' practices, not only describe but also help to produce the reality that they understand" (Law, 2004, p. 5).

Considering this line of argumentation, the question for methodology would not rest on asking for the pair objectivity/subjectivity of knowledge production within a Split Epistemic Framework but would be about questioning the reality they produce relationally. This way, a rhetorical possibility for understanding research within a Relational Epistemological Framework would be provisionally argued for. From this reconceptualization of qualitative research, a rhetorical possibility is provided that would be aligned with a relational conception of knowledge through speech.

Now, the problem of generating research that addresses experiences as formulated beforehand carries on to thinking about the particular forms of research and the knowledge that they produce. In a sense, any research on

experiences would produce/re-produce them. The question then is transformed from the initial 'what is being researched when doing research on learning experiences', to a latter what is being produced/what should be produced when/for doing research on learning experiences.

2.2.2 Doing research as an experience.

In line with the framework that has been argued for here, we turn to Law (2004), who argues that social sciences research might no longer claim "that methods discover and depict realities. Instead, it is that they participate in the enactment of those realities" (p. 45). In that sense, research would be a form of craft that is creative: "It re-works and re-bundles these and as it does so re-crafts realities and creates new versions of the world. It makes new signals and new resonances, new manifestations and new concealments, and it does so continuously" (p. 143).

Understanding research as producing and creating knowledge transforms the general question regarding what is the concept/phenomenon that is being researched to what concept/phenomenon is being produced/created of/from research. Using Eisner (1997) to illustrate: "we report the temperature even when we are interested in the heat; we expect a reader to be able to transform the numbers representing the former into the experience that constitutes the latter" (p. 7).

Embracing the presented understanding of both an experience and of the research process could lead to consider one possible way to go: seeking for a method that intentionally 'produces' something (Clough, 2009), in this case, an experience. Dialogicity might be acknowledged, suggested, and supported by the way of expressing and experiencing research and knowledge and thus it may be stated that one possible solution would be to intentionally devise/produce an experience through research.

Understanding critically the productive and creative manipulation of speech in qualitative research to construct knowledge relationally and dialogically would open an interesting avenue for considering a wider field of creation and recreation

in meaning-making for understanding the learning experience. Enter: Art-Based Research (ABR). Close to other poststructuralist methods such as storying (Clarke et al., 2017; Gravett, 2019; Gravett & Winstone, 2021), ABR is a vast research approach encompassing different methods like comics and graphic vignettes (Cheah et al., 2023; Khanolainen & Semenova, 2020; Lawrence et al., 2017), drama and dancing (Beach & Beauchemin, 2019; Erel et al., 2017; Snowber, 2017; 2022), amongst many others. Here, I will argue particularly for ABR that works with poetry.

Art-Based Research has gained momentum in the last years. In essence, aesthetics helps produce and express meaning by filling the gap left in the mere pragmatical understanding of the role of speech in experience through form (Larraín, 2015). Following this rationale, some researchers have preferred to include art-based elements in qualitative research, as form mediates understanding and fosters a more emotional response to the work done (Butler-Kisber, 2002). For the case of this thesis, it would make sense to explore ABR as a way to possibly get some insight into the emotionality in experience.

A broad definition of ABR can be found in Leavy (2015). She states that,

> Arts-based research practices are a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined. Arts-based practices draw on literary writing, music, dance, performance, visual art, film, and other mediums. Representational forms include but are not limited to short stories, novels, experimental writing forms, graphic novels, comics, poems, parables, collages, paintings, drawings, sculpture, 3-D art, quilts and needlework, performance scripts, theatrical performances, dances, films, and songs and musical scores. (p. 21)

For understanding the value of art in research, we can draw from Constantino (2003) who takes on Gadamer to offer a vision of relational knowing that is closely

related to an experience through art. The separation between "product/producer" and audience gets dialectized by understanding them relationally. Constantino says that

> Gadamer uses the experience of understanding a work of art—aesthetic experience— as an exemplar of the ontological nature of understanding because aesthetic experience, according to Gadamer, requires that the interpreter enter into a dialogue with the work. For Gadamer, understanding is ontologically dialogic, with dialogue being characterized by a kind of play, or ongoing to and fro movement. (p. 80).

Art is an interesting way of understanding meaning making as relational because it is temporal – *in the act* – by referring to the discontinuous relationship between the phenomenon/idea, the artist, and the audience (Baudrillard, 1981). In that sense, art is an act of dynamic appropriation.

With this framework as a background, the idea that: "the very nature of art as a medium is hostile to simple answers" (Martin, 1975, p. 279) becomes extremely interesting but in need of unpacking. For this, a close reading of John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934/1980) could shed some light on the particularities of art while at the same time unravel its connection to the notion of an experience.

To Dewey,

> The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd; […] the zest of the spectator in poking the wood burning on the hearth and in watching the darting flames and crumbling coals. These people, if questioned as to the reason for their actions, would doubtless return reasonable answers. The man who poked the sticks of burning wood would say he did it to make the fire burn better; but he is nonetheless fascinated by the colourful drama of change enacted before his eyes and imaginatively partakes in it. He does not remain a cold spectator. (p. 5)

The last idea from the quote, although an appealing picture, shares the active character of 'the audience'. In art, the very source of art lies in the relation between the *oeuvre* and the active spectator. The latter is implicated in the occurrence of art not just as the recipient: for this to happen, meaning does not arise in a communicational – representational – transaction, but is constructed through dialogical and open-ended engagements.

According to Dewey, engagement in art reflects the series of "movement and culminations, of breaks and re-unions" (p. 17) in life. To the author, the dynamic and relational aspect of an experience make it closely related to art in its characterization, but this is not enough to establish a relationship between art and an experience.

For Dewey, it is the mediated structure of art that makes the difference. To him, "Form, as it is present in the fine arts, is the art of making clear what is involved in the organization of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing life-experience" (p. 24). In a way, the author supports the hypothesis arrived at in the previous theory work through art: art would be art by the movement of such a mediated structure that constructs it as qualitatively different from others but through its dialogical relation to others. That way, art is socio-culturally constructed by the way the artist organizes experiences into *an* experience through form.

Following this reasoning, Dewey states that

> The act of producing that is directed by intent to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have. The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works. (p. 48)

Again, another key distinction that comes from this is that in art, the artists produce something with a relational framework sustaining the production. They understand that the work is not about themselves, nor is it about the work itself, but is about all of the above plus the audience and in relation to each other. In a strict sense, they are working *beyond* themselves, at a given time.

This process, once more, is depicted as a two-way movement, as a counter dynamic that relates internally to achieve totality. Meaning is not something univocal and preestablished but distributed and constructed. Taking from Dewey,

> For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience, and his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. […] There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. (p. 54).

Thus, this understanding of art would relate to that of an experience while, at the same time, research could be understood as art if given the proper relations. To Dewey, "art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience." (p. 48). For Dewey, the artful processes are the same as that of an experience. Following the argument developed by Dewey, it could be stated that for researching an experience: "its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience." (p. 43).

Therefore, experiences researched through art would be constructed differently from those of the scientific rhetoric based on a Split Epistemic Framework. In a sense, Art-Based Research would intentionally promote a specific way of (re/over)experiencing in/through the research process, for everybody implied. With art, the role of speech would transform,

> Were it the function of speech to reproduce that to which it refers, we could never speak of fear, but only of fear-of-this-particular-oncoming-automobile, with all its specifications of time and place, or fear-under-

specified-circumstances-of-drawing-a-wrong-conclusion from just-such-and-such-data. A lifetime would be too short to reproduce in words a single emotion. In reality, however, poet and novelist have an immense advantage over even an expert psychologist in dealing with an emotion. For the former build up a concrete situation and permit it to evoke emotional response. Instead of a description of an emotion in intellectual and symbolic terms, the artist "does the deed that breeds" the emotion (p. 67).

From this, the suggestion would be that the researcher may also do the deed that produces an experience, in a structure/form that is similar to that which is under research. One way of doing this is through poetry. Strongly advocated by Leggo (2018), poetry expands the frontiers of words and utterances conveying meaning in different, more complex ways. Poetry is typically used in research "1) to represent and reinterpret existing data; 2) to collect data; and 3) to collect field notes" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 75). A broad research approach that exemplifies this is Poetic Inquiry (Faulkner, 2019; Vincent, 2018), and a more specific example of a methodology is Poetic Transcription (Glesne, 1997).

In Poetic Inquiry, the researcher actively constructs a reality that is in a way the experience under research. Poetry is used not only to tell but to convey an experience in such a way that others can experience it as well. Essentially, poetry is used to produce similar processes of experience uniting the researcher, the research itself – theories, methods, participants, values, ideologies, etc. – and the audience, all of them under a mediated cultural practice. Expression through art in research projects would be an interesting provisional solution to studying an experience because "they, too, have undergone a change similar to that which the painter or poet effects in converting the immediate scene into the matter of an act that expresses the value of what is seen" (Dewey, 1934/1980, p. 77).

In a sense, with Art-Based Research in general and poetry in particular, researchers experience with the participants, with the potential audience and all other relationally integrated aspects of the unit through a poem. When researcher and participants, or a research group write a poem together, arguably they are

experiencing today whatever happened in the past. They (re)experience it as artfully mediated. It won't be the same experience in the split phenomenological sense, but in a dialogical, open-ended, and in-development sense it is the same. Moreover, the audience/reader are also experiencing through the poem.

Through the careful consideration of art and poetry for researching an experience – *an experience for researching and experiencing an experience* – a challenge for the epistemic assumptions of the split may have been argued for. Following Dewey, "the problem in hand may be approached by drawing a distinction between expression and statement. Science states meanings; art expresses them. […] "Science" signifies just that mode of statement that is most helpful, as direction" (p. 84). Dewey offers an alternative rhetoric with art,

> The poetic as distinct from the prosaic, aesthetic art as distinct from scientific, expression as distinct from statement, does something different from leading to an experience. It constitutes one. […] The poem, or painting, does not operate in the dimension of correct descriptive statement but in that of experience itself. (p. 85)

By producing an experience, researchers as artists do not neglect ideas like the truth in science; on the contrary, they might recognize truth as provisional and therefore change from a statement of certainty to a suggestion that is situated and relational. As Martin (1975) says, "The statements of science are, of course, more certain than the suggestions of poetry. But art has the curious faculty of seeking truth without at the same time pretending to certainty" (p. 1). Following the suggestions made here, the researcher resembles an artist in the sense that "creates significant new experiences for the reader - significant because focused and formed" (Perrine, 1977, p. 4), where the research purpose "is not to tell us about experience but to allow us imaginatively to participate in it" (p. 6).

Thus, a final stepping-stone would have been laid for understanding a particular form of research and the knowledge produced for doing research on learning experiences. Here, the main argument could be summarized as the following: in line with a Relational Epistemic Framework, to study learning as an experience the researcher might consider intentionally devising/producing an experience.

Following the work of John Dewey, the suggestion would be that such could be done as art, understanding art as an experience.

With this, a twist to qualitative methods for studying experiences can be provisionally argued for by closely crafting a relational, dialogical and processual rhetoric for Art-Based Research and the type of knowledge it creates. The twist in the rhetoric of scientific research would have been extended so as to introduce art not only as a properly valid form of scientific and systematic knowledge production/creation but a fitting alternative for doing research on/from learning experiences.

To conclude simply, Art-Based Research offers ways of participating in the experience under research by dialogically and semiotically creating and recreating it through the research process. Such understanding is made possible by inscribing Art-Based Research within a rhetoric sustained in a Relational Epistemic Framework. The research process might be thought of both as creating the experience under research and also as being an experience in itself. In other words, it is possible to think about research as not only focused on discussing and describing any experience with the participants, but also as aiming to work-through it with them. The latter will be discussed further in the methods section.

Another interesting aspect of this elaboration is that the researcher may not be focused on communicating information but on producing experiences. Taking Perrine's approach to poetry and literature,

> The practical writer will always attempt to confine words to one meaning at a time; the poet will often take advantage of the fact that the word has more than one meaning by using it to mean more than one thing at a time. (p. 37)

As suggested by Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1994): "Art, then, is an increase of life, a sort of competition of surprises that stimulates our consciousness and keeps it from becoming somnolent" (p. xxxiii). As such, it is argued here that empirical research might want to resist turning a rich experience

into a somnolent research description but work towards increasing its life by working-through it through the research process.

Part III.

3.1 Empirical Work

As previously stated, this thesis first developed some theoretical work to argue for a processual and dialogical understanding of experience and learning, framed in a constructivist learning epistemology. Now, the second level of work will be developed: namely, the empirical work.

The second argument of this research is that through empirical work, early career academics could express experiences made up of a variety of emotions and feelings, which could be understood within the wider learning processes unfolding. The corollary questions derived from this take of the main research question are i) what do early career academics tell us about how they experienced teaching? ii) what do they tell us about how they felt while learning to teach? and iii) what do teachers tell us about how they make sense of their experience of teaching?

This section will first explore the rationale of the method selected. I will succinctly outline the design, participants, procedure, etc., and then move into an exhibition of the *data.*

In the arguments developed in the last part of the theory work, with Dewey (1934/1980) we arrived at the idea that art is socio-culturally constructed by the way the artist organizes experiences into *an* experience through form. For Dewey, artful processes are the same as that of an experience. From here, I suggest that it could be beneficial to research experience as art, considering that "its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience." (p. 43). Furthermore, I find it interesting to think not only about the research process but also about the 'product' of it as an experience. That means not only talking about the experience with the participants and describing it, but also working-through it with them, to experience it. Extending from Dewey, my position as a researcher would be like that of an artist, as "the artist 'does the deed that breeds' the emotion" (p. 67).

Thus, I present the idea of studying learning-as-an-experience as an experience by producing/devising one through art. Dewey's notion of art as experience leads to Art-Based Research as a possible way of doing research that is aligned with the characterization of learning as an experience.

3.2 Methodology.

Art-Based Research has gained momentum in recent years. In essence, the aesthetics implicated in the methods help produce and express meaning by filling the gap left in the mere pragmatical understanding of the role of speech in experience through form (Larraín, 2015). Following this rationale, some researchers have chosen to include art-based elements in qualitative research, as form mediates understanding and fosters a more emotional response to the work done (Butler-Kisber, 2002).

As previously explored, a way of doing this is through poetry. Carl Leggo (2018) has been instrumental in expanding the use of poetry in research methods to a myriad of academics all over the world. Here, I follow Poetic Inquiry (Faulkner, 2019; Penwarden, 2021; 2022; Prendergast, 2009; Schoone, 2019; Schoone, et al., 2022; Vincent, 2018), specifically through Poetic Transcription (Glesne, 1997). I use poetry to collect, represent and reinterpret data as well as field notes and research reflections and thoughts (Hanauer, 2010) while guided by the work of Glesne (1997) and Jones (2010) for Poetic Transcription, and taking from Burdick (2011) and Loads et al., (2019); Smart & Loads, (2017) for doing a little twist. I will unpack this now.

Based on a language-based production of data, Poetic Transcription typically is done after an interview or focus group has taken place (Glesne, 1997; Jones 2021). The first task that is required in Poetic Transcription is to have a piece of writing to 'transcribe poetically'. The procedure I followed was firstly interviewing/talking to Early Career Academics and then transcribing the interviews in full. After that, typical Poetic Transcription follows the procedure recommended by Glesne and Jones, where the transcripts are read fully for a first time, and then again for a second time while also underlying relevant

utterances according to the reader's perspective. The aim is to grasp the main ideas taken from the interview.

The poetic part starts by taking the ideas identified verbatim and transforming them into poetic form. By itself, this is a process of analysis as it means taking out parts of the interview and leaving some as data. Broadly speaking, Poetic Transcription means taking the words from the interview and playing with them to transform them into poetry. Poetic licence is taken as the people actually transforming the transcript into poetry have the opportunity to select, change, move around, delete, add, and basically do whatever is needed to create poetry from/with the transcript that expresses the core of the interview.

From Loads (et al., 2019; Smart & Loads, 2017) I added the twist of making the process of poetry-creating collaborative instead of a lonely task of the researcher, and from Burdick (2011) I extended the twist of bringing the participants into the poetry creation process. Burdick sent the transcript to the participants and asked them to do the same analysis and selection process independently, as she did on her own. With both her and the participants' work over the transcript, Burdick took upon herself the task of creating the poetry.

I have added to the process by meeting with each participant to work on both worked-through transcripts and crafting a single poem together. I call this *Joint Poetic Transcription*, and it will be further developed in the *Procedure* section.

This project took a 'retrospective' approach. The research design can be summarized as: interviewing the participants and recording them; transcribing the interview; sending the transcript to the participants with working instructions (to read, highlight, comment on their transcripts); do alternative drafts of the main ideas; and last, meeting with the participant and crafting the poem together. All poems were analysed through a combination of perspectives. For an historical-developmental interest, a narrative approach was needed to account for the way in which experiencing has unfolded through time. As a process, the intention was to understand the pathways that led to Early Career Academics experiencing teaching the way they do, and thus looking at the structural elements in the

narrative such as the beginning of the story, development (conflict) and resolution (if any), was considered relevant.

Working towards learning as affective/emotional, theoretical analysis was required to look at theory through the emergent data. Theoretical analysis here meant that the poems were read to intentionally pinpoint the main concepts that arguably would appear, if the theory work is consistent and well developed. Also, Poetic Inquiry requires a degree of aesthetic analysis as the poems need to produce something in the reader (Leavy, 2017). Here, aesthetic analysis was performed as a final reading of the poetry with the participants, identifying the aesthetical pleasure and enjoyment they took upon reading our work.

To assist the different analysis, field notes were taken, which also tried to acknowledge the myriad of cognitive and emotional aspects of this research project as I developed it and as I was developing with it.

The population for the project were early career academics with a full-time indefinite contract at a University in the North of England (anonymized for confidentiality reasons as per agreed on the informed consent) and who were somewhere between their fifth to seventh year as a HE academic, ideally without a UKPSF Fellowship or with an Associate Fellowship at most. They were all proficient English speakers so that the interview and poems could be done fully in English. Sampling was defined by convenience, resting on the idea that only people that were keen on doing this method and talking about this issue would want to participate. In a sense, participants were self-filtered-out by interest.

The empirical work had 11 participants, all academics in the broad area of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities in a research-intensive University.

The instrument for the project was a semi-structured interview that was slightly modified following a pilot. With this instrument, the project produced the raw material for creating the poems. The finalized poems are considered to be the data of this project. The final version of the interview script can be found in Section 3.2.2.1, and the Pilot project finished poems can be found in Appendix

One. This research was approved by the Educational Research Department Ethics Committee.

3.2.1 Research Design.

3.2.1.1 Participant Selection.

I outline here the rationale for participant selection. The sampling process chosen was convenience sampling, with a bit of purposeful sampling. Alongside my supervisor, we looked for people keen to participate, considering their affinity with the topic and the method. Furthermore, we were completely mindful of first the effort and time required to take part in this research (overall somewhere between 4 to 7 hours) and second of the ideations that may arise from being invited to take part in a research project where the participant needs to actively create poetry. In that light, we were confident that only people with enough time and interest in the topic and the method would voluntarily take part in the research. Thus, we approached Early Career Academics purposefully, looking for people who we knew personally or knew of from someone else, and who we believed could be interested in taking part.

Supporting this strategy, Smart and Loads (2017) offer words of caution, as not everybody would like to engage with such methods as a participant. Thus, I follow Leavy (2017) considering that

> Given the philosophical basis of ABR [Art-Based Research] and particularly the value placed on multiple truths and multiple ways of knowing, a strategy of purposeful sampling is generally employed so that the "best" participants are selected—those with the most to offer in regards to the topic. (p. 197)

In terms of participants' disciplines, this project was open to any field of work but considering ease of access in terms of the purposeful sampling, I aimed to recruit people working in the broad fields of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, in the north of England, this being the broad field of knowledge where we knew or knew of more people. The relationship between teaching and learning in HE and

the disciplinary field of participants has been explored by Jones (2010). To her, the disciplinary background arises at different points when interviewing Early Career Academics, imbricated and complementing the conversation about their teaching and academic work. As such, limiting the scope to one broad field yet keeping it open to a plurality of disciplines was thought to be of convenience to producing data that is wide yet restricted, open yet delimited. In her work, she suggests that the disciplines are important to academics and their stories, so we purposefully reached out to people in different departments (excluding the broad Educational Research field, to avoid ties with our Department). We believed in the importance of multiple disciplines following Jones, as she sees that academics bring them into their stories

> They discussed their discipline and what it meant to them, their teaching and why they taught in particular ways, and through this, participants told stories of their academic lives. In other words, participants were not simply discussing their teaching but were considering this in the context of more personal as well as moral, disciplinary and institutional dimensions. (p. 593).

