

READING FROM THE MARGINS:
CONSTRUCTING NORMATIVE STUDENT IDENTITY
THROUGH CURRICULAR LITERATURE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Audrey Jane Barkman Hill

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Audrey Jane Barkman Hill, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, has presented a thesis titled, *Reading From The Margins: Constructing Normative Student Identity Through Curricular Literature*, in an oral examination held on March 29, 2011. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

Informed by postmodern and poststructuralist notions of the ethical subject, this dissertation offers a deconstructive literary analysis framework that cites and maps dominant discourses of modernity assumed in literary text and reproduced in the study of literature. Entirely other than readings offered through traditional, modern literature study practices, a deconstructive reading following the literary analysis framework offered in this dissertation demonstrates how normative subjectivity is constituted as students respond to subjectivities available through curricular text—those that are normative and imbued with power as well as those that are socially marginalized.

Following Michel Foucault's methods of genealogy and archaeology, this study explores how we come to know ourselves. Historical records of a particular site are critiqued to describe a process of establishing cultural hegemony on the Canadian plains through constructing the subjectivities of citizens in ways that support the Anglo-Saxon majority and those who are determined or persuaded to find their place with them. The success of the enterprise both presupposes and establishes political superiority and economic control through the continual marking of identity and difference.

The identity that matters is white, with attending properties that mark one as male, rational-thinking, property-owning and English-speaking. Of the many practices that contribute to citizen-formation, a key component regulating the educational project of whitening the prairie west is the study of curricular literature.

This study develops a methodology for examining emerging subjectivities in novels of the colonizer. Based closely on Foucauldian archaeological theory as laid out in *The Order of Things*, the method of literary analysis described in this study reveals

regulatory discourses at work in the act of producing normative student identities. The usefulness of this method of literary analysis is tested and demonstrated by giving a remarkable, albeit colonizing novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, a new reading—a reading that displays the injurious completeness of what the normative curriculum has set out to do.

More importantly, the reading is an example of how the reading analysis framework offered in this dissertation can be used to give a deconstructive and archaeological reading to any text. Following Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences, the framework asks questions of identity and meaning of the three dimensions of the site of the sciences of man: biology (life), economics (labour) and philology (language). Remembering Foucault's insistence that everything can be thought within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm, the framework asks specific questions about who lives within the system of the text and how the system structures life, who lives under the law or rule and how rule controls life, who lives as a normal member of society and how the norms regulate who lives. Through the open-ended questions of the reading analysis framework proposed in this dissertation, the novels of the colonizer can be made to declare the colonizing process in the here and now.

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DEDICATION

For my parents,

Mary Barkman and John Barkman

“Three things remain—

faith, hope, and love—

and the greatest of these is love.”

(1 Corinthians 13:13)

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1. READING FROM THE MARGINS

1.1 Introduction

“The postmodern takes the form of the self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement,” says Michael Apple in the foreword to Patti Lather’s text *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* (vii), and that being so, this text participates in the postmodern. My hope is that it operates as a personal story both of hegemonic (re)production and of a desire to appropriate and abrogate dominant discourses, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin suggest that postcolonial texts do (*The Empire* 38-39). As I think and write, I pause to consider and acknowledge what Judith Butler has told us: “power pervades the very conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms, including the subject position of the critic” (“Contingent” 6). The telling of my research project forces a linear storyline with a dependable sequence, yet it is rife with tensions, complicities, and contradictions both said and unsaid. Nevertheless, I proceed. I ask of the words pinned to my paper that they articulate why I am attracted to postmodern thought and postcolonial perspectives; how I have followed Michel Foucault to engage poststructuralism in research; and how the method of literary analysis that I have created maps disadvantageous systems of rules and hierarchies of inequalities as they are reproduced in curricular literature used in Canadian classrooms and as they are mirrored in normative, detrimental student identity.

1.2 Panorama

This study presents a panoramic view of postmodern, poststructuralist, and

postcolonial thought, with an emphasis on the deconstructive methods of archaeology and genealogy envisioned by Foucault and by which an analysis of modern power can be made. The focal point of the panorama is a tool for literary analysis which, when used, uncovers the discursive, ongoing construction of student identities in Canadian classrooms in ways which establish, maintain, and consolidate dominant cultural and social structures. While the term “panorama” conjures pleasing vistas, the sweep of this work confronts power and elitism in ways that are anything but pleasant.

1.3 Research focus

This study investigates how novels set as curriculum inscribe high school students as ethical young Canadians in a white-settler society. In situating this research, I follow Foucault to see a curriculum collection—part of an educational system—as a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourses, with the knowledge and powers they bring with them (*The Archaeology* 227). The body of literature chosen for curriculum reflects an elite groups’ definition of what it means to be a Canadian—what values, goals, dreams, concerns, and interests we have as a nation. Snuggled within this national literature lie both an identity and an ethic. Through the interpellation of students by characters in fiction, the study of curricular material has the potential to properly inform and form the developing citizen.

Given that cultural understandings of normativity govern our ethics, as Foucault teaches (*Discipline* 170-227), I create a genealogical study to trace how hegemonic subjectivity was—and is—constructed in a specific locale in Canada’s prairie west. Through the regulatory and disciplinary techniques of public education, subjects are

produced in ways that privilege Anglo-Saxon, liberal, democratic, and capitalist interests. Curricular fare and the micro-practices of schooling establish a normative identity as one that is white, male, English-speaking, able-bodied, and oriented toward the accumulation of private property. The study of literature is central to this process of normalization and to the perpetual and harmful creation of identities that marginalize women and persons of colour.

In a second move, I follow Foucault to create a deconstructive method with which to read curricular literature. Based closely on Foucauldian theory, as laid out in *The Order of Things*, the method of literary analysis offered in this dissertation is able to reveal regulatory discourses at work in the act of producing normative student identities. In this study, I trace how I develop a new method of deconstructive literary analysis, and I test and demonstrate the usefulness of this method of literary analysis by giving a colonizing novel a new reading. The reading I am able to give Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* displays the injurious completeness of what the normative curriculum has set out to do; more importantly, the reading is an example of how the reading analysis framework offered in this dissertation can be used to give a deconstructive reading to any text. Through the open-ended questions of the framework, the novels of the colonizer can be made to declare the colonizing process in the here and now.

1.4 Subjectivity of a Canadian prairie woman

Because this study is concerned with the constitution of subjectivity and entertains a poststructuralist invitation for the author to enter the text, I choose to begin with a reflection of what I take to be my identity. I am a prairie woman who has lived in

many places in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. My father was the owner and general manager of a road construction company, as well as a private pilot. (I am not unaware of the fact that I begin my introduction of self with a reference to the patriarch in my childhood family.) During my preschool years, we lived a transient lifestyle, moving with him to the sites where his company was building stretches of new highways. The pattern of life I first learned was to become immersed in a local community, only to move again a few months later. A particular joy of my childhood was to fly with my father and see the wide vista of the world from a bird's eye view. Ribbons of rivers that wind their way through patchwork quilts, nubby textures of woods, hills, and shadowed valleys, drifting clouds as near as my hand—these elements of panorama are written on my imagination. I understand notions of “discourse” best as systems of possibility for knowledge. The Canadian prairie is part of the discourse of geography/land/place/Canada which has produced me and which I reproduce. The joy I take in panorama and the mapmaking such a view enables speaks to me of the imperialist impulse bred into my bones.

The discourse of place intersects with the discourse of family. I am the great-grand-daughter of Russian Mennonite immigrants to Canada who settled in a farming community near the Red River Valley. I am the oldest of four siblings and it was my fifth birthday that prompted my parents to purchase a home in southeastern Manitoba so that I could begin school in a settled environment; at the same time, they vowed only to speak English in our home, so that their children would become more fluent in the language of schooling. I learned to love the provincial parks near our community—the rolling hills and

woods of the Sandilands and the rock, lakes, and pine forests of the Whiteshell. I now live in southeastern Alberta among the buttes and coulees so common to the Medicine Hat area. Saskatchewan is the productive space between these two homes. As a young adult, I attended the University of Regina to earn a degree in Education, and returned again for graduate study. I still enjoy a pan-prairie existence. Every summer, my family and I travel across Saskatchewan from our home in Alberta to return to a cottage in the Whiteshell.

Inscribed on my heart, the people I love best provide a panorama of family. What started as a small venture—my husband and four small children—has multiplied into an amalgam of many voices, many perspectives, many stories, many lives. I am produced by and perform—fairly enthusiastically—a mothering discourse, which puts me into the centre of the family circle, trying to keep in touch with and meet the needs of those who are mine. The challenge to me is to complicate that discourse, to decentre/marginalize/other myself within the family system. In part, decentring means refusing to be the standard of reference for my grown children and releasing some of the sense of responsibility I feel for them and their children, as well as for the organization and management of family events and rituals that maintain the continuity of close and friendly ties among all of us.

Family life, both in my childhood home and in the one I co-created as a young adult has been/is predicated on the notion of a cohesive individual able to make rational and responsible choices. Dominated by a Judeo-Christian ethos, I was taught—and taught—how to be good. Goodness, in our understanding, meant to be engaged in activities that promoted the well-being of others and our own self-improvement, to be self-controlled in

matters of emotional expression, and to find strength in times of daily stress—and solace in times of existential distress—in the tenets of a Christian faith. If there was some thought that we were individually and collectively being schooled in hegemonic norms and participating in colonizing enterprises through our efforts at being “good,” this awareness was suppressed.

At the same time, even as children, we absorbed social hierarchies that spilled over into our play. As pre-adolescent girls, my sisters and neighbourhood friends discovered the ritual of the maypole in a British school girls’ story, and decided to replicate the festival in the back yard of our family’s prairie home. With some difficulty, we planted a pole—while it seemed very tall to us, it may have been a broom handle—and each girl brought a strip of fabric to tie to the top of the pole; the end was held as we danced and wound the fabric around the maypole. The Queen of the May was to lead the dance; we decided to choose her from among us by secret ballot. To my chagrin, my younger sister was selected. Jealous of her, I used her tawny skin tone to begin a condescending smear campaign, “Let her be the Queen; she needs some special things to happen in her life too; after all, she is an Indian who has been adopted and doesn’t really belong in our family.” That we consciously chose to emulate primordial British traditions, that I chose to use an aboriginal and marginalized identity with which to shame my sister, and that the tactic brought her distress confirms, as Daniel Coleman argues, “the successful interiorization of the Canadian cultural endeavor to formulate and elaborate a specific form of whiteness based on a British model of civility” (28).

Like my mother and many other relatives before me, I chose education as a career.

An educator for thirty years in a practice that stretches across the structure of public education, I have taught elementary classes, junior high language arts, and high school English. I have been positioned as a high school counsellor, a high school vice-principal, and the principal of a Kindergarten to Grade Nine School. These years have made me—bodily and socially—into a teacher. Material effects of the teaching discourse enable me to perform “teacher” in a way that is recognizable and usually validated by the communities in which I have worked. I sense in the telling of these “vital” credential details, the culturally acquired need to establish credibility.

My career as a student has been dominated by the search for “one big answer”—what I have sometimes come to call the OBA. As an undergraduate I had extreme difficulty in choosing a major—should it be Fine Arts? English? Religious Studies? Psychology? Anthropology? Sociology? The phrase OBA was coined for me by a professor during my undergraduate years. On an exam which posed three short essay questions, I asked whether I could combine my response into one big answer. He said I could certainly try—after that, for assignments that required more than one response, he would defer to me and say, “of course, you may try for an OBA.” Looking back, I see this has become a metaphor for my search for cohesive meaning, for a truth that will cover all the contingencies and circumstances of life. This is not, I think, an unfamiliar thing; it is a symptom of our hegemonic discourses—western, colonizing, rational, white, masculinist, progressive discourses that require us to think of ourselves as cohesive and autonomous individuals who are able to make sense rationally of the components of our lives and take control of our circumstances. I wanted a philosophical vantage point vast and

comprehensive enough to encompass—and imbue with meaning—even the most mundane moments of my life, a vantage point so wide that I could see the way ahead and choose with clarity the direction that I would next take. I wanted to be, if not master of the world, at least the master of myself within it.

A similar search has occupied my years as an educator—looking for the bigger pictures, the ones that will finally explain scope and sequence, inter-curricular connections, holistic education, hidden curriculums, seamless school to work transitions, community-based education, and administrative visions for inclusive educational programs and institutions of excellence. When I applied for a doctoral program in education, I recognized that there are many ideological questions that go unasked in the teaching of high school literature. Produced by modern discourses and life circumstances to desire a panoramic view, I wanted the same thing from a doctoral program. I still hold on to a wonderful image of my advisor in our first meeting. When she asked why I wanted to pursue doctoral studies, I told her about the—yes, I knew, naïve—desire to connect the dots, to pull this career in education all together. She put her hands on her knees and laughed a deep belly laugh worthy of a Buddha, and then set me to reading. Postmodern/postcolonial theory has since demonstrated how our desires are discursively produced and how my desire to “pull it all together” could be read as an imperialist instinct. Once I chose to study within the area of Curriculum and Instruction, I sketched the biggest question of which I could conceive in my subject area—what ideological questions go unasked in the teaching of high school literature? In many ways this is still my area of academic interest although the question is now framed differently.

Through reading classes in poststructuralist theory and in curriculum, I began to understand my attraction to postmodern thought. There is a wonderful paradox at the heart of postmodernism and poststructuralism between the universal and the particular—all of our theories and truths, ideologies, beliefs, ways of doing things are stories, and all stories are partial. Claiming not to be a meta-narrative, postmodern thought, nonetheless, insists that all stories are contingent, localized, and partial and that all subject positions are perspectives that are, as Jean-Francois Lyotard puts it, “contingent, situated, and contextual” (34). That all satisfies my search for the big picture, the overarching answer, yet frees me to examine the rich detail of the local and the specific. Poststructuralism questions the meta-narratives through which we know ourselves, and the notion that we are constructed by discourses—power working through language—establishes an ideological field in which to explore. (The easily-used metaphor begs me to notice neocolonialism in my academic pursuit.) Through poststructuralist research, I can now look at particular literary texts, and make explicit the structures of some of the discourses that are at work in and through them, producing identities and subjectivities and contextual worlds.

1.5 Positioning

I accept four notions of postmodernism, summarized by Kevin O’Donnell, that allow me to move ahead with poststructuralist work: grand narratives—of any type—are flawed, incomplete, and privilege some, while marginalizing others; human knowledge is limited to human discourse so we cannot have direct access to reality “out there;” we are constituted and constitute ourselves through iterative and reiterative performances; and

knowledge is produced through power and is always situated, partial, and contingent (8-45).

As a researcher, I work within a feminist poststructuralist methodology. Elizabeth St. Pierre and Wanda Pillow assert that poststructuralism radically foregrounds language, and through deconstruction, offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity (6). A poststructuralist analysis, argues Ursula Kelly in *Schooling Desire: Literacy, Cultural Politics, and Pedagogy*, centres discourse, representation, subject positions, and cultural practices as the focal lenses for the hypertextuality of postmodern life (47). A poststructuralist analysis “shifts attention away from individualism to subjectivity, from text to discursive practices; it focuses on how language works, in whose and what interests, on what cultural sites and why” (Kelly 47). In *A Body of Writing*, Bronwyn Davies advocates doing research through deconstructive methods by which we can view and analyze the ways in which dominant discourses trap us into conventional meanings and modes of being (143). To deconstruct, states Butler, is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question, and perhaps, most importantly, to open up a term to a reusage or redeployment that previously had not been authorized (“Contingent” 15). As such, the methodology is highly congruent with a feminist methodology which St. Pierre and Pillow describe as one that challenges those who claim to speak in authority for others, subverts what counts as truth and knowledge, and works to reclaim and rewrite untold stories, particularly those of women (5). There are areas of tension as well as agreement between feminism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. For example, there is tension between poststructuralist methods of discourse analysis and

postcolonial dedication to social change, but theorists such as Gayatri Spivak and Gyan Prakesh have suggested this tension may be creative and that choosing to combine theoretical approaches has the potential to transform them (Ania Loomba 253). Each of the three theoretical approaches is concerned, in its own way, with an analysis of power; that analysis indicates to me that there are productive possibilities in calling the discourses together in some form of bricolage. The theoretical position that I am taking, then, is to draw on poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial theories to develop a deconstructive understanding of curricular literature used in Canadian classrooms, particularly in Alberta where I live and teach.

1.6 Concepts and definitions

This research relies on concepts such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminisms, postcolonialism, nation-building, curriculum, interpellation, normalization, hegemony, and ethics. While these concepts and terms are elaborated later in this text, specifically in Chapters Two, Four and Five, a brief definition may serve to situate this text within an ideological climate.

1.6.1 *Postmodernism and poststructuralism*

Postmodernism, suggests Steven Connor in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, is an updated version of skepticism, a deployment of philosophy that questions the legitimacy of truth and knowledge claims of grand narratives and undermines the authoritarian imperatives of our culture (21). St. Pierre and Pillow describe postmodernism as skepticism, anti-foundationalism, anti-authoritarianism, and counter-humanism; it is a set of cultural changes brought about by critiques of

colonialism, racism, patriarchy, homophobia, and ageism which is reflected in both popular and high culture (1-5). While postmodernism does not assume that humanism is an error that needs to be replaced and postmodern/poststructuralist theory “has it right,” postmodernism does work against humanism’s authorities and exclusions (St. Pierre and Pillow 5). In *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*, Jane Flax argues that postmodernism opposes such modernist, humanist conceptions as a stable, coherent self; a transparent understanding of language; that reason and philosophy can provide an objective, reliable and universal foundation of knowledge; and that there is a right use of reason or that knowledge acquired from the right use of reason will be true (41-42). In “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism,’” Butler proposes that the term “postmodern” has force in the field of feminist social theory because it seeks to show how philosophy is always implicated in power. The postmodern, says Butler, casts doubt upon the possibility of a “new” that is not in some way already implicated in the “old” (6). All the same, according to Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, self-implicating questioning should allow postmodernist theory to challenge narratives that do presume to “master” status, without necessarily assuming that status for itself (13).

St. Pierre and Pillow say that poststructuralism shares the same orientation as postmodernism but through deconstruction offers methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure (6). Poststructuralism is academic theorizing and critique of discourse, knowledge, truth, reality, rationality, and the subject (6). In “Poststructural Feminism in Education: An Overview,” Elizabeth St. Pierre describes deconstruction as a

poststructuralist and critical practice that looks at how a structure has been constructed, what holds it together, and what it produces (482). Knowledge is never closed and as such, a deconstructive method can be turned on itself and the critic must make room for new concepts, the reconstitution of which, in turn, can be deconstructed (St. Pierre 483). Butler reminds us that there is no position that can place itself beyond the play of power, but that deconstruction is able to call into question and open up terms to redeployment in ways that had previously not been authorized (“Contingent” 6-15). Hutcheon argues that postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminism, and postcolonial theory, while they cannot be conflated, work on a similar methodological plane in which they critique, interrupt and reinscribe normative, hegemonic, and exclusionary ideologies and practices (*A Poetics* x-xiii).

1.6.2 *Feminisms*

Ontologies, methodologies, and epistemologies that displace patriarchy are feminist. Feminism, write St. Pierre and Pillow, is characterized by reclamation and rewriting of untold histories (particularly of women), subversion as to what counts as truth and knowledge, and a challenge to those who claim to speak in authority for others (2-3). In her study *Feminism after Postmodernism: Theorizing Through Practice*, Marysia Zalewski suggests that poststructuralism offers theories to work against the tendency in feminism to generalize from the position of the white, middle-class, western woman and to focus instead on identity categories such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, age, and wellness (55-62). Butler suggests that identities are related to cultural standards, even if they are imposed, because language

permits and constructs some identities, and not others; for example, transsexuals, lesbians, and homosexuals experience a disjuncture between pleasure and their own body parts because the body has been discursively constructed and heterosexuality is the standard to which other identities are placed in opposition (*Gender Trouble* 84-91). Butler questions whether feminist theory requires the category of woman (*Gender Trouble* 324-340). Flax suggests that feminist theory is aligned with both postmodern thought and psychoanalysis, which adhere to multiple truths, knowledge, and notions of the self; as such, Flax sees feminist theories, psychoanalysis, and postmodern philosophies as transitional ways of thinking, apprehending our time in thought, but also offering glimpses of a future that will not be a mere repetition of the past (*Thinking Fragments* 14). In "Feminist Approaches to a Situated Ethics," Pat Usher suggests that feminism is not a method but a perspective that leads us to question the discourses by which our meanings are constructed; she argues for a politics of difference that is local, contextual, and concrete in which a gendered researcher speaks from a particular class and racial, cultural, and ethnic position (28-37). In "Circling the Downspout of Empire," Hutcheon cautions, however, that feminist and postcolonial theory which assert the need to affirm a denied or alienated subjectivity, should question whether the challenge to a coherent, autonomous subject is the luxury of the dominant order which can afford to challenge what it securely possesses (130-31). In contrast, in *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Chris Weedon argues that a key feature to both postmodern and poststructuralist theories is the decentralization of power, and that by adhering to the notions that discourse creates subjectivity and has implications for power, and that power

produces resistance, feminist poststructuralists have created a platform for the political interests of the once-marginalized to be heard (170-81).

1.6.3. *Postcolonial theory*

John Willinsky asserts that at the height of its power, the British imperial enterprise, made up of crown colonies, white dominions, mandates, naval ports, and the Indian raj, spanned roughly a quarter of the globe in population and land mass (2). In “Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse,” Helen Tiffin suggests that three-quarters of the contemporary world has been directly and profoundly affected by imperialist and colonial ventures directed at extending the dominion of Europe around the globe (95).

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define white-settler societies such as Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand as those where land was occupied by European colonists who overwhelmed, dispossessed, and blockaded indigenous populations (1-3). The European invaders established a transplanted civilization which eventually secured political independence while retaining a non-indigenous language; as part of a civilizing mission, European language, literature, and learning were exported to the colonies and a vast wealth of indigenous cultures was suppressed (1-13).

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest that the term “post-colonial” covers all culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day; all postcolonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neocolonial domination, so that postcolonialism remains a continuing process of

resistance and reconstruction (*The Postcolonial* 2-3). In “The Subject and Power,” Foucault tells us that resistance is complicated in that power itself inscribes its resistances, and so, in the process, seeks to contain them (224). Studies of settler colony cultures may be especially useful in addressing the problem of complicity in postcolonial discourse. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest that studies of settler colonies point to the difficulties involved in escaping from hegemonic practices which limit and define the possibility of opposition; at the same time these studies highlight the potential inherent in hybrid processes of self-determination to defy, erode, and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge (*The Empire* 133-35).

1.6.4. *The needs of the nation*

Colonial expansion into the New World shook Old World horizons of understanding. Willinsky describes the unprecedented discoveries of new places, plants, and people that forced a rebuilding of systems of knowledge (22-26). The intellectual “will to know” other worlds and other peoples, explains Willinsky, worked as an ally of economic and political control (26-33). “Knowing other peoples” became the mode by which New World inhabitants were increasingly persuaded to “know” themselves as subordinate to Europe (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire* 1-4)

One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s work shows how the imperial education system installed/installs a standard version of English as the norm in white-settler societies and marginalizes all variants as impurities (*The Empire* 1-9). Benedict Anderson argues that language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is

perpetuated, the nation becomes an imagined political community, and conceptions of truth, order, and reality become established (3-9).

Daniel Coleman explains “fictive ethnicity,” a term developed by Etienne Balibar to describe the way in which a nation represents the narrative of its diverse peoples’ past and future as if they formed a natural community (7). Coleman says that unraveling English Canada’s fictive ethnicity is a historical project of reconsidering Canada’s past as well as the multiculturalism that has occupied centre stage in recent debates over Canadian pluralism, citizenship, and race relations (7). Whatever ideals multiculturalism represents, whiteness continues to occupy the positions of normalcy and privilege in Canada (Coleman 3-45).

1.6.5 *Curriculum*

In her doctoral dissertation “By Virtue of Being White: Racialized Identity Formation and the Implications for Anti-Racist Pedagogy,” Carol Schick explains that elite groups control public discourse through their access to and domination of symbolic and actual communication systems (77). According to Schick, these elite discourses of imagined community articulate an image of what members of the nations imagine and desire themselves to be (78). The collection of resources on an approved curriculum list is an example of an elite discourse. Of particular significance in controlling the production of identity in white-settler societies, as in other postcolonial societies, is the study of English and literature written in English.

The imperial drive and the study of English arose from the same ideological climate, states Willinsky, and the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with

the development of the other (215-20). He claims, “English literature rallied people to the imperial cause” (216). In white-settler societies, we were/are taught to discriminate in both “the most innocent and fateful ways so that we can appreciate the differences between civilized and primitive, West and East, first and third worlds. We become adept at identifying the distinguishing features of this country, that culture, those people” (Willinsky 7). Willinsky questions what comes of having one’s comprehension of the world so directly tied to one’s conquest of it; I question how elite discourses continue to control our comprehension and the production of identity in Canadian society today.

1.6.6 *Interpellation*

The theories of Louis Althusser contained in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” describe how ideology enlists us into a belief system and constitutes us as subjects. We do not recognize our subject positions and come to believe that our beliefs are simply true and not relative because we are interpellated—called, hailed—by a particular ideology (245). Interpellation can be imagined to perform like that of a police officer calling “Hey, you!” on the street; a person walking down the street, so hailed, will respond by turning to the voice of the officer, and so becomes a subject. Advertising is premised on the notions of interpellation; a person who inwardly responds to advertising with the thought, “yes, that’s me you are talking to” has been successfully interpellated (Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer 178). In a similar way, people are hailed by ideology, respond as subjects and so, are subjected or put under the control of ideology. We respond to ideas as if they are addressed individually to us; therefore we claim the ideas as our own and act on the basis of them as true beliefs. Althusser calls ideological

concepts “obviousnesses;” people simply take their ideological assumptions for granted, not questioning what appears to them to be obvious (246).

1.6.7 *Normalization*

Foucault describes the construction of subjectivity/identity through notions of normalization and internal surveillance. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault traces the historical European cultural move from overt surveillance and external discipline of bodies to internalized systems of surveillance (135-227). Foucault postulates that the hegemonic culture has such a claim on power and knowledge that it produces a powerful form of domination in which the individual is disciplined through the process of normalization (184-85). Foucault does not see power as the property of an individual or class, nor as a commodity that can be acquired or seized; rather, power operates through discourses and modes of activity which constitute subjectivity. “Power,” Foucault contends, “produces reality” (194). Normative behaviour, normalizing communications, and the creation of hierarchies of knowledge are made intelligible through a collection of rules, says Ann Stoler (77). In her study of how pre-service teachers make a claim on their whiteness as dominant and innocent in their desire for ideal teacher status, Schick reminds us that it is through repetitive, rule-abiding practices of daily life that citizens perform themselves as natural, proper, and normal—ethical subjects (“By Virtue of Being White: Racialized” 211).

1.6.8 *Ethics*

Perhaps Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony serves best as a picture of ethics at work. In his “Prison Writings 1929-1935,” Gramsci describes hegemony as a concept

which explains how a dominant class maintains control by projecting its own particular way of seeing social reality so successfully that its view is accepted as common sense and as part of the natural order by those who in fact are subordinated to it (364). In *Structural Anthropology*, building on the methods of structural linguistics developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss postulates that things that are meaningless in themselves become meaningful when various signs are set in relationship to one another. In other words, we develop a sense of who we are and the meanings of our behaviour from the places we occupy within kinships or binary relationships (12). On the basis of binary oppositions, such as man/woman, good/evil, white/black, healthy/degenerate, self/other, the hegemonic power operates on us in such a way that we know how to live as respectable and ethical citizens. According to Sheila Dawn Gill, the liberal paradox of our culture is that equality is dependent upon boundaries between normality and abnormality. She identifies the liberal paradox as ontological, “concerned with who is and who is not a true human subject” (167). In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex,’* Butler reminds us that there are implicit norms which mark irregularities, departures, and differences between bodies that matter and abject beings (3).

Laying claims to truth, says Stoler, allows certain knowledges to be disqualified and others to be valorized; this action is central to claiming hegemony, privileged positioning, certified knowledge, and jurisdiction over the manner of living, the governing of children, over the civilities, and the conduct and competencies that prescribe how to live (83). Certified knowledge and the civilities, conduct, and competencies that prescribe how to live become the crux of the official curriculum. Learned in childhood,

reproduced continually, hegemonic practices prescribed by curriculum become the common sense model of morality. Proper behaviour is vigorously enforced by reiterative, normative practice.

1.6.9 *Fracturing the centre*

Theorists—including Homi Bhabha; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin; Ursula Kelly; John Willinsky; Gauri Viswanathan; and Neil McDonald—contend that the study of literature, was/is central to the cultural enterprise of Empire. Taking up the official curriculum, including the study of literature, is both pedagogical—an imagined picture of what has been—and performative—what Schick, following Bhabha, calls a self-generating, living process, a site of writing the national identity and the self (“By Virtue of Being White: Racialized” 89). Students and teachers are participating in a juxtaposition which Bhabha calls a “double inscription in which people are both the objects and the subjects of the nation. It is both on and by them that the nation is narrated” (*Nation and Narration* 292-93). Tiffin says that the double vision of members of white-settler societies establishes an inevitable hybridization, a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology, and the impulse to (re)create local identity; this on-going dialectic between hegemonic centres and peripheral subversions destabilizes systems (95). Efforts to stabilize systems result in the renegotiation of identity boundaries, whether those of the nation or those of the selves who see themselves within the nation. Like any reference point of the dominant culture, like any identity, the official curriculum operates in a socially reproductive capacity but is not static.

According to Jacques Derrida, the sense of a word or a text depends on the ability

to separate it from all the things it does not mean. Consequently, any given word or text evokes and depends on meanings unlike or opposite its own. In fact, each word or text implies the idea of its opposite, and so contains its opposite (7). The sense of the word “efficient,” for example, depends on difference from all that is inefficient; “white” depends on a differentiation from all that is not white. In a similar way, we can say that the centre of an identity is constructed by what is on the margins—defining what it is by what it is not—and therefore, can also be fractured by what occurs on the margins. Careful exploration of a text, Derrida suggests, will reveal “aporias,” absences, cracks, or gaps in the text’s structures where a reader may discover how the text turns on itself and its apparent meanings and reveals its own artifice (48, 158). A deconstructive exploration of curricular texts opens the possibility of determining how curriculum is constructed or manufactured and how the reality, truths, and life lessons conveyed through curriculum are a series of fictions creating a social elite and supported by that social elite.

That fracturing of the centre and renegotiation of boundaries/binaries is possible, is a motivating awareness. I think a deconstruction of curricular texts has the potential, not only to make dominant discourses explicit, but also to disrupt those same structures of dominance. It has the potential to illustrate what discourses/knowledges are marginalized/silenced in order for dominance to hold sway. In reading and writing from the margins, there is always/already a restructuring of hegemonic power/language/knowledge constructs.

1.7 Writing a Canadian identity

What selves are we writing along with our national identity as we study literature

in our school classrooms? How are high school students inscribed as ethical young citizens? I think about the texts I have studied with high school classes in the past. What was I doing? What ethic predominated in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Mosquito Coast*, or *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*? What norms, what markers of identity, what ethics will I find in Canadian curricular literature? How do novels set as curriculum inscribe high school students as ethical young Canadians in a white-settler society? Will a poststructuralist analysis allow me to give well-known novels a new reading? What deconstructive method will enable me to do so?

1.8 Methodology and questions

To engage poststructuralism in research, I follow Foucault, who establishes methods of archaeology and genealogy. Foucault's methods, agree commentators Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow; Robert Arrington; and Michael Peters and Nicholas Burbules, operate on poststructuralist, hermeneutical planes. Through reading Foucault's *The Order of Things*, I am able to assemble my own deconstructive framework for textual analysis which I call "Reading from the Margins", and on the basis of which I have chosen the title of this dissertation. From this point onward, what has been understood as the title of the dissertation will refer to the analytical tool "Reading from the Margins". As pre-trial exercises, I call on deconstructive perspectives to analyze the short story "If Not Higher" by I.L. Peretz, and apply the deconstructive questions from my textual analysis framework to the well-known curricular novel, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding.

Human beings, says Foucault, constitute a symbolic universe for themselves through language (*The Order* 383). In deconstruction, an attempt is made to define the

ways in which people represent words to themselves, use the forms and meanings of words, compose discourse, and reveal and conceal in it what they are thinking or saying, sometimes unknown to themselves. A deconstructive method will investigate what it is that enables a human being to know, or seek to know the answers to these questions: What is life? What is labour? What are laws? In what way am I able to speak (Foucault, *The Order* 380-400)?

Everything, insists Foucault, may be thought within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm. Through his archaeology of the human sciences, Foucault sees that signification and systems, conflict and rules, functions and norms completely cover the domain of what can be known about human beings. In the modern era, with the shift to theoretical models borrowed from language, the second terms—systems, rules, and norms—emerge with greater intensity and importance. Each area provides its own coherence and validity. On the basis of life, labour, and language, human beings are able to present themselves to a possible knowledge of themselves (Foucault, *The Order* 383-400).

Using the notions drawn from my reading of *The Order of Things*, I develop the “Reading from the Margins” framework that follows Foucault’s constituent model of systems, rules, and norms and enables me to look critically at the discourses operating in curricular texts. Through questions on my framework, drawn from my reading of Foucault’s archaeology of the human sciences and through the insights gained in my examination of two pre-trial pieces of literature, I am able to do a close reading of the curricular novel—widely-read in Canadian classrooms—*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper

Lee.

1.9 Arguments and questions of analysis

One strand of the argument developed through this research work is that the deconstructive questions on the “Reading from the Margins” guide can be used to read approved curricular resources as a justification of British imperialism and as a means to perpetuate colonial relationships between a normative, white, rational, masculinist centre and a marginalized, native, feminine or disabled, irrational “other.” Looking particularly at the use of novel studies in the classroom, this study demonstrates that the harmful discourse of colonialism constructs the ethical student as a young Canadian who is white, masculine, rational, physically, mentally, and emotionally abled, and a property-owner. Significantly, and worse than we may have expected, this production is contingent on the subjugation of aboriginals, people of colour, women, the disabled, the natural world, and their knowledges. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that this injurious production is continually occurring despite anti-racist activities in pedagogical circles and in the national community at large, and despite themes of tolerance, inclusion, and acceptance in the curricular novels taken up for student review. Finally, this study not only argues that a poststructuralist analysis of any novel is enabled by the “Reading from the Margins” guide, but also that such a method of reading is able to participate in re-marking identities in emancipatory, albeit contingent, ways. My studies suggest to me that a deconstruction of curricular novels will contribute to feminist and postcolonial interests, and lead to productive conversations about the ethical production of young citizens through the study of literature and about the compelling need to read—and

teach—differently.

There are, of course, many questions to be engaged within the performative acts of research. There is, for example, an irreconcilable tension which Bidy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohany call the search for a secure place from which to speak, within which to act, and the awareness of the price at which secure places are bought (209-10). I understand that I am speaking postmodernism and poststructuralism, yet constructing a framework that insinuates a totalizing scheme (which would be an exercise in positivity and essentialism). At the same time, textual analysis of curricular novels has the potential, as William Pinar suggests, to name gaps in the discourses in which the novels participate and through which students are constructed as proper and ethical citizens—or not. Pinar reminds us to nurture inquiry in the many spaces experienced in a lived curriculum, “(re)conceptualizing the forgotten spaces” (*Understanding Curriculum* xx). As a feminist informed by postcolonial and poststructuralist theory, I am interested in participating in the disruption of systems which install hierarchical structures of power through which standard versions of truth, order, and reality become established and other variants are marginalized as impurities.

1.10 Reflexive considerations

My personal aim in poststructuralist research is to become, as Virginia Woolf suggests, “wide awake” (190). As an educator, I am interested in Apple’s perspective—that of shifting the role of critical intellectual from being a universalizing spokesperson to acting as a cultural worker “whose task is to take away the barriers that prevent people from speaking for themselves” (Introduction ix). As Lather recommends, I want to avoid

becoming the master of truth and justice whose self-appointed task is to uphold reason and reveal the truth to those unable to see or speak it (164). The art I seek is to make, as Allison Jaggar proposes, theory, method, and praxis inseparable (387). How? Perhaps by acknowledging that all readings and the theories, perspectives, and methods that bring them into being are corrigible. The findings of my research are not undeniable truths but changeable social and political constructions. It is postmodern/poststructuralist theory that has made me aware that social relations mediate the construction of knowledge. I hope, however, that through research and telling the story of my research, I will be investing in an educative venture that grapples with polarized thought, makes visible social relations of dominance and so works to interrupt them, and participates in the pursuit of justice, working toward the reinstatement of the marginalized. By learning to read and teach in ways that bring the constitution of subjectivity to the fore, I hope to participate in tracing the ideological lineage that has made of Canada a multicultural nation carried on the shoulders of racism and white supremacy. The call to work toward social justice and to re-story the marginalized in our classrooms and communities requires at least this.

1.11 Organization of this text

I have become uncomfortable with a unilinear story line, yet I am a map-maker and I find that I need a linear plan to order my work. This, then, is the storyline of my research. Chapter One is an introduction in which I pose the questions of subjectivity that have engaged me as I explored postmodern, postcolonial, and poststructuralist theory. In Chapter Two, I explore postmodern and poststructuralist notions of the ethical subject. In

order to demonstrate how these notions of subjectivity lead to different critical insights, I offer a poststructuralist reading of the story “If Not Higher” by I.L. Peretz. Through a deconstructive analysis, this curricular story takes on a tone entirely other than one offered through traditional, modern literature study practices, and demonstrates how a student may respond to underlying messages of available subjectivities—those that are normative and imbued with power, as well as those that are socially marginalized.

In Chapter Three, I look more specifically at how subjectivity works out in practice. Trying to discover what the nation needed citizens to be at various points in the national story, I focus my attention on one specific locale in the Canadian prairie west—my hometown of Medicine Hat, Alberta. Using a Foucauldian genealogical approach, I inquire about and describe the process of establishing cultural hegemony through constructing the subjectivities of the citizens who populated the town and surrounding areas. What was the desire of the nation and what were subjectivities in the midst of that desire?

Chapter Four both narrows the focus by theorizing how literature was part of the nation-making process, and widens the scope of the study by situating the use of literature as a colonizing tool in all white-settler societies, of which Canada is one. That discourses operating through curricular literature are used to discipline, subdue, and inscribe dominant mores on students in identity-making ways, leads me to look for a method of bringing those discourses to the fore of literary study.

To create a poststructuralist tool for deconstructive literary analysis, I follow Foucault’s work in *The Order of Things*. Chapter Five describes how Foucault’s work led

me to conceptualize my own method for textual analysis, “Reading from the Margins”.

I summarize how the analytical framework helped me to recognize the discursive work of the curricular text, *The Lord of the Flies*, producing student subjectivities supportive of colonial/neocolonial cultural and political ends.

Chapters Six and Seven are the centrepieces of this research story because they illustrate in a comprehensive way how a poststructuralist reading of any novel may be undertaken. Using the “Reading from the Margins” textual analysis tool, I devote these chapters to a close reading of the curricular novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. I argue that the novel, claimed by many to be a guidebook demonstrating tolerance and understanding in the midst of complex ethical issues, actually works to construct and normalize damaging social identities and relations and that this perspective is made possible through deconstructive analysis. More specifically, this literary analysis demonstrates how the novel disciplines students to perform an ever more adequate normative white identity, expressly through the surface anti-racist messages of the text.

Following on the findings of the two shorter test cases, the “Reading from the Margins” analysis describes the system of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the rules which maintain the system, and the norms of the text which not only circumscribe how characters of the story will behave, but how students of the text are disciplined by those same norms. The textual analysis makes it clear that in order to be normal, ethical, and good, students must also be white; conversely, students who perform identities that are non-Christian, non-European, female, and black will also be deemed poor, uneducated, unclean, morally suspect, and certainly powerless. What frightens is the dawning

understanding that this method of analysis shows the completeness of what the normative curriculum has set out to accomplish.

Chapter Eight concludes the work of this research by supporting Ted Aoki's notion of the "re." Those of us who have been marked as acceptable members of white-settler societies, as citizens who maintain Eurocentric structures of power and privilege, can be re-marked differently, not just once, but again and again. How we read is of paramount importance to the reworking of subjectivity. I contend that as a method of reading that makes apparent, and works to interrupt, the deliberate—and continued—role of curricular literature to construct damaging, normative subjectivities, "Reading from the Margins" offers a way of redrawing identity even through the study of works that have become classics of our society.

2. POSTMODERN AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST NOTIONS OF THE ETHICAL SUBJECT

2.1 Introduction

Angel of mercy whisk me away
Sweep me into tomorrow so that this
day is done.
We'd be finished with goodbye hearts
already broken not
used to the lonely but one day along.
(Vance Gilbert qtd. in Farley 143)

The interest in how novels set as curriculum inscribe students as ethical young Canadians in a white-settler society—set out in Chapter One—requires an understanding of subjectivity. Postmodern and poststructuralist notions of the ethical subject bring to the fore a vision of productive power working to construct students as proper citizens. The reader will see that the proper and normative construction, the subjectivity of choice in modern liberal humanistic systems, is a white racialized identity.

I place—one on each side of me—two texts. To my right is *The Heath Introduction to Literature*; for many teaching years it was a Bible of sorts, an anthology of short stories and poetry that provides the foundation and organizing principle upon which and around which my plan for Grade 12 literature classes depended. Because it was published in Canada in 1980, I expect that *The Heath Introduction to Literature* and the works within it will be premised on a modernist epistemology, the system of knowledge that became dominant in the nineteenth century and continues to be dominant into the twenty-first century. It is my expectation that both as individual pieces of literature and as a collection, this text assumes the rational humanist subject of Enlightenment thought in which the ethical subject is produced as a white, masculine, middle class, liberal-minded

citizen oriented toward progress.¹

To my left is another “text.” While there is a literal stack of books and papers placed at my elbow to which I will refer as I write, the text of which I am speaking is the discourse of postmodern/poststructuralist theory. For the purposes of this chapter, I conflate postmodernism and poststructuralism because I think as theoretical orientations they share a postfoundational position to “regimes of truth that have failed us” (St. Pierre and Pillow 1).

Poststructuralism specifically contests the totalizing theory of systems offered by structuralism and, against this orderly picture of the world, offers a view of difference rather than similarity as a defining characteristic in the workings of systems.² As previewed in Chapter One, postmodernism specifically contests the grand narratives of modernism, and against beliefs in progress, originality and the power of reason, offers a view of skepticism, anti-foundationalism, anti-authoritarianism, and counter-humanism.³ St. Pierre and Pillow contend that because postmodernism calls into question the universality of any theory/structure/narrative, it works in concert with poststructuralism in deconstructing and critiquing the functions and effects of theories/structures/narratives (6). Specifically, postmodern and poststructuralist thought allows us to see that all of our theories, structures, beliefs, logics, methods, ways of doing things, observations,

¹ For more information on the modern ethical subject, see Bhabha, “The Other Question” 23; Mohanty 259-263; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 85-86, 355-57; Butler, “Contingent” 10-16; Di Stefano 63-83; Kelly 23-27; Natoli 13-15; St. Pierre 478-506; St. Pierre and Pillow 1-6; Tanesini 36-64; Willinsky 235-40; Coleman, 3-35; and Apple, *Educating* 6-17.

² For further information on poststructuralism, see Alcoff 434-57; Davies 21-144; Derrida; Di Stefano 63-83; Lather; Peters and Burbules; Schick, “By Virtue of Being White: Resistance”; Sim; and St. Pierre and Pillow.

³ For more information on postmodernism, see Benhabib 107-32; Flax, *Thinking Fragments* 39-62; Flax, “Postmodern”; Lather; Lyotard; Natoli 3-171; Sim; and St. Pierre and Pillow.

objectivities, subjectivities, and identities are narratives, and that all narratives are partial, contingent to context, and culturally produced.⁴

Of interest to me are the narratives of subjectivity and identity; specifically, I am interested in how literature, as a part of the structure of curriculum, participates in the construction of student identity as it produces notions of the ethical subject. As I trace the postmodern and poststructuralist notions of the production of the ethical subject in the theoretical text to my left, I turn to the curricular literary resource on my right for examples to illustrate that theory of knowledge at work. In particular, I take note of the notion of the production/construction/performativity of the ethical subject and look for examples of this production in terms of patriarchy and whiteness.

Examining how subjectivity is established is one of the main purposes of this thesis. While introduced in Chapter One, this chapter more fully traces notions of hegemony, interpellation, surveillance, normalization, productive power, bio-power, identity, positioning, agency, and contingency by which an understanding of subjectivity is made possible. The work this chapter performs within the context of this thesis is to acknowledge curricular literature and literary pedagogy as regulatory techniques participating in the constitution and reconstitution of self-production. This recognition is made available by exploring the short story “If Not Higher” by I.L. Peretz in terms of the theories of subjectivity emphasized in the chapter and so, uncovering hegemonic norms in the act of positioning students in relation to the social order and producing them as normative subjects. Within this thesis, describing how a traditional study of Peretz’s short

⁴ For further information, see Butler, “Contingent Foundations” 3-19; Butler, *Gender Trouble* 324-40; Flax, *Postmodernism* 39-62; Foucault, *Order of Things*; Kelly; Kumashiro, *Against Common Sense* 3-12; Lather; Lyotard; Sim; St. Pierre and Pillow; St. Pierre 477-515; and Weedon, 12-42, 170-81.

story works to produce normative subjects poses the beginning of an understanding of how resistant, deconstructive readings of literature complicate and loosen the oppressive rigidity of binary productions of the reading/writing subject.

Snapshot 1

I stand at the door as they come in from the hall, a habit that has been established since I was a novice. “Stand right in the doorway,” I was told, “so that you physically have to move to let each one into the room. It sends the subliminal message that you’re in charge; they are entering your space.” By now, the ritual is second nature. I greet each one, chat with some, call the stragglers, and with a wave of my hand, shepherd them in. They saunter to their desks, hang book bags on the backs of chairs, and make shuffling noises as they search for pens and paper. The curtain rises, our production today, as every day in this classroom is an iteration of a binary norm with/in which we have been inscribed as oppositional and complementary terms. They turn their eyes to me ... students. I get ready to perform ... teacher.

2.2 The panopticon

Gramsci’s theories of hegemony and Althusser’s theories of interpellation, set out in Chapter One, as well as Foucault’s theories of normalization can all be seen, at least partially, as attempts to explain how ideology can be imposed on the mass of the population without recourse to force. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault turns to Jeremy Bentham’s plan of the panopticon to provide a concrete and paradigmatic example of the continuous, disciplinary, anonymous power required for the process of normalization (196-98). Designed by Bentham as a prison, the panopticon consists of a large courtyard with a tower in the centre. Buildings on the periphery of the courtyard are divided into cells. Each cell has two windows—one brings in light; the other faces the central tower. The tower has large observatory windows that allow for the surveillance of each cell. The cells operate like “small theatres in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized

and constantly visible” (197).

The inmate is always visible to the supervisor. However, the inmate cannot see whether or not the supervisor is in the tower, so she/he must behave as if surveillance is constant, unending, and total. Power is always operative because the prisoner, not knowing when or if she/he is being observed, becomes her/his own supervisor. Those who occupy the central position in the tower are also enmeshed in the local organization; their behaviour and positionality is fixed and regulated by the structure of the panopticon (195-228).

The figure of the panopticon brings together notions of knowledge, power, control of the body, and control of space into an integrated technology of discipline. Whenever individuals or populations are set into a grid where they can be made observable and productive, panoptic technology is at work. Dreyfus and Rabinow explain that panoptic power does not have a deep, hidden meaning; its function is to increase control (*Michel Foucault* 68). The mechanism through which power operates could be said to be neutral; power is exercised, not held. The tendency, then, is for power to be depersonalized, diffused, relational and anonymous, while at the same time totalizing more and more dimensions of social life (68-70).

It is in this “space of domination,” explains Foucault, that “disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects” (*Discipline* 216). Through constant observation, all those subject to control are arranged, examined, and documented. Dossiers are compiled. In doing so, the “accumulation of individual documentation in a systematic ordering makes possible the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the

calculation of gaps between individuals, their distribution in a given population” (Foucault, *Discipline* 219). Dreyfus and Rabinow explain that on the basis of the information gathered, averages can be deduced and human beings can be analyzed and rated on a statistical scale that ranges from normal to abnormal (*Michel Foucault* 72-79). And so, the concept of an objectified, analyzed, and fixed individual is constructed. The power/ knowledge nexus of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment produces the effect or object which we call an individual (72-76).

Snapshot 2

There are three hundred students crouched over desks, hunched over papers, row upon row upon row. It's so quiet we are startled when the proverbial pencil hits the floor. Teachers sit at tables at the front of the examination hall, watching, waiting for the papers to be returned to piles under signs marked with subject, class and section. A small stir in one corner—no talking, just unsettled movements. Walking nearer, we know why—the stench of unclean feet, unwashed socks. Paroling the aisles, we cross-check with each other. Yes, he's the one. The smell is disconcerting, disruptive to the ones who need to concentrate. To knowing half-smiles from those around him, we tap him on the shoulder: c'mon let's go.

2.3 Normalization

Foucault demonstrates that a government which utilizes a panoptic strategy of surveillance depends, not on authoritarianism, but on normalization: the concept of a normal individual (*Discipline* 216-27). The panoptic arrangement provides a formula for imposing a standard of normalization as the only acceptable way of life. Normalization technologies operate in almost identical ways to the panoptic structure.

Foucault teaches that power operates through discourses and modes of activity through which subjects are constituted as effects of power and become their own overseers. An epistemological field is made intelligible through a collection of rules that

construct normative behaviour, normalizing communications and the creation of hierarchies of knowledges (Foucault, *Discipline* 232-40). Commenting on Foucault's theories, Dreyfus and Rabinow stress that normalization operates through the creation of abnormalities—that which is marginal—which must then be treated and reformed (*Michel Foucault* 84-98). The normal social arrangement has an intrinsic validity and by determining what counts as a problem to be solved and what counts as a solution, normalizing technologies continually extend their range of prediction and control. Dreyfus and Rabinow explain that preserving an increasingly differentiated set of anomalies is the very way that normalization extends its power into wider and wider domains of human experience (84-98).

Butler reminds us that a norm operates within social practices as the implicit standard of normalization ("The Question" 206). When they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, norms usually remain embedded, difficult to read, and discernible most clearly in the effects that they produce (206). What it means to be outside of the norm poses a paradox, for to be outside the norm is still in some sense to be defined in relation to it. For example, says Butler, to be not quite masculine or not quite feminine is still to be understood exclusively in terms of one's relationship to the quite masculine and the quite feminine (*Gender Trouble* 10). Thus a discourse that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field performs a regulatory operation of power, naturalizing the hegemonic instance, foreclosing the thinkability of its disruption. A norm is a regulatory ideal; it is the point of reference—unspoken, abstract, and speculative—by which human activity orients itself and which, in turn, supplies human activity with its sense of givenness and intelligibility.

Our identities, such as gender identity, are complexly produced through identificatory and performative practices (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 17).

Butler explains that the hegemonic nature of norms are such that they govern intelligible life; when we defy normalization, it “is unclear whether we are still living, or ought to be” (“The Question” 206). Women and men, for example, exist as social norms, as do white people and people of colour; the reality of these categories is produced as an effect of normative performance. The double truth, says Butler, is that we need norms in order to live well, even to know in what direction to transform our social world; yet, we are also constrained by norms in ways that sometimes do violence to us and that, for reasons of social justice, we must oppose (“The Question” 206). Our best normative aspirations have to do with the ability to live and breathe and move and belong somewhere within a philosophy of freedom, yet Butler reminds us that the thought of the possible is an indulgence only for those who already know themselves to be intelligible (i.e., normalized) and therefore human and possible (“The Question” 219).

2.4 Productive power

To understand the materiality of power, it is necessary to go to the level of micropractices—everyday routines, everyday discourse. Specifically, when normalizing disciplinary techniques find localization within specific institutions—for example: family, school, curriculum—power becomes truly effective. The hegemonic power operates on us in such a way that we know how to live as respectable and ethical citizens; this understanding is dependent on the construction of binary oppositions. Schick explains that the middle class process of respectability depends entirely on the construction of binaries such as healthy/degenerate, disciplined/undisciplined, self/other (“By Virtue of

Being White: Racialized” 209). In order to claim hegemony, those who aspire to middle class respectability disqualify certain knowledges and valorize others, and in order to be considered normal, repudiate certain performances of identity and reward others. Further, Schick contends that “proper behavior is vigorously enforced by reiterative, normative practice” (211). Learned in childhood, reproduced continually, hegemonic practices not only prescribe how to live, they become our understandings of right and wrong—the common sense model of morality and ethics.

It is in this sense that power is productive. Dreyfus and Rabinow comment that we are all enmeshed in a general matrix of force whose disciplinary techniques establish codes of normality, proper behaviour and common sense which structure social life (*Michel Foucault* 89). Taking up these codes of normality, human beings are constructed or produced as normative, proper, ethical subjects and in their everyday actions, humans perform themselves as proper and ethical. Dominant individuals are as much the effects of this multidimensional flow of power as are the dominated.

2.5 Bio-power

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler argues that the liberal paradox of modern, democratic, western culture is that equality is dependent upon boundaries between normality and abnormality. Inherent norms mark irregularities, departures, and differences between bodies that matter and abject beings (6). Our gender identities, for example, are not truths that are somehow given, undeniable and interior to the body; they are points of registry on a normative scale that is culturally and ideologically produced. Abnormal gender performances are marked in order to more clearly define those that are normal. Normal constructions and performances of identity are dependent on the

abjection of constructions and performances that are abnormal. Anthony Farley declares that the structure of the hegemonic system depends on marginalized human beings in order to construct those who are dominant and central to the system; for those who live within the hegemonic structure and (re)produce it, dominance and marginality just seem to happen naturally because the rules of exclusion are hidden from view (98).

Snapshot 3

“Please don’t make me read aloud,” she asked me in hushed tones at the end of class. “The guys all look at me; they say things under their breath when I stand up.” She has been caught in the male gaze, just as a person of color is caught in a racist gaze. I want to go back—I want to change my practices. An anti-oppressive pedagogy averts the gaze from the racist/sexist object to the racist/sexist subject (Toni Morrison 90).

Following Foucault, we recognize that discourses are bodies of knowledge that are taken as “truth” and through which we see the world. In an interview with Paul Rabinow, Foucault states, “Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint ... each society has its regime of truth ... the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true” (72-73). We set out and identify discourses of race or gender that establish what it means to be a specific race or gender but we do so as if these were natural and/or self-evident. Stuart Hall reminds us that by conceiving of race or gender in a particular way, race or gender comes to exist in that form; race and gender categories are convenient fictions that serve to legitimate social hierarchies (“The Multicultural Question” 5).

Current ways of thinking and understanding colour spaces of socialized lives and experiences. Racial differences are achieved through sets of contrasts so that the act of positioning black as “other” or as “having race” constructs the subjectivity of white, even

though white is not marked as a racial identity. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon calls this action epidermalisation (11)—what Hall describes as the writing of difference on the skin of the other (“The Multicultural Question” 5). Since whiteness is the privileged social position established by imperial interests in white-settler societies, markers of race are used to shore up the project of empire; white postcolonialists seek to discover what they have been taught to deny through the mechanisms of privilege. By ignoring our own (white) race, those of us who are white continue to perpetuate whiteness as the centre and by extension, to marginalize people of colour. White does not occur naturally at the centre of society and black does not occur fortuitously at the margins of society but these are placed, positioned, as the consequence of a set of quite specific political, cultural and subjective processes which regulate, govern, and normalize the discursive spaces of society and the identities of its citizens.

Norms are inscribed on the human being either in psychological inscription or bodily inscription. Perhaps these two ways of thinking about inscription are compatible and part of the same process. Elizabeth Grosz explains that the notion of psychological inscription focuses on how the body is experienced and made meaningful; the notion of inscription on the “lived body” focuses on how the body itself is marked, scarred, transformed, and written upon or constructed by various regimes of institutional, discursive, and nondiscursive power (21-33).

Grosz describes how civilization carves meanings onto and out of bodies (26). Performing hegemonic norms, the body is variously adorned with colours, feathers, mud, piercings, jewelry, tattoos, clothing, hairstyles, etc. The body is manipulated by norms of diet, exercise, and “life-style” and normative ideological constructions such as debt are

ultimately expiated by flesh and blood (Grosz 26). Helene Cixous explains that material possessions, living spaces and work all function to mark the subject's body as deeply as any physical incision, binding individuals to systems of significance in which they become signs to be read by others and themselves ('*Coming to Writing*' 1-4). Bodies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become coded with and as signs. Grosz tells us that bodies speak social narratives; laws, norms, and ideals are incarnated (28-33). By laying bare the process of normalization, Foucault demonstrates how the disciplinary technology of power/knowledge produces useful, docile bodies (*Discipline* 135-169).

There is a paradoxical relationship between self and other. A normative production of self is performed in opposition to what is other, yet the other is needed to realize and define the norm. In "The Poetics of Colorlined Space," Farley suggests that oppressors need an other in order to imagine themselves as elite: "Blackness is a necessity for whites. Without the spectacle of black inferiority, whites cannot maintain their whiteness" (132). There is a sense in which the two terms of a binary opposition contain each other and are implicated in the other even while the privilege of the hegemonic centre is maintained through the repudiation of the other. In a manner of speaking, subjects are soiled in contacts with the other because normative performance is called into question. For that reason, Stoler explains, our society is marked by an endless striving toward wholeness, self-justification, and innocence (35). Fears of the degradation of whiteness, for example, find their location in disciplinary techniques that focus at the level of the individual and operate as biopolitical technologies of "incessant purification" (Stoler 35). Hegemonic calls to cleanse and purify the social body by efforts that differentiate in terms of race or class lead to acquired habits of individual self-control

such as maintaining personal cleanliness, using clean speech or being punctual.

Reinforced by the normative gaze of others, these every-day practices have the effect of nurturing and maintaining categories of otherness as in racism (Stoler 35). Bio-power is a form of government that works at once to both totalize and individualize.

2.6 Subjectivity and identity

The notion of subjectivity, says Kelly, is opposed to the modern notion of the individual (rational, believed to be capable of full consciousness), but it is attentive to both the unconscious and conscious in the constitution of identity (20-27). As human beings, Davies explains, we constitute a narrative of ourselves as beings of specificity (22-24), occupying both the position of subject and object in our narratives of self. The subject is constituted within discourse and cultural practice (St. Pierre 500-505).

To recognize ourselves as subjects of a narrative history who are also parts of others' stories requires an ability to "read and interpret the landscape of the social world and to embody, to live, to experience, to know, to desire as one's own, to take pleasure in the world, as it is made knowable through the available practices, and in particular the discursive practices, the patterns of power and powerlessness and one's positioning within them" (Davies 22). Following Althusser's notions of obviousness, Davies explains that correct membership in the hegemonic order entails being able to read situations correctly and to (re)produce the norms in such a way that what is obvious to others is obvious to you (22-23).

At the same time, one is aware of being both same and different in relation to discursive categories (Davies 26-29), capable of occupying multiple, sometimes contradictory subject positions within regulatory but never fully closed systems (Kelly,

25-29). The self, then, is recognized as a process of becoming (Davies 27-31; Butler, “Contingent” 13), of being competent and taking pleasure within the terms of a discourse, and at the same time “vulnerable to the discourses through which it is being spoken and speaks itself into existence” (Davies 26). The narrative of identity, who we take ourselves to be, is always in a state of flux, always caught up in iterative and (re)constitutive practices, and can never be concluded or ever fully known or told.

2.7 Situatedness and positioning

Each person is situated in a social context in which his or her notions and perspectives appear obvious and through which, and by which, that person performs normative ideological codes. At the same time, a person inhabits many discursive categories. Davies explains that positioning oneself is a way of recognizing how human beings perceive themselves in relation to various discursive categories, seen conceptually as elements of oppositional binary pairs (23-29). For example, one may see oneself positioned as an adult (not a child), as a teacher (not a student), as a woman (not a man), as a person of colour (not white). Making sense of one’s subjectivity is an identity-making exercise; it means judging how one is positioned both within and in opposition to a binary opposite, and also judging how one is seen both from inside the assigned (or chosen) category and how one is seen from the position of the binary opposite (Davies 23-29; Butler, “Contingent” 12-14).

In her article “Five Faces of Oppression,” Iris Marion Young explains, “Cultural imperialism consists in the universalization of one group’s experience and culture and its establishment of the norm” (59). The dominant cultural products of the society express the experience, values, goals, and achievements of the groups that produce them;

simultaneously, the representations and expressions of marginalized groups are repressed. Young emphasizes that the “dominant groups and their cultural expressions are the normal, the universal and thereby unremarkable” (59). A form of oppression under cultural imperialism involves “the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible at the same time that one is marked out and noticed as different” (60).

For those who are oppressed, a seductive thought is the thought of exceeding the norm, which Butler calls “the thought of the possible” (“The Question” 35). Exceeding the norm, becoming “other,” she says, may rework the norm and make us realize how “realities” to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone. But exceeding the norm comes at a cost, and paradoxically, to think of the possible may not be possible (Butler, “The Question” 35). To think of the possible one must be intelligible, which in our hegemonic system, is to say real or human. The totality of the hegemonic order is such that even that which falls outside of the range of normality is still defined in relationship to it. For example, bisexuality or homosexuality bear identification as non-normative sexual identities and practices because they are defined in relation to the heteronormativity constructed through dominant discourses. To exceed the norm, then, would mean to be unintelligible and therefore, not real, and to have that label institutionalized as a form of differential treatment is to become utterly the “other” against which the human itself is measured (Butler, “The Question” 36).

2.8 Agency and contingency

While some might conclude that the subject is predetermined, Butler argues that the agency of the subject lies precisely in its ongoing constitution as neither a ground, nor a product, but as the “permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process”

(“Contingent” 13). St. Pierre and Pillow point out that Derrida talked of loosening categories, not implying the liquidation of the subject but rather “a subject that can be interpreted, re-stored, re-inscribed” (Derrida qtd. in St. Pierre and Pillow 8).

Our productions of self are contingent—that is, they are dependent on the play of diverse signifying systems and regulatory techniques, which perpetually work to constitute and reconstitute our subjectivities. Within the norms perpetuated by the hegemonic society, the ethical subject, too, is produced as good, proper, and right, an understanding of the self that is contingent on the abjection of others who are bad, improper, and wrong.

2.9 Curricular literature as a regulatory technique

Curriculum is an example of an elite discourse, representing the ideology of a dominant class. Elite groups control public discourse through their access to and domination of symbolic and actual communication systems, and so are a major influence peculiar to each nation for articulating, what Benedict Anderson calls an “imagined community,” an image of what, in our case, Canadians imagine and desire themselves to be (6).

Homi Bhabha and Toni Morrison agree that the literature chosen for study in public schools is part of a body of national literature which describes and inscribes what is on the national mind (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 1-9, 291-300; Morrison 12-16). Through the study of literature, students and teachers engage in pedagogical and performative actions that accomplish them simultaneously as both the objects and the subjects of the nation, effectively writing both the national identity and themselves (*Nation and Narration* 293).