Furthermore, going back to the consideration that this research requires a significant amount of time from its participants, it was considered wiser to follow a convenience and purposeful sampling and conduct the research within an academic community and geographical place where I could have easy access to schedule interviews and follow-up meetings. Close personal relationships from my supervisor and members of the academic development staff at Lancaster also proved to be helpful in finding participants.

Additionally, it was considered to be beneficial as I value the possibility of building relationships with the participants inasmuch as I need the conversations to be open and sincere on multiple occasions. Thus, building and sustaining a relationship, plus the amount of time and proximity were relevant factors to opt for researching within the north of England. All things considered, some degree of flexibility was allowed in participant sampling in terms of gender, nationality

and other aspects that have not been reported in the literature as relevant, to gain access to more participants.

Regarding the distribution of the sampling in other aspects such as gender, nationality or other demographic characteristics there are some points to be said. Firstly, it is important to note that the number of people working in the fields of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities is relatively small, which when adding information such as affiliation, gender, nationality/origin/background, age, amongst other thing, would almost certainly end up in supressing the anonymity of the participants. As the research is about learning to experience teaching in HE as an Early Career Academic, it was possible that some of the poems would turn out to be quite harsh toward the institutions and thus it was important ethically to safeguard participants' identity so that the poems could reflect as much of their experience as they wanted, in all the honesty they wanted. To that end, no data regarding participants' demographics was recorded.

Moreover, and following the self-filtered-out-ness of the sampling, the decision was to conduct the research with everyone who agreed to take part, regardless of their gender, age, department, institution, etc.

3.2.1.2 Ethical Considerations.

This research was approved by the Departmental Ethics Committee. Written consent for participation was requested for/from every participant before starting interviewing and producing data. The initial contact was done via email where I gathered a written declaration of willingness to take part in the study. I sent the participants the Participant Information Sheet and we set the dates for the interviews. Upon the day of each interview, I sent the participants the consent form and asked for the signature. With that done, the interviews begun.

As stated in the previous section, no demographic data was collected so as to safeguard the anonymity of the participants. As departments are relatively small and the area is relatively limited, any demographic detail added may have been sufficient to narrow down the identification of the participants.

Moreover, the participants were arguably involved in a research capacity in the process of transforming the transcripts into poems. This mode of participation doesn't imply an individual task for the participant, but another moment of meeting with me to create the poem. In that sense, it resembles a workshop like in Smart (2014; 2017) and Smart and Loads (2017) where they invited academics to construct poetry from written texts. The difference here is that it happened within the research process as a stage/step to construct the final 'data'.

Ethically speaking, this procedure was made to ensure that the voices of the participants were heard once again, and that the data was negotiated and validated with the participants themselves. They had the possibility of filtering in or out whatever they felt was more relevant, and so, to have more control than usual over the data presented in the thesis. Not just that, but it aimed at empowering the participants by allowing them to reflect on their own narrative and what they wanted to share with the world. In a sense, this aspect helped protect the participants' intimacy and voices in the research, not imposing the researcher's 'authority', my univocal standpoint on their stories.

Regarding authorship, I would like to share some ethical reflections that arise from this last point. Looking closely at the relation between authority and authorship, this method developed as Joint Poetic Transcription is also inscribed within a decolonial and emancipatory framework (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2021). In a sense, participants are meant to be seen as in a position of authority/authorship as they are joint authors of the data produced. There is something in/of them in the data, which tried to be a conscious, voluntary and informed choice. For the purposes of this research and within this methodology, it is important to consider the participants' authorial contribution to this project, transforming the power relationship into one that is somewhat more horizontal. Thus, they were all offered the opportunity to be named co-authors. It was firmly stated that this would have no negative consequence for the research nor for me as the researcher so that they could make a choice as free from coercion as possible. Alternatively, they were offered to opt out from co-authorship for their pieces by providing a pseudonym of their choosing. By doing that, they were informed that they would renounce to copyright. All participants signed the

consent form, opted out from copyright and provided a pseudonym of their choosing.

Copyright she said to me - not

authorship. We don't do that anymore.

Who is the author of this play?

Anonymous were the names

of the Greeks that never became

synonymous to the owners of the tales.

Who said that? - we hear them talking

to themselves. I'm sure I've heard

that somewhere else

before. Who was that person? Did you hear that then?

Something haunts us. We need to know,

do the spirits come in peace? Or is it just me

thinking that if they use the computer to think we

will risk ourselves be obsolete?

They want to be remembered, what were their

names? Which year is today?

They were here before the plague.

I have become a medium, I can tell you I can

still hear what they once said

somewhere else.

You should be careful. Respect

that they are talking through to you here and there.

Write down which page.

It is not artificial nor intelligent to simply complain. We hear them talking to themselves –

realising

we can either cite them correctly or go insane.

3.2.2 Data Production.

3.2.2.1 Tools.

The instrument for the empirical work was a semi-structured interview that was tested with a pilot and subsequently slightly modified. With this instrument, the work produced raw material for creating the poems. The interview was presented as a conversation with some pointers noted down for me to guide the discussion if needed. The following were the questions outlined:

1. Could you tell me "the story" of how you became a higher education teacher?
    - When did you decide to become one?
    - Why did you decide to become one?
    - What were the most decisive/important things you did to become one? Why?

2. How would you say that your first years as a teacher were in terms of learning for/about the role?
    - What were some of the things that you had to learn?
    - How did you learn them?
    - Was there something or someone that helped you learn/taught you?

3. Could you tell me (roughly) some of the things that you thought about teaching at that time?
    - What challenges were you able to anticipate at that time?
    - What facilitators could you identify for your work?
    - Were there things that you couldn't quite grasp/master at the time?

4. How did you feel at that time about teaching in HE? [Change to "teaching in HE"]
    - What do you think made you feel that way?
    - Were there things/moments that you made you feel particularly that way?
    - [If bad] How did you deal with that feeling?
    - Have you felt like that before? When? Why?

5. Has that feeling changed over time? How has that feeling changed?
    - Has it changed in some sense and continued in another sense?
    - Why do you think it is the same/different?

- Have you done something for it to be that way (changed or the same)?
  - *How do you feel about teaching now?*

6. Do you feel that you have changed since you began teaching in HE? Why? How so?
   - What would you say that are the main differences between now and then?
   - Is there something that you would have like to be different at the beginning?
   - What would have been a good support at that time?

7. Do you feel like you know how to teach now?
   - When did you start feeling it?
     - Was there a moment or thing that made you feel that you had "learnt" to teach?
     - If not, when do you think that will happen? What should happen for you to feel that way?

As the interviews are not the final product of research, they are not presented here in full but rather as transformed after the Joint Poetic Transcription.

3.2.2.2 Procedure.

Note & notice #1: There is no single way of doing Poetic inquiry, nor Poetic Transcription. Taking from Butler-Kisber (2021)

> There is no template or prescribed approach for creating found poetry. Some researchers start with the transcribed interviews and approach the work thematically by categorizing and assigning code names to the categories most salient words within a particular theme/experience and work with these to recreate the rhythm and speech patterns of the participant. Others (Butler- Kisber, 2002; Madison, 1991) use forms of narrative or poetic transcription/ analysis (Mishler, 1992; Reissman, 1993)

to maintain and/or pull together the contiguous dimensions as well as the aural aspects of rhythm, pauses, and emphasis of a particular story or experience from the outset, and then work with these feld texts to craft a poem or poems (p. 25-26)

Still, this work replicates the procedure done by Loads et al (2020). They interviewed 12 award recipients regarding their experiences of continuous professional development. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcription process was as follows,

Rather than seeking out a singular, coherent truth, we sought to construct our poems around any points in the transcripts that struck us as significant and that felt pertinent to our research questions. In order to structure this process we needed some boundaries and each author defined a set of parameters for themselves. All three authors began by reading and re-reading the transcripts of their interviews and gradually removing words until they were left with what they saw as representing the essence of each participant's experiences. (p. 342)

Differentiating myself from them, I constructed the poems alongside the participants. I added to the process meeting with each participant with both worked-through transcripts and crafting a single poem together. I call this process *Joint Poetic Transcription*. A similar procedure can be found in what Burdick (2011) calls "tandem found poetry" where,

[T]wo found poems are created separately but at roughly the same time, from the same text, by the interviewer and the participant. Therefore the poems are unified, yet unique, originating from the same text, but created through separate perspectives and writing styles. This tandem found poetry illustrates the researcher's subjectivity/bias by making her poetic interpretation only one piece of the analysis, and gives equal validity to the participant's own poetic self-representation. It not only allows for comparison, it unselfconsciously acknowledges both the connections and the disconnection between the researcher and researched representations. This demonstrates the multiple perspectives held within

any research, and also deconstructs the positivist hierarchical assumptions of researcher and researched. (p. 5)

Overall, the Joint Poetic Transcription procedure can be outlined as an adaptation of the process described by Butler-Kisber (2021, p.27-28, in italics the new parts). Taking from her and adapting to my needs, I summarize the procedure as follows:

1. *Interviewing following a tentative script, open to change and in-site transformation.*

2. *Recording and transcribing the interview, privileging content over pragmatics.*

3. *The transcription is sent to the participant.*

4. *Both researcher and participant conduct a close and slow reading of the transcript to allow themes to emerge*, keeping in mind certain elements to muse about while letting the writing possibilities "cook" inside. *Slow and close reading is meant to be done ideally at least twice.*

5. Pull out the phrases and words that will "breathe life into the poem" highlighting any words that might help to shape the poem.

6. *With the transcript worked through, both put in common their readings and accents in a conversation.*

7. Combine phrases from the transcript, adding words to help with the flow and rhythm to portray. *The text will start to appear as a scattered collection of phrases.*

8. Use poetic licence to help to craft the text *into poetry. Creating the poems should be a creative act of appropriation and transformation of words and form, so it needs to both look like and sound like a poem.*

9. *Read it together as many times as you need until the final poem makes sense to both. In each reading changes can be made to adjust the text into a stronger poem.*

10. Use keywords from the transcript in the title to help give meaning to the poem.

In a nutshell, the procedure meant a transformation in dialogue with the participants following the above-mentioned scheme that extended the one from Butler-Kisber (2021). We tried to keep a relative narrative form by sustaining the contiguous elements as presented on the transcripts while at the same time playing with the rhythms and rhymes, ebbs and flows of the primary transcribed text to achieve a relatively coherent and aesthetically pleasant poem that expressed their experiences of teaching in HE. In a sense, we wanted to create a poetic piece that expressed their stories and feelings, their experiences as they flowed and paused, with a few emphases taken from our highlighted reading but open to transformation into the pieces of poetry.

3.2.3 Data Analysis Approach and Techniques.

Note & notice #2: Poetic Inquiry, being considered a form of Art-Based Research, dwells between different usages of language following a myriad of intentions. Amongst them we can find differences such an aesthetic and efferent reading and use of language. Thus, speech usage varies and mixes in terms of the univocal-multivocal referential value of concepts, sometimes making distinctions between 'artistic' and 'scientific' analysis quite blurry. Still, following Bullock et al (2021), "the aesthetic and the efferent reading may be one and the same, but, like any form of analysis, are intended to give us words to speak about things in more detail, and to keep wondering what we might know" (p. 617). In that sense, in Art-Based Research it is important not to get carried away by distinctions such as art and science, but to focus on what each adds to understanding.

With that said, I carried out two analytical processes:

3.2.3.1 Aesthetic Analysis.

The first analytical element that is present in my Poetic Inquiry is an Aesthetic Analysis. Here, the aim was acknowledging how the poems "produced" something by means of their poetic form. Taking metric and rhyme as an example of how form helps make poetry produce feeling or experiencing a phenomenon,

Obermeier et al. (2013) tell us that both rhyme and regular meter lead to enhanced aesthetic appreciation, higher intensity in processing, and more positively perceived and felt emotions, with the latter finding being mediated by lexicality.

Another example is shown in Faulkner (2019) through the value of purposefully crafted poetic form,

> For example, the pantoum, a Malay form, plays on repeated lines in quatrains; the second and fourth lines of a stanza become the first and third lines of the next stanza. The recurring lines can be hypnotic as they weave in and out of one another, creating surprises as they work together in novel ways (Padgett, 1987). It is a slow form because a reader takes four steps forward and two steps back, making it "the perfect form for the evocation of a past time" (Strand & Boland, 2002, p. 44). I find this form enticing to represent the fact that most narratives are not straightforward, that individuals often end up back where they started, working though identity issues in an anti- narrative pattern as identities change in our relationships and communities over time. (p. 169)

The Aesthetic Analysis was done by me and the participants in every Joint Poetic Transcription process. As a way of reflecting upon the quality of such analysis, a process called "Response" (Leavy, 2017) was carried out. Such is outlined in the following section "Quality".

3.2.3.2 Curation.

Note & notice #3: Some Poetic Inquirers are hesitant about using analytic techniques that require them to take poems as a corpus such as thematic analysis. In Rapport and Hartill (2012) for instance

> How best to analyse their content when the usual complement of analytic techniques –thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2002), content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002), framework analysis (Robson, 2002) seemed strangely inappropriate? To apply thematic analysis, for example, and by so doing

to reduce the ebb and flow of words to clipped lists of thematised events, behaviours, actions and interactions seemed disrespectful. Thematic analysis with its systematic simplification was out of kilter with the flowing resonance of the raw material. […] Eisner (1997, 2004) has advised us to: "think within the medium we choose to use" (p. 8), and FR recognised the value of letting the stories speak for themselves, sensitively working with the detail to allow texts to reveal their own transformations. (p. 19)

Yet, pondering how to articulate the poems as a corpus can be something useful to answer bigger questions such as the one my project sets out to answer. As an alternative way of analysing data within Art-Based Research, Butler-Kisber (2002) argues for producing *artful portrayals* as an analytical approach. Artful portrayals foster "experimentation with a wide range of possibilities and perspectives and produces interesting insights in the process" (p. 236). Following the core characteristics of Poetic Transcription,

> A portrayal presents the essence of a phenomenon at a certain time while retaining the signature of the creator. Artful portrayals mediate understanding, our own and that of others. They can help push the boundaries of qualitative work, but need not become part of the final representational form. (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 236)

Considering the aim of this research, Artful Portrayals seemed fitting as an analytical tool. However in looking at the poem data as a corpus I still needed a way of putting these together to create wider perspectives into the data.

Thus, Cluster Analysis was selected following Butler-Kisber (2021) to find similarities in the different 'stories' of learning how to experience teaching. This process shares the core purpose of a narrative analysis as a Cluster Analysis means taking the poems as series or collections with the intent to get "a prism-like rendition of the subtle variations of a phenomenon, while at the same time giving a more holistic understanding of it" (p. 34).

This process would arguably address the concerns in literature of diluting the individual value of the poetic form as it would keep the poems intact by only

framing them together as similarly-inclined pieces that collectively reflect a common story. Following Butler-Kisber,

> Clusters produce the particular and the general simultaneously and help to show the tentativeness of individual interpretations. […] Clusters give nuances that are not apparent in a single poem. They provide a "closer reading" of the topic while, at the same time, a more "general" one. (p. 34)

Clusters were created through an iterative process of reading and re-reading, going from the poems to the theory work and back again to check how it made sense. The aim of the clusters was to create groups so that reading the poems in a particular sequence could transform the poems themselves as well as produce an intended effect on the reader. For this, the process took two iterative movements: on one hand, printing out the poems, reading them and writing my reactions to them as side notes. Letting it rest. Letting them go. And coming back to them to pull them together and rearrange them in another order, to another intention. In contrast, a spreadsheet was developed to note some of my reactions, for example identifying in which of them there was a preponderance of more 'negative' responses and reactions from my readings and which were more 'positive'; on that note, some offer both and some offer none, negative and positive, and non-negative and non-positive.

Over time, these two processes converged in the aggrupation that is showcased later in this thesis. As the manipulation of data was taking place, the analytical work in terms of clusters became less a simple putting together to bring about a theme or certain commonalities and turned into a series of actual transformations of the data as they were being organized and structured differently. As they were put together differently, different nuances and readings were portrayed. Finally all poems were arranged so as to intensify the nuances and so build some differences into the reading, that later could be used to take on the more complex and muddled pieces, all without diluting their richness.

With this in mind, the approach taken for the data analysis departs from Cluster Analysis to re-work the method through the concept of Curation. More on this will be developed in the section called "Exhibition".

124

To close this section on Data Analysis Approach and Techniques, it is important to reiterate the apprehension shared in the literature on Poetic Inquiry, and specifically in Poetic Transcription. Thus, *Note & notice #4:* Although it is interesting to draw conclusions from poetically produced research, this must be done with caution. Following Jones (2010),

> *Poetic transcriptions are not thematic summaries or generalisable abstractions* but quite the contrary, they make us see the individual experience in a unique voice and to consider both the commonalities and the contradictions and cross-currents and 'sensitise readers to the particulars and to the perhaps surprises of the specific comments' (Clarke et al. 2005, 926). (Italics in the original, p. 594)

3.2.4 Discussing Quality.

I understand the need in any research project to discuss the idea of evaluating, assessing, or assuring the quality of the process, results, discussions, and conclusions. Coming from different traditions, every research paradigm encourages different ways of achieving this. In Art-Based Research and Poetic Inquiry, such ideas are still heavily discussed and often seen as ways of addressing the 'limitation' of such methods.

One limitation that has been identified regards the possibility of these poems even being considered art. In Loads et al. (2019), the authors discuss their self-perceived abilities and artistic skills, reflecting on their uncertain position towards their creations being considered poetry. One way of tackling this issue has been argued by Lahman et al. (2019) who offer an understanding of such creations as art-like *poemish*(s): to them, using poetry features with an effort to make something that resembles a poem could be good enough to be considered art. Alternatively, a more radical position on this issue is argued by the Chilean "anti-poet" Nicanor Parra, who defies the notions and practices of traditional poetry and its authoritative position towards what might be called art (López Mejia, 1990). Still, the limitation is clearly set as the extent to which Poetic Transcription can be accepted by the general academic community as a valid form of art and/or research.

Tribes.

This is not a place for the poets,

you are not welcome here.

Here, I want to extend the discussion on quality. Rather than trying to escape from addressing the fact that some sort of criteria for quality needs to be outlined, some authors have entrusted their close care and engagement with the craft as a sign of quality. The element of trustworthiness is shared in Art-Based Research but slightly extended. Following Leavy (2017),

> Guiding questions are thus: Does it ring true? Is it believable? Does it feel authentic? Does the work resonate? […] In other words, an artistic rendering must get to the heart of the issue and present that essence in a coherent form in order to achieve aesthetic power. (p. 212-213)

For this project, I would like to adapt some of the signs of quality suggested by Faulkner (2016). As such, I present for encompassing the rigour of methods 1) Methodological Criteria: Researcher Diary; for considering the audience, the power of the art and performance 2) Artistic Criteria: Response; and for developing the particular craft done for/in the research process 3) Technical Criteria: Exercise.

3.2.4.1 Methodological Criteria: Researcher Diary.

Taking into consideration the importance of conducting a rigorous and ethical research project, quality has tended to look into ways of managing the project in such a way that the researcher can account for the methodological and analytical decisions made throughout.

To that end, I kept a research diary. As outlined by Burgess (1981), methodological notes "help the researcher to reflect on the philosophical, practical, ethical and political aspects of the research process" (p. 78), while taking analytical notes "allows researchers to look at the ways in which social science concepts, professional concepts, and common sense/everyday concepts can be employed in the analysis of data" (p. 78).

Additionally, following Nadin and Cassell (2006), the research diary was useful for fostering the researcher's reflexivity, as notes on those analytical and methodological decisions provided feed back into the research process.

3.2.4.2 Artistic Criteria: Response.

As a tool, responding to the poems created is a crucial sign of the quality of such work. Two levels of response were identified as key for this project as they provided an account for the artistic value of the project.

a) Participant Response: for the poems to have artistic value, they need to promote thinking and reflection for those that craft them (Tian, 2023). Thus, being a good tool for learning has been identified as something needing to be looked into for addressing the success of the project. One way of doing so has been through follow-up questions/interviews with the research participants.

Here, I formalized the procedure done by Burdick (2011), where "two informal interviews allowed participants' analysis of the poems and reflection on the process. Participants also wrote formal reflections on the process" (p. 5). I added this process as part of the research procedure after the poems were crafted with a meeting at least two weeks after the poems were ready. The meeting was held to discuss both the poem itself and the process of making it.