In turning to curricular literature, then, I am looking for a pedagogical picture—a construction of hegemonic norms—and for the implications of that construction on the production of an ethical or normative student reader. Terry Eagleton says that every reading is a writing (128-38). Reader-response theories describe reading as a “‘transaction’, a ‘reading event’ or an ‘exchange’ between text and reader” (Nodelman and Reimer 219). Roland Barthes says that the sign is always a matter of historical and cultural convention (127-50). Ideological criticism, notes Eagleton, understands that a text achieves coherence by its dependence on cultural meanings (43). Through a poststructuralist understanding, the reading/writing of the text performs an identity which the reader/writer (re)produces in the self.

2.10 “If Not Higher”

I turn to the first short story in the Heath anthology, “If Not Higher” by I.L. Peretz, a story smooth and polished in the telling, and rich in interpretive possibilities. The reader quickly becomes aware that the story is set in the fictional village of Nemirov in an undisclosed country and that the villagers follow an Orthodox Jewish way of life. The action of the plot hinges on the mysterious disappearance of the rabbi every Friday morning during the time of Penitential Prayers. Thinking particularly about patriarchy and whiteness, I ask myself what norms are established in this story that would operate as internal mechanisms of surveillance.

The rabbi is a man of authority, revered by the community. Even though the doors to his home stand open while he is absent, “no one would steal from the rabbi” (Peretz 18). The opinion that the townspeople have of the rabbi is so high that, when the mystery of his disappearance every Friday morning cannot be solved, the townspeople conclude

that he must go to heaven. A Litvak, also male, an expert in Talmudic law, hides under the rabbi's bed so that he may secretly follow the rabbi to wherever he disappears on Friday morning. Already this story establishes several norms—the imagination of the community is controlled by male religious figures. They are figures of authority and action generating respect and wonder.

The Litvak follows a disguised rabbi through the woods the following Friday morning, where the rabbi chops wood, gathers it, and returns to a back street of the village. Knocking on a “small broken-down shack,” he is answered by the “frightened voice” of a “sick Jewish woman” (19). The rabbi offers to sell his wood to the woman—very cheaply, for six cents—saying that she may trust a great and mighty God to provide this amount of money for her. “Not waiting for the woman's reply,” the rabbi goes into her home and sets and lights a fire (20). She, lying in a “poor room with broken, miserable furnishings,” “wrapped in rags” complains bitterly and is condescendingly called a “foolish one” by the rabbi (20). Throughout the act of charity, the rabbi recites the Penitential Prayer “joyously;” the Litvak, who observes this exchange, becomes a disciple of the rabbi and does not reveal his secret, suggesting to the townspeople that the rabbi does go to heaven on Friday mornings, “if not higher” (20).

The characterization of the woman is at every point in binary opposition to the rabbi who is included with her in the narrative. Where he is strong, she is weak; where he is physically active, she is confined to bed; where he is confidently invasive, she is frightened; where he is authoritative, she is foolish; where he has material goods, she has none; where he has the means to give, she does not have the means to refuse; where he gives, she becomes further indebted; where he is joyous, she is bitter; where he has faith,

she has none. He is the savior; she, the saved.

Clearly, this story establishes the norm of the male as dominant—administratively, spiritually, intellectually, and physically. The authoritative male in this story is seen as a spiritual father and he operates as a patriarch in relationship to the woman, whom he cares for, patronizingly, in her weakness, poverty, and foolishness. That his secret is not exposed establishes the norm that even the law, metaphorically present in the Litvak, cannot or will not destroy the mysterious authority and nearness to God of the alpha male.

But something more subtle is going on in this story as well. Not only is the woman in every point drawn as inferior to man, she is also positioned as the abject other against whom the rabbi, in particular, is able to express his identity. Her sad state is required to bring him joy. The woman's poverty—materially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually—is required for the realization and expression of the man's wealth. Her marginality is essential to the structure of the narrative, for the structure of life within the narrative, and for the central position of the man in that structure.

It is significant, of course, that the rabbi is performing an act of penitence through the "charitable" act of bringing wood to the woman and setting the fire in her home. It is humiliating for him to be in her presence, to step down from the highest position in the village to the lowest. The humiliation of serving the woman provides the penitence he needs to regain a sense of forgiveness, innocence, goodness, and joy. Metaphorically, the burning wood symbolizes sacrifice and the absolution that it procures. However, the sacrifice has not been made once for all time. The Penitential Prayers are offered weekly and sacrifice will need to be made again to obtain a sense of cleanliness and goodness.

Through the figure of metonymy, the woman is the wood. The incessant requirement of purification for the rabbi, for the dominant male, will require the continual sacrifice of the woman.

2.11 Constructing the norm

For the reader of this short story, the norm of patriarchy is established at conscious and unconscious levels. It is implicit to the story that men organize social life, are the primary players in it, and accrue the benefits of it. In fact, we almost forget to question whether the rabbi or the Litvak are men or women, because they are unmarked as belonging to either category. The hegemonic norms are so well established that we simply assume they are male. If we look for evidence that the religious and legal leader of the community are men, we find it only through the eventual use of the pronoun “he.” There is obviousness to the positioning of men and women in this story that goes unremarked until the inferred characteristics of these binary oppositions are listed.

The two men, taken together, are imbued with characteristics which can be read as the norms of masculinity—authoritative, strong, healthy, confident, wealthy, intelligent, educated, liberal, devout, faithful, joyful, knowing. Similarly, the one woman in the story is imbued with characteristics that can be read as the norms of femininity—weak, fearful, foolish, poor, uncertain, bitter, despairing, and ungrateful. Making patriarchal norms explicit can cause discomfort because normative subjectivities are thrown into question.

2.12 Producing the ethical subject

“As enacted disciplinary practices—practices that by design and effect regulate, domesticate and discipline notions of desire—literacy curriculum and pedagogy position student-subjects to read and to write the world in specific ways” (Kelly 11). The study of

literature and the pedagogical moves with which the study of literature is undertaken are powerful institutionalized practices which compete with or complement other discursive practices to position students in relation to the social order and to produce them “as subjects desiring specific forms of life” (Kelly 11)—forms of life which they take on and perform. We learn to desire some things and not others; we learn to “be” some things and not others. Pedagogical practices work to domesticate students (Lankshear and McLaren qtd. in Kelly 63), to cause them to adapt (Giroux qtd. in Kelly 24) to hegemonic norms, and to construct them as productive, easily-controlled bodies (Foucault, *Discipline* 138).

The ethical student, as produced through the story “If Not Higher,” desires the privileges—“the patriarchal dividend” (Knuttila 78)—and ideal type characteristics couched in the representation of the two males. As a regulatory discourse, the narrative produces the good, proper, and right student as male, a shade of white, liberal-minded, and religiously devout. I suggest, however, that a white female reader is ambiguously positioned by the story. Recognizing, desiring, and produced by the norms of/in the narrative, a white female reader must, however, negotiate the alterity of the woman with whom, to some degree, she will probably identify. In her production/performance of the hegemonic norm, she may take pleasure in her whiteness, her generosity, and her faith while experiencing powerlessness as a woman. Similarly, a male student of colour may experience ambiguity and oppression in constituting an identity with/in this discursive production. Performing hegemonic masculinity, he may experience himself simultaneously invisible as a person of colour. For female students of colour, I speculate that the process of subject construction with/in this narrative is doubly convoluted, negotiating powerlessness as a woman as well as invisibility as a person of colour.

Complicating this production, different gender relations are implicated for students who are not heterosexual.

There are further questions to be considered in the production of an ethical subject. What other social and discursive practices are available for hegemonic productions of white/coloured and male/female? As Schick asks, what passes for acceptable performance as a dominant white male (“By Virtue of Being White: Racialized” 322-44)? What social and discursive practices are available to disrupt productions of dominant white male?

Kelly explains that postmodern and poststructuralist theories (informed by postcolonialism and feminism) make visible the notion of the rational, unified, and individualistic language user/meaning maker and the processes by which this production occurs (15-20). In so doing, they not only disrupt the docility of subjects, but insert a discourse which speaks the subject as never fully known or knowing, one who is “pre-spoken in contradictory ways, by broadly based language systems that constitute the subject in multiple, imprecise and conflicting ways” (Kelly 15).

Resistant readings of cultural and literary texts may have the potential to complicate the contingencies through which subjectivity is produced and loosen the oppressive rigidity of binary constructions/productions/performances. A deconstructive reading of “If Not Higher,” for example, recognizes that patriarchy is established through the paradoxical presence of the woman as both expendable and essential. The humanist goal of personal moral development is seen to be contingent on the abjection of the woman. A deconstructive reading also makes it possible to recognize that by analyzing stories in terms of man/ woman, white/coloured, we are reproducing the very hegemonic

system and binary constructions which we seek to disrupt. Schick explains how the unstable and precarious nature of class, race, and gender hierarchies give rise to hierarchies of whiteness (“By Virtue of Being White: Racialized” 320). Minor differences among ethnic groups have historically played a role in distinguishing shades of whiteness; subjects also shore up their claims to whiteness and innocence by drawing comparisons between themselves and others who are perceived as white (321). The notion of shades of whiteness and colonizing implications could be further problematized in the story “If Not Higher”.

2.13 “If Not Higher”– further considerations

From the standpoint of feminist and postcolonial theory, it is necessary to re-evaluate the agency of the woman and the performance of shades of whiteness in the story, “If Not Higher.” In the article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak raises our awareness about the virtual impossibility of speech for the subaltern within ideological structures that marginalize her. Silence becomes the unbearable violence perpetuated toward the other (Morrison 22-23). At the same time both Benita Parry and Toni Morrison ask us to notice not only the imposition of silence on those who are subjugated, but also the occasions of resistance, the times when silence is broken (Parry 36-44; Morrison 70-78). That the subaltern speaks, claims a view, and inserts a self into the oppressor’s space and consciousness at all, can be read as a self-constituting act of spectacular aggression.

The story concludes with the unequivocal understanding that the two dominant males in the community—the religious leader and the legal expert—are the ones who know. The reader, positioned as a white male, is also one who knows. But none of them are

telling. The woman, by contrast, does not know, but significantly, she is the one who opens rather than closes dialogue in the story. She asks questions.

Despite her subjugation and the querulous tone with which she is characterized, the impoverished woman asks eight questions of the rabbi. She questions his identity, “Who is there?” and to his evasive answer “I,” questions more assertively, “Who is I?” (Peretz 20). She questions his purpose with her, “What do you want?” and her economic standing in the community, “How can I buy? Where will a poor woman get money?” (20). It is only when she admits her helplessness before him, “And who will kindle the fire? Have I the strength to get up?” that the rabbi moves from the position of offering wood for sale to the “service” of kindling the fire (20).

As a subjugated and marginalized woman, there is both poignancy and possibility in her question: “Have I the strength to get up?” (20). Despite her resistant questioning and her non-acquiescence to the knock on the door, however, both men invade her home and proceed with the plans they have willed, leaving her in even greater debt. The Litvak’s rebellion, on the other hand, is rewarded; despite scheming to undermine the rabbi’s authority, he is also redeemed through the experience with the woman and raised to a position in the village where he is identified with the rabbi. But, of course, he is male.

The characters in this story are white, and “we know because nobody says so” (Morrison 72). Yet the understanding that the characters in this story are probably eastern European, and Jewish, makes them ambiguously white. For the reader, positioned as white and male, as with most Eurocentric literature,⁵ this creates at least a hint of the

⁵ For more information on Eurocentric literature, see Morrison and bell hooks.

oriental,⁶ an effect which both reinforces whiteness as a subjective position of power and increases excitement in the vicarious experience of the other and so, gives pleasure. The narrative voice acts as a guide in this story, leading the reader through an alien landscape. As the plot unfolds, the narrator offers snippets of cultural information: Hebrew vocabulary—“minyan,” “Gemarah”—and idiomatic commentary—“Satan of the thousand eyes,” “it sticks in your eyes,” “Go argue with a Litvak!” and “long life to him” (Peretz 18-19). Metaphorically a colonizer, the reader is made able, through the assistance of an interpreter, to capture the sights and sounds of this new land; guided through the narrative plot, the reader even gauges the spiritual pulse of the new world’s strange inhabitants.

I look again at the anthology crammed with narratives to investigate: “The Lottery,” a settler story with no indigenous people and ending with the ritual murder of a mother in exchange for a bumper crop; “Young Goodman Brown” who takes a fearful evil journey into the primal forest and thinks he sees “a devilish Indian behind each tree” (Hawthorne 36); and “Celebration,” a story of an alcoholic couple on welfare whose neglected children freeze to death in a snowstorm. But what else might be discovered about these stories through a deconstructive reading and how might the reading/writing of the text impact the production of my students as ethical citizens?

2.14 Who am I?

The reference points of the dominant culture, such as curriculum and pedagogical practices, operate in socially reproductive capacities but neither the reference points nor the subjectivities produced are static. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said tells us that identities are semi-mythical constructs, remade countless times by power acting through an

⁶ For a detailed analysis of Orientalism, see Edward Said.

expedient form of knowledge (xviii). Having consciousness, always being driven by the demands of the unconscious, and perpetually in a process of construction in language, the subject is a site of perpetual contradiction and change. “We have been living at a masqued ball,” exclaims Farley, “what we think of as our identity is a schooled set of notions” (121).

Snapshot 4

I’m sitting on a wooden chair in my bedroom; I’ve been here for an hour—it isn’t even comfortable now that I stop to think about it. I had intended just to bring this book down from the shelf, but I got lost somewhere between *The Chrysanthemums* and *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. I want to see them all, these stories, to run my fingertips across the pages, to taste the words, sweet or bitter, on my tongue—“wire-thin” and “pliant,” “public warmth” and “raw black mountainside.”

What desire do I bring to the text? How implicated in a performance of whiteness are these desires to explore, to know, to order, to master, to be wooed by and indulged by words? How colonizing? Is the pleasure that I take in literary reconfigurations part of a perpetual drive for newness, hence innocence? Am I resisting patriarchy in any way? The privileges of whiteness? Or am I appropriating authority through a control of literature? Enacting it through the privilege of reading? How implicated in class and race is my ability to access the training of the academy, to access literature at all?

Through reflection as I read and write and through the comments of my academic advisors, I have become aware at various points in the process of writing this thesis, of the discursive moves that send me looking for a redemption narrative. If our identities are schooled sets of notions, runs the internal monologue, then how can schooling be changed so that our identities are no longer marked by patriarchy and racism? Scrambling for answers, for ways of doing it right, I collect bits of theoretical wisdom: privileging marginalized knowledges; working from borderline positions; embracing contradiction; poking holes in the constructs of self; writing ourselves into our work; practicing daily

resistances in micro-practices; performing body art; deconstructing; doing collage, montage and bricolage; asking questions; and resisting the final word. I would dearly like to stitch these theoretical bits into a comprehensive blanket, a new and more equitable approach to the schooling of identity. I am faced with the probability that I am looking for a benevolent white redeemer, located within my white self (Schick, "By Virtue of Being White: Racialized" 319).

As a white woman working with theories of subjectivity, I need to be continually aware of processes that offer to procure purification and justification. The desire for innocence leads to a fervent wish for knowledge that—speaking euphemistically—will set us free. What I am led to recognize again is that knowledge is always interested. Foucault declares that "the 'will to knowledge' in our culture is simultaneously part of the danger and a tool to combat that danger" (qtd. in Rabinow 7).

Knowledge production is impossible to look at without situatedness; there is no space of innocence—no way to do it right. Accordingly, in "Studying Across Difference: Race, Class and Gender in Qualitative Research," Margaret Anderson reflects, "I am reminded of the humility with which I need to work. I cannot assume the role of expert and I need to be willing to talk about my life as a woman and as a white person" (51).

In the midst of the codes, messages and images that produce and reproduce our lives, codes which we, in turn, produce and reproduce, the search for meaning is endlessly deferred. Butler states that we can allow ourselves to feel uncertain, dissatisfied, doubtful, and insecure—these are places where possibilities reside ("Contingent" 15-17). Writing about the colour line, Farley states, "We want to believe that it is possible to mend our broken hearts; what if one bright day we suddenly

overcame? The question itself is incoherent because it assumes that we are somehow separate from the world, that somehow the world is less broken than our hearts” (144).

An elemental part of word and world, constituted in the turbulence of discursive clouds, now thundering, now sighing, seeking freedom in the interstice from breath to breath, this is a fragile self I am constructing—thin as rice paper, perverse as the last, red, hard crabapple that will not disengage the winter tree, delicate as a dying yellow leaf caught up in the wind.

There is an elusive sense of something more, unknown and unsayable. It is in this way that I understand that we are freer than we may know (Foucault qtd. in Rux Martin 9). Infinitely contradictory, infinitely fragile, “infinitely suffering things” (T.S. Eliot 51), we turn to the other and ask the question for which there is no answer: “Who are you?”

2.15 Bringing home a field of events and the constituted subject

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of postmodern and poststructuralist thought regarding how human beings are made subjects. I have explained how the hegemonic order operates on human beings in such a way as to make a mode of being obvious; how the subject is objectified by processes of division such as surveillance either within the self or from others; how power relations operate through discursive practices and regulatory techniques to produce the concept and effects of normative individuals; and how human beings perform themselves as intelligible and normative through reiterative meaning-making routines and activities. In this chapter, I have begun to show how literature operates as a regulatory technique, participating in the construction of student identity as it produces notions of the ethical subject; and how resistant readings may work to interrupt rigid binary relationships and so, complicate the

production of normative subjectivity.

In the next chapter, I look specifically at how white subjectivity is established in a particular place over the course of a particular time. Foucault calls the attempt to locate historically and analyze the strands of discourse and practices dealing with the subject, knowledge, and power “the genealogy of the modern subject” (qtd. in Rabinow 7).

Bringing theories of subjectification home, I trace how normative white selves were, and are, constituted and reconstituted through the play of signifying systems and regulatory techniques in my home town of Medicine Hat, Alberta, and how this production works to establish cultural hegemony in the Canadian West.

3. A FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGY: ESTABLISHING CULTURAL HEGEMONY IN MEDICINE HAT

3.1 Introduction

How is subjectivity established in practice, particularly white subjectivity? Or more specifically, how is white subjectivity established in Medicine Hat, Alberta, as a particular place in Western Canada, and currently, my home? In Chapter Two, I suggested, in alignment with postmodern and poststructuralist thought, that our productions of self are dependent on the play of diverse signifying systems and regulatory techniques which perpetually work to constitute and reconstitute our subjectivities. The process of normalization acquires potency when disciplinary techniques are at work in institutions such as the family, the school, and the curriculum. This chapter moves from theoretical notions of subjectivity to a genealogical exploration of subjectivity at work in a specific locale during a specific time in history.

A Foucauldian genealogy is an attempt to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework (Foucault qtd. in Rabinow 59). In this genealogy, I follow traces of the imperial drive and civilizing mission in western Canada and the shaping of a white-settler community in Medicine Hat, Alberta, giving special attention to the panoptic power of public education at work constructing subjects suitable to the colonial imperative. I have used a technique of pastiche, borrowing elements of historical records, critiquing them and fusing them into a storyline of my own making. As a result, this chapter is intended to operate, not as a “transparent continuum of events” (Alfred Lopez 22), but as a narrative—a story I am telling of the discourses in the Canadian West and specifically Medicine Hat, Alberta that

function to produce normative subjectivity in the service of colonial whiteness. In the context of the thesis as a whole, this chapter serves to illustrate the kind of individuality imposed on Canadian citizens and to locate that construction within local communities, educational institutions and curricular demands.

3.2 The battle ground

Cultural hegemony was established in the prairie west through the development of normative identity. The battle was not fought on the wide sweep of grasslands or on the buttes and in the coulees and riverbeds that ran through them. It was fought in the minds and hearts of those who came to live here—the Anglo-Saxon majority and those who were determined or persuaded to find their place with them. The success of the enterprise both presupposed and established political superiority and economic control through the continual, and continued, marking of identity and difference.

The racial identity that mattered, quite simply, was white, with attending properties that marked one as male, rational-thinking, property-owning, and English-speaking. The great fear that disciplined the settlers who came to call the west home was that they would be seen as—and discover themselves to be—not white, or not white or respectable enough. The educational project of the prairie west was, and is, one of whitening.

In his preface to *Postcolonial Whiteness*, Alfred Lopez defines whiteness as a signifier of global hegemony and imperialism (x). “Whiteness,” says Lopez, “is that which would simultaneously recast everything else in its own image and banish the scene of the recasting into an originary myth” (5). Associated with privilege and power, whiteness functions in colonial interests and has historically used its normative power

and the ideology of white superiority to suppress, de-possess, marginalize, or murder its others (Lopez 22). Even in the postcolonial moment, says Richard Dyer, the state of being visibly white remains “a passport to privilege” (44). The privileges of being visibly white, however, have always come at the expense of those who are not.

To accomplish the educational project of whitening on the Canadian prairies, it became necessary to clearly mark the boundaries of what was not white, what was abjectly the other. One could only know and establish whiteness by establishing characteristics separate from, and superior to, that which was not white. Identities were produced through boundary markers such as dirt, which came to stand in as a sign of otherness. Dirt in its representation of the other became a fetish in which to be brown was to be dirty; to be dirty was to be brown. What was unclean and undisciplined, while exotic and capable of exciting desire, anxiety and fear, had to be repudiated. A continual cleansing was required and systematic habits of clean living inculcated. The resulting morality of individual character, if never perfect or complete, was mirrored in community development and procured a bourgeois social order on the Canadian plains.

3.3 Evading the indigenous presence

Morrison reminds us that literary journeys into the forbidden space of blackness often leave us with figurations of impenetrable whiteness—white snow, white curtains of mist—images of whiteness that are mute, unfathomable, frozen, veiled, curtained, implacable (33). After studying the displacement of Blackfoot and Cree tribes from the Medicine Hat valley and the settlement of Anglo-Saxon and European immigrants in their place, I wanted to write about identity construction from a local historical perspective. I wrote forty difficult pages, before I became conscious, through a re-reading

of Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, about how I was evading the indigenous presence in my own work. I originally invested my writing energy for this chapter in creative descriptions of the snow-covered plains, and in textual performances about my current ownership of the land interlaced with a romantic reconstruction of Blackfoot life in the past.

Morrison suggests that images of blinding whiteness seem to function as “both antidote for and meditation on the shadow that is companion to this whiteness—a dark and abiding presence that moves hearts and texts . . . with fear and longing” (33). She also reminds us to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject (90). My academic explorations gather identity for me as a white woman through the availability of a historical and literary indigenous presence. That it takes temerity to face that haunting presence speaks to the complex and contradictory ways in which we are disciplined in the formation of normative moral identity.

3.4 The imperial drive in the Medicine Hat valley

The imperial drive in the “new world” was carried forward by the educational project of (re)establishing Eurocentric identity and marking difference. On the Canadian plains where I now make my home, Blackfoot, Blood and Peigan tribes followed a nomadic buffalo-hunting lifestyle, as did their rivals, the Plains Cree. In the mid-sixteenth century, the first of the Europeans arrived on the plains. These were explorers—Henday, Mackenzie, Thompson—who were interested in the fur trade and were scouting Rupert's Land for the Northwest or Hudson's Bay Company. A significant imperial action that accompanied this invasion, and educated the invaders, was a witnessing and positioning of indigenous people as “other” to themselves (Willinsky 55).

“They had straight black hair, high cheekbones and copper-coloured skin,” wrote Senator Gershaw about the Blackfoot Indians near Medicine Hat (32). Blackfoot children were “uncommonly attractive,” recorded one ethnographer, while “the appearance of both sexes usually suffered” in old age with “a peculiar scrutinous characteristic in the glance. Add to this an increasing disregard of personal appearance, which became a matter of no earthly moment to an old Indian woman long past the period of usefulness and the picture is not an attractive one”, says Kenneth Kidd (21). Impressions recorded in colonial explorers’ journals delivered indigenous people to the imagination of other imperial subjects as exotic in appearance, following a primitive lifestyle, and lacking in basic morality exemplified by lack of cleanliness. Both materially and morally, these witnesses asserted, indigenous people of the plains were different from white Europeans.

Ironically, says J. W. Morrow, descriptions of nomadic indigenous people were also accompanied by reports of the prairie west as uninhabited land—“The Great Lone Land” (L. Butler qtd. in Morrow 6) or “The Great Uncharted Wilderness” (Palliser qtd. in Gershaw 11). Early explorers coined descriptions which drew the land as waiting to be known, to be mapped and charted, and to be taken and tamed through European settlement. Thinking of the west as empty land may have made invasion easier, but the practicality of establishing settlements was a much different matter; indigenous tribes claimed territorial rights over tracts of land based on alliances and treaties with other indigenous groups. The land surrounding the Medicine Hat valley, for example, a corridor along the South Saskatchewan River that was “black with buffalo,” was divided for hunting purposes between the Blackfoot and the Plains Cree (Morrow 23).

From the perspective of the European colonists, the need to establish physical

boundaries to separate themselves from the indigenous “other” was clear. To facilitate settlement of the Canadian West, the government looked for opportunities to extinguish Indian title to the land.

In Blackfoot winter counts, say Sarah Carter, Dorothy First Rider, Walter Hildebrandt and Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council, 1877 was the year when the winter was open and cold. There was great hunger, even starvation, and the long rains did not come (8). Contact with European newcomers had brought diseases against which the people had no immunity. Hugh Dempsey records that the 1837 epidemic of smallpox alone had wiped out two-thirds of the Blackfoot nation (6). The introduction of liquor and the subsequent illegal whiskey trade through the Cypress Hills had resulted in much misery and hardship. Prized for their hides and seen as wildlife to be cleared from the land to open the way for ranching and farming, buffalo were relentlessly hunted to the point of near extinction by 1874.

In 1874, too, the Dominion Government directed the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) to move into Blackfoot territory with the mandate to control the illegal whiskey trade from the United States and to bring order to the areas that were being opened for settlement (Dempsey 14). “Our mission is to plant the rule of British freedom here, restrain the lawless savage and protect the pioneer” rang the words of a NWMP song (qtd. in Gershaw 54). With the NWMP establishing posts throughout the region, with the buffalo gone and with their own populations greatly diminished, most Blackfoot and Cree groups met with government commissioners at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877 and signed Treaty 7. The treaty agreement established indigenous hunting rights, reserved sections of land for indigenous settlement and guaranteed provisions for ammunition, basic food

stuffs, education, and medicine in exchange for title to the land (Carter et al. 18).

Treaty 7 opened the way for Métis hunters who had come from Red River to the Medicine Hat valley in the 1860s, to divide the land adjoining the South Saskatchewan River into seigniorial lots. Following the buffalo in summer, Métis families settled on their lots in one-room hibernants in winter. A few years later, in 1882, youthful white entrepreneurial squatters from eastern Canada gathered in tents in the valley to await the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). In quick measure, government surveyors overturned the Métis system of land division and resurveyed the land in the valley according to the British grid system. Large tracts were set aside for CPR development while other lots and sections were offered for sale to the general public (*Permanent Gallery*).

As explorers, fur-traders, missionaries, squatters, policemen and railway workers moved into the prairie west, so did the ideology of the Anglo-Saxon majority. Under the imperial project, the indigenous “other” was positioned as a subordinate class separated from Eurocentric realms of value and esteem, and therefore, in need of reform. Thus began the missions to educate the unknowing and convert the heathen (Willinsky 89). Methodist missionaries were advance soldiers in the then self-evidently humane and just battle to “civilize” native peoples through the inculcation of Christian beliefs and values. Nick Kach and Kas Mazurek describe how Wesleyan Methodists sent Robert Rundle to Fort Edmonton in 1840, proclaiming “a brighter day” for the “Red men of the far West” (Owen qtd. in Kach and Mazurek 16). Rundle was followed shortly after, in 1842, by a Roman Catholic missionary—Jean-Baptiste Thibault—who established a mission at Lac Sainte Anne, says John Chalmers (10). In 1885, Harry Stocken, an Anglican, arrived at

Blackfoot Crossing, near Medicine Hat, at a place now called Gleichen (Stocken iii). The Anglican crusade under the Church Missionary Society intended “to establish schools for Indian children ... as a means of converting the natives and as a centre for the propagation of Christianity” (Stocken iii).

These missionary objectives were compatible with the economic priorities of first, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and later, the political, cultural and economic priorities of the Dominion of Canada. The first government policy for education in what is now known as the province of Alberta made explicit the role of the church in the surveillance of new communities, the civilizing of Indians, and the disciplining of fur-traders, their Indian wives and Métis children. For the purpose of “moral and religious improvement,” divine services were to be held every Sunday to which “every man, woman and child resident will be required to attend, together with any of the Indians who may be at hand” (Oliver qtd. in Chalmers 7). Women and children were to be given “regular and useful occupation ... best calculated to suppress vicious and promote virtuous habits” (Chalmers 7). Perhaps most importantly, the indigenous language was to be discouraged; conversations and instructions were to be conducted in the European vernacular of the missionary, whether in English or French (Chalmers 7).

After Treaty 7 was signed, the Indian Agency system and North West Mounted Police patrols worked to keep Indians on reservations and out of the way of settlers. Through the surveillance of Indian Agents, and federal policies like the Home Farm Plan, the Peasant Farm Policy, Work for Rations, and the Pass System (S. Carter 103-24), the Dominion Government sought for overt control of the racialized “other.” Native industrial schools, modeled as reformatories, betrayed a mixture of contempt and fear as

they enforced the separation of Indian children from their families, the adoption of English as the only language of communication, and the training of aboriginal students for service to the white population as domestic workers and farm labourers (Carter et al. 22).

3.5 Shaping a white-settler community

The dark boundaries of the Indian reserves gave shape to the developing white community of Medicine Hat. The Assiniboine were moved to a small section southeast of Medicine Hat, Treaty 6 placed the Cree north of the new development, Treaty 7 established the Siksika (Blackfoot) nation northwest, while the Blood, Peigan, Sarcee, Stoney and other nations settled on reservations to the southwest (Dempsey 5-63). The core of the new Medicine Hat village was situated on the south side of the river where CPR men and their families and the newly arrived merchants who served them, selected lots.

For the first few years after 1883, as the railway was being brought into the valley and a bridge built to cross the river, the settlement was a tent town. The European newcomers set up their residences in tents along the river and all business was conducted out of tents or boxcars. Ed Gould says that the tents of the newcomers were interspersed with the tents of the Cree who had chosen not to move onto reserve land, the difference being that “one was referred to as a tent, the other as a teepee” (Bomford qtd. in Gould 54). “I used to feel sorry for some of the children,” said an early pioneer, “Once when I was invited to visit their camp, I saw a child dying. The teepee was filled with smoke and there was no fresh air. Many of them died from tuberculosis” (Stewart qtd. in Gould 36). The misunderstanding implicit in this description, or the concealment of the knowledge

that the Europeans had brought the tuberculosis virus with them when they arrived on the plains, makes the resulting self-righteous pity seem valid and natural.

Early townspeople belittled the native tribes, rejecting their claim to the land and downplaying their contributions in helping newcomers adjust to the frontier. In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison cites categories articulated by James Snead that delineate a normative recipe for domination (Morrison 66-67); these were helpful to me in tracing whiteness in this genealogical study. In *Medicine Hat*, separating strategies against difference worked to maintain racial purification and loss of identity. Women declared that they were frightened by Indians who peeked through the windows of their homes in the evening, and entered houses and tents without knocking (Stewart qtd. in Gould 35-36). The records collected by David Jones, C. Wilson, L.J. Roy and Donny White report that CPR men said they were slowed in their work by ever-present Blackfoot and Cree spectators, who not only got in the way of the railway workers, but also frequently stole tools and supplies. "The redman is the only curse hanging over the prosperity and growth of the North West Territories," grumbled the *Medicine Hat Times'* editor in April 1887: "That the government should allow them to run rife over the whole county when they could easily be restricted to a reservation is an insult" (qtd. in Jones et al. 26).

The unease and distaste settlers described when they were in the presence of aboriginal people turned to a fear that was palpable during the 1884-85 North West Rebellion. Louis Riel, whose provisional government had secured minority rights and the formation of the province of Manitoba, had returned from exile at the request of Red River residents to again protect western Canada's interests against those of the Dominion government. The movement led by Riel, and supported by the Métis, Sioux, Cree, and

Assiniboine tribes, erupted in violence in Northern Saskatchewan. When Riel's forces sought the support of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the settlers in the Medicine Hat valley were sure that the balance of power would shift to the indigenous tribes and that the whites would be completely wiped out (Gershaw 31). For a period of several weeks, they feared for their lives. A CPR engine was kept "fired up" day and night ready to take women and children out of the area if the rebels came (Gershaw 31). Residents went to bed with their guns beside them. Trenches were dug on the hillsides and watchmen were on duty day and night ready to give the alarm in case the terrible disaster occurred. Children were whisked away from windows and hidden in cellars if an indigenous person came near. Chief Crowfoot of the Blackfoot, however, assured Indian agents and missionaries that he would remain loyal "to the Queen" (Gershaw 31); the rebellion ended quickly with the arrest and subsequent hanging of Riel in Regina.

Whether the fear felt by these early settlers was justified is a matter of speculation. Local records tell of the 1873 Cypress Hills Massacre when American wolf trappers retaliated against a group of Assiniboine who had stolen their horses. After an ambush and shoot-out, thirty-five Indians and one white man lay dead (Gould 16-17). In the Medicine Hat area, NWMP Constable Graburn was ambushed and murdered; a Blood Indian named Starchild was charged but acquitted of the crime (Gould 16). Feared Indian attacks on the railway construction crews took the form of barricades and blockades in which teepees were set up on land surveyed for the building of the CPR (Gould 22-23). There were documented cases of horse thievery—a common practice between warring tribes—before the NWMP enforced the livestock property rights of settlers. Significantly, fear of the indigenous presence added incentive to the extension of the railway (Gould

21-41), to the campaign to flood the plains with more European settlers, and to the consolidation of Dominion rule on the prairies.

In the 1880s, Medicine Hat quickly became known as a rough and ready frontier town. In June of 1883, the rail bed was laid, with difficulty, to the river and the tent town mushroomed, with hotels, general stores, and barbershops catering to crowds of big time spenders. The town's many saloons openly flouted Prohibition laws and served drinks around the clock to CPR men, fur traders, gold rush prospectors, whiskey smugglers, prostitutes, and cowboys.¹ A favorite practice was lassoing passersby to come into the hotel to buy drinks (Gould 47-66; Jones et al. 2-3). The occasional gunfight lit up the streets (Gould 59). A weekly stagecoach ran to Fort MacLeod and steamboats plied between Coalbanks (later called Lethbridge) and Medicine Hat. Indian tom-toms kept settlers awake and all-night dances were held in the boxcar that served as an immigration hall.

The resistant band of resident Cree moved their camping grounds across the CPR tracks to an area known as "the flats" (Morrow 46). Here, at the periphery of the new settlement, Cree riders initiated the first community rodeos. Bucking horse contests, horse races, gambling, and the illegal drinking that went with it—50 cents for a dipperful of whiskey of dubious quality—became common Sunday entertainment (Morrow 46).

Derision of those whose physical characteristics marked them as a subordinate class was overt. Chinese immigrants from the Manchu Dynasty wore braids to acknowledge their allegiance to the Emperor. In Medicine Hat, they suffered abuse from racist tormentors and drunks who pulled their braids or snipped them off; these confrontations sometimes ended in bloodshed (Gould 60). Avoiding the citizenry became

¹ For more information, see Gershaw; Gould; and Morrow.

a method of defense for these early Chinese immigrants who worked in cafes and hand laundries where they remained “out of sight and out of mind” (Gould 60).

“Remittance Men” were second sons of English parents who sent them off to the colonies because there was not enough money in the family purse to launch them on careers in Britain². There was usually enough money, however, to keep them away from home and support was sent in the form of monthly remittances. Many of the local “Remittance Men” established relationships with Cree or Métis women, and it was said that, if money was slow in coming from home, the men would threaten to bring their new wives and families back to England; money from home was usually quick in coming (Gould 67-69). Local judgment rendered these immigrants as gamblers and drinkers who lived, between social outings, in unclean shacks on squatter’s land. While deemed bookish and good at horse racing, they were also seen as lazy and inept and were frequently the butt of public jokes (Gould 67-69).

Similarly, the first waves of European immigrants who arrived in town in the late 1880s and early 1890s were looked on as “unmixed” (Gould 47). The editor of the *Medicine Hat Times* spoke for the community when he called the immigrants from eastern Europe a “motley” crew of “outlandish nationalities and equivocal sects” which were “hardly the stuff out of which a strong, sound patriotic community is made” (qtd. in Gould 47).

In the 1880s, at least two-thirds of the residents in town had barns filled with pigs, cows, chickens, and horses. Every morning cattle were herded down the streets to the prairie before being herded home again at night. The beasts fertilized the boardwalks, the streets, the lawns—the town reeked like a feedlot (Jones et al. 2-3). The laundryman,

² For more detailed information, see Morrow and Gould.

derogatorily called a “washee washee,” slopped his dirty water in the thoroughfares where it mixed with “loathsome, foul-smelling accumulations of filth” like bones, decaying vegetables, ashes, old boots, and cans (Jones et al. 3).

While not altogether lawless because of the presence of the Northwest Mounted Police, Medicine Hat gained a reputation as a wild town. A story circulated and recorded in the early years told of an itinerant evangelist who met a teamster driving an ox-train and tried to use this opportunity to spread the gospel. “Mister, do you know how to get to heaven?” he asked the driver of the wagon. After a few seconds of silence the driver replied, “If that’s where you want to git to, mister, you’re headed for Medicine Hat, and you can take it from me, you sure as hell are headed the wrong way!” (qtd. in Gould 64-65).

Overt strategies of spatial and conceptual separation from the other did not have the efficacy to bring order to the turmoil of new communities like Medicine Hat and to establish a bourgeois hegemony on the plains. However, the machinations of normalization (Foucault, *Discipline* 183), which would structure “the conditions of rule into the selves of the ruled” (Bruce Curtis 366), were already in the works.

3.6 Education for nationalism

The development of the school system in the Canadian West reveals one of the most undisguised attempts to use formal education for nationalistic purposes (McDonald, “Canadian” 121). The basic structure of the system was shaped in the decade of turmoil and disunity that followed the execution of Louis Riel in Regina, a period which coincided with the numerical and political ascendancy of English-speaking Protestants in the North West (McDonald, “Canadian” 121).

In England, during the period between 1780 and 1830, “abstract forms of property [came] to be ... normalized as a new moral code of individualized character” (Corrigan and Sayer qtd. in Curtis 366). Participating in international contemporary thought, educational reforms in Canada West were structured around the notion of a moral discipline of the working class. By 1867, the belief that early political learning influenced adult behavior was conventional wisdom. “Education,” wrote Ontario’s Superintendent of Education, Egerton Ryerson, “is the chief element in forming the mind and heart of an individual” (qtd. in McDonald, “Canadianization” 93). The new Anglo elite in the prairie west looked to the Ontario model to construct formal education to be used for nationalistic purposes (McDonald, “Canadianization” 93-103) in the form of a moral revolution of the working class (Curtis 366).

In Ontario, Ryerson framed educational reforms for state schooling as a common curriculum, a common pedagogy, and a common Christianity (Curtis 101-32). Similarly, in the west, the ideal of the new Anglo majority was of a homogeneous nation founded on a common language and cultural background, an appreciation of British institutions, identification with the Empire, and a pride in the so-called Anglo Saxon race (McDonald, “Canadian” 121). “A common school and a common language will produce that homogeneous citizenship so necessary in the development of the greater Canada lying west of the Lakes,” proclaimed the Superintendent of Schools for the North-West Territories (Goggin qtd. in McDonald, “Canadian” 142). Education was meant to “inculcate forms of self which would then be natural; social life would simply become education in action” (Curtis 377).

Educating the population of the prairie west was a project of panoptic power,

which imposed standards of normalization for the only acceptable ways to live. Power operated through the discourse of “Canadianization,” a pseudonym for the Eurocentric humanism which was the prevalent ideology of the Anglo-Saxon settlers. Collections of rules constructed normative behavior, normalizing communications, and the creation of hierarchies of knowledges (Foucault, *Discipline* 180-85). Through the construction of routines and rituals of obedience, subjects were constituted as effects of power and became their own overseers (Foucault, *Discipline* 195-227).

The initial legislation that provided formal schooling in the North-West was passed by the federally appointed North-West Council in 1884. For a few years—from 1884 to 1892—schooling on the plains was a dual-confession system operating under a Board of Education that was divided into two sections—one for Protestant education, the other for Roman Catholic (McDonald, “Canadian” 122; Chalmers 13-14). In 1891, responsible government in the form of an elected Assembly was introduced to the North-West Territories. By 1892, the North-West Assembly, decidedly favoring English-speaking Protestants, brought schools completely under central control granting state control of finances, curriculum, teacher certification, textbooks, and inspection (McDonald, “Canadian” 122). The Chairman of the North-West Executive Committee, Frederick Haultain, opposed separate schools for English-speaking Protestants and French-speaking Roman Catholics. In his view, the North-West was intended to be an “English-speaking country” and “the function and mission of schools was to mould and assimilate all families making the prairies their home” (qtd. in McDonald, “Canadian” 125).

In 1884, in accordance with territorial legislation, the first public school in

Medicine Hat was held in the Presbyterian Church. In 1887, three men were elected as school trustees. It was decided that the school board would have an assessment roll and collect taxes to run the school. To this end, \$1-2 per month was collected from each family in the village. One hundred and two pupils were registered in the first year, with some Grade 1 students being nine or ten years old. The publicized curriculum consisted of reading, writing and arithmetic. During the first years, students had to provide their own playground materials (Gould 66-68). Such information, and the fact that it is available to us today, speaks of disciplinary power at work, collecting documentation and systematically ordering it.

In the process of normalization, the accumulation of individual documentation made it possible for averages to be deduced and for human beings to be rated on a statistical scale with characteristics that ranged from normal to abnormal. From this, it was possible to construct the concept of an objectified, analyzed, fixed and normal individual.

It is in this sense that power was productive. The citizenry was enmeshed in a general matrix of force whose disciplinary techniques established codes of normalcy, proper behavior and common sense which structured social life. Taking up these codes of normalcy, human beings were constructed, or produced, as normative, proper, ethical subjects and in their everyday actions, performed themselves as proper and ethical. The objective of state schooling in the prairie west, clearly and consistently articulated and seeming to subsume all other declared objectives, was the remaking of moral character in the interest of creating good British citizens for the Empire. This involved the creation in students, and eventually, in the population at large, of new habits, attitudes, orientations

and desires (Curtis 366-80). Through the minute practices of everyday life, and the construction of routines and rituals of obedience, individual identities were to be made and remade in ways supportive of the Anglo-dominated, liberal, democratic, capitalist state. The micropractices of everyday routines and everyday discourses made power material.

3.7 Creating acceptable Canadian identities

The norms that structured schooling have become common-place, intrinsic, and natural. Under state schooling, pedagogical norms were the same in Medicine Hat as elsewhere in the prairie west. Students were expected to attend classes regularly, to come to school appropriately dressed, and clean, and to be in their places at the ringing of a bell. They were expected to speak English, to complete assigned tasks, and to obey school authorities. How they came into the classroom, how they sat in their desks, how they managed their personal supplies, and how they spoke to others was regulated day by day, minute by minute. The comparative freedom of recess was brought back to order by students lining up—usually by gender—to re-enter the classroom. Older schools in the community, such as the Elm Street School, still have brick gateways marked as “Girls Entrance” and “Boys Entrance.” Picking up schooling norms, students produced identities based on binary oppositions—punctual/not punctual, industrious/not industrious, clean/not clean, English/not English, male/not male and by extension white/not white.

In the schooling of the west, English was the only language that qualified as a language of instruction; identity performances which produced a student as English-speaking were considered normal. Speaking of a school in the Medicine Hat area that was attended mainly by Scandinavians and Germans, a pioneer teacher observed, “The

English language was sometimes the only common denominator among the diverse settlers. There were very few Anglo-Saxons among the children but the kids picked up English by Grade 2. I didn't notice any social problems or ethnic problems" (Davidson qtd. in Gould 158). Speaking a Germanic language was not seen as an accomplishment; rather it was a condition to be reformed. The task of the school was first to construct in the child a sense of ignorance in not knowing the master tongue, and then ameliorating that ignorance. That this was not a social or ethnic problem illustrates the complete alignment of the teacher with the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon norm.

The explicit content of lessons aimed to bolster the authority and property relations congenial to the Anglo majority and to enlist popular energy in the support of capitalist accumulation. In *Building the Education State: Canada West, 1836-1871*, Bruce Curtis explains: "Official knowledge presented the patriarchal, linguistic, ethnic, political, economic and religious interest of the ruling class as the general interest of society" (371). In English-only classrooms, English literature was studied through which students were interpellated by characters that performed the hegemonic norms of whiteness, patriarchy, rationality, and middle-class privilege. British and Canadian History centered on the lives of great men to teach patriotism and civic duty. Lessons in history were supplemented with singing and reciting patriotic songs and poems (McDonald, "Canadian" 143-44). *The Geography of the British Empire* was a required text (McDonald, "Canadian" 143) intended to cultivate national and imperial sentiment. Music, manners and morals, temperance, maxims, proverbs, daily patriotic exercises, and special patriotic events, such as the Diamond Jubilee celebration in 1897, were used to deepen feelings of loyalty to Canada and Britain and to lead students "into a clear

understanding and constant practice of every virtue” (McDonald, “Canadian” 144).

Educational practice contributed to the construction of bourgeois hegemony by normalizing particular forms of character and comportment. Authority relations were inflected to become personal and psychological relations (Curtis 371); respect for others came in practice to be seen as personal cleanliness, punctuality, and orderliness. Respect for private property became respect for the teacher. The efficacy of respect for authority did not depend on students’ mental appreciation of its moral correctness, but in their practical behavior towards authority (Curtis 370). Habits were to precede intellectual instruction. Speaking in a public address, Superintendent Goggin declared that he would “rather see a poorly educated but good mannered child, than a highly educated but poorly mannered one” (qtd. in McDonald, “Canadian” 143).

The emphasis on “seeing,” on visibility, was significant to the efficacy of the normalizing power (Foucault, *Discipline* 190-95). On the one hand, there was tactical consideration put into educational edifices that were dominating and fortress-like. The power of the educational project was visible in Medicine Hat when, in 1889, the public school board began the work of financing and building the Toronto Street School, an imposing brick building three streets above the South Saskatchewan River. On three separate occasions, the secretary of the school board went to the public, pressed for funds. When the building was opened, it held two large classes—and with the patriarchal norm revealed—hired two teachers, a Mr. Sharp who was paid \$62.50 a month and a Miss Walker who was paid \$45 a month (Gould 62-63). From its position in the centre of town, the Toronto Street School visually extended its powerful schooling influence throughout the community.

The panoptic project of normalization also required that educational activities be visible to the eye of power. Devices and practices, such as tours of inspection, annual reports, report cards, and public exams (Curtis 140-50), gave a sense of surveillance and accountability that was constant and ubiquitous. In Medicine Hat, in the 1880s and 1890s, students took oral exams in front of a community panel; the results of these exams were published in *The Medicine Hat Times (Permanent Collection)*. The vagueness of educational power coupled with the visibility of its effects gave state schooling much efficiency in turning social and political relations into character structures.

An array of administrative practices was publicized to counter and circumvent opposition to coercive pedagogy. Irregular attendance, often a counter-definition of the social role of education, was combated by tactics such as barring late-comers, locking the school door, awarding demerit points, demanding notes from parents, demotions of students (Curtis 311-57). The schooled subjectivities that resulted from these practices were then able to extend this discipline to others. According to Gershaw, “[Indian] children were usually well cared for but the families seldom stayed in one place long enough to get much education” (109).

A normalizing power made power real by embodying power relations in students. These power relations would ideally disappear; they would be lived as a sense of self, as an identity. Regulatory forms which constructed routines and rituals of obedience would become implicit to schooling and taken for granted. Students habituated to certain kinds of behavior at school would exhibit that behavior outside of school. On the level of micropractices—everyday routines, everyday discourses—hegemonic power operated in such a way that students, their parents, and the community at large knew how to live as

respectable and ethical citizens.

Proper behavior, vigorously enforced by reiterative, normative practice, not only prescribes how to live, but becomes our understanding of right and wrong—the common sense model of morality and ethics. In the 1880s, Medicine Hat established the first hospital on the prairies between Winnipeg and Vancouver, and in conjunction, a Nurses' residence—named, not insignificantly, after Queen Victoria “as everything that [is] beautiful in womanhood” (Finlay qtd. in Gould 237). Many rules disciplined the adult women who lived in the residence in an effort to establish proper behavior and thus good moral character. Not only were nurses expected to work hard, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day, except for two half-days off, they were also expected to use one of those half days to attend church on Sunday. They were expected to spend at least fifteen minutes in open air every day, be punctual for meals, and be in their rooms by 10 p.m. with lights out by 10:30. They were instructed in minute detail about the cleanliness of their rooms; “combings, refuse, eatables, match-ends, wastepaper, refuse of all kinds must be thrown into the waste basket and never into the slop jar. Closets and drawers are to be kept clean and old clothing such as old shoes and corsets are to be discarded” (Gould 235-36). Nurses were instructed to cultivate a character of steadiness and modesty through these habits of cleanliness and decorum—a character which would “justify confidence” (Gould 238) because it reflected the accomplishment of schooling in a moral remaking supportive of a bourgeois social order.

As theorized by Butler and Grosz, the selves produced spoke social narratives; laws and norms and ideals were incarnated in them. The citizenry of the town established clubs, organizations, and societies devoted to patriotic assemblies, music, the arts,

charitable works, and good fellowship, but not everyone qualified for membership.

Biopolitical technologies of “incessant purification,” which worked constantly to procure hegemonic whiteness, also worked necessarily to nurture and maintain categories of otherness such as in racism (Stoler 77), a racism that came often to be expressed in tones of restraint and intended kindness. Recalling early social life in Medicine Hat, a pioneer recollected, “This was a very social town. No Chinese or Indians came to the dances. They were very fine people, but they had their own friends” (Hargrave qtd. in Gould 59). While the rules of exclusion were hidden from view, and whether or not white settlers were excluded from other groups within the community, the structure of the hegemonic system of whiteness depended on marginalized others in order to construct those who were dominant and central to the system.

3.8 Self, other, and the dirt fetish

The understanding of how to live as a proper, ethical citizen was dependent on the construction of binary oppositions. The Eurocentric hegemonic power at work in normalizing an identity was centered on the binary of self and other. In the prairie west the idealized identity was white, with all properties that attended that construction. The paradoxical relationship that exists between self and “other” is that the normative production of self is performed in opposition to what is other, yet the other is needed to realize and define the norm. The two terms of a binary opposition contain each other and are implicated in the other even while the privilege of the hegemonic centre is maintained through repudiation of the other. In a sense, subjects are soiled in contacts with the other and normative performance is called into question. For that reason, the social is marked by an endless striving toward wholeness, self-justification, and innocence (Stoler 77).

The great fear that disciplined the settlers who came to call the west home was that they would be seen as—and discover themselves to be—not white, or not white enough, depending on social class, language of the home, ethnic origin, and all designations of public respectability in keeping with Anglo norms. Establishing characteristics separate from, and superior to, that which was not white became the way of determining whiteness. In order to clearly identify the difference between whiteness and otherness, boundary markers such as dirt came to represent what was abjectly the other and not white; identities were produced in relationship to these boundaries. In its representation of the other, dirt became a fetish variously regarded as undisciplined, tainted, and exotic. Stimulating disquiet, horror, and desire, impurity in any form had to be repudiated; continual cleansing was required and systematic habits of clean living were persistently instilled.

In practice, this cleansing, and the whitening it procured, was seen as a process of self-improvement, and in related ways, of community improvement. The urge to be disassociated with what was brown led to strict demands for clean hands, clean faces, clean clothes, clean language, clean work, and clean working spaces at school. It lent to the rhetoric from the pulpits of the community proclaiming the need for clean minds, clean hearts, and clean living. The fetish of cleanliness as evidence of whiteness is apparent in the administrative interest in the nurse's residence of cleanliness of person and personal belongings, extending to details as specific as the disposal of a nurse's used corset. In the Medicine Hat school system, the concern with boundaries between clean/unclean, healthy/not healthy, white/not white led, in 1913, to the hiring of a female doctor to conduct medical inspection of all school children (Gould 67). That she was to

be paid the same amount as the Toronto School principal spoke of the importance of her task to the administrative offices.

In the community, the dirt fetish spoke loudly through the campaign to clean up the streets. Every spring, complained the *Medicine Hat News*, the animal and human refuse turned the town into a “hottentot kraal” (qtd. in Jones et al. 3). In chastising the townsfolk with this unusual expression, the editor of the paper conjured up Dutch colonialism and the offensive term used to refer to the Khoikhoi peoples—indigenous groups of South Africa and Namibia. The title “hottentot” is thought to have come from a repetitive formula used in a Nama dancing song which was transferred by Dutch sailors to the people themselves (“Hottentot” def. 1, 2). Alternatively, it may have arisen as a derisive term that originated with the German “Hotteren-totteren” which means to stutter, thus making reference to the click language of the Khoikhoi (“Hottentot” def. 3). The South African word “kraal”, originating from the Dutch word “currel” (or corral), was taken to mean both a traditional African village of huts, typically enclosed by a fence, or an animal enclosure through which livestock was driven (“Kraal” def. 1, 2). The implications are clear. If the citizens of the town wished to distance themselves from an indigenous identity, with attendant animalistic and incoherent traits, they would need to clean up the town’s streets. Dirt, in its representation of the other, contaminated the Anglo population and called for a public cleansing and whitening.

Cleaning up the streets was a figuration too, in a school inspector’s report, of the struggle to establish a hegemonic order within the community. “You are afflicted here,” wrote a territorial school inspector in the 1880s, “by too much freedom on the streets at night and habits acquired there that are altogether incompatible with discipline and

progress at school. Few teachers, very few teachers, can maintain order in your school” (qtd. in Jones et al. 44).

In 1887, John Niblock assumed the supervision of the Medicine Hat Division of the Canadian Pacific Railway. For more than a decade, he made it his personal campaign to clean up swearing, gaming and illegal drinking in the community, rousing the ire of many residents and sparking much controversy. Before he left his post, he established the first territorial hospital, built a show garden near the CPR Station, and made a public appearance with a prime political rival, who shook his hand and said, “The fight’s over ... if we all work for the common good, this community will prosper” (qtd. in Jones et al. 5). This short speech exemplifies what had become known as “the imperial spirit” and echoes a barrage of admonitions from Canadian educators, such as Superintendent Goggin who urged his associates to look to the organization of the Empire as a model for behaviour, since it was “a prime example of commitment to the welfare of the whole and not to mere selfish particularistic interests” (qtd. in Macdonald, “Canadian” 130). Educational structures and practices had become a force in the land so that the application of moral forces by the respectable classes disciplined the population as a whole. A systematic habituation of the working class structured the conditions of rule into the selves of the ruled (Curtis 366).

3.9 Held in common

The common curriculum, common pedagogy, and common Christianity of state schooling came to be lived out as an identity of whiteness and goodness. Norms were inscribed on people both in psychological and bodily inscription. In material possessions, living spaces, community life, work, and schooling, bodies were marked as white, male

or under male authority, clean, and disciplined, producing them as signs of the hegemonic order to be read by others and themselves. Through the process of normalization, the disciplinary technology of power/knowledge produced useful, docile bodies.

Operating through the discourse of Canadianization, the vehicle of state schooling, and the practices of systematic habituation, subjects were constituted who were effects of Imperial hegemonic power as well as their own overseers in maintaining those effects. Through regulatory daily practices of cleanliness, attendance, punctuality, separation of the sexes, physical exercise, speaking English, and caring for the public good, students, and the wider citizenry, performed themselves as natural, proper citizens.

Despite the rhetoric of a common curriculum, common pedagogy, and common Christianity, however, the realm of public schooling was a contradictory one. In Medicine Hat, as elsewhere in the prairie west, constant boundarisation maintained categories of otherness and saturated the individual and society with relations of force. Rules of exclusion and forms of social violence, which differentiated in terms of race, class, and gender, were hidden from view under notions of individual agency, self-improvement and progress. Normative identity was maintained through continual repudiation of the other and through iterative and reiterative hegemonic performances. The normal individual subject both presupposed and accomplished by the bourgeois order was one who was middle-class, property-owning, rational-thinking, English-speaking, clean-living, and preferably male—in other words, white. This normalized identity remains a central constituent of political rule in the capitalist liberal democratic state of the Canadian West.

This chapter has questioned how subjectivity was established in a particular place

over a particular period of time, and in genealogical fashion, has answered that, in Medicine Hat, Alberta, public education became the vehicle through which forms of self were inculcated that privileged the Anglo-Saxon majority and helped to secure a liberal capitalist state in the Canadian West. The compulsions of the hegemonic order which shaped schooling became implicit, obvious, and common; curriculum and pedagogical practice that established whiteness as a cultural norm spilled from the classroom into forms of self which were lived as natural and normal. In the next chapter, I explore how curricular literature, in particular, was put to use as part of the colonizing effort to establish a normative identity in white-settler societies. I argue that it is at the level of curriculum, specifically the study of literature, where refusals of harmful subjectivities and promotions of new forms of subjectivity can be made.

4. THE USE OF LITERATURE AS A (DE)COLONIZING TOOL IN WHITE-SETTLER SOCIETIES

4.1 Introduction

Based on the rhetoric of a common curriculum, a common pedagogy, and a common Christianity, public schooling was the principal vehicle put to use in western Canada for the construction of a homogeneous citizenry. As explored in the last chapter, the normative individual subject both presupposed and accomplished by the bourgeois colonial order was one who was middle-class, property-owning, rational-thinking, English-speaking, clean-living, preferably male, and certainly white. This normalized identity remains a central constituent of political rule in the capitalist liberal democratic state of the Canadian West, as it does in other white-settler societies.

This chapter identifies the uses that literature was, and is, put to as part of the colonizing effort to establish a normalized identity in white-settler societies; the chapter also points the way towards reading and writing stances that may be used to work against the constitution of normative subjectivity in the name of resistant social action. In the pages that follow, I grapple with the question of how to construct a postcolonial reading and writing of history; in the interest of questioning the legitimizing functions of history and literature, I explore how literature was and is used to constitute and contain colonial subjects; and I argue that literature has the potential both to collude with and provide resistance in complex ways to colonial reproduction. The work this chapter performs within the thesis is to draw a picture of the compromised homeland within which literary resistance is staged and to draw out the perspective that finding a method to map

dominant discourses and articulate their underlying assumptions is a way to work toward disturbing and dismantling those assumptions.

4.2 History and narrative within the postmodern

The linguistic turn of the last century defies a linear telling of the world, colonial history, and decolonizing practices; words depend on other words for their meaning rather than on reference to some extra-linguistic reality. The breakdown of narrative logic forecloses tales with definitive beginnings, middles, and ends, making the task of writing a cohesive history of the use of literature in colonial efforts an impossibility. Foucault contends that “the traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled” (“Nietzsche” 88). The postmodern appeal to discourse as power working through an expedient form of knowledge, says Bernadette Baker, invites us to unknow history as empirical and to reknow history aware of its narrative status, contrived and constructed within the operation of language (30-39). Seeing, then, that history has always been constructed as a narrative, the postmodern challenge to a historical reading comes in the form of questions about the subject, the author, time, space, and progress.

Foucault asks us: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse? What does it matter who is speaking?” (“What is an Author?” 117-19)? Can there be a history without an a priori subject who places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity? Thinking about the author as a constituted subject means to analyze the author of a history or a narrative as a variable and complex function of discourse (Foucault, “What is an Author?” 118). How one thinks about the subject, states

Bernadette Baker, leads to questions as to what counts as real, as an event, as truth; these in turn ask us to consider our notions of time and space and power (30).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that attention to space enables the recognition of the strategies and tactics of power (135-227). In Foucault's usage, space is a kind of mapping, a way to read discourses (Baker 39). Intimating space as relational, Foucault postulates that marking boundaries of objects, domains, and discourses already presumed out there produces a new kind of awareness of the specific and local ways in which power operates (*Discipline* 142-49). One of the ways in which power operates through language, and possession is taken, is through naming; "... by the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history" says Paul Carter ("Spatial" 377). The concept of place as a palimpsest written and overwritten by successive historical inscriptions, a history of journeying, continually beginning, continually ending, has been suggested as one way of circumventing a story of history as the scientific narrative of events (P. Carter, "Spatial" 375-77).

However, even the passage of time becomes difficult to discern if one is looking spatially at discourses as Foucault suggests. The postmodern concern is not simply about reports of an empirical past made as though outside of it and looking in from a distance (an Archimedean point) or about an understanding of the passage of time as an indication of progress or improvement in a state of affairs; the postmodern concern, contends Baker, is about the necessity for an awareness of how the present rewrites the past and naturalizes and historicizes what has been forgotten as culturally produced (31-41).

It is difficult, however, in telling any story, to suspend the modernist notion of

linear time, because, argues Baker, we do not have a language without tenses or an analytics of time and space with which to understand otherwise (32-39). Even when we do not claim direct causality (that is, where events of the past are not necessarily seen to determine the configuration of the present), a privileged notion of the present continues to operate as that which constructs the past (33-38).

Derek Walcott, the Caribbean poet who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992 and who writes, among other things, about myth, culture, and the West Indies as colonized space, says that the method by which we are taught to read time, the progress from motive to event, is the same by which we read narrative fiction; “as we grow older as a race, we grow aware that history is written ... and that everything depends on whether we write this fiction through the memory of the hero or of the ‘victim’” (371). Through figural language and representational tropes, history is a regulatory force by which cultural hegemony reproduces itself. Both the discipline of history and the novel came into existence coterminous with the rise of modern colonialism, and in both history and literature European imperialism found instruments for the control of subject peoples. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin contend, “At base, the myth of a value free, scientific view of the past, the myth of the beauty of order, the myth of the story of history as a simple representation of the continuity of events, authorized nothing less than the construction of world reality” (*The Post-Colonial* 355).

Thus, the problem of history becomes particularly crucial for the postcolonial writer. Not only are “the questions of truth and fiction, of narrativity and indeterminacy, time and space, of pressing importance,” but also, “historical narrativity is that which

structures the forms of reality itself" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial* 356). What it means to have a history "is the same as what it means to have a legitimate existence; history and legitimization go hand in hand; history legitimates 'us' and not others" (356).

Foucault states that history has no meaning; however that is not to say that it is absurd or incoherent; on the contrary, history is intelligible and should be analyzed down to the smallest details of struggles, strategies, and tactics of power (qtd. in Martin 56). To be avoided, says Foucault, are dialectics, since they evade the open and hazardous realities of conflict, and semiotics, which are a way of avoiding history's violent, bloody, and lethal character (qtd. in Martin 56-57). The historical sense can become "a privileged instrument of genealogy if it refuses the certainty of absolutes" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 87).

Perhaps it is in the interests of questioning the legitimizing function of history and literature that Said advises us that, "On the whole, it is better to explore history, than to repress or deny it" (*Culture* xxvi). Orthodox, authoritatively national and institutional versions of history tend to freeze provisional and highly contestable versions of history into official identities. "What matters a great deal more than the stable identity kept current in official discourse," states Said, "is the contestatory force of an interpretive method whose material is the disparate, but intertwined and interdependent, and above all, overlapping, streams of historical experience" (*Culture* 312).