The guiding question for the meetings was "has the process of creating a poem or the poem itself helped you reflect on your experience and how?" The discussions in such meetings were recorded, transcribed, and analysed following a Thematic Analysis. Overall, the participants considered the poems to be a tool for thinking about their experiences and learning from them. They asserted that

doing the poems provoked a transformation of the experiences as they went back to them and truly engaged with them again through the method. The participants used concepts such as cathartic and therapeutic to refer to the process, which is fully in line with the concept of perezhivanie as developed earlier.

b) Audience Response: for looking into the more extended artistic value of the poems, they need to promote thinking and reflection in others (Leavy, 2017). Thus, for the poems to be of 'good research quality', individuals in similar circumstances to the participants should be able to reflect after reading the poems. Following Leavy,

> Audience response is another marker of success. ABR has the potential to be emotional, evocative, provocative, illuminating, educational, and transformative. It may also be employed to unsettle or disrupt stereotypes or commonly held assumptions, bridge differences, challenge dominant ideologies, present resistive narratives or possibilities, prompt social reflection, and stimulate self- awareness. Therefore, it may be necessary to evaluate how well a piece of ABR has accomplished those ends, as applicable to the project goals. (p. 213)

This process was not carried out in this project, and it remains as a possibility for further exploration in the future. Tying up with the suggestions for Educational Development, this would offer a segue to reflect upon the experiences of others in a workshop setting, for example. Ideally, the workshop would have to be arranged with the staff entrusted with the development of early career academics at any HEI.
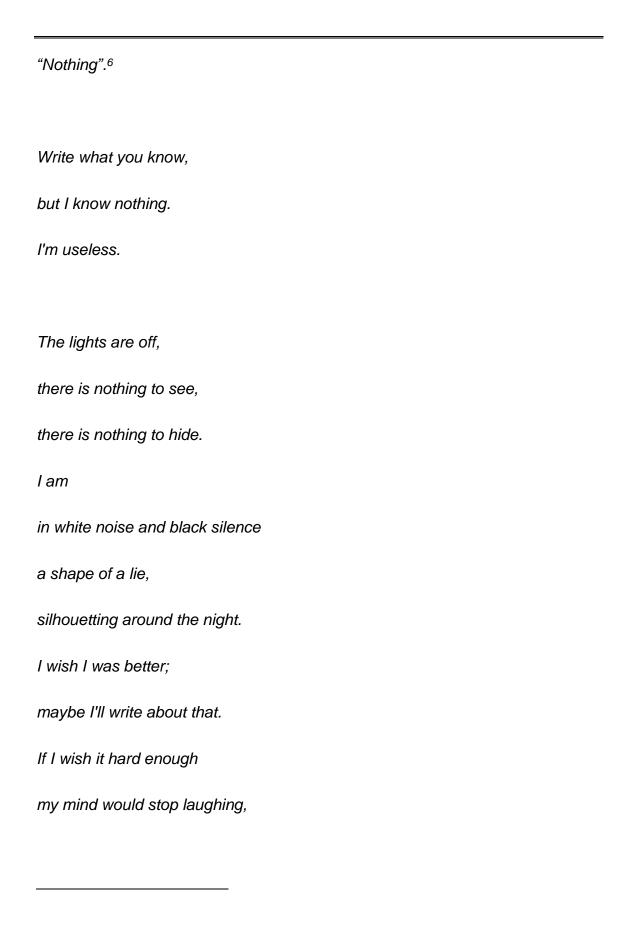
3.2.4.3 Technical Criteria: Exercise.

Fairly widespread amongst the Poetic Inquiry research community is the suggestion of doing exercises to practise writing poetry. Preparation of different sorts can be well exemplified in Faulkner (2019), who provides a myriad of exercises to develop the poetic skills of the leading researcher.

Here, I agree with the need to exercise and I followed the suggestions made by Thomas (2021). In particular, she advises us to

- Read and listen to published poetry noting the kinds of details, rhythms, and sounds that evoke an emotional response.

- Become familiar with the way poets arrange words on a page and the relationship between space and silences.

- Reread data and literature often, stay open to considering various relationships between and combinations of texts from different stages of the research process.

- When composing poetic juxtapositions, read them aloud to yourself and to a willing listener, noting places in the juxtaposition in which the flow of language, ideas, and embodied understanding are interrupted.

- Consider the addition of found poetry from every day and popular culture texts as they often include interesting and emotive turns of phrase while representing the larger culture.

- If song lyrics or quotes from popular literature come to mind during analysis, do not dismiss their meaning and usefulness. They are likely circling in your mind because they are analogous to the findings that are emerging. They can be used in poetic juxtaposition to add metaphor and simile. (Bullets on the original, p. 634)

As a space for exercise, I enrolled in the module "Seeing things: visualising poetry" led by Professor Paul Farley from the MA in Creative Writing at Lancaster University. My own personal project to develop my poetry as well as to produce reflection on my doctoral voyage, my theoretical understanding and research in general, ended in a collection of poetry called *K(no)wing & re(sé)arching*. Up to this moment, the final place for this collection is to be decided, but some of them are in this thesis. The name of the collection highlights in parenthesis the words no and sé, which in Spanish means *I don't know*. Here I offer you one of said poems, that was developed in the module, which expresses this central idea:

"Nothing".[6]

Write what you know,

but I know nothing.

I'm useless.

The lights are off,

there is nothing to see,

there is nothing to hide.

I am

in white noise and black silence

a shape of a lie,

silhouetting around the night.

I wish I was better;

maybe I'll write about that.

If I wish it hard enough

my mind would stop laughing,

---

[6] Inspired by a photograph, taken by @migueletchepare.be

she'll take me seriously this time,

turn the pills into poems,

songs of the yet to come.

For now,

I'm using myself less

until I know myself be mine.

The arrogance of the dark room that wants

to be the absolute when it's so easily broken,

I know not to see but to feel nothing - unconscious.

3.2.5 Presenting…

Having outlined the research in a relatively exhaustive way, now we can dispose ourselves to enter to the exhibition. Poems are meant to be page-stoppers – as Professor Paul Farley would say – so take your time.

3.3 Exhibition.

Provoking,

experiences of teaching.

This is an exhibition, like an art gallery, a guided walk, a tour. The tangled mess does not get untangled but acknowledged, exalted, and navigated through a thought-out structure and more provoking thoughts along the pathway. Here, no definite answers are looked for but provisionally constructed, negotiated and discussed between you and me. The voices and echoes that are hung on the walls and the people that come along intersect, intertwine, interact within the exhibition.

I may be something of a tour guide. If you had another guide, you might see different things. They might tell you different stories, ask you different questions, or make longer stops at different places. Every tour guide might be tempted to say that they are the best and that you, the reader, are lucky to have them. Well, I do have the feeling that you are lucky to have me. But mostly, I'd say that I'm lucky to have you. Without you, I'd be talking to the walls. Wherever you are, and whenever you are entering this exhibition, please share your thoughts with me. I would absolutely love to hear from you – here is my email: fsanchezb@gmail.com

—

Moreover, other people might want to take the same pieces of art/work – some might say, data – and move it around, shuffle it and rearrange it differently. With another intention, structure, you might get a different experience, and that is perfectly fine.

—

This exhibition is called *Provoking, experiences of teaching.*

Here, I offer a bit of an *introduction*.

The art pieces that compose this exhibition have been made by different artists – who otherwise might be called Early Career Academics, the participants of my doctoral research project – and myself.

Together we have created a series of poems around the experiences of teaching in Higher Education as an Early Career Academic. Each poem was created by one of the artists/participants and me, taking as a base for each poem the transcription of an interview/conversation that I guided and transcribed. I call this process Joint Poetic Transcription, and it shares elements of the methodology called Poetic Transcription (see Burdick, 2011; Loads et al., 2019; Smart & Loads, 2017, amongst many others) but adds participant collaboration into the data production/poem creation process thus transforming them into artists too.

The exhibition has been created as an act of resistance to some scientific discourses that call for data to be presented and discussed as if it were only words in a piece of paper (physical or virtual). As what has been otherwise called "boundary work" (Sigfúsdóttir, 2021), this exhibition has been created as an acknowledgement of a work that sits both with the arts and research fields. In a sense, output created through Art-Based Research methods and practices could be disseminated in cultural institutions and forms as much as in academic institutions and forms. In the words of Sigfúsdóttir, as an artistic research practice it "has epistemological value in both domains and serves to dissolve dichotomic attitudes towards theory and practice" (p. 434).

Ways of presenting, analysing and disseminating Art-Based Research take a myriad of forms, all of them valid and extremely interesting. A great example of a good way to treat poems in this field is through Cluster Analysis, to show the similarities in the different 'stories' taken from the poems.

Following Lynn Butler-Kisber (2021), this mode of analysis means taking the poems as series or collections with the intent to get "a prism-like rendition of the

subtle variations of a phenomenon, while at the same time giving a more holistic understanding of it" (p. 34). This process would arguably address the concerns in literature of diluting the individual value of the poetic form as it would keep the poems intact by only framing them together as similarly inclined pieces that collectively reflect a common story. Because Butler-Kisber said it best,

> Clusters produce the particular and the general simultaneously and help to show the tentativeness of individual interpretations. […] Clusters give nuances that are not apparent in a single poem. They provide a "closer reading" of the topic while, at the same time, a more "general" one. (p. 34)

Although there is an interest to draw conclusions from poetically produced research, such must be done with caution as Jones (2010) would argue. These "*are not thematic summaries or generalisable abstractions* but quite the contrary" (Italics in the original, p. 594). As an art form, the poems produced here are meant to be experienced, they should intentionally lead the reader to think of answers but also lead them to more questions.

The argument I make is that the Cluster Analysis could be thought of as a process of curation. As such, it would be accurate to say that I am the curator of this exhibition.

—

Although curation can be used as a common day to day concept, as any other concept it can also be used in a scientific way (understanding scientific concepts as does Vygotski [1934/1991]), as related to other concepts in a more abstract manner. The concept of curation draws from different historical and cultural elements such as stories and fables (Nowotny, 2013). When considered as part of the curatorial research field, it offers an understanding of the process of presenting and exhibiting artwork as a thoughtful act of caring – also as taking care of – both about the art, the authors and the audiences (Hansen et al., 2019). Curation goes beyond exhibition as Preziosi (2019) argues,

Whether we use the term to refer to the caring, organizing, and managing of objects or phenomena, whether material or virtual, curating is, firstly, a form of stagecraft, or the orchestration of entities or phenomena in space-time. Secondly, it is a mode of dramaturgy, or the practice of dramatic orchestrations. Thirdly, the theatricality of curating is also a rhetorical practice, an art of persuasion. So, whether curatorship invites or banishes, explains or masquerades, persuades or dissuades, it is never neutral, innocent, or permanent. In short, there is no "it" about it, but more of a when and a how, as well as a why. (p. 12).

Without trying to push the analogy too far, even the other major duties of a curator in the arts are not too dissimilar to that of the academic. If the role of the curator involves "organizing exhibitions, writing and publishing critical works, developing screenings and performances, coordinating fundraisers, conducting studio visits, and speaking in public about their work" (Persohn, 2021, p. 37), it is easy to see that academics do similarly inclined tasks such as organizing conferences, writing papers and other forms of critical work and forms of dissemination, applying for research funding, doing visits and attending to conferences, amongst others.

Yet, one place of departure of curating as differing from academic research could be thought of as the way curation seeks to distract, while academic result presentation aims to focus. As Bjerregaard (2019) argues, curating entails

"opening up attention for insights and relations that would otherwise be thought of an irrelevant in the everyday production of the museum. In this sense curating is not necessarily an activity aiming for an exhibition as end product but may be practiced by bringing people, objects, and space together in new formats. (p. 117)

The exhibition is not the end product in curation – contrasting to the results on a research project – but also "a site for carrying out this research, as a place for enacted research" (Sheikh, 2019 p. 102). This way, curation as a field and practice treats the exhibition as a relational and unfinished construction; with this concept, the results of research can be thought of as non-definitive answers to

questions, as open-ended, in process, related to a specific time and space. In a sense, the exhibited artwork are "*relational objects*, rather than as *autonomous* objects created by lone authors" (Spaid, 2020, p. 119).

Moreover, exhibiting from the curatorial perspective means that the exhibition is itself part of the ongoing processes: in this case, part of the art/data is the process of exhibiting it. Taking this practice together with the research processes and, in particular, with the presentation of results from a project such as mine, it makes absolute sense to think about results and analysis in the way of curatorial practice. Following Sheikh (2019),

> The curatorial is, in this sense, not necessarily something that takes on the form and eventual character of the exhibition, but something that employs the thinking involved in exhibition making and researching.[…] Rather, the aesthetic and to a large degree, the art world, are here seen as tools for investigating something other than art, for presenting ideas, research results, and project outcomes in a different discourse from other forms such as politics proper, sociology, science, journalism, etc. (p. 99)

All in all, the intent of approaching this research from a curatorial view is in tune with the practice of Cluster Analysis while offering a better rationale for it. As a curated exhibition, each poem "is studied for its individual characteristics and message, while drawn into interpretations of a body of work" (Persohn, 2021, p. 38); furthermore, the curated exhibition is

> conceived so as to reveal particular features of the artworks on view. In this case, the artworks indicate belongingness to some whole. When curated exhibitions illuminate contents that wouldn't be grasped otherwise, they augment each artwork's intrinsic value. Like curated exhibitions, art collections require 'modes of reasoning', but only curated exhibitions exhibit rules of inference – 'rules for reasoning from meaningful premises to meaningful conclusions'. (Spaid, 2020, p. 26)

The challenge for me here then has been to clearly devise ways of presenting the poems created, in a way that adds value to each of them individually as much

as to all of them collectively. Spaid (2020) calls the thinking collectively as devising "relational clusters" (p. 34), where the adjacent artwork is elevated by its shared references between each other, the audiences, and the world.

In sum, curating an exhibition here means many complementing and overlapping aspects of presenting my research data. On one side, it implies my thinking about the artwork and extending the relationships that I have identified, researched and reflected upon in a way that makes sense to myself, the artwork and the audiences; from another perspective, it means highlighting their distinctiveness as pieces of poetry that were made in conjunction with different artists and following different base texts; and on another side, it requires not just acknowledging but actively expecting and pre-acting to the different ways in which the audiences can engage with the exhibition.

——

I present to you the exhibition *Provoking, experiences of Teaching*.

With this exhibition, I intend to provide a way for you to experience the poems we created in a particular way. As Spaid (2020) suggests, "exhibitions enable audiences to experience artworks in a particular way" (p. 42).

With this exhibition, the invitation is for all of us reading: let's try to deconstruct, reconstruct, recreate and reproduce the different feelings, experiences, ideas and overall societal phenomena that are conveyed in the poetry presented. More than thinking about the experiences of teaching in Higher Education, I want us to try to experience them with the artwork, with me, the artists/participants, with the exhibition. By inviting us to experience rather than reading, I'd like us to engage with the poems/data in such a way that we treat them as art. As Preziosi (2019) suggests, this exhibition is meant to be "an epistemological technology: a craft of thinking." (p. 11). The thinking here will be done not only by me but by you too: all of us need to engage to think new things.

Let us begin.

___

3.3.1 Entrance.

This is a hall, lobby, foyer, a beginning, an opening. This piece is here to welcome and introduce you to the exhibition. First: with Daemon, *Chasing the Dragon.* Exhilarating and dramatic.

I wanted a higher education career. I mentioned this

to my personal tutor,

he told me I was mad to want an academic career. I know what he means,

but nonetheless

I went along with it.

I was self funded,

doing the PhD part time and working full time.

It therefore took me

seven years to complete the PhD.

This is the part of the story that always makes people go: What!?

After graduation, it took me,

seriously,

it took me 10 years,

600 job applications,

and 30 interviews before I finally got my first full time position.

And I'm not exaggerating.

I'm not exaggerating.

You might be asking yourself why,

why I kept at it.

Why,

Well, here is why.

There is something about a certain type of academic study.

When you're an undergrad, you study a whole range of different topics;

some of them you don't enjoy but some of them you click with.

I did a couple of courses relating to film and I found that really clicked with me

because I love cinema.

I love being able to analyse it, to talk about it, to write about it in depth,

what it did is spark in me the sense of

yes!

It clicked.

[Insert here the sound of a film projector going click-whirr].

This is an elevated experience.

I guess.

Not to sound super melodramatic

it's akin to when a detective puts together the different pieces.

Yes, there it is!

And things click.

Or perhaps when a wildlife photographer is out there sitting in the rain for days

and days

and then there! The animal that they have been looking for,

the snow leopard, the anaconda, the Komodo dragon,

and they get their photograph.

And the photograph encapsulates that moment.

There are moments of getting there,

my snow leopard, my anaconda, my Komodo dragon.

Like writing an essay, researching, a dissertation, a thesis

when it is like,

YES!

Finally!

This is so cool! This is so me!

I wanna keep doing this.

I want more of this.

Not to sound super melodramatic,

I guess.

I came out of my teaching experiences feeling really positive about it.

So it's one of those, I guess, slightly intangible things,

when you find something that is you.

I had my very first seminar and I came out and went *Yeah!*

That was good!

Which was fortunate.

If I came out of that and thought *God!*

That was

a horrible

experience,

perhaps I wouldn't have carried on, but…

But I did,

and I had great seminars.

Great because all the talking was done by the students,

that is the goal.

To sit back and go

carry on…

I want to give students something that will give them a similar spark to what I had.

If you're chasing a dragon in teaching,

it is to get the students to sit for days in the rain

because they are excited.

I want them to be excited about this topic

just as much as I am.

For those out there in the wild,

you need to know something:

it is crucially important,

absolutely vital,

you need to know

that you don't know what's going to happen.

And this might be a key reason why we are continually motivated.

I guess that is sort of essential unknown-ness.

The element that, you don't know how it's gonna play out is always there

and that makes it continually exciting to go into a class.

That sense of anticipation

provides the elevated experience,

even when it's frustrating

and nerve-wracking,

those are generated by the excitement of not knowing

what's to come.

What is to come

depends on us.

We need to make a class sit up and go yeah!

For those out there waiting in the wild,

a word from the wise…

experiences like this in teaching are few and far between.

Teaching is often a struggle.

You can step out of a seminar and say

That went really well.

Crap!

I gotta get to my next meeting,

to my next class,

or go back to my office and do a whole bunch of busy work…

Yay – ironically.

But you'll know it's worth it,

even when it wasn't particularly successful.

The feeling when you step out of a classroom

is enough to carry you through.

Isn't this a kind of addiction? I suppose maybe it is.

Yeah, I am chasing that high.

I am chasing the dragon of creativity,

of new knowledge

in me and in others.

Teaching is a creative act

and I'm still developing,

I'm still learning.

That is part of what keeps it going:

every class is different,

every preparation is different.

To make it fresh

because that's what is part of the motivation.

Satisfaction is what I'm aiming for.

I want to put together a class and feel that at the end of it,

I made a point

and I applied it in a way that they could understand.

I want to get the feeling that those students engaged with that material.

That's the satisfaction I'll get,

the spark

of people talking across the classroom.

And that is why you stay in the rain.

Chasing.

___

The addiction of teaching.

As a first step into this exhibition, I'd like to show you a form of addiction to teaching in real life. How it can be experienced by people, like me and you. Or Daemon. And me. And you.

It sounds like the idea of *flow*, a well-known concept by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (2014). A bit of excitement, tension, achievement; an overall experience of enjoyment. Wanting to do it again. To experience that experience again. Like a drug. And then it passes, it fades into other mundane tasks. It needs some mastery, proficiency (Bandura, 1994; 2012; 2018), but it also needs to be uncertain. What if it doesn't work this time? In which sense it may be different from the last time? It also engages all of you. All of me. All of Daemon, in this case.

In this poem, a key feature of the relationship between teacher and teaching unfolds. *Chasing the Dragon* signals what Van Lankveld et al. (2017) already stated: Early Career Academics can see strong ties between their identity and their work as lecturers. It can be enjoyable, satisfactory. All in all, this poem shows someone proud of their work and in so agreeing with what Stupnisky et al. (2019) have suggested: this work can be experienced positively by some. This poem is an invitation to the exhibition as it provides a colourful image that well addresses the literature.

It is a good taste of the field to start on a good note but be warned, not everything is as clear cut as it is in this one.

Victorious opening sequence, but everything is about to change…

⎯⎯

3.3.2 Room 1. Provocative Differentiations: Negatives.

In the myriad of experiences of teaching in Higher Education, there are several threads that can be pulled out to then knit back together. Even the lack of threads in specific points of the fabric can open interesting avenues for thinking and reflection. In this room, the negative spaces of *lack of* enjoyment, self-confidence intertwine with the outstanding elements of insecurity, fear, uneasiness. A clear contrast to the Entrance to tell us that we have definitely arrived at the exhibition. This room showcases an un-clearcut phenomenon that has been tailored in a way that highlights some bits despite its complexity.