The postcolonial task, therefore, is not simply to contest the message of history, but also to "engage the medium of narrativity itself, to reinscribe the rhetoric, the

heterogeneity of historical representation” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial* 356). A postcolonial reading and writing of history “deliberately makes visible the structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial* 357). By doing so it breaks up, what Jennifer Henderson calls, the sedimentary beds of discourse (3-45) and writes into the history of modernity, says Dipesh Chakrabarty, “the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and the ironies that attend it” (386).

If any story deserves to be narrated, it is the history on humankind of (post)colonialism's markings and mappings. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, postcolonial theory is predicated on the “historical fact” of European colonialism and the diverse material effects (such as slavery, displacement, migration, racial and cultural discrimination) to which these phenomena gave rise (*The Post-Colonial* 2). “We tell stories,” states Paul Ricoeur, “because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated ... the whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative” (qtd. in Randy Boyagoda 1).

4.3 A postcolonial perspective of imperialism

The focus of this present work is the (re)constitution of subjectivity as a regulatory effect of curricular literature and the search for a method for mapping and disassembling dominant discourses in such literature. What I need is a frame of reference useful for recognizing that the small narrative of regulatory forces operating in Medicine Hat, Alberta is only one of innumerable local stories about the establishment of modern Eurocentric hegemonic culture.

In postcolonial terms, the word “imperialism” operates as a policy for conquest and economic exploitation, a historical phenomenon, and an ideological mindset that links dominions of the past with neocolonial ventures of the moment (Said, *Culture* 9-12). A new word in the mid-nineteenth century, “imperialism” was first used as a term of pride to describe English policies of empire building. Since then, however, the term “imperialism” has been expanded to apply in general to any historical instance of aggrandizement of a greater power at the expense of a lesser power, and is frequently applied at this point in time to the United States, where rhetoric of American greatness and innocence, hierarchies of race, and overseas interests speak the discourse of empire (Said, *Culture* 8).

For many, the word “imperialism” brings to mind an era when countries directly controlled vast empires, a conflation of imperialism with colonialism, the establishment of overseas colonies. Willinsky suggests that the term “imperialism” operates as a loosely conceived historical phenomenon that covers “a myriad of ventures directed at extending the dominion of Europe around the globe” (10). Imperialism drove the expansionist dreams of the Portuguese, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, the Germans, the British and currently, the Americans. Imperialism's influence can be traced through Europe's age of exploration, the Renaissance, the founding of the colonies, the Enlightenment, the opening of the Pacific, the rise of romanticism, the Victorian age, and the scramble for Africa (Willinsky 9). Imperialist imperatives created “a trade in human beings that forced twelve million people from sub-Saharan Africa on a deadly journey into slavery in the western hemisphere” (Willinsky 9). Imperialism devastated indigenous populations

through military campaigns, economic exploitation, and the spread of epidemics. The imperialist misadventure demanded “the encyclopedic project of mapping and naming all that the world contained, bringing it within a single system of thought” (Willinsky 9-10).

Said tells us that neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition, but that both are supported and interpellated by impressive ideological formations (*Culture* 9). The internal coherence of the discourse of imperialism, says Said, lends itself to the construction of “supreme fictions” (*Orientalism* xvii), which are easily manipulated and mobilized in fear, hatred, disgust, resurgent self-pride, and arrogance in dividing large-scale enterprises into elemental battles between “them” and “us.” The vocabulary of imperialism (and neocolonialism) includes the notion “that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination” (Said, *Culture* 9). The discourse of imperialism is evident in iterations such as: it is our mission to enlighten, to civilize, to bring order and democracy; we are unique and these are special circumstances, therefore our use of power is justified; force is used only as a last resort; we have the expertise; we need standardization, homogeneity, orthodoxy, development of a national or collective identity; and there is an enemy which threatens our way of life, our very existence, and against which we must join ranks (Said, *Orientalism* xviii-xxiii).

Imperial authority accompanies and follows the physical invasion and dispossession of indigenous people from the land desired by the imperial power. Imperial authority is composed of power acting through a convenient form of knowledge, a discourse which means to survey a civilization from its origins to its prime to its

decline—and of course, being able to do that (Said, *Orientalism* 1-15). The civilization/country/culture, which is the object of such scrutiny, is inherently vulnerable, says Said. The dominated civilization knows what imperialism has made evident—that they are a subject race dominated by a superior race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves (Said, *Orientalism* 1). Through the complex functions of the dominant imperial discourse, subjects were constituted that reproduced the values of empire, particularly whiteness and patriarchy. Empire had authority and durability, says Said, because it was sustained on both the side of the ruler and the ruled; the colonist's acceptance of subordination either through a common interest with the imperial order or through an inability to conceive of an alternative was the basis of imperial authority (*Culture* 11).

4.4 The imperialist drive in colonialism and neocolonialism

Colonialism is the extension of a nation's sovereignty, territory and people outside its own boundaries, with an aim to facilitate economic domination over the resources, labor, and markets of other areas of the world. Not surprisingly, such an enterprise is driven by an imperialist belief that the mores of the colonizer are superior to those of the colonized. When Columbus reported the “discovery” of “a new world,” he set in motion an imperial drive which culminated in the domination of large sections of the world for the benefit of Europe. By 1914, when Europe held a grand total of roughly 85% of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions and commonwealths, the world was united as never before; scarcely a corner of life was untouched by the facts of empire (Said, *Culture* 8).

None of the imperial players were bigger, more imposing or more self-aggrandizing than the British Empire. At its peak around the mid-nineteenth century to just after World War I, the Empire's dominions, protectorates, mandates, condominiums, and protected states included one-fourth of the world's area and one-fourth of its population (Willinsky 2). Between the years of 1776 and 1910, white-settler societies like the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa declared their independence and became self-governing. Most of the dependencies, inhabited almost exclusively by indigenous populations, became independent in the two decades following World War II. By 1970, the Empire had virtually disbanded; the ceremonious return of Hong Kong in 1997 marked the end of Britain's last major colonial outposts (Willinsky 2).

“In our time,” states Said, “[C]olonialism has largely ended; imperialism ... lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices” (*Culture* 9). It is now neocolonialism that exhibits the ongoing nature of imperialism. Neocolonialism, say Meredith Cherland and Helen Harper, is the continued control of former colonies through ruling native elites compliant with colonial powers; populations are exploited for their labour and resources in order to feed an insatiable appetite for finished physical or cultural commodities made by the metropole (99-107). Robert Young explains that colonial systems of classification, notions of economic growth, ways in which economic output is measured, and progressive linear models of development have been so deeply entrenched that formerly colonized states have little recourse other than to continue to be

part of the colonially-instituted system (1-9). The exploitative tendencies of western countries are seen by many postcolonialists as inherent to their capitalist nature (R. Young 1-9) and intrinsic to all cultural activities, including that of education.

4.5 Narrating the nation in white-settler societies

In postcolonial terms, explain Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, white-settler societies like Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa are those where land was occupied by European colonists who dispossessed and overwhelmed the indigenous populations (*The Empire* 1-4). Alison Kibler reminds us that indigenous populations were annihilated or cordoned off, while white settlers became politically dominant and established a transplanted European civilization. Although they eventually secured political independence, white-settler societies maintained a dependency and loyalty to the mother country (Kibler). Since independence, the demands of white-settler societies have been those of nationhood: race-making (Jennifer Henderson 16-19) and the economic and cultural survival of the “imagined community” (B. Anderson 1).

The narrative of settler societies has been nuanced in many ways: by conceptions of a “gender frontier,” which rendered indigenous gender relations as backward and positioned the white woman's performance of gender as a standard (Brown qtd. in Kibler); by anxiety, which contributed to white women's suffrage movements where white women's voting rights emerged as a defense of mothers of the (white) race that would populate and dominate these new lands (Kibler); and by notions of the settler colony as a heterotopia, a privileged ground appropriated for race-making and the testing of liberal rule, both of which necessitated rigid differentiations and coding of the

population, and a permanent campaign of internal purification (Henderson 6-9).

Common themes in the literatures of settler societies demonstrate the difficulties of displacement and (re)settlement: losing, finding and defining home; concerns about exile, duty and purity, and filiative relationships with the metropolis; and physical and emotional confrontations with the new land and its ancient and established meanings (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire* 8, 9). Clinging unquestioningly “to a belief in the adequacy of the imported official language—where mistranslations could not be overlooked, it was the land or the season which was wrong” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire* 25), settlers were faced with the problem of establishing their “indigeneity” and new-found nationality and distinguishing it from a continuing sense of their European inheritance.

Literature—first, the classics from England and then literature which arose from within the settler society—staged an identity for newly-created nations like Canada. Novels carried empire abroad long after colonial exploits seemed to be over; conversely, the literary arts gained creative energy from the exploration and colonization of new lands. In and through novels imported from abroad or arising from within the settler society, the European immigrant/citizen was (re)connected to the mores of the homeland and encouraged in the enterprise of being at home in a larger world of England’s making (Willinsky 215-40). Jenny Sharpe illustrates a sexual tension that pervades literary settings of European women among the “savages” and sets out how “the figure of women was instrumental in shifting a colonial system of meaning from self-interest and moral superiority to self-sacrifice and racial superiority” (qtd. in Willinsky 215). The general

belief among politicians, business people, military leaders, and community promoters as the nineteenth century waned, says Paul Sheehan, was that Canadian nationalism and imperialism were one and the same (41).

Northrop Frye, one of Canada's preeminent literary critics, locates the Canadian nation in the imaginary space cultivated by English literature. Willinsky asserts that while Frye fosters the development of Canadian literature as anti-imperial in response to the onslaught of British and American literature, he centers the national imagination, not on regional or local identity, but on international "transcendent" forms of culture and politics (223-40). The themes that Frye identifies as educating the imagination in Canada are those of the uninhabited island, outside and other, the place of Canada, and the work of literature (qtd. in Willinsky 223-40). Frye's work demonstrates that Canada's educational literature is permeated by assumptions about Europe's civilizing mission, the idea of cultural progress, a sense of global mastery, the distribution of humanity between primitive and civilized, and an ambiguous sense of where is here (Willinsky 238-40). Frye's critical work, while attempting to represent the new nation, is a romantic notion of colonial space.

4.6 The novel as a colonizing tool

The novel as an aesthetic object emerged during the period of British expansionism and became immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences (Said, *Culture* 73-80). "Of all the major literary forms," states Said, "the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured" (*Culture*

71). Further, Said contends that the novel and imperialism fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read one without dealing with the other. Packed into the novel as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, says Said, are both a highly regulated plot mechanism and an entire system of social reference that depends on the existing institutions of bourgeois society, their authority, and power (*Culture* 71). As such, the novel exercises a regulatory social presence in western European societies and shapes the idea of England in England's overseas colonies and former colonies; the novel is and has behind/inside it the authority of history and society in the form of the author, the author's narrator, and the specific locality and historical moment of the community from which it comes (Said, *Culture* 72-77).

In her study *The Island as a Site of Resistance*, Dorothy Lane explains that it is not merely coincidental that Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, often cited as the first English novel, established the motif of finding, mapping, taking possession of and (re)creating an island kingdom, a copy of the imperial island, England (11). Imperialist island narratives, says Lane, represent the island as a garden paradise, a shadow of England, a site of discovery, and a place to be mapped and enclosed; these recurrent features of British colonial discourse in island narratives constructed the New World in imperialist ideological codes and were often used in the education of the colonies themselves (5-15).

In 1835, Thomas Macaulay proposed a plan to the British parliament to civilize India through the pedagogical use of English literature. Judging English by universal confession to be "pre-eminent even among the languages of the West," "with full and

correct information,” and “access to all the vast intellectual wealth,” Macaulay suggested that the natives in India would be best served by forming a class of interpreters to whom English would be taught (430). This class—“Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect”—would “refine the vernacular dialects of the country” and would become “fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population” (430). British parliament agreed and a colonialist strategy of education was born. Viswanathan describes how canonical English literature was deployed strategically and intentionally into the colonies in order to construct a cadre of native mediators that operated between colonial administrators and the producers of wealth, maintaining control of the natives “under the guise of a liberal education” (432).

4.7 The on-going mission

Theoretically, contends Abdul JanMohamed, the European imperialist has the option of responding to the colonial other in terms of identity or difference. If he assumes that the colonial other is irremediably different, he will turn to the security of his own cultural perspective and the assumption of moral superiority (18). While the imperialist may not be fixated on specific images or stereotypes of the colonial other, says JanMohamed, he is fixated on the affective benefits of the manichean allegory which generates various stereotypes (21). Based on the dualistic religion of the Persian prophet, Manes, Manichaeism is a combination of Gnostic Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and various other elements. A thriving world religion from the third to seventh centuries, Manichaeism teaches an elaborate cosmology between a good spiritual world of light and an evil material world of darkness (“manichaeism”). The colonial

world is a Manichean world, says Frantz Fanon (*Wretched* 41); and the manichean allegory, says JanMohamed, is a central trope of representation that operates in colonialist literature, pedagogical practices, and social arrangements (21). Derived from the view that the world is divided into mutually excluding opposites, the manichean allegory operates through interchangeable oppositions between binaries such as white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and other, subject and object. Through the function of the allegory, 'neutral' perceptions of physical difference such as skin colour are transformed from racial difference (ie. white/black) into moral or metaphysical difference (ie. good/evil). The rapid exchange of denigrating images permitted by the allegory can be used to maintain a sense of moral difference between colonizer and colonized (JanMohamed 21-22).

Understanding the vast differences between colonizer and colonized as natural and not ideologically constructed leads the imperialist to conclude that the process of civilizing the natives will have to continue indefinitely. Seeing empire as a fact of life, "those who have fashioned the colonial world are themselves reduced to the role of passive spectators in a mystery not of their making" (JanMohamed 22). The supposed inferiority and barbarity of the racial other translates into an insistence on the profound moral difference between self and other; the European imperialist's increased sense of moral superiority is further invested in the denigration of the native, launching colonial relations into a self-sustaining cycle (JanMohamed 23).

In Canada, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald put the continuing duty of

education this way: “secular education is a good thing among white men but among Indians the first object is to make them better men and (if possible good Christian men) by applying proper moral restraints” (*Debates* 1107). While aboriginal tribes were barricaded onto reserves and into residential schools to attempt this ‘civilizing’ mission of education, the European immigrants who came to the western plains of Canada to take up “the path of empire ... in the garden of the world” were to be overwhelmingly white and socialized through schooling into the predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture; this was to be accomplished, says Doug Owsram, through curriculum and pedagogical practices based on common values of what it meant to be a British subject and a Canadian citizen (25, 90-98).

To that end, every lesson was to be “an English Lesson” and school children were disciplined in “the Canadian way” by the stories of King Arthur and the poems of Robert Browning. Since “nothing delights the heart of a child like a story” (Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire rhetoric qtd. in Sheehan 42), Canadian schools at the turn of the century predominantly emphasized selections like *Stories from British History*, *Heroes in British History*, *Rulers Then and Now* and the fictional and poetic works of Scott, Shakespeare, Kipling, Stevenson, Tennyson, Conrad, Blake and Burns. The only selections specifically mentioned for girls in the *Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire Catalogue of Library Books* as late as 1940 were L.M. Montgomery’s “Anne” novels (Sheehan 44). In Canada, as in other white-settler societies, the imperialistic, racist, sexist and classed view of the world was actively and deliberately taught.

4.8 Postcolonialism

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin contend that the term “post-colonial” covers all culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day (*The Post-Colonial 2*). In their study *Advocacy Research in Literacy Education*, Cherland and Harper promote Alastair Pennycook’s definition of postcolonialism as a political and cultural movement that challenges the received histories and ideologies of former colonial nations and opens a space for insurgent knowledge to emerge (90). Power relations and subjectivity—the discursive formation of the self and the other—are central concerns in postcolonial theory and research. Yet, in *Postcolonial Whiteness*, Lopez suggests that postcolonial studies have produced “relatively little scholarship exploring the relations between race and power, specifically, between whiteness and the consolidation of colonial power” (3). One of the points of convergence that postcolonial and whiteness studies hold in common, says Lopez, is “the history of the spread of hegemonic whiteness through colonialism” (16). Lopez reports that a prominent group of whiteness scholars collectively classify whiteness as “THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF EUROPEAN COLONIALISM” (19).

Cherland and Harper illustrate the usefulness of postcolonial theory in the field of education to analyze how pedagogy operates, placing some of the subjects of education at the centre of discourse and relegating others to the margins (90-107). Viswanathan argues that curriculum circulates and validates colonial power (431-37). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin remind us that all postcolonial societies are still subject, in one way or another, to overt or subtle forms of neocolonial domination (*The Post-Colonial 2*). In this sense,

postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin demonstrate how studies of settler/invader colony cultures point to the difficulties involved in escaping from hegemonic practices that limit and define the possibility of opposition; despite the difficulty, they suggest that there is also potential inherent in hybrid processes of self-determination to flout and sometimes unseat the phenomenal power of imperial cultural knowledge (*The Post-Colonial* 183-84).

4.9 Is Canada postcolonial?

Surely Canada is now a self-determining nation no longer in thrall to its imperialist origins, given our diversity and access to a globalized world. Yet, in the afterword to Laura Moss's collection of essays *Is Canada Postcolonial?*, published in 2003, Stephen Slemon states the question is unanswerable or answerable only by misdirection. Postcolonialism, he suggests, "is an incomplete project; it is colonialism's shadow; it is a dialectic of engagement and not a singular logics" (320). The work of postcolonialism "involves a sustained challenge to the dominant in contemporary distributions of valuation and power" (321). Terry Goldie says that indigenous people in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand maintain that the term "postcolonial" is depressingly laughable without native sovereignty (300). Colonialism is precisely what names the situation of native people in relation to the Canadian state, says Slemon; neo-colonial Canada is a linguistic contradiction; Empire is persistent, and the powerful avoid change ("Afterword" 321).

Farha Shariff notes, based on the 2006 Statistics Canada census data, that one-fifth of Canada's population is foreign-born, an immigration surge unprecedented in a

quarter of a century; “In addition their children will constitute a large group of second generation who will have to negotiate issues pertaining to race, culture, school and identity” (69, 71). “For the immigrant,” says Chelva Kanaganayakam, “Canada is still colonial in that it is alien” (148). Postcolonialism has almost always entailed the assertion of a nation state based on foundational myths which provide cohesion, but these are especially problematic for the immigrant, says Kanaganayakam, for whom there is a divide between nationality and citizenship (147). Neither the term “Canada,” nor the term “postcolonial,” are stable enough or universally accessible to provide a sufficient platform for the construction of social equity and justice (Slemon, “Afterword” 322). “Canada,” says Slemon, “can no more be ‘postcolonial’ than patriarchy can be feminist, or homophobia can be queer” (“Afterword” 322). That being so, one of the ways Slemon suggests we might begin to answer the question is to think of postcolonialism as the practice of “persistent, unremitting critique” (“Afterword” 322).

Goldie responds that the central import for the question, “Is Canada postcolonial?” is at once “Is the Canadian text postcolonial?” and “Is the Canadian reader postcolonial?” (309). Postcolonialism has impacted academic studies for at least a quarter of a century, says Goldie, and the old Commonwealth literature taken up in academic studies are now postcolonial literatures (302). There has been an effort to incorporate alternative readings beyond the classic English texts and in them, says Goldie, the native is a common assumption although often not indigenous (302). Arun Mukherjee recognizes that the norm in Canadian representation is white, but proposes that simply representing non-white Canadians gives rise to new theoretical questions about history,

race, universality, representation, aesthetics, inter-textuality, and the reader's positionality (qtd. in Goldie 304). However, the difficulty with a multicultural canon, suggests Goldie, is that multiculturalism deflects white hegemony by recognizing many parallel ethnicities without apparent consideration of the special case of the indigenous peoples (304). A multicultural canon is too often a grab-bag of minority literatures implying that the postcolonial is always brown or black and emphasizing folklore rather than substantial opportunities for those deemed to be other (Goldie 303-304).

At the high school level, which is the interest of my present work, the choices of approved texts are becoming wider, yet including a multicultural text here and there is not enough. Many teachers have had little preparation for working in culturally diverse classrooms and little exposure to existing critiques of multicultural education (Johnston qtd. in Shariff 68). Because most high school multicultural literature programs to date have not taken into account the relationships between cultural representations and imperialism, says Jim Greenlaw, teachers of such courses have not developed the necessary pedagogical strategies to enable their students to examine the many problems of cultural difference and identity which they encounter during their textual investigations (5). Henry Giroux argues, "Multiculturalism is generally about Otherness, but is written in ways in which the dominating aspects of white culture are not called into question and the oppositional potential of difference as a site of struggle is muted" (qtd. in Greenlaw 10).

Most of us who are teachers have learned "to read—thoroughly and unwittingly—as white colonials; and as subjects, we are mostly unaware of our production. Unless we

have been schooled in how to read oppositionally, there is little chance of reading outside the margins of neocolonialism, given the hegemony of dominant rule” (Schick, Personal communication). In Canada, says Susan Holloway, most teacher education programs are based on a traditional model that does not put issues such as race at the forefront; available social justice courses are often optional (21). When confronted by discussions of white privilege, novice teachers in Solomon et al.’s 2005 Canadian study displayed “a range of emotions including anger, guilt and paralysis” (qtd. in Holloway 8). Holloway finds that teacher candidates still claim that they can address issues such as race and gender by talking in terms of general inclusion (8), not understanding that “questions of representation and inclusion suppress any attempts to call into question the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category that secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible” (Giroux qtd. in Holloway 15).

It is unrealistic, says Holloway, to expect a change of attitude that addresses prejudice and racism by simply providing teachers with texts that are considered culturally diverse (8). What is needed, explains Holloway, is for teachers to experience firsthand how power is a productive as well as an oppressive, always-changing force (9). My argument in this dissertation is that learning to read poststructurally will lead teachers and their students to understand how identity, difference and inequalities are socially constructed through the dominant discourses of text and daily power relations. A poststructuralist reading serves postcolonial interests in helping teachers to see that identities, no less than classrooms, are contested spaces; that whiteness and privilege are discursively constructed; that reason and effort are largely ineffective in helping

individuals to erase the disadvantage they experience in society; and that systemic and structural forms of oppression shape lives.

Graeme Harper states that western children today live in societies not simply characterized by difference, but by a consuming passion for it (39). More or less free to consume fictional and fantastic worlds with enthusiasm wherever they find them, a child's world is one of postmodern superabundance, disconnected images and signs, of intertextual references, pastiche and eclectic nostalgia, fragmentary sensations, promiscuous superficiality, numbed and flippant indifference, bricolage and disconnection (Harper 39). "And yet," Harper explains:

it is no less true today that children live in a shared world of critically ordered sensory experience; that they are involved in the passing on to others of knowledge gained about the natural and social worlds (which presupposes a shared meaning); and that they are encouraged to join with adults in the classification of the things of the world (that is, to make identifications of similarity and so on). In fact, here is an ontology that is consciously progressivist and alerts children to the condition of adulthood, seeks authenticity in the present and celebrated possibility in the future, an ontology, which by this definition, has a modernist ethos (Harper 40).

Poststructuralist theories, together with cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and feminist theories offer useful conceptual tools for critical awareness and critical thinking needed in working with youth to disassemble the modernist ethos.

In particular, poststructuralist theories help to question ethical beliefs and

ethnocentric biases in texts and teach students how to deconstruct the discourse of race. The discourse of multicultural education has generally failed to connect discussions of race with the wider discourse of power and powerlessness (Greenlaw 11). In order to perform interrogations of literary representations of self, other, and place, students need to understand “how subjectivities are produced within configurations of knowledge and power that exist outside of the immediacy of one’s experience but are central to forms of self and social determination” (Giroux qtd. in Greenlaw 9). It is necessary, suggests Greenlaw, for teachers to make a concerted effort to situate themselves with the other at the margins of the dominant culture and to encourage students to think of themselves as cultural workers whose task it is to deconstruct and reconstruct the social text within which we are all caught (12). The central aim of textual study is to help students to understand who they are and how they can change and enhance not only “their own lives but the lives of others as well” (Simon qtd. in Greenlaw 19).

Students must learn repeatedly to deconstruct the given and assumed representation of whiteness and the moral and cultural differences that they encounter in their texts if they are to reveal entrenched power at work in identity constructions. Lopez cautions that non-white minority groups also have an investment in whiteness, to some degree or another, as an indispensable component of their own upward mobility with their respective societies which each group retains as part of its own particular legacy of colonialism (17). Lopez reiterates that the tandem of whiteness, as both aesthetically desirable and pragmatically necessary, is a product of the so-called civilizing mission of colonialism (17). bell hooks’s perspective is that “it is useful when theorizing black

experience to examine the way the concept of ‘terror’ is linked to representations of whiteness” (“Representing Whiteness” 344). To examine representations and productions of whiteness, deconstruction of texts needs to occur across a wide variety of geographical and cultural contexts and include classics as well as those texts that are not categorized as Anglo mainstream, and such deconstruction needs to occur as a frequent exercise.

“Reading the occasional oppositional work,” states Schick, “only reinforces an enlarged sense of self that is able to travel to oppositional space and return with dominance still intact” (Schick, Personal communication). To build a teaching practice around the deconstruction of literary texts means to participate in critical pedagogy. Such a pedagogical approach is aligned with postcolonial purposes for it moves teachers to become active participants in social justice issues and advocates for change. In their discussion of critical pedagogy, Kerry Robinson and Criss Diaz quote Giroux. “Critical pedagogy focuses on the production of knowledge and identities within specific locations and on how knowledge can be transformed in relation to the construction of social experiences constituted in particular relationships between self and others and the social” (Giroux qtd. in Robinson and Diaz 3).

Is Canada postcolonial? In my experience as a Canadian educator in public schools for over 30 years, notions of meritocracy and the rhetoric of capitalism pervade educational endeavors and work to persuade teachers and students that democracy is fully-functioning and acts of prejudice are isolated events. The process of “unlearning” accepted “truths” about how society is structured is painful (Holloway 21) and does not happen once for all. Holloway contends, “The process of engaging those students who

most benefit from the current hegemony in dialogue about privilege, and how they are embedded in its structure and the degree of agency they have to make change, is a slow and tenuous road” (21).

4.10 Decolonization

The notion of hegemony is inseparable from that of counter-hegemony. For postcolonialists like Fanon, decolonization is a process of opposition to dominance, the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature. For Fanon, that means a complete calling into question of the colonial situation and putting into practice the principle that, “the last shall be first and the first last” (*The Wretched* xxix). It means that the whole social structure is changed from the bottom up, and that whatever headings or formulas are used to structure the change, decolonization is always a violent process.

For other postcolonialists, like Tiffin, a demand for “an entirely new or wholly recovered reality, free of all colonial taint”—such precolonial cultural purity—can never be fully recovered (95). Tiffin agrees that the brutalities and denigration experienced by the colonized makes the demand for an entirely new reality desirable and inevitable (95). But postcolonial cultures are hybridized, says Tiffin, and it is not possible to recreate national or regional formations that are not implicated in imperial projects (95). For that reason, decolonization involves “an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and the peripheral subversions of them, between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dismantling” (95). Such theory recognizes decolonization as a slow and deliberate process and not a forced and violent arrival.

A dialectical process of decolonization engages the question of how a post-

imperial power, like a Britain without its empire, still maintains cultural authority in postcolonial societies. In what ways are postcolonial readings, and the production of postcolonial texts, haunted by Eurocentric and neocolonial assumptions about race and nationality, gender and literature? And how can European intellectual traditions be dismantled and set aside?

The main problem, unresolved in postcolonial theory, is how to effect agency for the postcolonial subject. Fanon assumes an agent of oppositional discourse, Spivak argues that in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak (28), and Parry charges that some postcolonialists have ignored those occasions when the subaltern has spoken (36-44). Stephen Slemon twists the question of agency; given that contemporary thought has firmly fixed subjectivity in language, he argues, “[H]ow can one account for the capacity of the subject in a postcolonial society to resist imperialism and thus to intervene in the conditions which appear to construct subjectivity itself” (“Unsettling” 109-10)?

The theoretical debate about agency leads many postcolonial theorists to question whether the terrain of postcolonial studies is itself becoming colonized by competing academic methodologies. Why, for example, has English literary activity suddenly turned to the representation of educational processes in the colonial realm? Is it possible that academic interest in (post)colonialism is the newest project of global theory and European universalism itself, another mapping of the world (Slemon, “The Scramble” 49)? Slemon's call is for more tolerance of methodological difference, for a recommitment to decolonization in postcolonial studies and for local interventions that

interrupt colonial and neocolonial material realities.

4.11 The use of literature as a decolonizing tool

What interventions do theorists propose to interrupt colonial and neocolonial material realities? And how are these concerned with the educational system, curriculum and the pedagogical use of literature?

Tiffin reminds us that it simply stretches the limits of the possible to suppose that decolonization might mean the recovery of nations, regions, subjects, or disciplines unsullied and independent of the colonial endeavor (95). For that reason, resistance becomes an aesthetic principle, which thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression, with education being one of “the most potentially fruitful routes to a dis/mantling of ... old author/ity” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial* 427).

Although the study of literature had its beginnings as a “strategy of containment” (Viswanathan 437), in a somewhat unexpected reverse process, literature has come to operate as a mode by which the objectivity of narrative is contested, and particularly the narrative of history. Reading and writing have become ways in which colonized people engage discursive planes and enter otherwise forbidden battlefields of powerful European intellectual pursuits (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire* 16-33).

Resistance resides in a privileged position within (and between) two worlds, argues Tiffin, the world of the colonizer and the world of the colonized (95). She envisions a dynamic strategy of resistance, one that does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but evolves textual strategies that continually consume their own biases at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant

discourse (95-98).

Slemon draws on the notions of resistance literature and literary resistance for purposes of decolonization. Resistance literature, he says, is a category of writing that emerges as an integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation, whereas literary resistance is a reading/writing position that can be seen as a form of contractual understanding between text and reader (“Unsettling” 107-108). Slemon cites the argument posed by Jenny Sharpe in “Figures of Colonial Resistance,” that “literary resistance is necessarily in a place of ambivalence: between systems, between discursive worlds, implicit and complicit in both of them” (qtd. in “Unsettling” 108).

Literary resistance works to point out that centre/periphery notions of resistance can actually work to reinscribe centre/periphery relations and can serve an institutional function of securing the dominant narratives (Slemon, “Unsettling” 107). Informed by theories of the constructedness of subjectivity, literary resistance contests easy access to representational purity and argues that “resistance is grounded in the multiple and contradictory structures of ideological interpellation or subject-formation” (Slemon, “Unsettling” 108). Literary resistance highlights Foucault’s persuasive theory of power, that power itself inscribes its resistances and, in the process, seeks to contain them. What to read, how to read, and how to (re)write are questions central to the use of literature in the processes of decolonization with many implications for classroom instruction and practice in Canada as in other white-settler societies.

4.12 Resistant strategies of reading/writing

What is characteristic of postcolonial texts, says Tiffin, is not the construction or

reconstruction of essentially national or regional texts; what is characteristic of postcolonial texts are the subversive maneuvers which constitute fields of counter-discourse to the dominant discourse (96-97). For Tiffin, counter-discursive reading/writing strategies involve “a mapping of the dominant discourse which exposes its underlying assumptions and a dis/mantling of those assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified local” (98). In canonical counter-discourse, says Tiffin, the postcolonial reader/writer “takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, and unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes” (97). These purposes include directly contesting British sovereignty over persons, place, culture, and language; reinvesting a hybridized world with a provisionally normative perspective which is deliberately constructed as provisional; and demonstrating the subjective nature of point of view and hence the cultural construction of meaning (98).

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe the process of “writing back” as one of appropriation and abrogation. To abrogate the imperial culture means to reject, and refuse to use, the aesthetic standards, correct or normative usage, and the assumptions of the dominant or imperial discourse (41). Appropriation is the process by which the imperial language, generally English, is taken and made to bear the burden of the colonial subject’s cultural experience, conveying in a “language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own” (Raja Rao qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 60). The appropriation of English occurs in the act of writing in which the tools of English are used for textual construction and yet work to remain faithful to another culture or society.

Appropriation involves writing strategies such as glossing, selective lexical fidelity, interlanguage, syntactic fusion, and linguistic adaption (59-77).

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said proposes contrapuntal reading as a strategy of literary resistance. Contrapuntal reading takes up canonical literature along with marginalized texts, works circulated by the dominant discourse of imperialism as well as works arising from those subjugated by imperialist discourse. Contrapuntal reading gives a “simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (51). Said argues that contrapuntal readings allow the reader to simultaneously think through and interpret discrepant experiences, recognizing each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formation, internal coherence, and system of external relationships and becoming aware, at the same time, of how the experiences and the texts interact with one another (32, 51, 331, 336). This reading strategy takes account of both imperialism and resistance by extending reading to texts that were once forcibly excluded, overlapping experiences and interdependent histories of conflict. In addition, explains Said, a contrapuntal reading connects the structures of narrative to the ideas, concepts, and experiences from which it drew support. A contrapuntal, or counterpointing, reading strategy enables an appreciation of the power of ideology and an understanding of its continuing influence (51, 66, 318).

Alan Lawson calls the “neither/nor territory of white settler-colonial writing,” the “Second World” (qtd. in Slemon, “Unsettling” 104). Slemon says that the “Second World” is at root a reading position embedded by a theory of communicative action, such

as Clifford Geertz's thesis of "intermediary knowledge" or Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of an interpretive "fusion of horizons" ("Unsettling" 109). Slemon cites Alan Lawson to argue that the inherent awareness of both "here" and "there" creates a space within which the second world, postcolonial text may move while speaking ("Unsettling" 109).

The second world reading position also draws on Bhabha's theorizations of hybridity. "To be authoritative," states Bhabha, "colonial rules of recognition must reflect consensual knowledge or opinion; yet to be powerful, these rules of recognition must be breached in order to represent the 'exorbitant' objects which are outside of colonial administration" ("Signs" 34). When a discrimination is made between dominance and its subjects, as between the self and its doubles, there is a trace of what is disavowed but not repressed; that trace is repeated as something different—a mutation or a hybrid (Bhabha, "Signs" 34). Bhabha asserts that in the act of mimicry the colonized subject is produced as hybrid and that this hybrid ambivalence is the site of postcolonial resistance ("Signs" 34). The mimic man or hybrid colonized subject, then, is a contradictory figure who simultaneously reinforces colonial authority and disturbs it; mimicry is a trope of partial presence, says Bhabha, that masks a threatening racial difference only to reveal the excesses and slippages of colonial power and knowledge ("Signs" 35). Hybridity is a common and effective form of subversive opposition, because all sites of discrimination are necessarily deformed and displaced; the absence of closure that results from a less than totalizing colonial power creates a space for native intervention (Bhabha, "Signs" 34-35).

Following Bhabha, Slemon argues that the internalization of the object of resistance in second-world literatures, the initialization of the self/other binary of colonialist relations, explains why second world literary writing, rather than second-world critical writing, occupies the vanguard of a second-world post colonial literary or critical theory (“Unsettling” 109-10). Literary writing is about internalized conflict, whereas world critical writing—for most practitioners, says Slemon—is still grounded in the ideology of unitariness, coherence, and specific argumentative drive. For this reason, second world critical writing has tended to miss out on “the rigours of a necessarily ambivalent, necessarily contradictory or incoherent anti-colonialist theory of resistance” (109). The necessary entanglement of anticolonial resistances within the colonialist machineries they seek to displace is worked through and thematized in second world writing in ways that unitary and logical demands of critical argumentation simply have not allowed (109). Because the illusion of stable self/other, here/there binary divisions have never been available to second world writers, figural contestations between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized have been taken inward and internalized in second world postcolonial textual practice (109-10).

The ambivalence of literary resistance is itself the “always already” condition of second world settlers and postcolonial literary writing. In white-settler societies, resistance is not directed at an object or a discursive structure that is purely external to the self; “The second world writer and second world text have always been complicit in colonialism's territorial appropriation of land and voice and agency and this has been their inescapable condition even at those moments when they have promulgated their

most strident and most spectacular figures of post-colonial resistance” (Slemon, “Unsettling” 110).

Slemon speculates that the ambivalent, mediated, conditional, radically compromised literatures of the indefinable second world may yet have an enormous amount to tell theory about the nature of literary resistance. Precisely because of their filiative metaphors of connection with a post-imperial or neocolonial centre, white-settler colonies and their literatures problematize the idea of resistance as a simple binary, and address the issue of complicity in all opposition discourse (Slemon, “Unsettling” 110).

4.13 Replacing “liberation” with “resistance”

Tiffin, Bhabha, JanMohamed, Parry, Slemon, and Sharp all work to examine the ways in which resistance in reading and writing must go beyond the mere questioning of colonialist authority. The word “liberation” implies a clean extraction from, or reversal of, oppressive power—an unfeasible undertaking. Sara Suleri tells us there is an incipient schizophrenia in a critical discourse that seeks to represent domination and subordination as though the two were mutually exclusive terms (111-13). Rather, the “necessary intimacies” (Suleri 112) of the ruler and ruled produce complicit subjectivities and an “always already” counter-culture of hybridity and ambiguity. Notions of liberation are more usefully replaced by notions of resistance, recognizing that even resistance itself is never purely resistance but is always complicit in the discourses of word and world that it seeks to transgress.

My focus in this chapter has been the operation of language. The language, curriculum and literature imposed in colonial and postcolonial realms as mechanisms of

control and regulatory techniques produced, and continue to produce, normalized subjects who reproduce the harmful conditions of rule within their own selves. It is also on the levels of language, curriculum and literature, and within the comprised and hybridized identities of the second world reader and writer, that resistance in the form of counter-discursive reading and writing practices can be staged. Tiffin's theory of a counter-discursive strategy that maps dominant discourses, exposes their underlying assumptions and in such a way, works to dismantle those assumptions propels me toward the next stage of this present work.

As a compromised, hybridized member of a white-settler society interested in subverting canonical texts for postcolonial purposes, I need a functional method for making the dominant discourses of texts visible and open to critique. In the next chapter, I look to Foucault for a precisely-articulated perspective of the dominant discourse of modern Enlightenment, and on the basis of the structure of modernity that he establishes in *The Order of Things*, I construct a method to map dominant modernist discourses as they operate in curricular literature.

5. FOLLOWING FOUCAULT: *THE ORDER OF THINGS*

5.1 Introduction

“Tell all the Truth but tell it slant” (Emily Dickinson 775).

“All things counter ... spare, strange” (Gerard Manley Hopkins 857).

I spent a summer with Foucault. While I sat on the sand, walked on the beach, dropped anchor in a quiet cove, I found that Foucault spoke to me through his text, *The Order of Things*, and I tried to understand. Finally, when the leaves fell and the cottages were emptying, I had sketches in my hand and a notion for a different way of doing literature analysis percolating in my mind.

In Chapter Four, I explored the discursive formation of historical narratives, the establishment and consolidation of imperial regimes through the variable and complex functions of discourse, the subjectification of people to dominant powers through imposed language and literature studies, and the possibility of counter-discursive reading and writing practices in settler societies. Of particular interest to me is Tiffin’s perspective of literary resistance to be accomplished by mapping the dominant discourse and so working to dismantle it.

What I need at this point in my thesis research is a representation of the features that structure the discourse of modernity, so that I can recognize its traces in the literature I study, holding in mind the underlying understanding that signifying systems are always in a state of change. The explorations that I have begun in theories of subjectivity, in a genealogy that outlines the construction of normative and harmful subjectivity, and in historical narratives of (post)colonial inscriptions and resistances can be traced by using Foucault’s text *The Order of Things*. Based on Foucault’s detailed and articulate

description of what he called the modern episteme, I am able to produce pictorial representations that arrange, for me, a vision of modernist discourse; and the charts and diagrams that I construct lead me to understandings that help to formulate a new and different method of mapping modernist discourses in curricular literature.

In this chapter of my dissertation, I record how I am following Foucault to construct a fresh approach to analyzing curricular literature; in doing so, this chapter contains the key to my dissertation. The argument that undergirds my thesis is that mapping dominant modernist discourses at work in curricular literature is made possible through the ““Reading from the Margins”” method of literary analysis which follows from Foucault’s description of the modern episteme in *The Order of Things*, and that such a mapping serves the postcolonial interests of disrupting and dismantling a hegemonic order that supports white supremacy.

In following Foucault, I find my motivation for resistance work in the recollection that the study of literature was/is a central player in (re)establishing a hegemonic order that supports white supremacy in white-settler societies and that it continues to adversely (re)produce students as normalized subjects. I find encouragement for the task of disruption in the words of Bhabha, that a hybrid colonizer/colonized identity provides a space for intervening against colonial power (“Signs” 34); I sense that as a citizen of a white-settler society, I am in a “Second World” reading and writing position, which is a critical maneuver of communicative action on the boundaries of intermediary knowledge and at the fusion of horizons of both “here” and “there” (Slemon, “Unsettling” 110); and I see that, in this thesis, I am creating, as Tiffin theorized, a counter-discursive reading strategy that involves a “mapping of the dominant discourse exposing its underlying

assumptions and dismantling those assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified local” (98). Informed by theories of the constructedness of subjectivity, I accept that the literary resistance in which I engage contests easy access to representational purity and that my “resistance is grounded in multiple and contradictory structures of ideological interpellation or subject-formation” (Slemon, “Unsettling” 108).

To lead the reader to an understanding of how I formulated a deconstructive method of literature analysis, I will try to trace my steps in reading Foucault. To begin, Foucault’s study of the human sciences is situated in the theoretical moves of the late 1960s and 1970s—a conglomeration of theories, methods and perspectives that we have come to call poststructuralism. I will explain his archaeology of the human sciences, using Foucault’s “remembered” words and my own. I will demonstrate how sketching his models of the human sciences led me to formulate my “own” deconstructive method, and what the use of this method might allow and foreclose in the study of literature.

5.2 Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is itself a contested word—rightly so—since “poststructuralism” and “contesting” are words that are often conjured up together. As a movement of thought, poststructuralism is decidedly interdisciplinary and embodies many different forms of critical practice (Lather 4-6). Like postmodernism, poststructuralism is incredulous about metanarratives. It contests scientific pretensions of social inquiry, including Enlightenment norms of truth, objectivity, and progress and questions the humanism underlying traditional accounts of the unified, autonomous, and transparent self (Lather 20-22). In critiquing dominant institutions and modes of thinking, speaking, and writing, poststructuralism asks us to see the danger or harm even in what we take to

be “good” (Peters and Burbules 4). It rejects the established picture of knowledge as an adequate representation of reality; against transcendent arguments, poststructuralism pits many-sided perspectivism. It diagnoses and critiques entrenched binary oppositions and unmasks the way they manufacture value that arbitrarily privileges one term over another (St. Pierre and Pillow 6-8). Poststructuralism exposes structures of domination by diagnosing power/knowledge relations and the way these are manifested in our classifications, examinations, practices, and institutions. It highlights the centrality of language to human activity and culture, and focuses attention on the pervasive ideological nature of language (St. Pierre 480-84).

Poststructuralist work provides new practices of reading and experimental forms of writing, resulting in new coinages of familiar terms and as such, has high relevance to pedagogical endeavors. St. Pierre and Pillow say that feminist poststructuralist educators “ask questions that produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently, thereby producing different ways of living in the world” (1). Reinforcing skepticism of talk and text as unproblematic sources of information, examining governmentality in the context of disciplining institutions and practices, and questioning subjectivity, poststructuralists who follow Foucault not only propel educational research but situate educational research itself as implicated in the power/knowledge nexus (Rabinow 12-22). For example, in studying classification systems in educational institutions, how does research itself become a classification system? In exposing the disciplinary function of curriculum in the construction of subjectivity, how does research itself become a technique of surveillance and discipline?

Poststructuralism is a specific philosophical response—motivated by the work of Nietzsche and Heidegger—against the social scientific pretensions of structuralism (Peters and Burbules 8). Developed from the theories of Saussure and Jakobson, structuralism is a form of linguistic analysis of discourse that undermines humanist and romantic assumptions about intentionality, creativity and the speaker or author's meaning (Peters and Burbules 8). Under the influence of Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Althusser, Jacques Lacan, Foucault, and others, poststructuralism developed into a framework for the semiotic and linguistic analysis of society, economy, and culture as a series of functionally interrelated sign systems (Peters and Burbules 8). Poststructuralism seeks to decentre the structures, the systematicity and scientific status of structuralism, to critique its underlying metaphysics and to extend it in a number of different directions while preserving structuralism's critique of the humanist subject (Peters and Burbules 12-15). Where structuralism is the study of the life of signs within a society, poststructuralism is the study of society, economy, and culture as functionally interrelated sign systems (Peters and Burbules 12-15). In other words, poststructuralism asserts that:

... in the same way that language is structured by a grammar and other rules that allow us to organize our speech intelligibly, even when we are not aware of and cannot articulate those structures, so too are cultures and societies organized by structures that the participants may not be aware of, but which nevertheless give their social practices and institutions coherence and meaning (Peters and Burbules 15).

Poststructuralism emphasizes the constitution of self, and self-regulation, and the subject's corporeality, temporality, finitude, unconscious, and libidinal energy as well as

its historical and cultural location (Peters and Burbules 2-4). As a movement of thought responding to the alleged scientific status of structuralism, poststructuralism embodies many different forms of critical practice. These methods or approaches, which include archaeology, genealogy, and deconstruction among others, are united in that they tend to emphasize notions of difference, local determinacy, historical breaks, serialization, repetitions, and a disassembling of dominant discourses (Peters and Burbules 5).

Choosing a theoretical standpoint in poststructuralism, I am interested in Foucault's archaeology of knowledge and deconstruction of the human sciences. Yet, the question of whether Foucault himself was a poststructuralist has been the occasion for considerable debate. Piaget, for example, judged him to be a structuralist, a bad one at that; for one thing, he said Foucault confused the individual subject with the epistemic subject (qtd. in Peters and Burbules 17). Ladelle McWhorter suggests that some commentators judge Foucault's early works of archaeology (*The Archaeology of Knowledge, The Order of Things*) to be structuralist, but his later genealogical works (*Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality*) to be poststructuralist (77-78).

Dreyfus and Rabinow argue that Foucault's archaeology is quasi-structuralist and that he operates on a theoretical plane somewhere between structuralism and hermeneutics (*Beyond Structuralism* xix-xx). Other commentators say that Foucault stands as a transitional figure between structuralism and poststructuralism (Peters and Burbules 25). Foucault, however, claims that he is not trying to be a structuralist, that he has never been a structuralist, and that those who persist in labeling him a structuralist are "half-witted" (*The Order* xv). He does acknowledge that the problem addressed by structuralism—"that of the subject and the recasting of the subject"—is a problem close to

his own academic interests, but claims that he does not use any of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterize structural analysis (*The Order* xiv-xv).

In an interview given in 1968, however, Foucault connects his work with structuralism (at least as emerging from an understanding of structuralism), stating:

In a positive manner, we can say that structuralism investigates above all an unconscious ... One could describe structuralism roughly as the search for logical structures everywhere they occur ... one tries to bring out the logical correlations that can exist among a great number of elements belonging to a language, to an ideology ... to a society ... or to different fields of knowledge, which is what I myself have studied (qtd. in Peters and Burbules 26).

Despite the lingering suspicion of structuralism, however, Foucault's legacy has certainly been taken up in poststructuralism; the perspectives and problematics posed by Foucault's critical approach to discourse as a language/power/knowledge construct both compel and propel many researchers who self-identify as poststructuralist.

While Foucault's archaeological methods of historical and textual analysis are viewed as more static than his genealogical ones, which follow from Nietzsche, Foucault does not draw a distinction between these two (McWhorter 77-78). He might be more inclined to call his method of work a technique of thought, or a practice. Foucault suggests that none of our concepts or ways of understanding the world are stable through time and that all of his major works are genealogies because they are all interested in subjectivity (McWhorter 78). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault states:

Discourse in general, and scientific discourse in particular, is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different

methods. If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity—which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of scientific discourse should, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice (xv).

Part of Foucault's genius may be the fact that he prefers not to identify himself as only one particular kind of theorist and thus leaves his work open to deployment and redirection in many fields and disciplines.

Fifty years after poststructuralist work is said to have begun, Foucault's understanding of the subject, in all of its historical and cultural complexity, continues to impel poststructuralist projects. Foucault, say Dreyfus and Rabinow, views the subject as decentered within language, as discursively constituted, and as positioned at the intersection of libidinal forces and sociocultural practices (*Beyond Structuralism* 168-83). "My objective," Foucault says, "has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" ("Subject and Power" 208). The main themes of Foucault's work focus around three modes of objectification of the subject. These include dividing practices, as, for example, the spatial or social isolation of lepers or prisoners or others defined as marginal in which "the subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself or from others" (Foucault, "Subject and Power" 208); scientific classification, as, for example, objectivizing the speaking, producing, living subject in linguistics, economics, and biology as explicated in *The Order of*

Things; and subjectification or self-formation as, for example, processes of self-understanding mediated by external authority figures (Rabinow 9-12). Rabinow says that it is important not to draw too sharp a line between these processes and that they can be effectively combined even though they are analytically distinguishable (Rabinow 11). Foucault writes, “There are two meanings of the word *subject*; subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to” (“Subject and Power”, 212). Dreyfus and Rabinow say that in Foucault’s writings the concept of society and the rise of the modern individual are joint developments, the effects of specific forms of power; human beings are born embodied and sexed, but are vulnerable, malleable, and variously constituted as selves by the practices and strategies of normalization and individualization that characterize modern institutions (*Beyond Structuralism* 143-44).

5.3 Deconstruction

As suggested in Chapter One, Foucault’s work can be usefully considered in reference to another French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. Derrida coined the term “deconstruction” in the late 1960s, says Jonathan Culler, to propose a way of reading that critiques the hierarchical oppositions that have structured western thought—oppositions such as inside/outside, mind/body, presence/absence, speech/writing, male/female, model/copy (169). In binary couplets, the preference of the first term always works at the expense or exclusion of the other, subordinated term. Pitching one term against the other, however, fails to recognize that each term both differs from and defers to the other term and that a privileged term depends on a subordinate term for its meaning; a clear-cut

division between terms, then, is an impossibility and points to the unstable nature of meaning. To deconstruct, says Culler, is to show that oppositions are not natural and inevitable, but constructed by discourses; dismantling oppositions through deconstruction works to reinscribe meaning, giving texts a different structure and function (169).

Barbara Johnson, who translated and provided an introduction to Derrida's work *Dissemination*, says that the word "de-construction" is closely related, not to the word "destruction," but to the word "analysis," which etymologically means to "undo;" to deconstruct a text means to carefully tease out the "warring forces of signification," destroying, not the meaning of a text, but the claim of "unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another" (xv). This suggests, of course, that a text can signify in more than one way and that, through various strategies, a deconstructive reading breaks open explicit statements. For example, deconstructive readings articulate discrepancies that occur in double-edged words; show how figurative and literal levels of statements are at odds with one another; and demonstrate that the presuppositions of the starting point of an argument are problematic to the conclusions or that the argument is circular (Johnson xv). A deconstructive reading, says Johnson, does not point out the flaws, weaknesses, or stupidities of an author, but shows how what the author sees is necessarily and systematically related to what she or he does not see (xv-xvi). In close readings that attend to the textual unconscious and that investigate the workings of power and how subjects are made objects, Foucault's methods of archaeology and genealogy have been made to work in concert with deconstructive analyses.

5.4 Discourse analysis

In *Doing Discourse Analysis: Methods for Studying Action in Talk and Text*, Linda Wood and Rolf Kroger define discourse analysis as the study of how language flows or unfolds rather than a study of sentence-based stylistics or linguistics (xv). They base their perspective on a definition by Jonathan Potter, which states that discourse analysis “has an analytic commitment to studying texts and talk in social practices” (qtd. in Wood and Kroger 4). James Paul Gee says that discourse analysis is concerned with a theory and method for studying how the details of language get recruited in specific times and locations to produce specific social activities and social identities (1). Discourse analysis is based on the notion that speakers make sense of utterances because they are embedded within assumptions and expectations about what speech is and how it functions (Wood and Kroger 4-5). The body of knowledge shared by a community shapes the norms of intelligibility, which will determine whether or not a statement is perceived as true, clear, or relevant (Wood and Kroger 5).

According to J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things With Words*, discourse analysis distinguishes between two types of utterances: a performative speech-act performs an action, such as naming a ship, while a constative speech-act is a simple statement of fact, such as “this is a big ship” (1-10). Truth criteria are applied to constative utterances but not to performative ones. Performative speech acts can only succeed or fail depending on the context; the social frame that surrounds the speech-act governs its appropriateness (Austin 1-10). Derrida, however, argues that Austin fails to pursue his insights concerning the classification of performatives and constatives, stating that performatives

in particular can only work if they repeat a codified or iterable form of regular speech (qtd. in Culler 169).

As perhaps the most influential theorist to have emerged in the postmodern theoretical world, Foucault's presence haunts the term "discourse" and notions of discursive performance. While Foucault's projects examine discourse in large units such as systems, institutions, histories, and subjectivities, discourse analysis conventionally attends to shorter units of discourse in the form of words, sentences, conversations, and paragraphs. As do discourse analysts, Foucault rejects the assumption that there is an internal or external world that can be known separately from its construction in discourse (Wood and Kroger 28). In *Beyond Structuralism*, Dreyfus and Rabinow contend that Foucault is only interested in serious speech acts in the human sciences, what experts say when they are speaking as experts (xxiv). Dreyfus and Rabinow argue that Foucault is interested in how social institutions influence discursive practices, treats what is said in the human sciences as a discourse-object, and raises genealogical questions such as: how are discourses used and what role do they play in society (*Beyond Structuralism* xxiv-xxv)? Foucault's approach to discourse comes in the form of examining the matrix of language, power, and knowledge.

Foucault states that there are no definite methodological principles on which to base an analysis for what has caused a specific change in a science. Instead of concerning himself with causality, Foucault chooses to confine himself to describing the transformations themselves (*The Order* xiii-xiv). Foucault argues that history is not as continuous, ordered, or capable of order as historians would have us believe; it is discontinuous with breaks and ruptures between "stories" and patterns of development

and evolution (qtd. in James Marshall 32-33). Instead of gradual, steady, progressive change, Foucault observes that forms of knowledge sometimes undergo rapid transformations, which result, not only in a change in the content of a discourse, but also a change in what counts as knowledge (*The Order* xii). Rather than treating sudden and thorough changes in very different disciplines as if they could be reduced to a single culminating point or attributed to a single discovery, a new collective spirit or the genius of an individual, Foucault states that it would be better to respect such differences and try to grasp them in their specificity (*The Order* xii-xiii). What needs to be identified in the human sciences, says Foucault, are the historical conditions that make certain discourses or truths possible; for example, why do children of the same age follow essentially the same syllabus across formal systems of education (qtd. in Marshall 31)?

In showing how our words and concepts fit into discursive formations—layers of thinking and acting—Foucault also shows how our lives and thinking are ordered. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault's analysis of the human sciences demonstrates that the very concept of “man” was constituted in modern thought as a result of a unique set of historical contingencies and specific relationships of power (375-77). If we can trace the moment “man” came into existence, says Foucault, we can predict his end (420-22). The theory of the death of man, or more specifically, the death of the concept of man as the self-contained, rational agent and knowing subject, spells disaster for some and hope for others (Stuart Sim 212). While it diminishes the importance of the individual agent, it also opens “the way to a future thought” (Foucault, *The Order* 421), a theoretical possibility that the urge to classify, dominate, exclude, and exploit, which derives from the notion of the knowing subject, could also come to an end (Sim 212).

5.5 Genealogy and archaeology

Dreyfus and Rabinow state that Foucault has developed a method for studying human beings and for diagnosing the current situation of our society (*Beyond Structuralism* 1). Foucault terms his own work, somewhat arbitrarily, as either archaeological, genealogical or, since they all revolve around subjectivity, conflates them under the umbrella of genealogical projects (McWhorter 78).

A genealogy is an investigation into the combined possibilities and necessities of a form of life; to write a genealogy requires patience and knowledge of details; “its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 76-83). Following Nietzsche, Foucault develops a genealogical method that traces the relationship between truth, theory, and values in the social institutions and practices in which they emerge (Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism* xxv).

Archaeology “is a potent metaphor for excavations of a more subjective nature” (Sims 211). Foucault’s archaeological dig is the unconscious of the episteme (or epistemological field)—the assumptions, expectations, values, drives, desires, and beliefs of a society at a particular historical moment (Sim 211-12). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault seeks to uncover the formational rules and systematic factors which shaped human life during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, a period of time—in the western world—which began with the Renaissance and the rise of humanism and Enlightenment thought, spanned the period of industrialization, and ended with the transformation to the modern age.

As a technique, explain Dreyfus and Rabinow, archaeology serves genealogy (*Beyond Structuralism* xxv). What is available to study in both an archaeology and genealogy are practices shaped differently in different historical eras, and sets of practices, both discursive and institutional, that come to characterize a particular epistemological field (Peters and Burbules 55). What is critical for both archaeological and genealogical methods of study is awareness that knowledge in the human sciences is not disinterested, neutral or value-free, but rather, is intrinsic to relations of power.

While the density of Foucault's writing attests to his attention to specific detail in context and relationships, Foucault also views his text/representation as an "open site," one in which there are still gaps and unresolved questions, thus inferring a necessary incompleteness and postmodern provisionality even to his own projects (*The Order* xii). Specifically, Foucault feels that he has laid out questions about the problem of change, of causality, and of the subject, for which he has not yet found answers (*The Order* xv).

5.6 The Order of Things: archaeology of the human sciences

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault asks whether the history of non-formal knowledge itself has a system. To answer the question, he conducts a comparative study in which the knowledge of living beings, the knowledge of the laws of nature, and the knowledge of economic facts are related to the philosophical discourse contemporary with them from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. His object of study is modernist knowledge, what Foucault calls the domain of "the modern episteme" (378) in the form of "the human sciences" (379) that takes as its object wo/man "as an empirical entity" (375).

A note to the reader may be in order as I begin to relate Foucault's theory of the human sciences. Throughout *The Order of Things*, Foucault refers to human beings generically as "man." Instead of drenching the following discussion with the noun "man" and the pronoun "he," I have chosen to privilege "woman" in the woman/man binary. This necessarily complicates the use of third person pronouns as well, for which I have chosen the similar strategy of writing "s/he."

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault uncovers the historical, theoretical, epistemological, foundational, and constituent elements of subjectivity. His discussion is generally organized into triads—three historical periods that gave rise to the figure of wo/man, three epistemological regions, three empirical sciences, three constituent models. The history of modernist knowledge, then, is a history of the adoption of one dominant analytical model as differentiated from another—a gradual movement through the classical period followed by an abrupt change at the beginning of the modern age (375-78). In the modern age, Foucault notes, there is a shift from function to meaning, and a shift away from an emphasis on processes accessible to consciousness to an emphasis on rules or norms that govern structures or systems and constitute subjectivity (Peters and Burbules 41). Tracing Foucault's description of the relationships between the concepts that establish the human sciences, I assembled a table, Triads of the Human Sciences as described by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (392-98).

Table 1

Triads of the Human Sciences as Described by Foucault in *The Order of Things*

Historical Periods	18th Century - Renaissance and Romantic Age	19th Century - Industrialization and Communism	20th Century - Modern Age
Representative Theorists	Comte	Marx	Freud
Empiricities	Biology	Economics	Philology
Positivities	Life	Labour	Language
Epistemological Regions	Psychology	Sociology	Linguistics
Ana-epistemologies	Finitude	Relativity	Perspective
Foundational Repetitions	Death	Desire	Law
Forms of Finitude	Duplication that characterizes wo/man's mode of being	Unthought at the heart of thought	An origin more distant than itself
Primary Frontiers or Constituent Models	Function and norm	Conflict and rule	Signification/meaning and system
Secondary Constituent Models	Conflict and rule Significations and system	Function and norm Signification and system	Function and norm Conflict and rule
Loci	Where the living being opens itself to the possibility of representation	Where the labouring, producing, consuming individual offers herself/himself a representation of the society in which this activity occurs; of the groups and individuals among which it is divided; of imperatives, sanctions, rites, festivities and beliefs	Where the study of literature and myth, the analysis of the verbal traces of a culture or an individual, laws and forms of a language hold sway but nevertheless remain on the edge of themselves, enabling wo/man to introduce into them the play of her/his representations

5.7 *Reading from the Margins: A framework for deconstruction in literary studies*

following Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences

Following Foucault's tendency to describe his vision in triads, I constructed three analytical models as I worked toward a framework for a deconstruction of modernist knowledge that would be useful in the study of literature. One model follows from the other.

5.7.1 *Primary model*

All knowledge in the classical period—mid seventeenth to early nineteenth century—says Foucault, ordered its material by the establishment of differences. This created a path leading from the simplest to the most composite truths. However, from the nineteenth century onward, the epistemological field became fragmented, exploding in different directions (Foucault, *The Order* 377-78). Three primary dimensions of that explosion can be seen in the disciplines of empirical sciences, deductive sciences and philosophical reflection (378-79).

5.7.2 *Primary model—figure one*

To work towards an understanding of Foucault's theories of modernist knowledge, I constructed a cube, entitled "The Modern Episteme (Primary Model)," presented on page 140 (Fig. 1). A volume of space, representing modernist knowledge, is opened by three dimensions: empirical sciences; deductive sciences; and philosophical reflection. The labels and descriptions on the diagram are drawn from Foucault's words in *The Order of Things*.

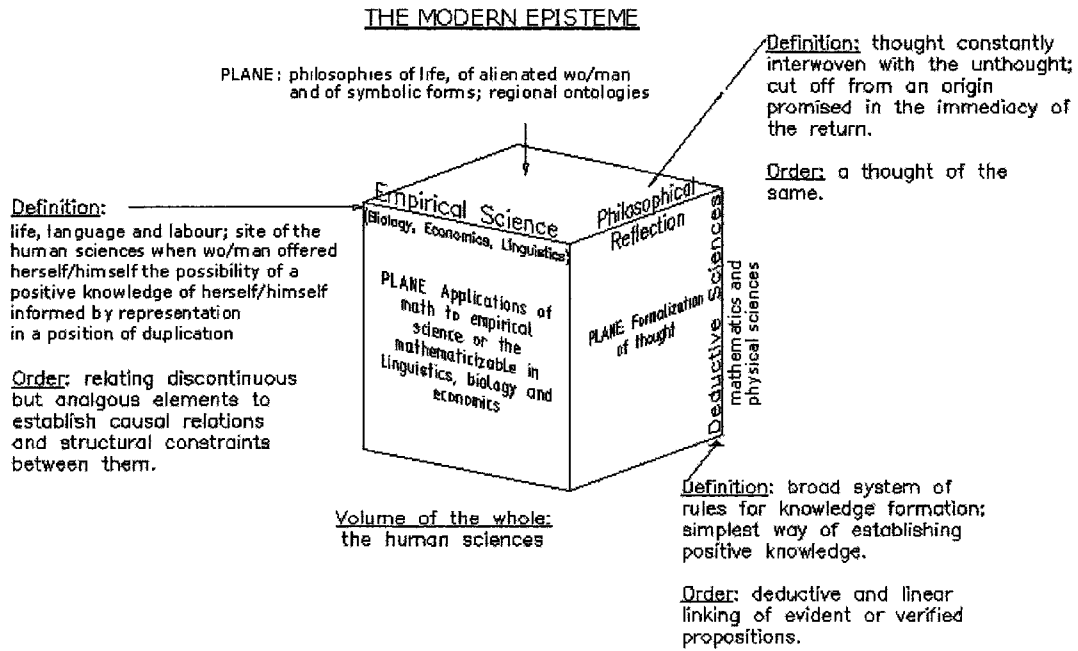


Fig. 1. The Modern Episteme (Primary Model), conceptualized by Audrey Barkman Hill based on Foucault's *The Order of Things*, and electronically formatted by DecisionWorks.