———

The first piece we see with Mike, is *We can't make it on our own*, a poem to make our peace with.

I really knew what I wanted.

I really knew I wanted to teach.

I was looking for, was not just a standard PhD,

I wanted to have a mix.

A mix of PhD and teaching,

together.

That was my pathway.

Pathway to disaster,

I thought.

I found my first semester was a disaster

I tell you.

I was really crap.

I was really bad at teaching

I thought.

The hardest part for me was the realisation that

I've been trying to be able to understand, whenever

students would say something,

is that what they're saying?

Is that actually right?

Or are they getting that wrong?

I thought it would be relatively easy, right?

Right?

The students would come up with creative questions and to be kind of thinking,

is that what they're saying?

Is that actually right?

Or are they getting that wrong?

I'd be thinking, can I have a minute?

- in *your* mind obviously, you wouldn't say that to the student, would you?

I felt incompetent.

My goodness,

I'm gonna get fired…

And then I was like

I'm never gonna be able to do this.

And then,

what am I going to do for my PhD?

– at *this* point *this* is my second attempt at a PhD –

my goodness.

And then I was like

not seeing the way out, the pathway through to get you out to the other side.

Certain groups would,

they would fill me with dread thinking,

my goodness,

what are they going to ask me today?

I would *never* do that to a postgraduate teaching assistant.

My goodness

I thought I knew what I wanted.

I really wanted to teach.

This was going to be an easy subject,

but there is romance,

a romantic notion that you're going to university

and you're going to teach something interesting, fascinating, cool,

which it was to an extent.

That you're not going to have any challenges.

Lets just say

it isn't.

It was only at the end of term when I came to terms with it.

Next year like, I'm going to be *so* much better,

I'm going to be so much more organised

and I know the issues that can arise.

I'll be better,

I'll be prepared.

I found myself in my first semester teaching

with a mentor that was much more into researching.

Let's just say

It's best forgotten.

I would *never* do that to postgraduate teaching assistant.

Moving on.

Now the second one,

she was much more approachable.

The second semester teaching,

it was brilliant.

She actually sat down,

She actually did it,

and we went through and said look,

if you come up against this, this is different way you could deal with that

and this is a different way that you can manage to get the information across there

and so on.

She was a very good mentor.

She had me work through different strategies and say look,

if this happens, well then this is what you've got to do for that

and this is at least one way to respond to those things there.

And so on.

Moving on.

Now,

if I do anything then I probably over prepare for that,

if anybody asked me to do anything, then I would be the one person overprepared there.

Now I am

in control, I suppose?

In the sense that I wouldn't have a fear of going to a class and thinking

my goodness,

I'm gonna be put through the ringer today.

What we found is that it was even a case that students were not trying to challenge you.

My mentor told me that

it was a case that

the more in control you were of how things were going

then the better the experience the students would have.

You are able to manage it.

To manage them.

At the end I remember

seeing that actually more of the feedback I got was positive than negative.

I remember thinking

at least now I know that I must be doing something right.

Right, this is where the weaknesses are, the gaps are, and this is what I'm going to do

now.

The end – ?

___

There is despair, disenchantment – *best forgotten* – but is it? There was a wish, an expectation, a romance but it comes across as naïve… it should have been easy! But why would he think that? Here, the idea of not seeing the way out is particularly devastating. Having committed to teaching we cannot jump ship halfway through. The repetition of the verse 'my goodness' shows that it is somewhat shocking at different points, it is surprising in a way that needs to be noted.

Love was supposed to be at the core of the experience, but it wasn't. On its own, teaching is not necessarily experienced as joyful; on our own, we might feel abandoned, forgotten. There is a duty of care in accompanying someone who is just starting to teach which feels neglected to me. My goodness is a cry for attention from the above.

In contrast, along comes a good mentor and it feels like everything changed for the better. He is heard. This shows what Boyce et al. (2019) were suggesting: mentoring works as a collective practice to learn ways to experience teaching. With his mentor, there was a growing confidence to balance the insecurity.

Still, even at the end there is a feeling that it might not be the end. The end – ? It feels almost satirical but there is a warning disclosed as an archetypical question mark at the end: things change, and there is something odd and unsettling about acknowledging that.
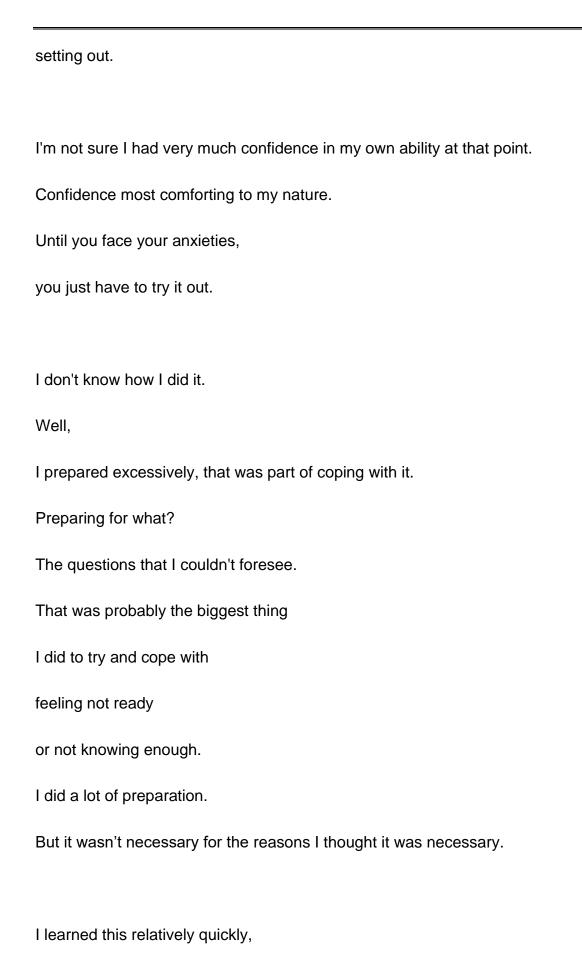
This poem showcases uncertainty. Spaces not quite filled.

___

The second poem in this room comes with Miles: *The Questions I Couldn't Forsee.* An offbeat and gray-ish view of the land.

I don't recall anybody that was early in their career, I was surrounded

by a lot of people who were really experienced.

They were very easy

in their knowledge. Still,

it seemed like a gap

between where they are and where

you are

when you enter.

In the beginning

there was nothing.

You just don't have a bank of knowledge,

bank as a natural ridge,

as starting something new.

It's actually harder -

scaling banks of perseverance, of fortitude -

when you're just starting,

setting out.

I'm not sure I had very much confidence in my own ability at that point.

Confidence most comforting to my nature.

Until you face your anxieties,

you just have to try it out.

I don't know how I did it.

Well,

I prepared excessively, that was part of coping with it.

Preparing for what?

The questions that I couldn't foresee.

That was probably the biggest thing

I did to try and cope with

feeling not ready

or not knowing enough.

I did a lot of preparation.

But it wasn't necessary for the reasons I thought it was necessary.

I learned this relatively quickly,

I had this perception

I was going to get loads of questions

I needed to have answers for. But

the more you do it,

the more you realise…

Actually, you never get those questions,

like it's not an interrogation, it's not a siege.

It's a step in the sand, a day, a passage, a journey.

It's also about learning.

You don't get nervous about things if you don't care about them.

I have always wanted to teach

and enjoyed teaching,

it comes with expectations of myself to do it well.

And those watching

I've seen some tough acts to follow.

Maybe that's part of an academic job.

Admire deeply. Be moved,

to be more passionate about your subject and then

it means you have high standards for yourself

but because I think it's an important thing to do

and I enjoy doing it.

Confidence is developing ways to get positive outcomes out of being nervous.

It's like being a bit more familiar with the fact that you're not always familiar with everything.

Like being confident with the fact that you're not always confident with everything.

That has taken experience to learn:

a journey, a passage, hundreds of days, thousands of steps in the sand.

At the beginning I would over prepare and then for nothing

you know? It never actually happened.

But I think you only know that by doing it.

Tracing back your steps, washed away.

It just teaches you that it's OK to not have all the answers.

Let yourself be driven

by the things, the people, the moment.

In an ideal world, you might just sit there and discuss.

It is you,

perseverance.

You weren't ever going to have all the answers,

and that's OK.

___

There is an unfinished-ness in this poem that resonates with Mike's. Not like those *more experienced*, in this poem we see the gap: in knowledge, in experience, in how to be. That gap is a clear on/going that needs to be filled in order to transform the feeling on the poem. The poem showcases a particular feeling as a feeling of uncompletedness.

Building confidence here relates to building competence, knowledge, to persevere, and for that there are two ways: preparing and trying. Preparing and trying again. Because there is a gap in knowledge and experience, preparing can be the only thing we can do on our own that can work as a way of coping with the unknown. Preparing means trying to anticipate. To imagine what could happen even if you don't know for sure. Interestingly, she did a lot of preparation for something that did not happen. Like preparing for a siege, an interrogation, she was preparing to defend herself behind a wall or a desk, and yet it wasn't like that. Why did she think that was the case? As I see it, a siege means the full-on attack on one's territory, our comfort zone. An attack that takes time and is meant to be dreadful; an interrogation means to be put on trial, a test – by someone who wants to get information out of you, to assess how much you know. Maybe students feel like that…

And then there is doubling of the unknown gap: even the questions could not be foreseen. How does one prepare for something one can't foresee? Because one cannot prepare for anything and everything, maybe it is best to find comfort with the unfamiliar, being familiar with the feeling of being unfamiliar (Barer-Stein, 1987).

Caring appears as a source of worry. Admiration for the craft and the crafters makes one care about it, and worry about it too. Persevere until you get there. You don't want to break down, you have to keep standing when the siege ends, when the interrogation finishes, because that is what good teachers apparently do.

––

Next comes with Sarah. The piece *Off the map* is simple, humble and sentimental.

I quite impulsively applied for it. And so that's how I got here.

And it was a bit of a shock to the system, to be honest.

I was quite naïve, and I thought would be quite easy to

come and teach:

it's about standing up, it's about keeping in control, it's about telling

everybody everything

they need to know about something. And so I was nervous about that,

but I was more nervous about, well, standing up and talking

in front of lots of people

rather than the actual process of supporting people to learn.

It's hard to go from doing something you've been doing for a long time

to doing something new.

I've also got a really supportive colleague and I really respect her

and I really like the way she teaches. So I'm trying to learn from

how she does it.

Well, I think I'm still learning. I need to be a lot less focused on me

and my performance and whether I know

enough and be more focused on the students.

Maybe just letting them decide for themselves a little bit more,

decide what they need to know.

I quite like spending more time listening than talking.

I can relax a bit then.

I think that fits much better with how I would like to be,

and we are allowed to do that.

I think there is this kind of fear that students will see someone

who doesn't really know their stuff and…

This has definitely been the kind of step off the map

sideways.

And just because I find it uncomfortable doesn't necessarily mean

that I can't do it,

or that I won't learn to get better at it because I think,

you know what,

I've tried other things in my life, you're not very good at them for a while

are you? And then you get a bit better.

Like a swan.

But I'm not like a swan, because I'm very obvious.

I think I'm in control of not being in control.

On a good day.

Yeah, I'm OK with that.

___

There is an eerie feeling at this point when reading that it should have been easy to teach. Again, we see the assumption that the lecturer needs to be knowledgeable and in control. The uneasiness comes to me when taking that together with the impulse, the shake up, the career change: *one does not simply go into teaching.*

The more we do something, like a job, the more difficult it may become to switch. Not because it is inherently more difficult, but maybe because we get used to feeling in control… And we may not want to lose that. Loss of expertise (Van Lankveld et al., 2017).

There is insecurity, both in terms of disciplinary knowledge and teaching skills. Yet, it is clearly matched with looking out for support: right after the acknowledgement of the difficulty comes the otherness, the distributed expertise. Trying to learn from a colleague, doing it together even if conversationally. Keep learning. Probably the part that is most beautiful to me is the constant realization that people are not good at doing everything *right off the bat*. We get there, and we look out for support from others. This idea is very much supported by the literature on learning (Sebastián et al, 2021): one gets better over time – and practice. Interestingly, a first artistic transformation appears through an affective devise (Zittoun & Stenner, 2021): the ugly duckling and the swan. Who am I? Sarah is in control like a swan, gracious and magnificent, but more obviously trying. She is also like a swan in the old fable: an impostor duckling, on a good day, and that is fine.

——

This is the end of Room 1.

All in all, with the three poems taken together this room offers a somewhat gloomy view of the experience of teaching in Higher Education. Still, we get a glimpse into how these people have arrived at experiencing their teaching in the way that they do now, under this view, with these method and conversations.

With these three poems, the overarching feeling may be that we are never completely ready for this job. In that sense it is always unfinished: we may never stop learning how to do this, and we may never be fully ready – at least this room isn't.

In this room there is an acknowledgment of some support and mentorship – formal or informal –, yet the sense of insecurity is always lurking, more or less present, more or less obviously. One aspect for our consideration is that it can get better if supported. We will come back to this in another room.

Here, there is little space for the joyful elements, aspects or moments in teaching. On the contrary, concerns and worries are what might predominate as to feel joy we need to find more comfort in ourselves and others. The sense of loneliness on the learning process offers insight into the experience of teaching: contrasting to mastery in their previous jobs, to feel security and enjoyment these poems offer over-preparedness on the one hand, and some peer support on the other. Both comfort and discomfort with teaching are built into the experience. Unfamiliarity is a contrasting feeling to previous mastery and thus it becomes uncomfortable, insecure. Familiarity is developed over facing the gaps by preparing – excessively, leading still to a difficult experiencing. Familiarity is built by working through it with others, but it does not seem to be the biggest strength of this room… thoughts? Take your time.

——

3.3.3 Room 2. Provocative Differentiations: Positives.

If you imagine yourself leaving Room 1, you could think of yourself leaving a slightly dark place. Moving towards Room 2 means facing a luminous space: big windows, a warm embrace. This room is rich, full of joy, beauty and love, but not in a simple way. This room is trying to highlight the connections, inspiration, positivity, but also acknowledging the difficulties. In a sense, the movement is the opposite to Room 1. All in all, this room has been set up to convey those things added: the positives on the pathways that lead to happy feelings towards teaching. Yet again we need to be mindful of complexity even when trying brightness at the forefront.

——

In this room, we start with Lauren: *Dr Cynic and Mrs Generous.* This piece is a tale of opposites that complement each other. It is a tale of passion.

To be an Academic you need to be a bit of a cynic

but I think at some point everybody becomes a bit like that.

It's like a defence mechanism,

Like the she-hulk – that is my secret – I am always cynical.

But maybe it doesn't have to be just that.

At least it did not start like that.

I started full of joy and naivety, and me becoming a teacher

has a lot to do with generosity

of one of my supervisors in my PhD – a woman –

no surprises there. I knew she was taking *care* of me.

I started to play with my methodology, to do something creative

and she said if you're going to do that, you're going to teach it.

The best way to learn something is to teach it, so we're going to

create a module together. I'm going to teach it with you the first year,

and then you can carry on, on your own.

I remember the first time we taught it.

We and the module,

we would start at 9:00 or 10:00, meet for coffee, go over the content,

then teach together, then drink coffee again and debrief.

Every single week.

And in between she would send me supportive, reminder emails.

She really made me, made me into a teacher.

It was very challenging, because it really involves a lot of introspection,

it is demanding on the more human level, you have to be very honest

with yourself. Otherwise, it doesn't work. You need a little bit of confidence

because you need to not only tolerate but support silence, patiently, shut up

doesn't mean not to be passionate but to be playful. Play with passion and silence.

Some of these I learnt on my own, some I take from my mentor. She

really made me, made me into a teacher.

She really cared about me, that was the difference.

A mentor really worries about your complete development,

it is not just about your PhD research, quality, getting published, so on.

She wanted me to flourish, the best way I could, as a human being,

and sometimes that flourishing is against your PhD, but she doesn't care about that,

she cares about me more.

There were challenges but I was blind to them.

My mentor was very good in not letting me know them in advance.

She remained silent. Not to spoil the surprises. She allowed me to learn,

letting me reflect, meeting her before and then after to talk, drinking coffee

– so, how did it go? What? How? Blah-blah, blah-blah-blah… talking turns into

confidence. We confide in each other – women, no surprises there – and I trust

in myself.

I don't teach something unless I'm confident.

Otherwise is $#@% if I may say.

&#<&, I knew the material inside out.

I rehearsed it. To the best of my ability, to make it my own.

I don't think anybody else, anybody, should demand more than that from themselves.

Prepare not to feel fake, like a fish out of water, an impostor, not yourself.

You don't need to do something shiny but to make it enjoyable, look at each other,

our gazes becoming an anchor in the midst of change.

But some things have changed. Something is rotten in England.

A lot of us start out with very precarious contracts, not full time, constant pressure,

constantly surveyed or review, do better and do more,

volunteer for this and volunteer for that, less freedom more work,

you must become indispensable for the institution – so they say.

You have a temporary contract, you have to become indispensable

so that they don't fire you – I have heard one too many times.

So what has happened is that I've become less generous

with the institution and more generous with the people. I've become

generous to others but I keep my distance with the institution.

If there is something that students really value I do it, but not by default.

Don't do absolutely everything that the department is recommending

you to do because a lot of those things are for the institution to tick boxes.

I'm working, I'm being paid by the institution,

but I'm working for the students. I'm not working for the institution.

In fact, I often find myself working in spite of the institution.

I don't want to work for the institution. I want to work for the people.

I often find myself working in spite of the institution.

Don't get me wrong, I feel sad that I have to make that distinction.

I wish they would trust we are professionals, and acknowledge us

have been training years to do that job. Instead we become angry – cynical.

People often find themselves thinking of teaching as a chore.

I recognise this from before. My mentor cared about *me*.

She did it very much in her own time, like her own actual time,

she didn't get any hours in her workload to supervise me ever or to do all

that work, ever. She's an amazing human being. She is known for this.

A very generous person that has always tried to do everything

in spite of the institution.

To be an Academic you need to be a bit of a cynic but also very generous.

Cynical to defend your generosity, like a secret. Hopefully nobody will know

how generous we are, in spite of the institution, so that we can give to each
other more

caring.

Maybe it doesn't have to be like that.

At least it doesn't start like that.

___

Starting naïve, joyful – becoming cynical, bitter? Disenchanted.

Dear Lauren,

I hope this email finds you well.

I was writing about our poem Dr Cynic and Mrs Generous and I roamed to the idea of disenchantment. Do you want to read something about it? I feel that you would like it. See - Atkinson, W. (2022). Falling in and out of love: With and beyond Bourdieu on individual enchantment and disenchantment. Let me know your thoughts! Maybe we can get together for another coffee sometime to have a chat!

Warmest regards,

Felipe.

There is something enchanting, almost magical that is built at the other side of the desk. The magical was encouraged to be explored, but not alone. In every hero's journey there is a wise guide. Here, a woman, a mentor, a caring person. We cannot start this journey alone… or maybe I should rephrase: we *should* not start this journey alone. A note can be made here to Timmermans & Sutherland (2020) – maybe another email? But I won't bother you with that one here. As the authors note, some people are *entrusted* to support academics in Higher Education, and they *should* support them as they feel anxiety and failure.

Supporting here becomes about caring, but caring that takes time and puts Lauren at the centre. Her wellbeing, her learning, her journey. In that sense, her mentor was selfless - generous. That generosity is here found in people and not necessarily in the institution. Naivety turned cynicism not with teaching and academia but with the institutional academia. Institutional academia is focused on institutional academic performance (Macfarlane, 2020; Macfarlane & Jefferson, 2022). Here, a point for reflection is quite literally reflecting this poem back to what Djerasimovic & Villani (2020) have pointed out: novice academics need support to build their understanding and experience of academia, as they

say, "to reconcile this optimism with a prospect of precariousness, […] seeking ways of preserving their autonomy and shielding their passion from being co-opted by unfair employment" (p. 262).

In this poem, naivety did not turn to cynicism, but to a taught cynicism that arises to protect the joyful, generous, naïve, passionate Lauren that is still there. Her mentor did this too. In that sense it is a defence mechanism that is built to protect the loving that is dear to them.

——

Next is *Navigating through the ranks* with Joy. This poem is courageous and adventurous, while at the same time being tender and sincere.

Regardless of your competence and confidence,

we all expend energy on teaching – expand on emotions –

and some are in a better position to spend.

We need to fight to get that currency

of competence and confidence.

I've always enjoyed teaching.

I've done learning and development with adults in the workplace,

arranging, building, crafting, designing, engaging,

a b c d e for forging the foundations of my skills

in the Learning division of a bank, I was new to a team.

And the team used to design courses, so we all used to think together.