The general arrangement of modernist knowledge provides a site for “the human sciences” which exist, says Foucault, wherever there is an analysis of norms, rules, and systems that unveil to the consciousness the conditions of its forms and contents. Modernist knowledge summons and establishes “the human sciences” and enables them to constitute wo/man as their object. The visual image of “the modern episteme” is important to me because it models a deconstructive way to speak about epistemology as a body of discourse and allows me to see that modernist knowledge will concern itself uniquely with what Foucault calls “the human sciences” and human subjectivity. Pursuing an analysis of literature with an aim to map the dominant discourses of modernity within it, then, will mean focusing on systems, rules, and norms in the construction of human subjectivity.

5.7.3 *Primary model—figure two*

Foucault tells us that contemporaneous with, and of the same origin as the empirical sciences of biology, economics and philology, wo/man constituted herself/himself in western culture as both “that which must be conceived of and that which is to be known” (*The Order* 376). In the second diagram, entitled “The Figure of Wo/man: Subjectivity (Primary Model),” presented on page 143 (Fig. 2), I have again drawn a cube which represents wo/man as both subject and object, as both the knower and the known; in other words, the cube represents Foucault’s theories about subjectivity as expressed in *The Order of Things*. Foucault explains that this figure, situated within the volume of the human sciences “in the direction of the empirical sciences and philosophical reflection,” makes it possible most clearly to define “the human sciences,” or modernist knowledge. The dimensions that produce the figure of subjectivity are those

of the empirical sciences of biology (life), economics (labour), and philology (language). The wording on the diagram repeats Foucault's definitions of life, labour, and language as they relate to human beings. The volume of the cube represents Foucault's description of human subjectivity as presented in *The Order of Things*.

THE FIGURE OF WO/MAN: SUBJECTIVITY

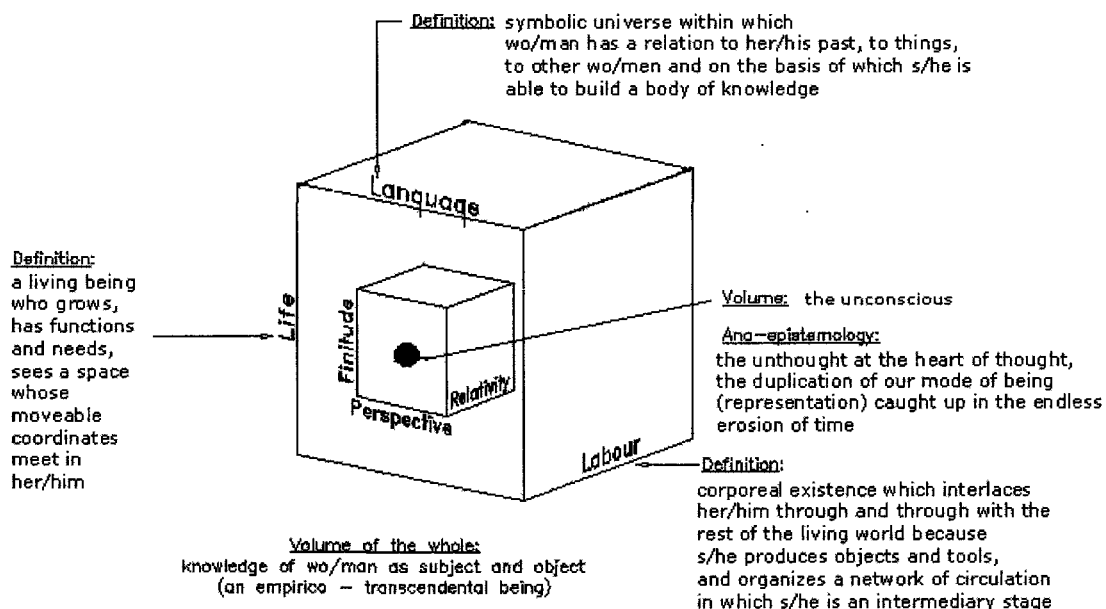


Fig. 2. The Figure of Wo/Man: Subjectivity (Primary Model), conceptualized by Audrey Barkman Hill based on Foucault's *The Order of Things*, and electronically formatted by DecisionWorks.

In modernist knowledge or “the human sciences,” states Foucault, an analysis can be made “that extends from what [wo/man] is in [her/his] positivity (living, speaking, labouring, being) to what enables this same being to know (or seek to know) what life is, in what the essence of labour and its laws consist, and in what way [s/he] is able to speak” (*The Order* 385). Drawing the diagram of “The Figure of Wo/man” helped me to understand that in order to describe the formation or constitution of subjectivity in modernist discourses, I would also need to attend to matters of life, labour, and language within the discursive system of the text under study. The definitions provided by Foucault alerted me to ways that I might proceed to investigate life, labour, and language in literature analysis in each of these three dimensions by asking questions of identity and meaning, such as: Who grows? and How is s/he interlaced with the rest of the living world?

Inside/outside of subjectivity, or the figure of wo/man, is a third cube which represents the limits of the human subject/object, unveiling, says Foucault, the unconscious as the most fundamental object of modernist knowledge. This cube’s structure is the analytic of finitude, a zone of representation in a play of relativity from which knowledge and wo/man cannot escape (*The Order* 396-97). Representation, says Foucault, is the general pedestal upon which the human sciences are based and the field upon which they occur (396). The figures of Death or finitude, Law or perspective, and Desire or relativity, form the liminal zone between the unconscious and the (un)conscious and operate in the production of subjectivity as devastating norms (409). According to Foucault, ethnology, psychoanalysis, and linguistics are privileged sciences in modernist

knowledge because they provide an analysis of norms, rules, and systems, partially unveiling what is unconscious to consciousness (407-21).

Drawing a diagram of subjectivity following Foucault's description in *The Order of Things* helped me to envision the field of representation within which a positive knowledge of oneself is made. Recognizing the binary relationship between life and death, I also considered how perspective present in the law or rule becomes the opposing and complementary term to language, while desire and relativity become the opposing and complementary terms to labour. For me, the diagram helped to situate notions of unconscious processes that structure discursive systems and constitute subjectivity, of some of the dangers, attractions, and difficulties that are implicit within the process of bringing the systems, rules and norms of which we are often unconscious to consciousness, and of the necessity to continually disrupt the binary constructions of dominant modernist discourses if such discourses are to be deconstructed.

5.7.4 *Secondary model*

Foucault tells us that things attain to existence only insofar as they are able to form the elements of a signifying system. Because a human being has a language, s/he can constitute a whole symbolic universe for herself/himself (Foucault, *The Order* 383). In modernist knowledge, wo/man is the living being who constitutes representations by means of which s/he lives. To discover modernist discourses at work, one would need to examine, explains Foucault, the way in which individuals and groups represent to themselves the life in which they live, and the way they represent to themselves the partners with whom they produce or exchange (384). The modes in which they clarify, ignore, or mask the productive function, the positions they occupy in the economic

system, the manners in which they represent to themselves the society in which their life takes place, and the ways they feel themselves integrated or isolated, dependent, subject, or free—these are components for examination in a study of modernist discourses, and of their object/subject, human beings (384-85).

Each discourse provides its own coherence and its own validity and can be examined from the point of view of the norm, the rule, and the system, states Foucault (*The Order* 393). Because systems are isolated, rules form closed wholes, and norms exist in their autonomy, it is not possible to speak of insignificant discourses (393). Foucault insists that everything may be thought within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm (393).

To make an epistemological field explicit, declares Foucault, an analytical attempt will be made to define the way in which individuals and groups represent words to themselves, utilize their forms and meanings, compose real discourse, and reveal and conceal in it what they are thinking or saying, perhaps unknown to themselves (*The Order* 385). The verbal traces of an individual, group or society will be deciphered (385). The human sciences (or modernist knowledge) consider what wo/man is in her/his positivity as a living, speaking, labouring being (385). By positivities, Foucault means what characterizes the unity of a discourse through time (Peters and Burbules 43). As such, the term positivity seems closely connected to the notion of a power/knowledge construct. What is it that enables the human being to know, or seek to know, the answers to these questions: What is life? What is labour? What are laws? In what way what am I able to speak? The human sciences treat as an object (representation) that which is, in fact, their condition of possibility. Foucault states that in “the modern episteme, the

human sciences are forced to attend to the meanings we give things rather than to the things themselves” (*The Order* 385-86).

Drawing the primary models of the modern episteme and subjectivity led me to sketch “The Secondary Model,” a preliminary method for examining and deconstructing modernist discourses in curricular literature. The secondary model is a graph with two axes, which takes, on one plane, the three dimensions that, according to Foucault, form “the human sciences” or the figure of wo/man (subjectivity), and asks the questions of identity (who?) and meaning (how?) of each of the three dimensions—life, labour and language. The second plane of the graph contains the second terms of Foucault's constituent models, highlighting Foucault's insistence that everything can be thought within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm (*The Order* 380).

Table 2

The Secondary Model

Who? How?	Systems	Rules	Norms
Lives	Who lives within the system? How does the system structure life?	Who lives under the law or rule? How does rule control life?	Who lives as a normal member of society? How do the norms regulate who lives?
Speaks	Who speaks within the system? How does the system order speech and silence?	Who speaks the laws or rules? How do rules legislate speech?	Who speaks the norms? How do norms regulate speakers?
Produces	Who produces within the system? How does the system organize producers?	Who produces the laws or rules? How do laws or rules control producers?	Who produces the norms? How do the norms regulate producers?

5.7.5 Tertiary model

Foucault repeatedly states that it is not that, or only that, the human being is the content of study in modernist knowledge, but that object is also subject; the known is also the knower. Subject and object are bound together in a reciprocal questioning of one another. All that is studied is deflected towards a human being's subjectivity (*The Order* 386-87). Foucault poses three questions regarding subjectivity: how do people understand themselves as knowers; how are people subjected in power relations; and how do people establish themselves as moral agents (qtd. in McWhorter 78)?

Foucault's theories lead to the understanding that life, labour, and language ordered by rule, norm, and system are the basis on which wo/man is able to present herself/himself to a possible knowledge (*The Order* 414). Following Foucault, a deconstructive study defines as a dominant discourse (or a system of cultural unconsciousness), the structures that give significance to myth, coherence, and necessity to the rules that regulate needs, and a foundation for the norms of life other than to be found in nature or in pure biological functions (414). Deflected toward subjectivity, however, such a critical examination is an open-ended project; wo/man is constantly unveiling and demystifying herself/himself (393-97).

The tertiary model I have created—"Reading from the Margins"—amplifies the questions that can be asked under the banner of the second term of Foucault's constituent models—systems, rules, and norms. I have constructed this model by following Foucault's observations that a discussion of literature explores systems as the primary constituent term. However, all three terms inform one another and the secondary constituent

terms—rules and norms—add depth to the questions that can be raised in the study of literature.

In creating the framework of the tertiary model, I considered all of the tables and models following from Foucault that I had previously drawn. From the two primary models, I drew the understanding that all my study questions should be directed towards subjectivity in the areas of life, labour, and laws as ordered by rule, norm and system. From Table 1, I drew examples for questions about the discursive locations of life, labour, and language. From the secondary model (Table 2), I drew the understanding that the questions to be asked of rules, norms, and system about life, labour, and laws on the tertiary model should be those of meaning and identity. Other questions on the tertiary model framework consider the devastating norm of death and the limiting and defining roles of perspective and desire. I recognize from reading Foucault that my own subjectivity is interrogated when I study literature and that, in modernist thought, the unmasking process is endless. From this, I drew the understanding that, while signifying systems or dominant discourses can be recognized and described, such descriptions will, of necessity, be incomplete and open to change, because subjectivity and signifying systems are always in a state of flux. In totality, the questions on the tertiary model reflect Foucault's suggestions from Chapter 10 in *The Order of Things*, about how “the human sciences” make wo/man visible and intelligible, as well as about how subjects are entangled with the systems they produce and that produce them (384-400).

Table 3

Reading from the Margins—A Foucauldian Framework for Textual Analysis

(Tertiary Model)

Systems What does the system look like?	Rules What rules manage daily life?	Norms How do the rules enable a normal way of life?
Who lives at the centre of society? Who lives in the margins of society? Who is absent? Who is integrated? Who is isolated? Who occupies liminal space? Who is external to the system? How do people relate to others? How are people divided or put into groups? What similar patterns are repeated in social arrangements? What things consistently stay the same? What are the contradictions? What is changeable? Where are the gaps? Who speaks? How does he/she speak? Who is silent? What is so well understood that it is silent? Where is the silence? What possibilities are silenced? Who produces? What is produced and how? Who benefits from production?	What rules or laws are advanced or championed? What is imperative? Who produces the laws or rules? Who or what is to be regulated? How are people regulated? What is produced and how? Who benefits from production? Who suffers? What is lost? What is prohibited or taboo? What limitations are put on people? How is conflict expressed, evaded, reduced, solved? How are people rejected? How are needs expressed? satisfied? Who wins? Who loses? What are the totems or expressed fundamental beliefs? What is seen as the truth? Who is understood to speak the truth? What is sayable? What are people afraid to know? How are rites and festivities regulated? To what ends are emotions harnessed? What is desired? How does desire reveal itself? How does desire make rules necessary? How is desire satisfied?	What is the normal way of life? What does the normal way of life preclude? What is normal work? What is normally said? Who normally speaks? What communicative gestures are repeated? What figures of speech are repeated? How do people establish themselves as credible? What is established as fact? What is forgotten? What or who is good? What or who is pure? What or who is righteous? What or who is typical? What or who is proper? What or who is defended? What or who is justified? What or who is forgiven? What or who is redeemed? What or who is innocent? What or who is guilty? Who is free? Who is subjected?

<p>What are the unimportant acts? Where or what is the origin of life? How do people relate to the past? How do people relate to things/objects? What literature or myths are repeated/studied? What meanings are drawn from them? How does death occur? How is death repeated?</p>	<p>What is unthinkable? How is death managed?</p>	<p>Who is dominant? Who is subordinate? How does death make a normal way of life possible? What is obvious?</p>
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5.8 What does a deconstructive method for literary analysis following from Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences allow and foreclose?

Foucault's understanding of his own work as an open site has been expressed variously by others as the recognition that all texts are an endless play of signifiers which can never be finally nailed down to a single centre, essence, or meaning (Eagleton 170). This produces space for the reader or critic to shift from the role of consumer to producer and carve up texts, transpose them into different discourses, and produce his or her semi-arbitrary play of meaning athwart the work itself (Eagleton 170).

For me, Foucault's archaeology brought to consciousness an awareness of the epistemological field in which and within which I find my identity, in which and within which I think and work. By drawing on (and sometimes literally drawing) Foucault's models of the human sciences, I formed notions about how the individual figure is produced by an epistemological field, by discourse. I began to be aware that the epistemological discourse of modernity is incessantly repeated in all cultural constructions—in identity, in ways of speaking and interacting, in literature, in formal institutions like places of work, study, worship, and government, and in informal institutions like the family, friendship, and festivals.

I traced Foucault's thesis of the historical and gradual evolution of systems of knowledge, eventually followed by a sudden transformation to a new system of knowledge. I became further intrigued with the notions of death, desire, and law, which form both the boundaries and the possibility for being of/within "the modern episteme." Understanding from Foucault that wo/man composed her/his own figure in the interstices of fragmented language, I felt I could use Foucauldian theory to investigate curricular

literature. If human beings are made knowable to themselves as objects and are subjectified as effects of power through discourse; if Foucault's theory exposes the structure of "the human sciences," the dominant discourses of the modern age; and if dominant discourses construct the texts and allow the reification of texts considered elite, classic, and curricular; then I felt I could examine curricular literature on the basis of Foucault's constituent model of modernity, "the human sciences," and I could make the texts speak the system of modernity that has produced them, the rules that govern that system, and the norms that produce subjects acceptable to it. This is not to say that texts do not always speak their production, or that the "truths" of modernity's discursive structures are deeply hidden somehow in curricular texts, but that an analysis on the basis of Foucault's terms reconstructed modernist discourses at work in curricular texts exposed in a way that brought me to attention, and slanted towards the construction of normative subjectivity in a way that I had not considered in earlier literature studies. Mystified as to how a reading following Foucault might unfold, I nonetheless used Foucault's suggestions that a break-through in thought can only occur through a reflexive practice that engages knowledge about meaning and identity with the figures of death, desire, and law within the framework of life, labour, and language ordered by system, rule, and norm as an impetus to begin deconstructive work.

5.9 A trial study—*Lord of the Flies*

In years past, when I was a high school English teacher, *Lord of the Flies* was a favored resource for novel studies. Beautifully crafted, amenable to thematic development on many levels, the novel was a rich field for lively discussion with my students. Our talk, our study together, however, was premised on a shared notion of an

autonomous individual with a cohesive subjectivity. Working with (and working out) liberal humanist ideology gifted to us by imperialism, we entertained such questions as: “How do we live together in civilized ways so as to keep at bay the savage instincts inherent in human nature?” or “How would this novel have been different if it was a class of girls who had been marooned, instead of boys?”

A traditional reading, such as the one I reproduced with my students and that is recommended by available teaching resources in Canada, focuses attention on questions of survival of the fittest and contesting political systems and the potential for good and evil that resides in each individual. By way of amplification, the story is often considered allegorically in the classroom, which raises awareness of binary constructions such as civilization and savagery, order and chaos, reason and impulse, law and anarchy. Standard classroom practice presents the novel as centrally concerned with the conflict between two competing impulses that exist within all human beings—the instinct to live by rules, act peacefully, follow moral imperatives, and value the good of the group, against the instinct to gratify one's immediate desires and act violently to obtain supremacy over others and enforce one's will.

While the traditional readings we produced in my high school classrooms were not able to recognize the power/knowledge constructs of hegemonic discourses, a deconstructive reading using the methodology that I developed by following Foucault was able to see the novel as a justification of British imperialism and as a means to perpetuate colonial relationships between a normative, white, rational, male centre and a marginalized, native, female or disabled, irrational other. After reading the novel through this poststructuralist inquiry, I recognized that the questions and answers posed in high

school classroom discussions of the past always revolved around the responsibility of the individual to choose rationally and wisely from among a buffet of possible politics, beliefs, and lifestyles. Considering the novel in light of Foucault's deconstruction of the modern episteme, however, led me to ask: What does the system within the text look like? What rules manage daily life? And how do the rules enable a normal way of life in the system? Through the use of questions emerging from Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences, a deconstructive reading was able to reveal modernist discourses (of Eurocentric humanism and liberal democracy) at work in constituting student subjectivity.

Since the time that I first made a deconstructive "Reading from the Margins" analysis of *Lord of the Flies*, I have become aware of academic and postcolonial readings of Golding's work other than mine that trace how his novel repeats the colonial misadventure; these are of much interest to me and suggest that postcolonial readings of the novel will soon come to impact general pedagogical practice at the public high school level. The point of this present work, however, is that the reading enabled by a deconstructive method that follows from Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences allowed me to establish a perspective of the novel slanted differently from any I had been able to formulate to that point. I am no longer able to read myself into Golding's novel as an intelligent and autonomous individual led to see the darkness lurking in each man's heart; rather, I now see the novel working out of and in collusion with a Eurocentric colonial discourse producing reader identities that are both normative and harmful, continually repeating injurious discursive norms in a contemporary postcolonial setting.

In this chapter I have investigated how Foucault's methods of archaeology and genealogy make use of approaches also found in structuralism, poststructuralism, hermeneutics, discourse analysis, and deconstruction. I have reviewed Foucault's description of the structure of the human sciences as found in *The Order of Things*, creating diagrams and charts to help me follow his theory more carefully. In particular, I have noted how, in the modern age, human beings are able to understand themselves as knowers through the sciences of life, labour, and language; and I have taken to heart Foucault's suggestion that, in modernist discourses, all things can be thought within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm. On the basis of Foucault's theory, I have devised the "Reading from the Margins" method of reading and I have discovered that the framework maps the elite discourse of European humanism allowing me to uncover some of the underlying assumptions operating in Golding's novel.

The understanding that a novel's discursive system produces students as normalized subjects with identities that matter or marks them as those who do not, propels me toward another novel using the "Reading from the Margins" methodology that follows from the work of Foucault. In the next chapter, I look at a curricular novel produced within the compromised and hybridized identities of the second world, a novel that has been widely used in Canadian classrooms as a foundational text that deals with complex ethical issues in ways that promote tolerance and understanding. This novel is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Using the "Reading from the Margins" framework, I investigate the discourses from which the novel arises and through which cultural imperatives become known. The next chapter performs the first part of my reading, answering the questions that gradually reveal the system or discursive bones of the text.

The poststructuralist reading I am able to give the text complicates reader perceptions of racial discrimination, class structure, and gender stereotypes by demonstrating who benefits when social problems, social identities, and concerns for social justice are taken up in conventional ways. My purpose in pursuing this counter-discursive reading is to illustrate the efficacy of the “Reading from the Margins” methodology to produce an original deconstructive reading that follows Foucault’s archaeological structuring of “the modern episteme” in *The Order of Things*.

6. *To Kill a Mockingbird*—AN ARCHAEOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

Through everyday classroom practices, including the study of literature, hegemonic power works to construct identities of choice—white, male, rational-thinking, property-owning, English-speaking. Providing a method to consider how normative subjectivity is constructed through curricular literature is the focus of this dissertation. In doing so, I rely on Foucault’s description of modern epistemology, or modernist knowledge, and his explanations of how people are made subjects.

In Chapter Five, I reviewed Foucault’s description of the structure of the human sciences as found in *The Order of Things*, creating diagrams and charts to help me follow his theory more carefully. In the modern age, according to Foucault, human beings are able to understand themselves as knowers through the sciences of life, labour, and language and within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm. On the basis of Foucault’s theory, and in the interests of learning how to conduct a poststructuralist analysis that can unearth the assumptions of discursive structures in curricular texts producing students as normalized subjects with identities that matter or marking them as those who do not, I devised a deconstructive method of reading that maps modernist discourses as found in literature.

In this chapter, I use the framework that I have developed by following Foucault to ask questions of the text, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, a remarkable novel that has become a classic of modern literature. Promoted by educators as a foundational text that encourages the development of tolerance and understanding in students, Harper Lee’s novel tells a tragic story about complex issues of race, class, and society (AB, Alberta Education 141). Harper Lee’s brilliant depiction of racial prejudice at a critical

time in American history is so widely recognized that *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been cited as a major reason for the success of the civil rights movement in the 1960s; commentators say that the novel arrived at the right moment to help the nation grapple with racial tensions, inspiring hope in the midst of chaos and confusion (Flora 249).

Using the “Reading from the Margins” literature analysis guide, I perform the first part of my reading of Lee’s novel, answering the framework questions that gradually reveal the system or discursive bones of the text. The poststructuralist reading I am able to give the text destroys the comfortable collateral of a traditional study. Made possible by Harper Lee’s outstanding replication of culture, this deconstructive analysis charts the system of white elitism. My hypothesis is that such a reading complicates perceptions of racial discrimination, class structure, and gender stereotypes by demonstrating who benefits when social problems, social identities, and concerns for social justice are taken up in conventional ways. This counter-discursive reading illustrates the efficacy of the “Reading from the Margins” methodology to produce an original deconstructive reading that follows Foucault’s archaeological structuring of the modern episteme in *The Order of Things*.

6.2 An approved curricular resource

In Chapter Three, I cited historical sources to describe how discourses of Canadianization operating through curriculum and the pedagogical practices of public schooling constructed, and continue to construct, a homogeneous citizenry and established whiteness as a cultural norm in the colonial spaces of western Canada. In Chapter Four, I explored postcolonial perspectives that see curriculum, and literature in particular, as regulatory forces in the colonizing effort to establish a normalized identity

in all white-settler societies. In Canada, socialization through schooling was, and is, to be accomplished through curriculum and pedagogical practices based on common values of what it means to be a British subject and a Canadian citizen. Part of the common school, common language, common pedagogy, and common curriculum (Curtis 101-32) imperative of western Canada, the Alberta Education Program of Studies, and its Approved Resources Lists, encapsulate an elite discourse of Canadianization that privileges an Anglo-Saxon majority and secures a capitalist state. Forms of self, supportive of the hegemonic bourgeois order, are inculcated through approved literary study and are lived out as normal and natural identities. Disrupting these socially reproductive processes may be possible through poststructuralist deconstruction of curricular material by making explicit dominant discourses and their identity-constructing machinations.

To Kill a Mockingbird has been an approved resource for literature study at the high school level in Alberta since it landed the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961 (AB, Alberta Education 141). Written in the late 1950s at a time when racial injustice was a rarely mentioned topic in literature, the novel portrays Southern life as the author experienced it during the 1930s in Alabama. Highly popular as a school resource in the United States, the novel has also been widely used in Canada as a central piece of pedagogical instruction promoting student inquiry and reflective writing. Recommended to teachers as a text that deals with complex ethical issues in ways that promote tolerance and understanding, the provincial resource guide suggests that students will follow the protagonist's growing awareness of good and evil and racial, class and religious prejudice, counterbalanced by characters who display qualities of compassion, sympathy,

understanding, and wisdom (AB, Alberta Education 141). The resource guide praises the accurate historical frame of the novel, revealing that some of the characters use language indicating racial and class prejudice that reflect the attitudes and circumstances of the people at that time. Class discussions are recommended to guide students to discover that one individual can make a positive difference in society (AB, Alberta Education 141).

Reading and studying *To Kill a Mockingbird* with classes of high school students has been a pedagogical project that I have enjoyed; engaged in discussion with students, I felt that this prize-winning novel by Harper Lee opened up significant thematic questions. Together, my students and I talked about such things as the effect of adversity on the human spirit, the positive impacts of conflict, alienation and personality development, and the tensions created by dreams and reality. We wrote character sketches about the feisty little girl, Scout, the serious and sensitive Jem, and the moral hero, Atticus. Year after year, my students decided that one heroic individual could alter the perceptions of a community regarding racial inequality, and that the book challenged us to decry prejudice and emphasize tolerance in our own communities and nation.

Joseph Crespino observes that the novel is “probably the most widely read book dealing with race in America and its protagonist, Atticus Finch, the most enduring fictional image of racial heroism” (9). Michelle Pauli reports that British librarians have ranked the book ahead of the Bible as one “every adult should read before they die” (6). Alice Petry says that Richard Matsch, a federal American judge, counts Atticus as a major judicial influence, and that law professors at the University of Notre Dame state that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is their most influential textbook (xxiv). The book is widely taught in English-speaking schools throughout the world as an example of remarkable

story-telling and for its lessons of human dignity and respect, culminating in a “scathing moral condemnation of racial prejudice” and a fundamental and universal “affirmation that human goodness can withstand the assault of evil” (“SparkNotes” 12). In contrast, I propose that a Foucauldian poststructuralist lens enables the recognition that students of the text are subjected to hegemonic values and a particular normalized identity in order to maintain the power of a particular political, economic, and cultural order that privileges whiteness.

In Canada, politicians and educational leaders have the authority to select what will be taught in provincial schools. The process of legitimizing a text, such as a novel, for inclusion on an approved resources list rests with a broadly-based consultative curriculum committee under the agency of the Provincial Ministry of Education and includes representatives from many constituencies such as ministry officials, teachers, parents, and subject experts. Such a process, say Shaheen Shariff and Michael Manley-Casimir, usually yields resources that are acceptable to mainstream culture (177). Teachers select novels from approved or authorized resources lists to take up for literature study with their classes. Challenges to authorized resources are generally made by individual parents at the school or school board level; sometimes special interest groups lobby educational authorities. Since material that is clearly racist or pornographic is censored by law in Canada, challenges to resources often occur ostensibly to uphold family values, say Joyce Bainbridge and Sylvia Pantaleo (21). Changes in culture tend to produce challenges to authorized texts. For example, as new immigrants arrive, bringing different values, beliefs, and perspectives, or as single-parent families or homosexual couples increase within it, a community can become polarized and cultural conflict,

including challenges to school curriculum, can result; complaints about the suitability of texts for schooling purposes revolve around the central question of censorship—whose values? (Shariff and Manley-Casimir 175). Often there is no formal process of response to complaints about an authorized text. School authorities simply do not re-order the texts in question. Occasionally, school boards or provincial boards of education establish evaluation committees and legally rule to remove a book from the province’s authorized teaching resource list (Bainbridge and Pantaleo 21).

For many years, the Black Educators’ Association has lobbied the Nova Scotia Department of Education and school boards to remove various books deemed to be racist material from school curriculum and school use. Similar initiatives have taken place in other provinces across Canada. In 1996, reports Isaac Saney, after intensive community pressure, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *In the Heat of the Night* by John Dudley Ball, and *Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker were taken off the authorized list of texts recommended by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. In 2002, lobby groups recommended removing these “demeaning and offensive” (Saney 99) works from schools entirely. *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been read in ways that criticize its portrayal of conflict between children and parents, its profanity, its ungrammatical speech, its acts of violence, its references to sex, its negativity toward authority, its lack of portrayal of family life as the basis of community life, its references to witchcraft, its negative portrayals of poor white trash, and its racism; it has even been criticized by white supremacists as anti-white (May 6). Saney believes that the novel attacks the worst excesses of the racist social order, but leaves the racist social order itself intact (101) and, while the novel remains one of my favorite teaching resources, I concur with this

evaluation. At the time of this writing, however, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is, again, an approved pedagogical resource in Nova Scotia and remains on approved reading lists in all Canadian provinces (Saney 101), Alberta included.

Backlashes to book-banning campaigns involving *To Kill a Mockingbird* have been fervent. The city of Chicago chose the novel for their Big Read project as a “rare [book] that can be discovered with excitement in adolescence and reread into adulthood without fear of disappointment” (Arts Midwest 1); literature teachers call the book “a masterpiece” (Bauld); and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) urged Nova Scotia schools to reconsider proposals banning the book simply because of the use of the offensive term “nigger” (Canadian Race Relations Foundation). While the CRRF agrees that the book is tainted with racial slurs, it suggests the novel presents a context that is historically relevant and, if taught with great care and sensitivity, can send a strong anti-racist message. The CRRF website explains, “Instructors should be properly trained and sensitized to deliver the material in the proper way to ensure effective anti-racist response.”

In the poststructuralist view, it is precisely “the proper way” which must be questioned in order to work for educational and social justice. The common sense way of doing things, proper perspectives, and even sensitive approaches help to secure the privilege of some and the disadvantage of others. To uncover unspoken assumptions about superiority and inferiority, dominance and subordination, normality and abnormality, commonly held values and ideologies of our modernist age must be disrupted and challenged. For me, the question is not whether curricular literature ought

to be banned or not; the question is: how can we read differently? How can we interrupt identity formations that continue to inscribe white elitism?

6.3 Comparing and contrasting conventional and deconstructive novel study readings

Novel study is a curricular requirement in Canadian education. Alberta Education organizes reading comprehension outcomes in terms of understanding textual forms, elements and techniques, constructing meaning from text and context, and responding to text. In a conventionally-accepted novel study, students will interpret the text according to genre, organizational structures such as setting, point of view, characterization, plot, and theme, and the use of literary techniques. Students will create meaning by relating textual themes to their own emotions, personal experiences, and interests (Language Arts Professional Development Committee 1-10).