I never delivered the training – I would attend. But what I did learn was that

I looked at what the trainers did, mirroring, copying, delivering these courses

so when I came to deliver my own courses, I had seen, I had been

in different types of training and I knew which was more comfortable for me

but it was still, it was still nerve wracking.

I was thrown into the deep end.

But I had all these colleagues and the team,

so I got to see all these different types of training styles

and ask questions.

I think everybody was willing to share:

how do you deal with like a difficulty,

how do you manage conversations,

and I was able to see it in practice.

Once you go into academia, you have to teach.

That's what you want to do to become an academic.

My supervisor was teaching a course. She shared with me,

she offered me a teaching assistant role.

It was experimentation, based on my previous experience.

In the deep end – the vast open ocean – experience is a life-boat.

You hang on to that to feel confident and comfortable to roam.

I had some training, a very broad brush but

I had my module convenor to chat,

like a lifejacket for if I fall off the ship.

Now as a lecturer, there's a whole training programme available

but most people have taught before they get the lecture-ship.

Some of my colleagues who had never done it before were quite nervous

but I was confident because of my past experience, I had practice-ship.

I didn't have to learn completely new things

if I can compare it to another module

where I didn't know the discipline, there my confidence wasn't the same.

What if they ask me question that I can't understand and all that.

I knew what I knew and I knew what I didn't know, that's just me,

so I said *look* we are learning together,

I'm not an expert, who's been working in the field for ages,

we're going to do this module-ship together, we are here to explore.

It's strange being the captain, what happens if I don't know what to do,

where do I go

to?

Being a lecturer, you are on your own.

I need to be confident because I don't

want people to wonder

how did I get the job?

Only if I'm confident I can say hey!

I'm struggling or look!

I need some help to keep going on.

I like it when my feet touch the sand, a happy place,

not in the ocean but by the ocean and gather around,

having lovely little games and chats but instead this job is not

like that. This job is such a solo endeavour to have.

Typically it's you deciding how you're going to do something.

Typically it's you doing it and all of that

but sometimes I wonder how it'd be like to have some space

to talk around what we did that worked out,

bounce off each other, travel together even if just once,

a gathering of lonely captains

on a remote island we sometimes call

a department, a city, a home.

I imagine teaching something that I love,

a few good days to possibly transform.

I imagine that we wouldn't have to work alone,

that we carried out the labour of this job

offering each other confidence, comfort, and support.

Wouldn't you like to see that?

———

Nothing here happens by chance. Not even the chosen pseudonym: *joy*. The enjoyment of teaching is something to be highlighted in this piece. Not on the simple terms of teaching being per se enjoyable but by understanding that enjoyment is built over time with a community, with a team. Practicing, rehearsing, chatting, discussing. We think together – like Sebastián et al. (2021) would say – we feel together.

The joy that is elevated as a shared experience, is then missed on the solitude of the lecturing role. Joy is then left on her own; her previous experiences help her, but she found herself travelling alone at sea. Her experience is what keeps her from drowning in the unknown new waters, and as a last resort the module convenor provides some ultimate sense of safety and companionship.

It is good noting that this piece carries another point of reflection. A counterpoint to the metaphor of navigating through the ranks, being at sea, is the pleasant reverie of touching the sand, being at the beach, happy and together. *So happy together.*

Joy enjoys teaching, she loves the subject – even if she doesn't feel confident every single time, she enjoys it. She is Joy yet she imagines not doing this job alone. En/joy even more.

——

Lastly in this Room we are with Alcibiades. The poem *A class to remember* is thoughtful, rhythmical and uplifting, and engages with us in such multiplicity of dimensions that makes itself a showstopper in this exhibition.

I remember it perfectly.

I remember the awe of the first day I entered the classroom.

Being very impressed being on the opposite side of the classroom.

Suddenly I am not on the student side, but on the other side of the table

and suddenly I am not the student. I'm on the other side of the table.

To do the work:

awe and uncertainty.

There was a lot of precarity involved.

There still is,

but it is an interesting combination of work and leisure.

Work, free work, extra work over work, insecure work and love.

It's loving of the subject.

Precarity and love.

I talk with my students like I talk with my friends at the pub.

It's a free house:

The political economy of capitalism and

critiques of capitalism and stuff.

Free work,

love and precarity

I didn't know what I was doing.

There was very, very minimal training, very, very minimal.

A lot of improvisation, lack of resources, lack of time,

drawing on past experience, talking with other friends who were also teaching seminars.

Yet total isolation in the classroom.

What am I doing here!

What am I doing here?

I remember it very strongly:

it was a process of learning by doing.

Uncertainty and awe,

flaws.

There was very, very minimal training, very, very minimal.

A lot of improvisation lack of resources lack of time.

Story time:

the department organized one session,

it was supposed to be a training session

for PhD students who were teaching for the first time.

We were just given like different essays and we were asked to rate them.

And the scary thing was that

everyone gave a different grade.

Oh no!

We're not ready for this.

Knowing that it is precarious, some are generous

Precarity, uncertainty, unprepared, anxiety, and generosity.

One convener took time outside of his working hours,

free work,

to help

us.

He didn't know if his contract would be renewed

but he knew that we were very concerned.

Shoulder to shoulder, generosity meets precarity.

Connected.

You realize that your experiences in the classroom were

shared experiences.

Because in the classroom it's very individualised as a teacher

but suddenly when you talk with other people,

it's first reassuring to know that others experience it,

it's also reassuring to know that people have found something to deal with it.

Connected and disconnected. Precarity.

Then I am the convenor.

I would ideally enjoy teaching

when I started working.

Sometimes you just had to do what the department asked you,

that's what you're hired to do.

You have to teach leftover modules.

You have to teach what is available, which is not necessarily always you.

You would ideally enjoy teaching.

It doesn't fully reflect me or my love.

Alienate.

Maybe the students love the subject too but they can't fully pursue it;

It doesn't fully reflect us.

Disconnect.

Now I have work.

Overworked.

But we don't talk too much about it,

we don't have time.

In the isolation we are in the dark;

you're not in the dark anymore once you speak with everyone.

But how to do it.

When to do it.

Isolation with a collective comfort.

There was a comfort in the precarious crowd:

connected solidarity.

But even overworked I try to connect

with the students, I think about them,

I overprepare,

I am conscious of how students would perceive it.

I don't want them to feel like they are wasting their time with me

because they don't have much time either.

Pressures.

And I want them to feel the love,

to go home thinking

Oh! Today this thing we talked about in the seminar was really fascinating.

Underprepared, so overprepared, so overworked.

I love my teaching.

But some students, they,

they don't necessarily experience it in the same enjoyable way.

There's the pressure to get a good grade,

they see learning in a functional way.

Work.

I want them to feel like being in the pub.

They want the good grades, they want a good job.

Future work,

my love for the subject under duress.

Love and pressure

for all of us.

We all want to love it

and we all feel the pressure

of performing,

of reality,

stress.

We want to feel the love for our work, for our subject.

Alienate.

Love in different timescales.

There are elements here and there.

Little awes and little uncertainties, again

I wonder,

will there always be that feeling of inadequateness.

I wonder if it's part of the process

rather than the destination.

There are normal pressures:

changes, cohorts and adequations.

Maybe that's knowing how to teach:

to be constantly asking questions,

finding ways to improve it, change it, adapt it.

Being a teacher is about facing challenges,

feelings of inadequacy and feeling of lacking something.

These challenges are part of the process

of developing, of becoming.

The absolute movement of becoming,

the challenges that keep it interesting and exciting,

the joy of overcoming the challenges that you choose.

Overcoming the challenges is liberating, joyful for me and you.

But there are added pressures too:

time management, time scarcity, time commodification,

the challenges that keep it from being interesting.

More than challenges, flaws.

System flaws.

Alienating.

These challenges are of a fundamentally different nature:

precarity, alienation, grade obsession.

My obsession is the love, the passion, the beating

heart rate faster in anticipation

for that first lecture after the summer vacation.

I want to remember them perfectly.

——

Critical love. To be in love but not with the googly eyes, the blindness. It is a reflective love that comes from awe into passion. The reality of stress and precariousness does not surpass the loving, free, freeing, leisure, wonder and enjoyable dimensions of teaching. One does not negate nor suppresses the other; they can exist together even if it seems contradictory, in a complex relationship. This poem may surpass the statements from academics like Bloch (2016), Hagenauer & Volet (2013), Nästesjö (2020; 2022), amongst others. Academics like them have described discrete emotions that appear together in the experience – that is to say, the experience as being one of mixed feelings.

Here Alcibiades is not offering a sum of valences that equate to an experience of mixture but he expresses an experience that, as it develops, produces complex emotions that are both good, bad, positive, negate, desirable, undesirable… the emotionality does not result in an experience of mixed feeling but the experience is of complex emotions because it is about love and uncertainty, difficulties and camaraderie, passion and challenge. Here, it is not about managing them to make some disappear; it is about bringing them about as the core of teaching.

In this poem, the main driver is love, a wanting to remember, to transcend space and time, even in an imperfect sector. It is about people.

Alcibiades seems to fight a good fight with the weapons he has: love, passion and his beating heart, as the Higher Education landscape gets attacked by the "league of -Ations" (as Richard Budd says – talk to him about this. He'll love it. Say "Felipe suggested me to write to you blah blah blah…". He will have a laugh and then reply in a very nice and thoughtful way. For a better reference find his work: Budd, R., (2025). Ubiquity without clarity? What do we mean by the 'higher education landscape'? A systematic review. In J. Huisman and M. Tight (Eds.), *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (Vol. 10, pp. 147–169). Emerald Publishing Limited.).

Here, a humanistic turn for people: the students, the colleagues at the centre of the experience may be enough to keep fighting the oppression. Critical love: there is love despite being critical to the institutional HE just as teaching seems

to be emotionally powerful enough to fight the power of research in the current academic scene.

To get to that loving, Alcibiades offers a pathway of collectiveness: learning and supporting each other while learning. To have this experience is to have each other.

—

This is the end of Room 2.

These three poems show the love and enjoyment at the core of the experience of teaching entangled with precarity, overwork, loneliness. These tales are uplifting at the end as they offer connectedness and togetherness as a path to transform the experiences of teaching in HE.

In this room, relationships take the centre stage: they are key to transform the initial experiences of hardship into joy and love without supressing/eliminating it. One interesting thing to note about this room is that it does not try to cover the malaise. The hardship, challenge, difficulties are not to disappear, to be avoided or taken over by easiness, relaxing achievement and success. Indeed, love and passion exist in the experience of teaching as much as challenge and discomfort exist. The turn here is that they are transformed collectively in different learning relationships, in such a way that they make sense together – critically so, may I add.

The relationships necessary to succeed are not a given but are constructed, and they allow these three poems to re-enchant the exhibition. Some might say that the relationship key to learning to experience teaching is the mentor/mentee, others might say the peers, others can say that they are the students… others would say all of them! But certainly, we need some – *any* – with the power to transform.

These relationships that are caring, safe, supportive, learning spaces in themselves are protective in the sense that they provide collective ways of

experiencing teaching that transcend and then carry on into the teaching life of these academics. They foster alternative ways of experiencing the difficulties of the role and the sector not by substituting the issues but by transforming them into a different, more complex experience. One next to the other, these poems speak of joy and love first and foremost, yet they articulate the challenges and difficulties too in a way that make sense and does not overpower the first.

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3.3.4 Room 3. Provocative Integrations: Complexity**.**

Having pushed the boundaries of complex and relational thinking into broad groups, this room will try to offer integrations of the myriads of dynamics that unfold while learning to experience teaching.

In this last room we will explore four pieces, all alluding to the increasing sense of complexity in the experiences of teaching in HE, that provocatively speak to a degree of integration of the previous differentiation. Against the backdrop of the previous two rooms, here we see how some experiences resist being put in a box, being described as something clear and thus inspiring some complex integrations.

Some elements of both previous rooms appear here less clearly, conflated, and showcased in a way to highlight rich mixtures. We can try to recognise them as part of a spectrum or a continuum of experiencing but in truth, each of these poems challenge them in different ways and complement each other in their own manner to bring forward what could be called the complex integrations of learning to experience Higher Education teaching as joy, failure, wonder, insecurity, love, etc.

―――

This first piece in this room is *Transitions* with Olivia. Transitions is a poem about subtleties, about finding a space first and move on from that one to another. Transitions is not a title given by chance so try to find all the transitions that we've laid out here and let's talk about them afterwards.

So initially I thought I was going to be a dentist

– I pass out of blood.

Belonging.

So I left dental school and instead decided to do something I like:

history and politics, loved it.

Then converted

to be a lawyer, a solicitor, a corporate lawyer.

Arsenal, Amsterdam, Manchester.

Practice experience

and then a job advert dropped here.

It's a dream job, completely serendipitous.

I remember being a student and thinking I would love to do that job,

you know?

Someday that would be my ideal job.

Maybe I can do them both.

Serendipity strikes.

Rehearsing.

I was quite used to kind of standing up in front

of people and presenting things so that didn't really phase me,

but things like course design, things like that

were totally, totally unfamiliar.

So, new skills, old skills, it's a little bit of trial and error.

I reflected on the type of teacher I wanted to be,

what kind of teachers I'd enjoyed, what kind of teaching,

which teachers I really enjoyed their sessions and which maybe I didn't.

But I didn't know anything about the theory of teaching and learning.

But I very much drew on my practise background.

New skills, old skills, it's a little bit of trial and error

doing the thing.

Do all academics feel this way?

I think it's a mix.

Excited, probably,

predominantly,

because I was really enjoying it and loved working with students.

That's definitely the best bit of this job,

sometimes probably overwhelmed and a bit daunted too.

Am I doing this right?

Authentic.

I think leaning back into practise,

that was kind of what I know, it's what I was familiar with

it's what I've done for a large number of years

so that was kind of safe,

a safe thing, because I know how to be a lawyer.

I know how to be a good lawyer.

But also I knew *that* was something that students would enjoy.

Many want to be lawyers.

No one really tells you how to teach or how to be a good teacher until it's there

I assume,

but maybe PhDs feel like this the first time they teach as well.

The unfamiliarity, unknown, unrehearsed.

Nobody tells you what makes a good session. It's kind of like the secret sauce, isn't it?

My secret ingredient is leaning back into my practice,

taking risks.

Sometimes it doesn't work,

but I like drawing from my background to have an authentic experience.

My other me, my other world.

I have been in practice for years now,

practicing my skills.

Now I have the best of both worlds.

In this collision

I bring in all the different aspects of practice,

the different perspectives

and we share them.

The content of practice is interesting, the theory;

the corporate, the culture, the day to day

others might find exciting

but for me the excitement

of practice, of teaching,

they come together here.

I think most people don't hit on the career they love straight away.

Where they feel like they belong

and love,

and I got to do them both

now together.

I love teaching.

It's a privilege,

it's my calling,

it's where I belong.

___

Wanting to belong – be longing for something to love.

Transitions are difficult and here we see again that the background is a strong support in some cases. The professional practice serves as the bases to stand on: for presenting, for disciplinary expertise. It provides some continuity amidst all the change.

Still, that is not all that is needed for the job and thus insecurity emerges at the same time: course design or teaching and learning theory are key aspects too, and those are totally unfamiliar to Olivia. Again here we see a common thread that resembles that of Barer-Stein (1987): learning is moving towards the unknown, the unfamiliar. But not totally. It is daunting and overwhelming but not completely overpowering as there are also other supports: Olivia may not know how to be a teacher but she knows how to be a lawyer. She knows how to be a *good* lawyer, and the good lawyer needs to transform into a good teacher. In that sense, Olivia moves away from her comfort zone as Mälkki & Green (2018) would argue, but not completely.

With Olivia we see collision and rupture. It is a collision as the two moving objects are not intentionally nor are purposefully guided to blend and follow a different course now together. Instead, they meet in a collision – nobody prepares you for this. Nobody has prepared her… but herself. In a way, the dramatic change is more like a rupture (Zittoun et al., 2013): to make the transition she transforms her experience of teaching – the experience of unfamiliarity – from her experience of lawyering – the experiences of familiarity.

Even if underprepared, over time Olivia finds love and belonging in teaching about what she loves, about where she belonged, passing on both. As feeling like a good lawyer may eventually become feeling like a good teacher, she can take the first to get to the second. Being a good lawyer serves her as the transformation substrate to be a good teacher.

___

The following piece is done with Amy. In the poem *Difficult, scary, happy – not necessarily in that order*, we can find scenic images of transformation that are both heartfelt and surprising.

It was chance.

It happened.

> I never ever imagined that I will be a lecturer and when I was a student
>
> I did not even like school.
>
> I did not like secondary school,
>
> primary school,
>
> any kind of school,
>
> and I was really looking forward to finishing it.

I wasn't expected

> And when I did go to university,
>
> but I wasn't even going to go to university,
>
> but *she has to go* to university
>
> – my mom said.

I wasn't expected

> I actually found it that for the first time I really liked studying.
>
> I actually liked it there:
>
> the freedom of University.

I was good at studying

there.

I started being offered research assistant opportunities.

Temporary things can get permanent.

It wasn't really a decision, but it is something that I found that I like,

and I think I do like it now, but it wasn't a decision:

It was chance.

It happened.

It should have been easy.

It should have been easy to teach.

Anyone can teach.

We all undermine teachers work.

I always thought that it's so easy to be just the teacher

– you can ask my high school self –

look at these people.

They will just walk in the class, tell us something and job done.

But it is not from A to B:

if you think it's not

how can it be?

It's sort of a mystery.

You have to run before you can walk.

It was difficult.

Yes, difficult.

Difficult and scary.

>I have to admit

>I don't think I knew what I was doing, and I was always a little bit worried about my students.

>I felt like I really wasn't as good as a teacher, as probably I should have been.

I know that I'm learning but

would they also see

that I'm learning.

>I felt like, I felt like maybe I don't sound,

>maybe I don't sound authoritative enough.

>And students will notice

>that, and they will pick on it.

>They are out to get me.

So every lecture I would go in and I would,

I would honestly have to go to the toilets, look

in the mirror

and just keep telling myself for a few moments:

you can do it. You're the expert. You're the expert. And then I will go

into the class like that.

Difficult and scary,

and students will notice.

The amazing part:

they didn't even notice!

I got very good evaluations

but I don't want to open that e-mail.

I was in the cafe and I said like okay I'll have some nice coffee and cake here.

If it's bad, I'll just eat this and I'll be better if it's good that's my way to celebrate.

So I am

I'm ready.

Whatever it is I am

ready.

And then I open the module evaluations and

some of the comments which they had left, they even surprised me.

The classes were very relaxed,

very friendly.

Amy had some sense of humour.

A sense of humour!

We liked her jokes.

My jokes!

And to me:

difficult and scary.

I didn't feel relaxed.

It didn't feel like that.

I think there was a point when I, when I even cried.

Happy cry.

I felt like ohh wow.

it's done.

I've done this year and then in the second year everything is going to be

much much easier.

– I think my module evaluations were slightly worse than the first year

but in the second year I wasn't as stressed and worried as I was.

The amazing part is that it is only you.

Only you know that you are still learning.

Well, not only you.

There was this colleague

with a friendly approach.

Disposition. Listening. Nodding. Smiling. Just as important as…

She sometimes recommended things to read,

She was an academic colleague

But also how are *you*?

Maybe It's just to, *just to check in and see how,*

How are you?

How are you getting along with teaching?

Maybe just as import as

observation of teaching sessions

and some feedback

– although useful –

and we are back to scary again.

Ups and downs. Student evaluation. I had my happy ending, but it had its ups and downs.

And then scary again.

But I am happy.

You can do it,

you can get through it.

I am happy now.

I'm looking forward to meet the students.

Now I am happy.

I want to see what questions they're going to ask me,

I am happy.

The more that you trust yourself and trust the students,

we are happy now.

I think I trust myself more. I trust myself more.

It is difficult

and scary

and happy.

Happy now.

___

From the start of the poem, I like the idea of not only being unintentionally on the pathway to becoming an academic but it being unimaginable at some point. The assumption being that academics like school – as a mode of institutionalized practice of learning – is reasonable and yet this poem is unexpected.

Amy believed academics liked school. So did I – to be fair. I really did love schooling. Learning like that, performing well, being curious and asking questions. It made me think that I could do well at the University, and possibly become an academic. Then I went to University and I loved it again – although not all the time – so I then I was sure I would love pursuing an academic career. But why was I so certain? For Amy, liking it was unexpected. Becoming an academic was unexpected. For me, liking it took years to develop. Becoming an academic was something I looked forward to.

For me, I saw the path. It was not a lineal one but could reconstruct my trajectory and somewhat imagine my future (for ideas of non-lineal human development you may want to see Campill & Valsiner, 2021). For Amy, it came about as an unexpected – a surprise.

Amy did not like school and would not imagine herself being an academic but University surprised her. She liked it. She got offered work. And thus, the temporary became permanent. Although she did not imagine herself being a lecturer, she imagined it being easy… But it wasn't – we have been there before. The rupture and imaginary transition, as Zittoun et al. (2013) would say, became problematic for her. The belief of what teaching is like, built over years of schooling, differs from the reality of teaching both in the substance (like in Guerra 2012, or Sanchez 2017) but also in form. How one imagines it is felt is different from how it actually feels like, how it is experienced: you run before you walk.

With all the difficulties of confronting the reality of both the experience and practice of teaching, still Amy found happiness in her unimaginable new role. All her self-doubts were not met with scepticism or critiques from her students and peers but with comfort, support, recognition; they were transformed with her students.

In this poem, Amy showcases insecurity and doubts at the same time as positive interactions and support: it is not one or the other but both and they transform each other. It is about underestimating and overestimating, having ups and downs don't cancel each other mechanically.

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The third poem in this rooms is the deep, uplifting, heartwarming and at times whimsical *A spoonful of sugar*, with Romanas.

There was one thing I was sure in life:

I would never become a teacher.

And that is when my life started.

It's complete chance.

I was not teaching, I was supporting teachers.

It definitely touches on teaching, but fun:

be a clown, be fun,

not focused on sharing but on having fun.

But then I realised at least one thing:

that if I was going to do this I needed to avoid discipline.

At any cost.

Somehow,

teaching became a bit less daunting or boring.

Having fun teaching was kind of an accident – it wasn't intended to be like this.

I was but an accidental teacher taxi driver,

A compagnon du devoir, a journeyman,

here and there and everywhere,

but I wasn't fully involved in the life of any place.

I was learning the trade.

Then I settled. I became part of the furniture.

This was my actual start – no more driving around.

My own office, my own desk, my tables and chairs.

Yet, no room is ever fully furnished, never looks the same way

for 10 years straight.

In my office, I can help transform any piece of furniture

into whatever it wants to be.

I am not alone anymore but part of a team, a department, a home.

I am now not just coming for a few hours, I parked the car.

That stability is very crucial to me.

You can't craft any single thing, be it life, work, research, or whatever it may be,

If you don't know if you're going to have any butter to put in your pasta in 10 weeks.

It is as simple as that.

In my house, having fun teaching is not an accident – I intend it to be like this.

Being a clown is what Julie Andrews would say:

A Spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down

The medicine go down-wown

The medicine go down

Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down

In a most delightful way.

The clown knows of anxiousness and sadness.

I know that my students know I can fail,

and thus, so can they.

Having a background of failure will help us be ready

to never expect perfection in our trade.

For that, we need to train.

Be ready to fail.

Over and over again.

It's like interpreting:

interpreting is about saying something on the spot,

something that you know might be wrong.

You may rephrase it straight away, but you still said it wrong.

You can't just tame failure with a song

so, in my mind it's like

how can I use that to the advantage of the students?

Here is some sugar, don't be afraid of it anymore.

Listen to my English.

Is it faultless?

Is it spotless?

No.

It sounds weird, and so on.

Embrace the fear,

let's get it under our control.

Be ready for it.

Whatever happens,

let's try to have something up our sleeve.

We need the confidence:

things are not perfect,

we are still learning and will always be.

Failure is only a big word if you make it a big word.

The F word.

But for me, failure is finding another way to make it work.

Don't worry if you make a mistake. Don't worry if you don't know a word.

So, you know things, you learn and forget them, learn them again.

So, you never get to perfection. Forget perfection. F to perfection.

Perfection doesn't exist in foreign languages,

perfection doesn't exist in translation so

logically, perfection doesn't exist in teaching.

We have fun in the classroom to feel better,

to feel good with our challenges,

with our failures,

with our imperfections,

with everything.

What I want for my students is first to have a smile on their faces,

and then to learn something.

To feel good. Definitely feel good.

And never be ashamed of anything.

In every job that must be done

There is an element of fun

You find the fun and snap!

The job's a game

And every task you undertake

Becomes a piece of cake

A lark! A spree! It's very clear to see that

A Spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down

The medicine go down-wown

The medicine go down

Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down

In a most delightful way.

___

We start again with the warning: don't be so sure, it might be that your life is about to start. A rupture could lead us anywhere. For Romanas teaching happened by chance, and enjoying it was chance too. Teaching can be unexpectedly fun and fulfilling. So unexpected. So enjoyable. So fulfilling.

In this poem there is a passage of lonely journeying that creates a basis to experience teaching in a specific way. On one hand by travelling and practicing teaching in different places: learning the trade on your own – learning from different masters. On the other hand, by bringing to the forefront the experiences of the previous practice: the background experiences of failure. In a sense, he was never really alone on the journey but was constructing his academic identity and experience (Boncori & Smith, 2020; Djerasimovic & Villani, 2020) through formal and informal mentoring and discussion (Boyce et al., 2019; Hibbert & Semler, 2016; Soomere & Karm, 2021).

Still, all that travelling can't carry on forever. The journey like that can feel lonely, nomadic. In turn, becoming part of a department means being part of a team, having security in yourself, confidence, having a place to call home. That physical and personal stability is crucial because it allows Romanas to stop and think, reflect on how *he* wants to do this. Here comes that second part: shaping the experience of teaching and learning intentionally taking from the previous experiences of failure. Let's bring back Timmermans & Sutherland (2020): the experiences of failure need to be supported, and Romanas has apparently found a way to do that. As an affective devise (Zittoun & Stenner, 2021) to work-through this experience of liminality and transit, both the clown and Mary Poppins are symbolic resources that know of sadness, of anxiety, of failure. To do the tricks we need to practice and fail plenty of times. Thus, fun in the experience is a way of transforming fear. Fun to face the challenges of learning. A spoonful of sugar is key to transform the experience of teaching… and learning.

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Finally, the last piece of the room and closing on the exhibition too is *Wonder*, with Elizabeth. I will leave you to feel wonder with this poem.

I had a really wonderful manager at the time,

she was amazing.

She's still a friend now in fact,

she encouraged me to make contact with a lecturer who was still working

here, who'd been very influential for me, who I'd found very inspiring.

She said perhaps what I needed was a mentor.

It took me about a month to compose this e-mail because I was so nervous about appearing daft and

he just responded straight away and said come in and see me, let's chat and

I was totally blown away.

He immediately said, well, why don't you do a bit of teaching

on my module

and I just said yes.

And just incredibly a post came up I mean even now it still blows me away

to another world,

it almost felt like it was written for me.

I still can't quite believe it happened and I got the job.

I can't say that I felt like I knew what I was doing at all.

I think I was given a lot of space to develop and work my way through that stuff

but actually what that meant is people really did look after me.

My mentor looked out for me. She actually knocked on my door,

let me mentor you a bit.

She was in the next office to me and she's still around,

just two offices away now.

She really looked after me. I could go talk to her,

She was always very encouraging,

the whole team were really friendly and lovely.

Even new lecturers like me

would often say shall we have a coffee? And how's it going?

It was a really good way of landing.

I don't actually think I'm the best lecturer

in terms of having loads of knowledge, but I work really hard

trying to create connections with students, to make sure that I could support them, help them.

That is what I really want to do.

If a student asks a really good question

it can lead to a really interesting discussion.

Sometimes if you don't have a perfect plan,

all I need is the confidence to just adapt and go with whatever's happening

with them, for them, for us,

so that in terms of actual teaching

being the best lecturer I can be,

I need the confidence just to go with the flow sometimes

and connect.

Like it was a funny mixture between

me

putting on a performance but also being very authentic.

It's kind of contradictory

I really loved it.

Congruent, open, other worldly,

to be honest and real but not letting your personal stuff get in the way of teaching.

Maybe yes, but not that much.

Maybe it´s about degrees. A little bit.

It's not making it about me…

but a performance it's about someone.

If you want to have a really honest relationship with students you have to be human.

Honest gets things wrong, having to apologise. Humility. Hold onto truth and honesty.

But I'm also knackered. I have to put on a brave face and say let's carry on.

It might be that I am still in love.

I can't explain it.

The feeling has maintained its mystery,

it doesn't fit into a box.

Definitely I take it very seriously

I know. And then,

who the hell is letting me just do this?

You just turn up and they say: *teach this module,*

you can't really do anything wrong,

they'll just love the fact that you're a real life practitioner

and they did. I mean,

I could have been saying anything!

– I wasn't.

I don't think I was.

They said to me you don't have anything to worry about.

I suppose comparing to my previous world,

when I was a practitioner, you know,

you go through this like really rigorous process,

having to pass to say that

you're good enough,

you're appraised all the time,

someone comes to watch you and

all sorts of things,

and you turn up here and it's just like *hey, here's your module!*

Get on with it.

I could have been saying anything!

– I wasn't.

I definitely wasn't.

But it was a bit, it was a bit

of wonder,

I'm doing this right? Kind of feeling.

Strange

thinking about it, I mean.

It is interesting to compare two worlds,

crafting a world that is not here but I know from before.

Reconstructing, imagining, comparing with them, connecting.

It is like a transitioning infrastructure.

I didn't see myself as an academic at all at that time.

I was more of a practitioner, and so I was

really, really comfortable with getting things wrong in the classroom and not knowing answers.

Good lecturers need to have all the answers,

so if students ask me something

I was totally fine with the fact that I might have to say

I don't know about that.

That's not something I've ever come across or whatever.

There is a comfortableness with not knowing.

For all the un-comfortableness of not knowing

I had my other world – to draw on,

to reconstruct, imagine, compare with them,

to connect.

It might be that I am still in love.

I really, I really enjoy just that experience of being

with these students and having all these discussions.

Sometimes I leave with my mind totally blown.

Worlds

that don't fit into a box

and that I get to connect

somehow.

___

Wonder is a concept that has gained some momentum recently in learning and emotions research. It has been seen to encompass both an epistemic and emotional dimension in the same concept, and to be related to human flourishment (Schinkel et al., 2023). Wonder can be an academic concept.

Wonder is not new (for a more extensive exploration see Glăveanu, 2020), and yet Elizabeth says it best. Wonder and amazement, from coincidences, daring, trying, un-believable… people. Wonder shows things we've seen before: women solidarity and support. Wonder in disbelief: how did I get the job? Who is letting me do this? What if I get it wrong?

The pair belief/disbelief is a remarkable opposition as it ties together Elizabeth not thinking she is the best for the role while also working hard to believe that she is good at it and connect. Performance and authenticity. The self-doubts and insecurities are there throughout, in process of transformation. Wonder is the centre piece of this poem because it allows us to reconcile the emotional and cognitive contradictions in one single movement. As the literature shows, early career academics feel many contradictory feelings, they think and do many contradictory things. Through their academic and teaching work they develop, change and become themselves not despite these contradictions but because of them. The job here is not to eliminate them but surpass them, and Elizabeth helps us to think about a way to do this: finding beauty in the contradictions. Wonder.

In all her doubts there is beauty. She is also in love. She has become mindful that she does not have to be the best lecturer. She has been accompanied to get to this point: a wonderful manager, a wonderful mentor, wonderful peers, a wonderful job. She does not think that she is the best lecturer, but she has never been alone in this and she has been supported into feeling that she is good enough. The support has allowed her to love her work in its un-comfortableness, in its strangeness, in its wonderfulness.

___

This is the end of Room 3.

By entering a dialogue, dialoguing the experiencing, we can find ourselves transforming our experience of teaching.

As points of dialogue, Amy has her students and colleagues to join her own expectations, Olivia has her lawyer self and student self to talk to her current teacher self, Elizabeth has her practice experience, a wonderful manager, a good mentor, her self-doubts, and Romanas has vicarious teaching experiences, his professional background, many mentors and a dash of pop culture. In this room, dialogue takes the forefront as the tool for integrating complexity and transforming the experiences of teaching.

It seems here that all these poems, in different degrees, could have made it into one of the previous rooms. Yet, here it is precisely the imprecisions, the nuances that keep the poems interestingly complex. They don't speak of pure bliss in a great and loving relationship with teaching, nor a brilliantly successful story of how they went from zero to hero and loved and enjoyed learning overall. They are not a story of difficulties and anxiety, nor a lonely journey of trial and error. Here, even at the end there is a degree of doubt, no final answers.

There are openly unfinished dialogues between good and bad, loneliness and companionship, comfort and discomfort, confidence and doubts, failure and achievement. Not to say that the previous rooms show finished processes, but here one could read a more provocative openness to change in still quite lively oppositions.

> Good and bad and
>
> happy and sad,
>
> come together
>
> unfinished
>
> every time

___

3.3.5 Final provocations.

<div align="right">– as if we haven't had enough</div>

<div align="right">experiences of teaching.</div>

This exhibition has tried to provoke… experiences; learning; difficulties; transformations; dialogues. Have we achieved it?

Abstraction as in taking away, drawing away, separating, generalizing, thinking, withdrawing from this exhibition with something that happened here with us, amongst us. Abstraction as something that is ours and yours too, that we can imaginatively re-track to this conjunction. Abstraction and disruption. Interrupting of the cognitive empire (Phipps & Sitholé, 2022) in researching the experiences of teaching?

We had three rooms. Room 1 of negative differentiating by that which was not there, or so it seemed not to be clearly there – to me, to us. Lack, to be filled with something, and this room seems to be about the work. In contrast, Room 2 showcases positive differentiating by addition. Lack that is filled with support and caring people. Lack is filled by the collective. This group of poems offers insight into transformation through relationships. Then integrating – provocatively – the lacks and fills through open dialogues of the multiple previous, current and future experiences. Dialogues with myself and others that are ongoing and offer the complex, in process, perspective of learning to experience teaching.

This exhibition shows many things but one is meant to stand over the rest: teaching is learnt to be experienced. Here, we have experienced with the early career academics: when people start teaching, many different stories and trajectories combine, hopes, backgrounds, groups, politics, circumstances all become part of the experience but the transformation of such into joy, love, loneliness, uncertainty, or any other expressed here is one that is learnt through interaction. The purposeful conjunction of these systems in specific ways of experiencing teaching is identified as the precursor to the current mode of constructing the experience of teaching. In other words, in every poem we can

identify how these systems have organized themselves in a particular way that has led to a specific way of learning to experience teaching. We have experienced how it may feel while learning to experience teaching, and while learning to teach.

The support / lack of support, the community / lack of community, the care / lack of care, not as dichotomies but as continuums attest to the drive of transformation, as experiencing positively appears to be the result of a conjunction that experiences positively and thus invites the academic to experience teaching positively too. In turn, the lack, being left to our own devices means quite literally that these academics have turned to themselves and their own devices: overpreparing, falling back into their practices, or insecurity, fear and unfamiliarity. They too have had to learn to experience teaching this way, and they have done so 'on their own', or with themselves/not-caring-others. We have experienced ways to make sense of the experience of teaching.

The exhibition tries to both provoke thinking about the experience of teaching and also to provide some experiences of teaching. It is a device in an artistic form, as we can take the poems and experience teaching with them. In an analogous way, we can explore semiotic devices that unfold through the exhibition: the clown, the maps, the other-world, the siege, the voyage, the pub. They provoke us too, to experience how it would be if it were like that. They come back and invite us to feel in such a way.

There are more questions

than answers.

The more you ask, the more you have.

I want to talk to you

do you want to talk to me too?

We have been an invitation

you have been here

along the way.

I hope you've had some hesitations,

the wind whispered in your ear

things to think before the sun has set:

who have you had

along your way,

with whom you've learnt

to experience teaching

to make familiar that which is

strange.

Why do you experience

the way you do?

we want to hear about you.

Part IV.

This research has been   written and conducted in order for it to be

experienced.

The rest of the page has been left intentionally blank for you to fill

however you see fit.

_____

In this section, the intention is for us to explore ways of integrating the previous parts: to have the experience of an *ensemble* as a collective distributed product of this research project.

As the structure goes, the first part served as an introduction to the topic and the work, who are the characters, what is the plot, what is our motivation. Then, the second part developed the ideas conceptually to build up the drama and the suspense – it was intended to play around with the ideas and pave the way for the next part to make sense. Part three was meant to be both productive and cathartic. Probably the most intentionally emotional part of the thesis was disposed so that it would unravel the drama and conflict in the field empirically, as it precipitated the need for integration. Which was at the beginning introduced and then developed, the third act led to a cathartic pinnacle. Now, it is time for this to end – provisionally.

In part IV, we are going to integrate all previous parts to explore what we can take from it (all)together.

4.1 Discussions.

From the framing of a context and the reading of the literature for this thesis, the aim here has been to explore how Early Career Academics learn to experience their teaching in Higher Education.

Going beyond the actualization of *what* HE teachers experience while teaching, which has been extensively described already, this research has aimed at looking into *how* experiencing teaching may itself be inscribed in a learning process. To that end, the purpose in this section is to assemble the different arguments and elements constructed, looking to understand the way they might be articulated to better comprehend the processes of ECAs learning to experience teaching in HE.

Firstly, a brief return to the initial rationale built during part I would be a perfect segue to tie the temporality of the argumentation with the last movement

performed as a curated exhibition. Beginning and ending coming together not as a circle but as a spiral, in a centripetal movement.

Overall in HE, research is seen as being more valuable than teaching (Bull et al., 2024; Cenamor, 2021; Elen et al., 2007; Geschwind & Broström, 2015), for instance when looking at career progression (Robinson & Hilli, 2016). In a sense, there is a misalignment between the work needed to develop teaching and the pressures to perform in the current academic context. Educational Development works towards developing academics into teachers, yet the situation of the HE sector in the UK and Europe now has led to identifying that one key aspect in the learning of the myriad of academic tasks and roles is learning the rules of the game.

Interestingly here, the exhibition showcases the idea that induction processes and academic peer relationships are crucial to socialising early careers into the academic life, as claimed by McKay & Monk (2017). Mentoring and colleague support are an axis through which we could return to the exhibition and look at how people have developed key relationships that have a place of significance in the different artworks. Note colleagues next door, module convenors, PGR peers. At the exhibition, the informal mentoring and induction is shown as the development of close relationships based in care, solidarity and companionship.

Next, as Part I, this thesis takes the issue into the fields of the developmental processes prior to getting the academic post. It is then noted that becoming an academic is a transition for the person (Emmioğlu et al., 2017; Cidlinska et al., 2022; Mantai, 2019; McAlpine et al., 2013; 2021). Here, loss of expertise and insecurity are identified as salient aspects of these transitions (Van Lankveld et al., 2017). Verses that support this idea are "a step off the map – sideways" (From *Off the map*), to convey the experience of stepping into unknown territory aidless, and "I don't actually think I'm the best lecturer – in terms of having loads of knowledge, but I work really hard" (from *Wonder*) to express the feelings of *not knowing as much as an academic should know*, and the experience of gap, vacuum, loss in contrast to the past expertise.

So, from the research in doctoral education and its intersection with early career academics teaching preparation, what was stated before in this thesis was roughly that the experiences of teaching as an ECA could be inscribed within those transitions and learning processes, where preparation and training are, on one hand, precarious and underrated within the HE sector, and on the other, relatively scarce. Lack of preparation and precarity are clearly another line of introspection that stands out from the exhibition at several points, which are perfectly consistent with the literature. Further, the exhibition transforms these ideas poetically as it allows the experience to be showcased not as a summary of key words but as an experience in itself.

The transitional conceptualization of these experiences offers a way to understand them relationally as an experience in the way that was elaborated on in the theory work. As stated there, the distinctiveness of an experience arises semiotically constructed as a new relation, qualitatively different from the others. As expressed in the poems like *Navigating through the ranks*, *A class to remember*, or most notably in *Transitions*, teaching is a different experience from the others, contrasting specially with that of the doctoral work, professional background and being a student. Here the experiences are constituted not in relation but as relations, and openly and dynamically integrating past, present and future experiences. Again, this thesis offers support to the theoretical exploration while also extending the theory work from the conceptual argumentation to an experience as expressed in the exhibition.

From this, the argument may move into unpacking the cognitive and emotional contradictions that are encompassed during this process, and the idea that they can be supported by engaging with academic communities. Authors such as Djerasimovic & Villani (2020), Hill et al. (2019), or Soomere & Karm (2021) have already suggested that the collective sense that is built within academic communities before ECAs are appointed to an academic post and the teaching duty is key to understanding how academics get to experience teaching as they do. Such suggestions have proven to be perfectly consistent with the theory work and some of the reflections derived from the exhibition. Still, this thesis discusses the current state of the literature as here we can think that the built collective

sense unfolds to offer and invite early career academics to experience teaching in a particular way – in the way that is done collectively.

The main point from this thesis as it relates to and challenges the literature is that such a way of experiencing is collective, progressive and dynamically internalized, worked-through as a perezhivanie and supported by affective liminal devices that help to articulate emotions and cognition in learning to experience.

This thesis partially supports and partially challenges the idea from Bosanquet et al. (2017), as they state that "no singular objective definition encompasses ECA experience" (p. 900). All the concepts and ideas that have been somewhat referred to in the literature as what early career academics feel when teaching and learning to teach have also appeared and been expressed in different ways throughout the exhibition. From a certain perspective, we would agree that there is no one way to refer to the ECA experience. In the empirical work done in this thesis we can feel the frustration and the pressures, the uncertainties, the worry and insecurities, just as we can feel the passion, love, joy, successes and happiness. Unsurprisingly all of them make an appearance, but novelty appears in how they can be understood as part of a process. The challenge arises not to the acknowledgement of multiplicity but to the pretention that objectivity is a property of the phenomenon itself rather than something that is developed as the act of knowing.

Here, taking together the theory work and the exhibition we understand conceptually and explore empirically how the ECA experiences of teaching and their academic work comes to be in particular ways, and so becomes objective in the sense of becoming an object of knowledge that makes sense within a larger learning process. Tentatively, we could assert that the singular objective definition is that the experience of ECAs can be learnt and transformed collectively as they work-through it; by that movement, they can become an object of knowledge that is dynamic, cultural, situated, open and relationally constructed.

Within becoming a lecturer – as in experiencing teaching and making sense of it – we see that contradictions can make sense: here, it can be argued that both

231

teaching and learning as transformational processes need the contradictions, oppositions, dichotomies, as both processes are meant to be like that. In some reflections from the exhibition like those from the entrance show that contradiction makes an appearance as we are disposed to feel that teaching needs mastery and proficiency as much as uncertainty. In *A class to remember* we see the necessity for the contradictory feeling in a few verses: "Maybe that's knowing how to teach: – to be constantly asking questions, – finding ways to improve it, change it, adapt it. – Being a teacher is about facing challenges, – feelings of inadequacy and feeling of lacking something." Here, teaching is about feeling like that while also "These challenges are part of the process – of developing, of becoming. – The absolute movement of becoming, – the challenges that keep it interesting and exciting, – the joy of overcoming the challenges that you choose". Teaching is a contradictory experience: certain and uncertain but in a different sense.

If we take that further and explore the need for learning to be contradictory, we can return to a few other verses like "I've tried other things in my life, you're not very good at them for a while – are you? And then you get a bit better." (from *Off the map*), and "Failure is only a big word if you make it a big word. – The F word. – But for me, failure is finding another way to make it work. […] We have fun in the classroom to feel better, – to feel good with our challenges, – with our failures, – with our imperfections, – with everything." (from *A spoonful of sugar*). Again, learning is contradictory too, as it has been conceptually explored in the theory work. At this point, the three parts of this thesis come together as an ensemble to discuss the literature: complexity and contradiction are not an issue to solve if we want to understand ECA experiences of teaching but rather something to articulate as the experience, here, the process of learning to experience teaching.

So far, it has been theoretically supported that the contradictions in the experience of teaching can make sense both cognitively and emotionally as they are a dialectical necessity for learning. If we can think that teaching is unfinished as we do in Room 1 and 3, we can relate to it as something still in process – something that is being learnt. Similarly, in Room 2 we appreciate how contradiction may be transformed to make sense together yet critically. In this

way, the exhibition offers insight of the experience of teaching on one hand, and of teaching itself on the other, as both teaching and the ways of experiencing teaching are being learnt by the early career academics during their early years as lecturers, considering all the complexities as part of a learning process.

The rationale for this thesis may be redeveloped differently to arrive again at the same point. As the literature has focused on discrete understandings, we know quite well all the different possibilities of feeling in teaching and in learning. This thesis builds on previous work and offers significant new insights to the literature as it tries to understand how those possibilities come to be and may be articulated coherently both theoretically and empirically as a learning process.

In that way, throughout the exhibition the point that can be made is that early career academics find themselves experiencing teaching in one way as they begin their journey, and it is transformed over time to make sense to them. As such, we are suggesting that how ECAs experience teaching is something that is learnt, as it gets transformed over time. Bringing together the collectiveness of the learning processes and the complex experiences of teaching, mentoring and collective practices to learn to experience teaching make a significant contribution to our understanding of the ECA experiences as a transformative process. Contradictions make sense in the theory work, and they make sense (sense as in meaning) in the same sense (sense as in direction) in the empirical work. This is particularly noticeable in *We can't make it on our own*, as we can feel the differences between the supported and unsupported experience of teaching, where contradictions are clearly transformed collectively in a progressively meaningful way.

As it was developed in the theory work, a transition as a spontaneous or expected disruption in people's lives and ways of knowing can be understood through the concepts of edge emotions and liminal experiences. As previously developed, changing and crossing the threshold that is necessary for learning requires to face the affect arising from preserving the previous self and knowledge: the previous structures. Here, learning is affective as it necessarily implies a struggle

between old and new, adaptative and un-adaptative, known and unknown, continuity and change, certainty and uncertainty.

Furthermore, learning to experience teaching is also intersected by the transition of learning to experience the academic role. As such, *Off the map* offers means to reflect on the idea that change is difficult as at times we feel that we have learnt too much, and that may mean 'transforming too much'. The construction in terms of learning, identity, and biography, means that the transformation also will change all of them recursively, and so learning to experience teaching also becomes about learning to experience change and transitions. Unfortunately, the identity and biographical intertwining has been left unexplored in this thesis. The hunch here being that a further integration could be made if articulated with the work of Bourgeois (2009), which is already referred to and consistent with the theory work.

Still, relevant concepts in psychological and educational research such as identities, sense making, motivation, beliefs and so on, have been left unattended and in need of conceptual and empirical articulation with what has been developed here. As a token of this, the literature on academic identity (Boncori & Smith, 2020) may provide further insights that could be explored in future research, as they could be part of the developmental process that has been explored here. This thesis has limited itself to the ECA processes of learning to experience teaching in HE, and so it may be easily interpellated by the literature that refers to learning as a process for the whole person, encompassing their identities, biographies, beliefs, and so on. Still, as the exploration has been done through a Relational Epistemic Framework, it is reasonable to think that there is a space for an internally consistent understanding of the processes of learning to experience and identity work, for example through the work of Vygotskian inspired contemporary academics such as Rubtsova (2020; 2021; 2023), or more established ones such as Kozulin (1991) or Vasilyuk (1991).

Coming back to framing this thesis against current knowledge, throughout the exhibition we see how affect is central in the experience of change as stated in the theory work; we can feel the conflict, contradiction, uncertainty, amongst

many others, as a central feature of the ECA experience of teaching in HE. Yet, we can also see how the emotionality is constructed and transformed in such a way that produces a complex experience encompassing contradictory thoughts and feelings. In a sense, as framed with and against the theory work, the thesis further discusses the field as the exhibition showcases empirically the need to support said construction. Notably in the poem *Dr Cynic and Mrs Generous*, we can explore the reflection that we need to learn how to support our understanding and experience of academia as we experience the conflicts and contradictions.

The learning process as both necessarily cognitive and emotional can be integrated and supported as an experience firstly due to art and aesthetics, as they become technical means for producing experiences that are shared, collective and culturally mediated. As such, this thesis again integrates theory as a counterpoint to explore the empirical work done at the exhibition. Together, they have tackled the suggestion from the literature for a need to explore the 'why' of the experiences of teaching and academic work. As expressed there, the different ways of experiencing teaching get to be like that because they are learnt. We can see here some of the transformation processes that arguably offer some insight into why they are experienced the way they are.

Furthermore, the research process supports this point as a meaning making production process. As a device to produce the object of the research, the exhibition intersects with the theory work and the context and literature review again as it produces what is being researched: a complex experience of teaching that is both contradictory and open to transformation. In a sense, the methods to produce the empirical work are not a contribution on their own, but they become relevant as they help tackle the issues identified in the literature. If contradiction is problematic as part of a speech genre that seeks to create discrete categories, phenomena and experiences, as it was argued at the end of the theory work taking from the literature review, this thesis tries out a way of conducting and producing research that works with the contradiction, and brings life and complexity into the research by way of the method.

The exhibition transforms the experience of teaching as it reconstructs learning to experience teaching as well as it promotes transformation. Learning to experience is not something in the past, but gets built during the research production/process, and it shows how it was produced before too, following the same logic. In a way, the rationale set out in the theory works proves to be coherent and effective here: as a technique, the discourse as unfolds during this text has produced and transformed speech in the way that was necessary to research these experiences and make sense of the gaps in current knowledge.

The mixtures, textures and contradictions of the experience can exist empirically through a way of producing 'data' that requires them: arts and poetry. For poetry to be poetic, it requires that plurality, the multiple, complex and even contradictory experiences to exist artistically mediated. Contrasting with the literature, contradictions in the experiences of teaching make sense here as they take the poetic form.

In this thesis, contradiction makes sense and has a place both theoretically and empirically as learning and arts. Thus, this provides another bridge between the empirical and theory work to discuss together the literature.

As we understand both emotions and experiences as something that can be devised through culturally mediated forms while supporting the contradiction necessary, we see that the specific ways of feeling and experiencing are in fact open to be learnt and developed relationally through art and aesthetic production. Here, we have provisionally and partially supported this theoretical intuition by offering a way of producing data that resembles that complexity while at the same time showcasing the collective and relational processes that have led early career academics to feel in the myriad ways that the literature has described so far.

Through this project and specifically due to the artistic intention of the research production and the exhibition both in content and form, we can provide some empirical support for the claim of Larraín and Haye (2019). To them, the self is constructed "as an effect of the aesthetic activity involved in everyday discursive life." (p. 8), and this has been attested by the aesthetic production enabled and

enacted by/through the research process and by the participants themselves as part of the stamp of quality of the research method. In a way, the poem creation was in fact a space for personal development as it supported the experience of self and otherness through the aesthetic creation.

The earlier claim that art and artistically inclined cultural production of speech can produce and transform learning and the learning to experiences of teaching has been supported by stopping to reflect upon the ways learning and experiences are articulated through and by the poetic productions. Within the poems, we can see the artistic and aesthetic transformation of speech to make sense of the experiences of teaching and how they arrived at those points. The ugly duckling, the clown and Mary Poppins are some ways in which to make sense of the experience as they offer an understanding that aesthetically articulates the experience without reducing its complexity. Further, stepping back and returning to the quality of the method, the poetic creation itself allowed the participants to transform and articulate the experiences in their complexities by the production of the artwork.

Still, this conceptual intuition argued for by Zittoun & Stenner (2021) amongst others, has been only partially supported by this thesis. The idea of devising liminality and supporting it artistically has not been fully explored nor sufficiently backed. We will come back to that later in this section.

For now, we can make another turn to discuss this thesis as this assemblage returns to the concept of perezhivanie and its value to further understand learning to experience teaching. As the labour of experiencing, we note how the work done in this thesis has positioned itself as transformational work for the participants as it invited and sustained meaning making both retrospectively and prospectively. As if that was not enough, the concept proves to be useful as it allows us to understand the poetic act and the way in which the participants have learnt to assert dominion over their experiences as they continuously work-through and learn to experience.

Against the backdrop of Educational Development as a place/space concerned with supporting academics in becoming teachers/lecturers (Hénard &

Roseveare, 2012), this thesis further discusses the need to move beyond the development of skills and methods (Phuong et al., 2018; 2020) and go towards looking at the professional service role of ED as one that supports early career academics in becoming academics and making sense of such experience (Emmioğlu et al., 2017; Hollywood et al., 2020; McAlpine et al., 2013; 2021; McCune, 2021; McKay & Monk, 2017). With the work done in this thesis, we could extend the role of Educational Development as one that needs to take into consideration devising ways for ECAs to feel and collectively work-through their experiences of teaching in an intentional and positive manner, that acknowledges and articulates contradiction and complexity.

In the exhibition, we have explored experiences that are the conjunction of selves in particular social interactions; they can be understood as perezhivaniya as they are molecules of learning processes that unfold in the working-though experiencing within social conjunctions. As a token, in *Dr Cynic and Mrs Generous*, both the production of the poetry and that which is expressed there are reminiscent and actively reproducing the internalized/ing ways of working-though the experiencing with a mentor. The learning drawn from the mentoring relationship in that poem in a sense offers the support needed to work-through the experiences of teaching in a way that is analogous to how it was done before – as if still done with the mentor. In the poem we can actively see the relative appropriation and reconstruction of the way it was experienced with the mentor. Even when the mentor is not 'the one directly speaking' in the poem, she makes an appearance as extended through and with the poem by the authors. In/with the poem, we are actively working-through the experience with her, even if 'she is not t/here'. Thus, such way of experiencing is reconstructed as a way of working-through and learning to/by experiencing.

In a similar manner we can take *Navigating through the ranks*, where collective practices were enacted and collectively sustained to develop ways of experiencing teaching. In that sense, the experience of teaching in HE is learnt as it produces again the same previously collective processes. The way in which both set examples of openness is here understood not as an experience that is reproduced linearly: it is not the same experience but it can be worked-through

and transformed as if it was analogous to the previous ways of collectively experiencing, to the same intention. In that sense, perezhivanie means a way of collectively constructing dominion over the experience, as we learn from/to experience, transform it, and gain consciousness of/over it.

The value of the perezhivanie in understanding ECA experiences of teaching is tentatively supported as it challenges and extends the literature while offering a way to explore an experience that carries on the properties of the learning processes that constitute it as such in an open and dynamic sense. As discussed here, we have effectively undertaken the study of an experience as perezhivanie, as we have explored the learning and transformations that unfold as perezhivanie. Every experience and contradiction that has been stated in the literature has been acknowledged here, and yet, we have successfully extended the field as it required further articulation both theoretical and empirical to account for the development of such experiences and contradictions as a necessity for a larger learning process.

As theoretically hypothesized, some ECA have not undergone intentional collective learning processes that offer ways of productively articulating and making sense out of the complexities of the experiences of teaching and the academic role. With perezhivanie, we may elaborate on this idea by noting that those poems that have been curatorially structured as Room 1 indeed express the unreadiness, unfinishedness, inadequacy, loneliness, etc., consistently with the literature (Bosanquet et al., 2020; Emmioğlu, et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2019; Van Lankveld et al., 2017; to name a few), as they unpack the relatively precarious way of transforming these experiences without a clear and intentional support from others. There, we feel how they learnt to experience teaching the way they do/did as we recreate the feeling being able to do only what they were already able to do.

With this transition as the production of a new subject – the teacher/lecturer – we can bring back here the idea from Sebastián et al., (2021): novelty is predicated of the greater unit. As such, the challenges of learning both emotional and cognitive are left to the devices of the ECAs, of the things they can do/think/feel

on their own. In contrast, other poems such as those curated as Room 2 present the collective that positively produces newness in the ECA as a working-through learning conjunction in an intentional, relatively stable and systematic way. Very concretely here, the literature is extended as we can identify the processual-ness and relational-ness of learning to experience.

Succinctly stated, one key takeaway we can draw from this discussion is that we can understand how the experience of teaching in HE unfolds as a learning process through the relatively stable and dynamic relationships and collective practices that are being internalized symbolically. In other words, we can understand the experiences of teaching in HE as learning processes through perezhivaniya, as they become the working-through collective learning experiencing of teaching.

With both the theory work and the empirical work taken together we can provisionally state that early career academics learn to experience teaching in HE as they collectively and mediately work-through their experiences of teaching in HE, and thus transform and appropriate them as well as learn to/from their experiences. This would be done by articulating the contradictions within the learning process.

Thus, the discussion here would support the implication already stated before derived from the argumentation both in part I and II: academics can learn to experience teaching even if they are not teaching themselves, or if their knowledge and experiences of teaching are limited thus far. Experiencing understood as perezhivanie would mean that there are ways of experiencing as working-through learning experiences that are collective and symbolically mediated. Such premise would offer some insight into why it would be relevant to offer doctoral researchers and early career academics opportunities to experience teaching as part of their doctoral programmes and their inductions to academic work (Jordan & Howe, 2018). Formally or informally, mentoring and close relationships with caring members of academic community would potentially offer ways of collectively experiencing teaching and learning, which in

turn could provide a way to systematically, intentionally and articulately foster academic development.

This would be perfectly coherent with the literature and the broader context as expressed through the ideas of Educational Developers such as McCune (2021) or Timmermans & Sutherland (2020), while at the same time supporting the arguments of Stenner (2017) and Zittoun & Stenner (2021). Fostering learning for early career academics to experience their teaching, for example, in the way that the institution has set out to do as a guiding principle for their work (imagine, centred in students, focused on EDI, wellbeing, multiculturality, etc.) is something that could be intentionally devised. Understanding experience as perezhivanie and learning as both emotional and cognitive in a coherent and articulated way, we can think of experiencing 'in advance' as a performed practice culturally mediated through art, for instance. There, the main point would be to produce ways of collective experiencing with liminal affective devises as a possible mediated practice to be progressively reconstructed internally – so, internalized.

Moreover, it is good to note that this argument can be extended into many different paths too. As an example, Oliveira et al. (2024) have expressed their concerns regarding the sociopolitical production of emotions in the current HE sector, as ideas like passion or heroism may support the reproduction of exploitative and oppressive relationships like the excessive workload, exhaustion and precariousness of the academic work. Thus, they have warned against the neoliberal strategy of focusing on happiness, cheerfulness as much as self-doubt and the 'being lucky to be here' feeling as means to produce emotionalities that focus on the individual while covering up the systemic failures of the higher education institutions more widely. Such discourses are also expressed in the exhibition and thus careful attention is needed if they are to be used to support educational development. This of course is a humbling note to our work done here, as we do not want it to be used to reproduce oppression. As a decolonial and emancipatory work (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2021), even the method of poetic inquiry should be intended to liberate rather than to oppress.

On the other side, the argument could also be used to support the transformation of the experiences of teaching into what Thrift (2022) has identified as some of the main academic motifs, for example curiosity, obsession, hard work, and "a desire to make the world into a better place" (p. 44). Some of these ideas are quite consistent with the field of epistemic emotions (Muis et al., 2018; 2021; Nerantzaki et al., 2021) as referred to in the theory work, and could be intersected with looking into how to build these emotions into the broader teaching and learning dynamics throughout higher education as a way to positively socialize students into prospective academics (Elen et al., 2007). Some aspects of these emotions have been expressed in the exhibition, although further development where epistemic emotions are at the centre of the data production could showcase nuances between them and their development.

In any case, what we'd like to be taken from this discussion is that there are ways of collectively supporting each other as academics in development. Closing, we could return to *A class to remember*, as we have reflected there that learning to experience is to reconstruct collectively: bring the collective to the present full of life. In a way, when we learn we are always talking about a collective, and the same is the case when addressing teaching and academic work. To have an experience is to have each other. For example, what would happen if we took the academic discourse and transformed it from the third person grammatic structure into the first person, and then from singular into plural, how would we promote collective experiencing then?

"Easy as pie".

I write with a fancy voice

to throw you off,

to get it right,

to get it wrong.

Provocations

of the most sinister type,

to state this is this and that is that.

If only I knew that much.

I know what I did last summer

and the summer before that one,

watching the fog clear out.

Let me dream that it is easy,

that you'll believe me when I say

provocations are all I have so far.

4.2 Conclusions.

Throughout this thesis, we have tried to advance the field of Higher Education research, particularly focusing on the issue of Early Career Academics' experiences, Educational Development, and Doctoral Education, alongside the fields of Educational Psychology theory and Art-Based Research practices as Poetic Inquiry. As an intersection of these fields, we have elaborated on a main research question that served to guide this project: how Early Career Academics learn to experience their teaching in Higher Education.

Starting from setting a context for the emotionality of the academic work (Austin, 2014; Bloch, 2016; Calderón & Sebastián, 2022; Djerasimovic & Villani, 2020; Hollywood et al., 2020; Khan, 2021; Nästesjö, 2020; 2022; Salisbury, 2014; Stupnisky et al., 2016; 2019; Walker, 2017; 2018), we then proposed a reading of the literature that recognised and elaborated on the complexity of the phenomenon at hand. Namely, early career academics experiences of teaching and their academic work can be quite different and varied: the literature speaks of pleasure, anger, enthusiasm, disappointment, precarity, overload, joy, sadness, lack of recognition, belonging, lack of control, unfamiliarity, passion, uncertainty, among many others (Bloch, 2016; Nästesjö, 2020; 2022; Oliveira et al., 2024; Robinson & Hilli, 2016; Salimzadeh et al., 2017; Turk & Ledić, 2016).

Moreover, the review found this to be consistent with the research conducted in the experiences of doctoral education (Emmioğlu, et al., 2017; Jespen, et al., 2012; Muzaka, 2009), and of learning (Barer-Stein, 1987; Mustafina et al., 2020; Walker & Palacios, 2016). In sum, the field can be seen as contradictory and complex, and thus it becomes difficult to understand how teaching can be experienced in such a way.

From this, the main argument for this thesis surpasses the question of *what* HE teachers experience while teaching, and moves into *how* this happens, as we inscribed the issue as one of a learning process to account for the complexity and contradictions of the ECA experiences of teaching in HE.

Starting with some Theory work to address the issue conceptually, the first contribution is to understand that emotions are not something that fosters or hinders learning but a necessary condition for learning. Every learning process is emotional as it requires a leap to the unknown, to uncertainty, the effort of change, while at the same time supporting relative familiarity, stability and continuity. Building on that, the development here led to argue that supporting these contradictions is a key challenge for learning, and thus arose the arts: a socio-cultural affective technique to construct meaning and sense in and for the experience. Within our understanding of both learning and the arts, contradictions and complexity are needed for them to exist and be produced as

such. The first contribution to knowledge comes from reworking the literature through this new conceptual development to understand that contradictory experiences are not a problem when understanding ECA teachings in HE, but a sign of the true complexity of the process.

Furthermore, emotionality in learning is not something that is predetermined, nor dependant solely on the individual nor on the social situation but can be built and developed relationally. The experience of learning can be transformed through liminal affective devices as a mediated, technical and artificial effort for meaning making: here, art and aesthetic production have a place in the process as they support the transformation of emotions in culturally and personally meaningful ways. This extends current knowledge quite significantly, as it provides an alternative way of thinking why each experience is personal and thus different from other people experiences, yet it is at the same time collective and relatively generalizable within certain groups. In a way, this allows us to think both about the particularity of experiences – such as frustration of not getting a TA role in times of crisis within an institution, or anxiety of changing roles after parental leave – and the commonalities and broad shared experiences – such as the precarious context of work after an economic crisis, or the nation wise consequences of major political decisions such as leaving a supranational organization.

From there, the argument develops into how this complexity comes into being. With a processual perspective, the focus is set on how people may learn to experience in particular ways regardless of the descriptions that have been actualized in the literature. Thinking with the concept of perezhivanie, the second contribution to knowledge is that what has been described in the literature are points in time of a learning process that is a collective and mediated working-through the experience. In that sense, what we see in the literature is nothing more than points in which the individuals are becoming within different situated social environments, they are working as themselves and with others in a specific social and culturally mediated situation. In a sense, the contribution here is to argue for a switch in the perspective in the literature, where contradictions and complexities of the experiences need to be unpacked and clarified as a linear

reflection of a phenomenon, to thinking with perezhivanie to offer an understanding of experiences as technical and open productions.

In sum, we could say that Early Career Academics learn to experience their teaching in Higher Education by collectively and mediately working-through their experiences of teaching in HE. They would transform and appropriate the ways of working-through that are collective and a learning experience, as the ways to learn to/from their experiences. This process would account for the relative stability of the experiences as they would be continuously reconstructed through mediated structures that give them a particular and recognizable form. Here, that would be of the aesthetic effort for meaning-making.

In contrast, the process would also take into consideration the dynamic and open-ended potential of learning to experience teaching, as it is relationally and developmentally constituted. If the process is predicated of the specific development of ways of experiencing of the lecturers, then we would be referring to the conjunctions of selves and the systematic yet particular internalizations of collective processes in the specific and mediated socio-cultural and historically situated interactions that have lead towards such and other internalization processes. Here we could tentatively state that so far, the literature has mistakenly taken the part for the whole, looking at the experiences unrelated to their processes of becoming as such, and the transformations that led to and unfold through the working of the experiences.

To provide further support for such contribution, we have understood the learning process within the doctoral education as a preparatory space for future academics. We have addressed it here as we take into account and extend the ideas of Mantai (2019): doctoral researchers need to feel like an academic before they are even appointed for an academic post, as it would support the transition, the learning, emotionality and the identity work necessary to carry out then. This way, early career academics would have an increase in agency and self-development, as it would become something that has been in processes (intentionally) beforehand.

Such an implication would be soundly supported by our work with the proposed statement: how early careers experience teaching is learnt with others that foster and support a particular yet recognisable way of experiencing teaching. Starting from the existing literature, this would arguable be a succinct way of stating two of the main contributions to knowledge derived from this thesis.

Moreover, the core aim of this project has been provisionally both theoretically and empirically addressed as we understand the whole process with the concept of perezhivanie, as the working-through collective learning experiencing of teaching. The conjunction of the theory work and the empirical production are needed to state that ECAs learn to experience teaching in HE via the collective and mediated work-through learning experiencing of teaching in HE. With this, the early career academics would be transforming as well as appropriating their experiences as well as learning to/from them. In that open ended yet recognizable way, the gap in the literature makes sense: as a mediated collective practice that is systematic, working through the experience of teaching would lead to early career academics to experience their work in contradictory ways, similar and different to each other, all of which make sense within the learning process that is both collective and particular, and as it means to face uncertainty, challenge, contradictions, etc., both cognitive and affectively.

Moving on to the empirical part of this study, a third contribution to knowledge is offering a way to produce research grounded in such an understanding that not only supports contradiction but actively requires it in its research production. On their own, the methods conducted for this research are not a contribution to knowledge; still, taken as part of a corpus of research that has somewhat failed to understand and effectively work with the contradictions that are central in this phenomenon, producing research that can positively transform previous research by reframing it through arts and aesthetic means of collective and individual production may be considered a contribution. If taken with the previous bodies of literature, it may be said that this specific field of research was stuck in the contradiction, looking for ways to weigh them and make one be more salient than the other. In turn, this research transforms such body of knowledge by reconstructing it through a method that embraces and requires contradiction for

its existence. It is precisely in the dialectics of arts and sciences as opposing speech genres that this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by trying to find both and work with them to produce new knowledge.

Lastly, a final contribution to knowledge has been to fill the gap in knowledge by actively making sense of the contradictions stated in the literature regarding early career academics' experiences of teaching. By constructing it collectively alongside some ECAs we have filled this space with an empirical account of actual transformation of experiences as a working-through process that is done collectively, intentionally and jointly with cultural means of producing experiences artistically and aesthetically. The contribution here has been that uncertainty, enjoyment, stress, anxiety, love, hesitancy, passion, precarity, contradiction, and many other ideas that encompass the experiences of teaching in HE have a place and make sense to early career academics as part of their learning processes. They are learning to experience teaching, and all the complexity of the experience is not in itself a problem, but it is part of an artistically/aesthetically articulated/articulable process.

In sum, we could initially conclude that early career academics learn to experience their teaching in Higher Education by working through it collectively, supported artistically and aesthetically to construct meaning of/by/from this working-through collective learning experiencing. In short, the main contribution is to transform the field of study of early career academics' experiences of teaching to make sense of the complexity and contradiction by reconstructing it from a learning perspective.

Furthermore, the aim of this project led us to elaborate some corollary questions, some conceptual and some empirical. Just to quickly reiterate how these have been addressed, we will revisit them here to go through them in an orderly fashion.

As part of the conceptual development done as part of the Theory Work, we could state that (i) learning may initially feel like uncertainty and unfamiliarity as it entails the transit from what is comfortable and known to that which is unknown and uncomfortable. Then, (ii) learning is not necessarily experienced in one

particular way, but the experience can develop. Learning is experienced in the way that it has been systematically constructed and transformed by/with emotions. Emotions here would be a social production, an effort to transform and dominate the body culturally and semiotically mediated. From that, iii) experience may be learnt by working-through it collectively as understood in the concept of perezhivanie. This latter point would be a contribution to knowledge from a conceptual standpoint as it reframes the literature on ECA experiences of teaching in HE. Moreover, one way of doing that is by art and the aesthetic production of experience.

Additionally, taken as the empirical work of this project, we could affirm that (i) early career academics show us that teaching is experienced as scary, uncertain, precarious, difficult, yet exciting, joyful, lovely, amongst other ideas. All of them are perfectly coherent with the literature. Further, (ii) these have been expressed again to refer to the feelings of learning to teach, where we could add loneliness, solidarity, amongst others. As a final point of the empirical work, (iii) the lecturers taking part in this research have made sense of their experience of teaching collectively, either by sharing/learning with others, or by recoiling to themselves as an other to elaborate and work-through the experience. Again, this latter point would be an empirical contribution to knowledge as it showcases the articulation of the literature as a learning process alongside the reconstruction and reproduction of the experiences of teaching with the participants. The artistic and aesthetic production of the experience is shown both in the poems as a mean to articulate contradiction into complex experiences, and in some artistic/aesthetic transformation of speech such as popular songs like in *A spoonful of sugar* (which is a clear homage to the popular song).

Differently stated, the original contributions to knowledge from this work are a) conceptually understanding learning as both cognitive and affective in an internally articulated manner; b) reworking experiences as something learnt via a working-through collective learning experiencing with the concept of perezhivanie; c) producing research that consistently addresses a complex, culturally and semiotically mediated, relational and in development phenomenon such as learning to experience; and d) filling the gap in the literature regarding

making sense of the contradictions and complexities of early career academics experiences of teaching by theoretically and empirically framing it in a learning process, and thus transforming it as something that is open to change. As ECAs work-through their experiences of teaching collectively, we can support said change intentionally by jointly working-through them with cultural means of producing experiences artistically and aesthetically.

These original contributions to knowledge have been supported and further developed drawing from the empirical work done in this project. As an exhibition, the project has generated data that consistently aligns with the claims and supports them, as well as expresses experiences openly, without offering final answers put provisional rationales to comprehend the phenomenon at hand.

From the Relational Epistemic Framework in which we have based our project and the different arguments here, this thesis has attempted to produce a piece of research that is intended to acknowledge and fully take on the relationality of knowledge production both from a conceptual standpoint and an empirical one. This thesis as a whole has been crafted to serve as an example of producing research while actively engaging the literature, the theory, the participants, the audience/readers, and myself. In that sense, this research has looked for a way to transit narratively and artistically through scientific speech genres, to arrive to a point in which it makes sense to read it in a *we* voice as it is an actual collective production even when written by me.

From this point, a first and relatively clear limitation can be stated: in its ambition to construct knowledge from a Relational Epistemic Framework in terms of conceptual as well as empirical work, the thesis may appear convoluted and hard to read at times. The push to re-work a field from a dialectical perspective requires to consistently sustain an alternative understanding from 'mainstream research' as exemplified before with prominent alternatives such as the Transformative Learning Theory for the conceptual work and Phenomenology for the empirical work.

Moreover, in terms of scope and reach of the project, a somewhat straightforward limitation is that it is quite clearly situated in the context of one country, done

within the north region, and with a limited amount of early career academic, all of them within the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Although it has been stated before that this project has been carried out with an artistic inspiration, as in, it has tried to pursue truth without claiming for certainty, we should still recognise that for the project to generate a larger impact it should be put into dialogue with different academic spaces to explore its potential reach and resonance. As a relational production and artistically inspired work, we hope to one day take the process and products of this research and explore how it relates to other early career academics on different countries and fields.

From that, a methodological limitation has been the absence of an audience response. Potentially this could be addressed by using these poems in the context of Educational Development workshops, or as an exhibition done at the University, all of which are still pretty much open as potential possibilities.

As learning to experience teaching in higher education is something done collectively, some avenues open for research that may be interesting to explore in the future. Firstly, within the field and practice of Educational Development, further research could be carried out to identify the alternative insight and learning potential that may exist when using this research for working with early career academics. Even if in terms of using the final exhibition, playing with it, transforming it to a different interest, or altogether creating new poetry with ECA, this project may be of great value to extend in this field.

Furthermore, further research could be conducted as broadening this idea into other experiences of significant transition and rupture.

Looking into intentionally preparing people to experience their future may be of service in challenging spaces such as school teacher training. Understanding the emotional labour of teaching as a perezhivanie, and done artistically as a mean of articulating and producing complex experiences could prove to be of great use for future teachers and teacher educators concerned with teacher wellbeing and flourishing.

Moreover, if we take the experience teaching in ECA as a learning process, we could also extend this research into learning to experience learning. As such, some further directions could be taken into some interesting fields. To name a few, out-of-school education such as afterschool programmes or informal learning (such as learning to play traditional music, for example as in Sebastián & Sebastián, forthcoming), could be interesting spaces to explore as they could represent relatively unstructured yet meaningful spaces for learning for different participants. Due to the unstructured-ness and low-stake-ness of the space, we would hypothesize that emotionality can be supported and transformed in a freer manner as part of a meaningful and engaging educative process.

Another interesting direction for this research could be in the intersection of learning to experience transitions, change and transformation, and the broader field of Future and Anticipation studies. Particularly, the issues of climate change, ecological learning and sustainability education could benefit from a perspective that integrates the idea that learning is a cognitive and emotional process, and that the experience of it can be devised so to integrate complex emotions and contradiction. As a field that is relatively focused on uncertainty, Futures and Anticipation studies may benefit from the contribution made in this thesis as it too took focus con uncertainty even if coming from a widely different concern.

All in all, this piece of research shows great promise despite its limitations. The claims we have made here are to be taken as an original contribution to knowledge that is meant to be provisional and to be further scrutinized and developed. As a relational product, I'd like to finish by thanking those with which I write – some knowingly and some unknowingly – equally relevant for the continuous, collective, stable yet dynamic production of scientific and systematic knowledge.

4.3 Coda.

"The text that wrote itself".

The words came to me one day.

They knocked on the door

- my office ends in four -

and they took a little walk

a little dance of their own.

They wanted to let me know

That they were words of joy.

Uncertainty, hesitance, underpaid and overworked

mischievous provocations: you never do anything alone

and there they were as I sat next to the board.

The words are constellations shining upon us all,

they show themselves at night when we take a stroll

by the corridors, the shower or at the grocery store.

Quickly! Take a note! As soon as they come

as soon as they've gone. They come when they want to,

they dominate us all.

Remind me again, how did it go? They put themselves in paper

and I forget to let them go.

Acknowledgements: to all who came before,

to all who led them to my door

to all who's thoughts became my own

to my wife, my kin, my kind, my mentors and so on.

Thank you for the words,

warm wishes, best regards,

I look forward to hearing from you once more

and hopefully one day I'll know

how you became my work.

Appendixes.

5.1 Appendix One.

5.1.1 Pilot Poem I.

"Unfinished Business"

I.

I trained as a teacher of English and drama,

I spent twenty-odd years teaching in schools

Then I started my part-time PhD in '99

But

I didn't feel like I had the time to do it.

I intercalated

But

I never went back until… I picked it up again

That was really a bit of

Unfinished business.

So,

my first experience of being

a higher education teacher was as a BA and MA tutor…

Because I have a background in education

it was fairly

I wouldn't say easy

But

fairly comfortable.

I did have this background in teaching, I was a qualified teacher, I knew how to structure lessons, I knew how to frame things to support that move to independent learning.

But

As all good teachers or lecturers should acknowledge,

It's a continual process.

We're always learning,

you know?

III.

Fascinating job

We can always reflect on how we undertook it.

I was allocated a mentor

An experienced teacher.

Sharing that collaborative nature

Was really important.

Like a safety net.

IV.

So,

I do

I remember

very very clearly

feeling that this was high stakes

I was dealing for the first time

With higher levels than I was used to

So,

I had to be very mindful

of the rhythm of the course,

the expectations I had of them,

the support that I could offer them,

and just the fact that it was that step up for me

I wanted to do the very best

for them

So,

I felt under a bit of pressure to be

You know?

Outstandingly good and supportive

of them,

to give them

the best possible chance of succeeding.

V.

I suppose…

I dealt with it…

better

after the first year

and each subsequent year

although it was really enjoyable,

it was very,

very challenging

I spent a huge amount of time,

I *probably* overprepared.

I wanted to be as good as it possibly could be.

I started here

There was some anxiety that first year

then there's anxiety at the end of the course,

 you're hoping they do well

when it goes well and they do well

and their feedback on you

and the course

 is great,

 it makes it all worthwhile

The weight

 of

expectation

I put on myself

was quite wearing in that first year

and it still is.

I'm quite a perfectionist,

 I want everything to be absolutely right

I always want to try to improve it,

to enhance it,

to enrich it

and to think;

is there a better source here?

Is there a better article?

Is there a better method of teaching this?

Or facilitating this?

It's that constant restlessness

to do better,

to improve,

and it's a test of oneself,

but you hope that the students benefit from that,

that each iteration of the course is better

than

the

previous

one.

Things are updated because disciplines don't ossify –

or they shouldn't ossify.

We've got to be alert to that,

and that's why this updating is really, really important…

To keep things fresh

and contemporary

and relevant.

The restless need for improvement,

The realization that we can always do better.

We can always tweak and refine:

and I don't mean in a needless way;

if it's not broken, we don't mend it.

But I think there's

always,

always,

room for reflection and evaluation

and

it's that cycle that must feed into teaching.

I've got a very highly developed sense of criticality about my own practice

that I've had from early days of teaching.

I've always been fascinated

by the process

and the skills of an educator.

I've always been fascinated

by what drives us

and what drives me personally to try to be...

outstanding?

I just want to constantly improve,

but I've also found that really enjoyable because

I want new challenges.

I want freshness

and it's just part of

who

I

am.

I suppose it was…

I think teaching is just –

unfinished business –

I absolutely love it.

II.

I don't think you can be a good teacher

without being a good learner.

So, the two are indivisible for me.

Now I have a track record of success, I'm more confident

but

In my teaching I'm still a very harsh critic of myself,

But

I know that I can do the job

and I know I can do it well

and I've got the quantitative measures of that.

I have a track record and I've got fabulous results,

And I've got qualitative validation from

great feedback

module feedback,

peer feedback.

So, I suppose it's from that really.

You might have a subjective sense that

that lesson went well.

that course went well,

but it's important for me to

know

that others

know

that this has gone well

and that can be manifested in exam results or evaluations.

So, it's perhaps me being a bit too needy

and needing this constant validation.

 "Yes, it was good",

"Yes, it was OK".

It is that cyclical process

and it's a never ending one.

I think that's changed me

I get more satisfaction from teaching now

I'm more confident as a teacher

than I've ever been

because

I've got a lot of experience

behind

me.

But you know,

I've got a new challenge this year

because I'm starting teaching PhD

for the first time,

which is really

exciting.

I've got two modules I'm working on with Professor [---]

so that joy of coworking is

lovely

because otherwise it can be quite

isolating.

But I was really lucky;

I did have an exceptionally good mentor.

I think I was fortunate

I learned a lot from her

about

higher education teaching,

about

time management,

about

her relationship with students.

And I've done just the same here

but in a slightly different context.

So, for example,

I draw upon, say, my supervisions with my PhD supervisor,

I often find myself

mirroring that style when I'm talking or working with my students.

I often find myself

using the same sort of words

and the same sort of phrases and approaches.

But that's just come, informally.

There isn't… there isn't a handbook that tells you how to do this.

I think it's a...

noble profession

and I think also it's a

vocation.

I think people that teach

are doing something

extraordinarily special.

Teaching in higher education is

 very enjoyable,

really rewarding,

very enriching.

So, when I came back to do my PhD,

that was always my plan…

that beyond the PhD,

as well as doing some research,

I would try to do some teaching somewhere.

I think teaching is just in my blood.

I absolutely love it.

5.1.2 Pilot Poem II.

"Untitled"

A little bit anxious

A little bit uncertain.

I didn't know what was happening

I was trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together

I was building…

A little bit anxious

A little bit uncertain.

You should be an expert

On anything and everything,

and, and, then suddenly…

You aren't.

Should I be an expert?

Should I?

Am I capable?

No, I wasn't trained as a teacher.

I was trained as a researcher.

It's another learning curve…

I tried to look for answers.

I acknowledged my inexperience at that time,

But I also acknowledged the experience that I had…

Obviously, I was replicating

Some of the things

That I considered that were valuable.

For the students.

I tried to look for answers.

I acknowledged my inexperience at that time

So, I got in touch with

Colleagues.

So, I got in touch with

My tutor.

To look for the answers that I needed.

How do you realize

That you have become a proper teacher?

By the student feedback, right?

I think that's the most important thing, because

Your colleagues are always going to be supportive to you

But

When you get feedback from a student

Saying,

You don't know

How valuable it is

What you have done

And how much we have learned

From you.

So I don't know if I've changed.

Well, or now I have the experience.

It is getting more comfortable with the feeling…

When I experience something that I don't know

What to do

Because it's new,

I know that I can ask for help,

I know that I shouldn't beat myself up

I know that there are ways to...

Transitioning

Turning your own experience,

Your lived experience,

Into your teaching practice

For the students.

For a better world.

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