Such a conventional reading of a novel might focus first on genre as a way of indicating how best to approach the text in order to glean the understandings necessary to create meaning. The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for example, would be identified as realism, a social drama and coming-of-age story, which students could expect to examine in terms of verisimilitude and historical accuracy. The context of the novel would be considered in relation to its historical time frame as well as the political, economic, and cultural conditions and concerns contemporary with it, the novel's intended audience, and its reception by the public. Biographical information about the author would be searched for clues about the thematic interests of the text. Such study is premised on the assumption that we can better know the whole through the parts. This process is highly natural, logical, and has meaning in itself, and the conclusions drawn from such a study are right because they have been made to seem inevitable. So, for example, considering

that Harper Lee is the daughter of an Alabama lawyer whom she admired and who unsuccessfully defended two black men; and that she wrote the novel shortly after Rosa Parks' 1955 refusal, in Alabama, to yield her seat on a city bus to a white person; and that critics laud the novel's contribution to the American civil rights movement, it becomes reasonable to expect that Lee's text will be anti-racist and may offer the reader helpful perspectives on negotiating troubled race relations.

In contrast, a poststructuralist, deconstructive reading is unconcerned about authorial intention and contextual clues to meaning. The focus of a deconstructive reading is the text itself, which will speak the discourse from which it arises and through which cultural imperatives will become known. The deconstructive reader approaches text interested in how it expresses and secures the hegemonic culture, and eventually, how hegemonic reproduction can be interrupted.

Under a conventional reading, a consideration of genre, context and authorial intention would be quickly followed by a determination of the setting of the novel and descriptors of primary characters and initiating incidences of the plot. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for example, would be scoured for details of antecedent action, time and place, mood, point of view and the introductory elements of conflict and characterization. Students might present their findings about setting in descriptive paragraphs and in speculative maps of the layout of the town of Maycomb. Pedagogical instruction would draw student attention to literary techniques and figurative language that establish the tone and construct the opening mood of the story. The story-telling structure would be examined to determine narrative perspective and students would be asked to speculate

how point of view might affect the story to be told. Notes would be kept to keep track of emerging characters and the beginnings of conflict.

It seems to me that orientation to the text in a poststructuralist reading is accomplished in ways similar to those of a conventional reading. I suggest, however, that the focus of deconstruction quickly moves from a description of setting as a backdrop to the plot to a description of system, which incorporates setting and characterization to construct the hegemonic cultural system from which the text arises and which it reproduces. The system of the text works as an isolated whole with its own coherence and its own validity even though it is rooted in a particular social setting, inscribed in particular language, and revealed through the lives of particular characters. Organized around linguistic structure, the hegemonic culture, or what I sometimes refer to as the discursive structure of the text, can be revealed through asking questions of identity and meaning about life, labour, and language within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm. In my deconstructive reading, I find that questions about centres and margins, absences and silences, patterns and gaps, sameness and difference, production and possibilities, origins and myths, relationships and death gradually reveal the discursive bones that structure the text. These provide an archaeological understanding of the textual system and the hegemonic order.

A conventional reading of the novel will move from activities of orientation to explorations of conflict, plot, and theme. In the poststructuralist reading I give, an exploration of conflict, plot and theme is bound up within the deconstructive questions that work to reveal the rules that manage daily life and maintain the system, and the ethics that enable a normal way of life within the system. This chapter proposes to

identify the hierarchical system of privilege that is perpetuated by *To Kill a Mockingbird*, while questions of rule and norm about the system are taken up in the next chapter.

It is important to recall that poststructuralist theory claims there are hegemonic assumptions implicit in all culturally-approved texts. Arising from what postcolonialists call the hybridized, second world, the *Mockingbird* text complexly questions and reproduces the hegemonic discourse from which it arises. Harper Lee's artistry in storytelling provides the rich detail through which a deconstructive analysis can draw out an understanding of how people's social identities are fashioned and altered over time, and how cultural hegemony is replicated in the construction of subjectivity. My reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which follows, brings with it knowledge about the text gleaned from conventional studies of the novel, taken up with new perspectives made possible through the deconstructive analytic tool developed in this thesis. I approach this reading with excitement because poststructuralist theory provides me with a new way of working with a well-loved text at the same time as it enables an analysis of how power operates in our modern culture through the processes of subjectification and knowledge production.

6.4 The system of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

6.4.1 *Centre, Margins, and Absences*

What does the system of the text, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, look like? Based on the information I draw from the text, I propose to eventually describe the discursive hegemonic cultural system from which the novel arises. To begin to answer this question, I entertain the first three questions of the Systems column from the "Reading from the Margins" framework: Who lives at the centre of society? Who lives in the margins of society? Who is absent from the social structure and/or external to it? I take up these

questions in relation to identifiable groups of people within the text and use as many literary cues as I can to describe the characteristics of the identifiable groups and to answer associated questions such as: How are people divided or put into groups? And how do people represent others to themselves?

The centre of the social system of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the childhood world of Scout and Jem Finch; the focal point of this centre is their father, Atticus. The story is told from the perspective of the youngest member of the Finch family; Scout is five–“almost six”–when the narrative is launched (Lee 12). Her brother, Jem, is nearly ten. Their childhood world is, at first, the neighbourhood within calling distance of the cook/housekeeper/nanny–two doors to the north and three doors to the south. As the story progresses through the next four years of the Finch family’s life, the children’s world also radiates outward and becomes the world of the town of Maycomb, Alabama.

After colonial invasion had “run the Creeks [Indians] up the creek” (9), a fur-trading ancestor of the Finch family paddled after them, making a fortune first through fur-trading, then through the practice of medicine, and finally, with the help of purchased slaves, through growing cotton. The ancient town of Maycomb, twenty miles from the ancestral family home at Finch’s Landing, was established by government surveyors–after “myopic drunkenness” (141) and business inducements–as the exact centre of what was then the newly-drawn Maycomb County. This central point was ordained to become the seat of county government and the hub of the county.

The physical arrangement of the town mirrors the societal order. The centre of the town is the courthouse, surrounded by a courthouse square, which itself is enclosed in a wider town square. The boundaries of the town square are made up of commercial

buildings such as the bank, the hardware store, the newspaper office, the post office, a restaurant, and tucked in between two businesses—the county jail. Atticus, patriarch of the Finch family, is the town’s most prominent lawyer; he practices law from two locations in the town square—his office in the bank building, and the court room in the courthouse, thus establishing his connections to the economic and legal power of the community.

The courthouse architecture reflects two artistic influences—the north façade is Victorian, loudly speaking the colonial presence; the south entrance is flanked by Greek pillars. The etymology of the name Atticus reminds us of its Greek origin: relating to Attica, the area surrounding Athens, marked by qualities of the Athenian city—classic refinement, simplicity, and purity (“Atticus;” “Attic,” def. 1a, 1b). Atticus is also an architectural term for a type of column base (“Attic,” def. 2). Not insignificantly, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus is seen as a pillar of the community. In addition to his role as an attorney in the community, he also represents the county in the state legislature.

The residential neighbourhood surrounding the town square is populated by white, middle and upper-class citizens, business and professional people, the descendants of generations of people “who had lived side by side for years and years” (Lee 141). The school is part of this stratum of society and is within easy walking distance for Scout and Jem, as is the Methodist Church that the family attends. The people who make up this inner circle of Maycomb society are variously described as “product[s] of several generations’ gentle breeding” (143), “related by blood or marriage to nearly every family in the town” (11), “common folk...[who] obey the law” (37) and “fine folks,” “Old Family” with “background,” “the ordinary kind” (239). The Finch family numbers in this societal group; their ancestor, Simon Finch, is credited with founding the county, they

have significant property, some money and the men of the family have excellent educations. The children live near enough to the town square so that they can watch for their father as he rounds the post office corner and run to meet him as he returns home from work.

The farms, fields and woods surrounding Maycomb, called Old Sarum, are occupied by white country folk, characterized as “the kind like the Cunninghams” (239). They are relatively uneducated; many of them are illiterate. The story is set in the mid-1930s, during the Great Depression, so everyone is poor on some level, but country folk are poorer than those living in town. They pay for legal or medical services with foodstuffs that they have raised or collected. While they are farmers who work with their hands, and have so little in the way of material wealth that the children go to school barefoot, country folk are generally clean and proud; they are characterized as people who “never took anything off of anybody, they get along with what they have” (27). Country folk live on land that has often been repossessed or mortgaged because they are “willing to go hungry to keep [their] land and vote as [they] pleased” (27). Nevertheless, within the context of the social system of the text, Scout and Jem’s family is “better’n the Cunninghams” (31). “You can scrub Walter Cunningham till he shines, you can put him in shoes and a new suit, but he’ll never be like Jem,” says Scout’s Aunt Alexandra, “... because—he-is—trash” (237).

Even more marginalized in the societal order are the white squatters who live at the edges of the town dump in abandoned “Negro” cabins (181). Typecast as “the filthiest human[s] ... ever seen” (33), the text makes their dirtiness explicit. Epitomized by the Ewells, these marginal squatters have necks that are dark gray, backs of hands that are

rusty, fingernails black deep into the quick. They have lice—"cooties" (33). They are contentious, mean and vulgar: "Ain't no snot-nosed slut of a schoolteacher ever born c'n make me do nothing" (34). The squatters are seen as scavengers who live off public welfare and rifle the contents of the dump to furnish their shacks. Atticus tells his children that the Ewells have been "the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations ... none of them had done an honest day's work in his recollection ... they lived like animals" (37). Their homes are described as "greasy," "tiny," unsteady, "varmint"-invested and cobbled together with sheets of corrugated iron and flattened tin cans (181). These homes are filled with numerous offspring who will not attend school and who are marked with congenital defects, worms, and the diseases indigenous to their filthy surroundings (181). All that a squatter has that makes him "any better than his nearest neighbours was, that if scrubbed with lye soap in very hot water, his skin was white" (182).

The nearest neighbours, who live just past the squatter's "nest" and on the far side of the town dump, are the African Americans. The "Negro settlement," made up of cabins that look "neat and snug" with smoke rising from chimneys, and doorways glowing with amber light and releasing the delicious smells of chicken and bacon, is nevertheless the outer ring of Maycomb society (182). Black workers from the town or surrounding countryside, like the Finch's housekeeper, Calpurnia, or the farm laborer, Tom Robinson, return to this settlement at night. From Jem's perspective, "our kind of folks don't like the Cunninghams, the Cunninghams don't like the Ewells, and the Ewells hate and despise the coloured folks" (239).

Scout wonders whether the “Cajuns,” descendants of French Canadian settlers who live in a nearby county, and the Chinese are part of Maycomb society (240). Jem judges that they are not since they live in another county. However, when they arrive in Maycomb for the trial of Tom Robinson, Jem points out a wagonload of Mennonites in bonnets and beards who are described as country folk from deep in the woods (169). Immigrant settlers from national and ethnic groups other than the Chinese, French Canadians or Mennonites are not mentioned within the text.

While their presence forms part of the historical portrait of the Maycomb community, the Creek Indians who were run off the land during colonial times are entirely missing from the societal order. Researching the Creek Indians, I found that despite the fact that settlers retained the Creek, or Muskogean, name for the land—“Alabama” which means a “clearing” or “campground”—the Creek Indians themselves were forced onto reserves in Oklahoma and Texas during the Indian Removals of the 1800s (Poarch Band of Creek Indians). A small group of resistant Creek who had provided “essential services” to government officials were allowed to retain their land in southern Alabama near the town of Monroeville (Poarch Band of Creek Indians), which is assumed to be the prototype for the fictional town of Maycomb. Nevertheless, according to the novel they have no presence within contemporary society.

6.4.2 Integration into the centre

To more clearly understand the hegemonic system which is replicated through the cultural system described in the text, I consider the Systems questions from the “Reading from the Margins” framework, which ask: Who is integrated into the system? How does integration take place? By examining how integration into the core of the system is

effected in the lives of individual characters, I can see and articulate some of the systematic imperatives and name processes of assimilation and disavowal. As I work through this analysis, I use the language of the text when it reveals how characters relate to one another and represent others to themselves. For example, I prefer to use the designations African American or black in my own writing; however, African Americans are usually referred to in the narrative as “Negroes” while blatantly derogatory terms are used to identify African Americans in the vernacular speech acts of particular characters. When I use these terms—as infrequently as possible for reasons of iteration—it is in quotation marks; through them, the offense of the text is made clear, not just because they are deprecating titles, but because of the work they do in constructing and perpetuating a hierarchal system in which a privileged normative identity is obtained at the expense of the other.

The Foucauldian template I am using as a tool of analysis directs me to consider the caste system of Maycomb which operates on the basis of exclusion and privilege and is clearly articulated in the text. White residents of the town who come from Old Family with property, money or education are integrated into the mainstream. A local family history is of importance to establishing credentials as an inner-circle member. The first three pages of the text, for example, expend considerable literary energy in delineating the family line of the Finches, representing them as long-standing members of the community who own significant property at Finch’s Landing, have had a fair share of money in their time, and have taken advantage of high levels of education.

Maycomb residents of the present generation represent their family line with all of its idiosyncrasies. In fact, the secondary characters that fill the inner circle of the

textual society are oddities—one-dimensional types—whose lives are difficult for the reader to enter with understanding, empathy, or compassion. Mrs. Dubose is a repulsive character who heaps crude verbal abuse on children and adults alike as she struggles to overcome an addiction to morphine; the Radleys are foot-washing Baptists who have virtually imprisoned themselves into their home; and Miss Stephanie Crawford is a neighbourhood scold who spreads fantastical gossip while making her rounds of “doing good” (51). Miss Maudie has an acid tongue; Mr. Avery pees off his porch in the dark and accosts the children on the grounds that their bad behaviour brings bad weather; and Miss Rachel Haverford drinks scotch before breakfast. Moreover, “Everybody in Maycomb, it seemed, had a Streak: a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, a Funny Streak” (140). What binds this hodge-podge of character types within the fabric of acceptable society is the fact that they obey the law, which was designed for them and privileges them, that they come from an Old Family background with property, money and education, and that they are white.

Atticus Finch is integral to the inner circle of societal structure and operates as its pivotal point. Not only familiar with the history of the town and county, he appears to be acquainted with all of its residents on every societal level. He relates family histories and the peculiarities of individuals with ease; he is viewed as a wise and clear-eyed attorney; and he has the confidence of the town in representing them in the legislature. He is presented as a reader, a thinker, a gentle man with unusual insight and a “good heart” (287), who can interpret the town and reflect his understanding back to the townsfolk. In his role as the lawyer defending a black man, Tom Robinson, he exposes the stratified layers of Maycomb society, its institutionalized racism, and the intolerance of the white

citizenry. At the same time, remarkably, he becomes a hero to both white and black residents of Maycomb. Although he loses his case in defending “a Negro” (216), and perhaps particularly because he loses the case, Atticus is put on a pedestal by those of white privilege who feel they have paid him “the highest tribute we can pay a man; we trust him to do right” (249). He is also a hero to the African American community who give him a silent standing ovation at the end of the trial for defending one of their members with clarity, precision and a humane handling of the law; they inundate his home with gifts of food as signs of respect and thanks.

A virtually flawless man who does not “play poker or fish or drink or smoke” (98), Atticus can also be seen, in quite contradictory ways, as a bumbler—an older widower with young children, who seems somewhat bewildered about how to raise them. He sternly asserts that the children are to listen to Calpurnia, the African American housekeeper who operates during the daytime as a surrogate mother, and he establishes boundaries of behaviour for encroaching on the Radley property and for the use of the air rifles that he purchases for the children. He insists that the children will obey the law, including that of going to school regularly. Other than that, he is lenient about their dress, indifferent about their playtime activities, and uncertain or unwilling to discipline them when they are disobedient. He reads to them, he occasionally interprets the ambiguities of the townsfolk for the children, but he also frequently withholds information that would seem to be part of a functional household. He never talks about their mother, who died when Scout was two, he withholds information about his and Calpurnia’s background at Finch’s Landing, and he makes arrangements for the children to read to the horrible Mrs. Dubose without preparing them for the experience. He allows the children to be present

at the rape trial, but is uninterested in attending their school Halloween drama and carnival. He initially seems to oppose Aunt Alexandra's restrictive notions about appropriate dress and proper behaviour, and yet, while preaching the unreasonableness of laws that differentiate between white and black, acquiesces to her demands that the children no longer associate with children from Old Sarum or visit Calpurnia's home in "the Negro settlement" (182). Atticus has no peer in the community; acquainted with everyone, he is friends with no one. Presented as a radical character who does not fit with the patriarchal norms of Maycomb, the novel produces Atticus as at once both perfect and deeply flawed.

In a conventional reading, *To Kill a Mockingbird* can be read as a Bildungsroman—a coming of age story—and the maturation and validation of a young member of the inner sanctum of Maycomb society. In this poststructuralist reading, I note this enculturation process as well. Jem, in particular, matures as he moves from being nine years old to thirteen years old in the story. As the story opens, Jem is presented as a young boy who likes to play imaginative games with his sister, Scout, and next door neighbour, Dill, renovate and camp in the backyard treehouse, and make daring raids on the house of the reclusive Boo Radley. He likes to read, is less resistant to Calpurnia's instructions than Scout, asserts the superiority of age and masculinity in his relationship to his younger sister, and worries about disappointing his father.

Jem consciously attempts to mold himself after his father; his father used to play football as a young man and Jem is fascinated by the game; he watches his father's reactions to the neighbourhood fire closely and imitates his father's words and attitude when passing information along to his sister; he is thrilled to discover that Atticus used to

be a sharp shooter when he was younger because it validates his own interest in target shooting. As the story unfolds, he gravitates closer to the masculine adults in the story, choosing the company of his father and uncles after dinner, discussing ideas in the living room above playing outdoors with Scout and his cousin. Becoming a young man physically—evidenced by the appearance of body hair—he is also released from strict obedience to his female caregivers, Calpurnia and Aunt Alexandra, is allowed more freedom of movement within the town, and takes more of a paternal attitude toward his sister.

During the Ewell/Robinson trial, Jem follows the proceedings carefully, asking questions about legal procedure at home, mirroring the body language of his father while watching the trial from the balcony, and agonizing over the unfairness of his father's defeat and the narrow-mindedness of the community when the trial is over. It becomes clear that Jem, like his father, is destined for the law: "'t's all right to talk like that—can't any Christian judges an' lawyers make up for heathen juries,' Jem muttered, 'Soon's I get grown'" (228). As the story develops, the textual purpose of quoting Charles Lamb's words on the flyleaf becomes obvious: "Lawyers, I suppose, were children once."

Nicknamed Jem, christened Jeremy Atticus Finch, Jem is a young Atticus in development; he incarnates the originary myth of recreating the world of the father. Jem is the gem of the story. He is swathed by the protective arms of the community, nurtured by his father's approval, and surrounded by the ministrations of his family. This is most iconically evident at the end of the story when he is lying in bed after being injured by an attack from Mr. Ewell and "put out" for recovery by the doctor (279). His father, his aunt, his sister, the sheriff, the doctor and next-door neighbour hover around his bedside,

dimming the light, speaking in whispers, blanketing his body. Having been taught at all points so that his identification with his father is nearly complete, Jem has now suffered in his father's place. When he arises from his bed, it seems, succession will begin; Jem will replace his father as the focal point of the societal system. The present text necessarily ends while Jem remains unconscious, in recovery, nearly ready to awaken to his section of the continuing story.

The motif that describes the replication of a heroic and paternalistic character in the novel propels me toward the poststructuralist perspective that the hegemonic culture replicates itself in normative subjectivity. I see the continuation of cultural norms transmitted from father to son within the novel and wait to see how a deconstructive analysis of the novel will illustrate the continuation of the hegemonic culture through the process of constructing the normative identity of students.

Jem's little sister, christened Jean Louise but called Scout, is integral to the system as well; she is a Finch with its associative meanings of propertied, educated, and white, but she is also female. This complicates her position among the social elite. As a five year old girl at the opening of the text, she emulates the boys—her brother, Jem, and friend, Dill—by dressing in overalls, fighting with her fists, accepting dares, and learning to swear. She is also portrayed as precocious, asking questions about the status quo and challenging boundaries in ways that her brother is hesitant to do. These characteristics work well for her as the narrator of the story. Scout's name beautifully parallels her role in the story because she operates as the scout in the text, navigating the social environment with curiosity, guiding the reader through its terrain, pushing aside conventions to gain a voyeuristic look at what lies beyond and beneath the exterior

surface. As she does so, Scout also plays a supportive and interpretive role, which alternately protects Jem from unwanted attention, collects information for him, and directs adulatory attention towards him.

Scout suffers on many levels. As a literary invention, she suffers credibility in her narrative role. Her voice alternates between that of an inquisitive and intelligent child and that of an experienced, knowledgeable and sometimes cynical, sometimes defensive, adult. At points in the story, Scout knows too little and her curiosity allows the story to unfold; at other times, she knows too much—"Mr. Underwood had no use for any organization but *The Maycomb Tribune* ... His days were spent at his linotype, where he refreshed himself occasionally from an ever-present gallon jug of cherry wine" (158)—and she expresses herself in the vocabulary of a scholarly adult, "There was no sign of ... the familiar ecclesiastical impedimenta we saw every Sunday" (130).

Within the text, Scout also suffers as a girl who is considered a tag-along to Jem and Dill, and she frequently bears demeaning allusions to her gender: "Jem told me I was being a girl, that girls always imagined things, that's why other people hated them so, and if I started behaving like one, I could just go off and find some to play with" (48). Scout, in fact, does not have any close female friends with whom to play. She alone, among the three boys with whom she spends time, endures a spanking, and that from her beloved uncle, who doesn't understand that she was fighting with her cousin because he called Atticus a "nigger-lover" (94). Aunt Alexandra's campaign to turn Scout into a lady causes much distress; Scout envisions herself stripped of her overalls and confined in a pink cotton penitentiary.

Unfortunately, Scout succumbs to the cumulative messages to conform to Maycomb society's code of appropriate gender performances. She accepts Atticus's explanation that the reasons women can't serve as jurors are to protect them from sordid cases and to make trials more efficient because "the ladies'd be interrupting to ask questions" (234). "Perhaps our forefathers were wise," concludes Scout (234). As the boys increasingly leave her out of activities, like swimming at Barker's Eddy, Scout begins to spend more time with the adult women, helping Calpurnia in the kitchen, sitting with her aunt and the missionary circle, and talking to Miss Maudie as she gardens. Toward the end of the text, the nine year-old Scout plays out her assigned gender role to near perfection: "I was wearing my pink Sunday dress, shoes and a petticoat and reflected that if I spilled anything, Calpurnia would have to wash my dress again for tomorrow ... 'Can I help you, Cal?' I asked, wishing to be of some service" (241). Scout carefully hides her feelings about Tom Robinson's death as she politely serves cookies to the women of the inane missionary circle who are moved by the perceived plight of an African tribe but not by the discrimination and suffering experienced by the African Americans, squatters or country folk in their own community.

Directed by the "Reading from the Margins" analytical template to inquire of the text who is integrated into the cultural system of the text and how that integration takes place, has led me to write detailed character sketches of the central characters of this novel – Atticus, Jem and Scout – using the essences of their character as embedded in the text.

6.4.3 *Isolation*

The inverse of integration is isolation. Taking up the questions from the Systems column of the “Reading from the Margins” framework about who is isolated, and how, builds a sharper vision of where the boundaries of the hegemonic system are established and the exacting attention to detail that consigns characters to isolated status, all the while working to legalize the privilege of characters who belong to the powerful centre.

To Kill a Mockingbird isolates the people in the two outer circles of Maycomb society on the basis of colour. The colour line clearly puts the African American settlement past the dump and outside of the town limits. Black residents perform the functions of servants in the white community as cooks, housekeepers, groundskeepers, garbage men and farm laborers, but from the perspective of the text, they are insignificant to the system and absent from any positions of power. Although Atticus calls the facts of life “ugly,” he nevertheless admits that “in our courts, when it’s a white man’s word against a black man’s, the white man always wins” (233). It is impossible to draw deeply-textured portraits of the characters in this text who are black, as, for example, Calpurnia or Tom Robinson, because the text portrays them as one-dimensional characters. The marginal nature of black characters in the text replicates the marginality of black people in the hegemonic culture from within which the author, the novel and the reader come.

The squatters who live in the “Negro cabins” (181) at the town dump are literally the refuse of the societal system. Their blackness is evident in their physical dirtiness and in their moral darkness. They must be expunged from the classroom, as is Burris Ewell, in order to make school life possible, and from the community, as is Mr. Ewell, in order to make Maycomb a safe and decent place. The rejection of black—as African American

people are kept from privilege and the protection of the law, and the morally black squatters are disposed of by the community—is used to further the whiteness of the privileged elite. The dividing lines between black and white citizens are sharply delineated in ways that authorize the legitimacy and privilege of white society.

That Maycomb society fears blackness is a thematic construction of the text as easily retrieved through a conventional study as a poststructuralist study. Scout, Jem and Dill reveal the deep-rooted fears of the community when they meet Mr. Raymond's "mixed" (172) children and speculate about how to determine if someone is black, of mixed blood, or white: "He looked black to me ... but how can you *tell*? ... how do you know we ain't Negroes?... around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black" (173). One of the reactions to the fear of blackness on the part of the white elite is to draw and redraw boundaries that keep black away from white. One of the members of the missionary circle says of her African American domestic helpers: "At least we don't have the deceit to say to 'em yes you're as good as we are but stay away from us. Down here we just say you live your way and we'll live ours" (247). Whiteness is further marked when disreputable whites are relegated to equal status as blacks, as, for example, when notice is drawn to the fact that blacks and disreputable whites live side by side.

Another response to the fear of blackness is to make whiteness explicit by equating whiteness with goodness and to cultivate, and advertise, good works. "We're ... called on to be Christians ..." says Miss Maudie when she talks to Jem about the role his father is playing on behalf of the white community in defending Tom Robinson (228). One of the ladies of the missionary circle equates correcting her domestic worker, whom

she calls “a sulky darky,” as “witnessing for the Lord” (245). Mrs. Farrow, whom Scout calls “the second most devout lady in Maycomb,” associates scolding and disciplining African American workers with education and expresses both fear and unconscious desire because of the perceived unwillingness of African Americans to become educated Christians: “We can educate ‘em till we’re blue in the face, we can try till we drop to make Christians out of ‘em, but there’s no lady safe in her bed these nights” (245). There are a handful of people, says Miss Maudie, not aware of how she is contributing to the iterations of white and black boundary markers, “with enough humility to think, when they look at a Negro, there but for the Lord’s kindness am I” (250).

Within the inner circle of Maycomb society, individuals are contradictorily isolated and integrated. While they belong to the group with privilege, they are also sharply drawn as people with strange quirks, making them open to continual societal pressure to conform to standards of decency and whiteness. No one is more evidently isolated than Boo Radley, who has spent the last 20 years or so voluntarily imprisoned in his own home. At the same time, no one is more visibly white: “They were white hands ... that had never seen the sun, so white they stood out garishly against the dull cream wall” ... “a hand surprisingly warm for its whiteness” (284, 292). Despite his oddity, Boo Radley’s extreme whiteness foreshadows his protection within the force of the law.

6.4.4 *Liminal Zones*

Can the boundaries of the discursive system of the text or the hegemonic system that it reproduces be stretched or broken? Under what circumstances? Are there any characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* who live in limbo between integration into the central core of the system and isolation in its outer circles? Considering the “Reading from the Margins” question regarding who lives in the liminal zones of society establishes a picture for me of the rigidity or elasticity of boundaries and how they are stretched, fractured, reformatted, and maintained. It seems to me that a discussion of liminality also works to illuminate how privilege is consolidated.

The boundaries are tightly drawn in Maycomb; liminal zones are not widely articulated. At least three characters in the story, however, are presented by the text as community members who operate in the grey—Mr. Raymond, Miss Caroline and Boo Radley—while white country folk, in general, live in an indeterminate state between white privilege and black disrepute.

Mr. Dolphus Raymond clearly ought to belong to the acceptable elite. He is white, “owns all one side of the riverbank . . . and he’s from a real old family to boot” (172). The difficulty, however, is that “he’s got a coloured woman and all sorts of mixed chillun” (172). To make his preference of a life partner palatable, Mr. Raymond pretends to be a drunk, sipping Coca-Cola from a brown paper bag when in public, knowing that the community at large will assume he is constantly inebriated. Thinking that Mr. Raymond is not in full control of his faculties allows the community elite to overlook, at least somewhat, his close black connections.

The text recognizes that the children of this union are caught in a societal limbo: “They don’t belong anywhere. Coloured folks won’t have ‘em because they’re half white; white folks won’t have ‘em ‘cause they’re coloured, so they’re just in-betweens, don’t belong anywhere” (172). The text keeps Mr. Raymond perpetually at arms’ length while denying the children’s mother, Mr. Raymond’s partner, a description beyond colour, a name, or an identity.

Miss Caroline, the new teacher from another county, is a transitional character, moving slowly from the status of an outsider into the mainstream of the community. She is unfamiliar with the town’s dynamics and social boundaries and makes many mistakes in judgment as she learns to navigate the lines that the social order has drawn around individuals and families. Her “progressive” methods of teaching are satirized by the text, and her demand that Scout and her father stop reading together at home is ignored by Atticus. That Miss Caroline may be Jewish is suggested through the way she opposes Hitler’s actions during current affairs’ discussion. During the discussion she espouses, “There are no better people in the world than the Jews, and why Hitler doesn’t think so is a mystery to me” (259).

However, Miss Caroline is white, and her indiscretions are excused; Atticus states that she is not to be held responsible when she knows no better (36). After a few years in Maycomb, she does know better, at least according to the unspoken rules of Maycomb’s societal system, when she says to a friend in an allusion to the Tom Robinson trial, “... it’s time somebody taught ‘em a lesson, they were getting’ way above themselves, an’ the next thing they think they can do is marry us” (260).

The text also seems to suggest that we should see Boo (Arthur) Radley as a marginal character, living peripherally between light and dark. One of the ways that we are led to make this connection is through the figuration of the novel *The Gray Ghost*, which Jem has been reading and Atticus picks up to read while sitting vigil at Jem's bedside. Following immediately after the unveiling of Boo Radley's person and an illumination of his morality, Scout and Atticus discuss Stoner's Boy, the main character of *The Gray Ghost* who is assumed to have created much mischief and hardship within *The Gray Ghost* storyline. When Stoner's Boy is finally caught and revealed to the other characters, he is discovered to be "real nice" (295), and Atticus says, presumably in thematic conclusion, "Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them" (296). This statement draws together the textual threads that attempt to show how understanding is achieved by seeing things from the perspective of others. The implication is that justice can be accomplished by more knowledge and more reason.

This conclusion fails in regard to many textual circumstances in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, notably the Tom Robinson trial, but also within Boo Radley's life. While Boo certainly does gravitate to the shadows and his silent presence gives rise to much mischievous speculation, he is simply an odd type among other odd types who make up the Maycomb elite. Enough is known about his family background so that he is accepted, excused and protected by the power of the social order. He is white and remains a member of the privileged centre. The very fact that there has not been an official investigation of the circumstances in the Radley house speaks to the family's inclusion among the select members of society who are generally held above suspicion. While it seems there must be a story to be told about family coercion and manipulation, the

choices the adult Boo makes to remain alone, silent and indoors are rights he exercises as a member of an elite group who have the political, economic and social power to make such choices.

White country folk of Old Sarum are in a liminal zone between the white elite and the morally black/physically black societal orders, and it is tempting to think that some, at least, will be able to make the transition to the social centre. The text initially hints at such a possibility through the invitation Jem and Scout give Walter Cunningham to join them for lunch, through the facts that Old Sarum children are generally clean and are learning to read, and through the connection Scout is able to make with Mr. Cunningham which leads to the disbanding of the lynch mob. But the central events in the storyline establish how deeply the boundaries between social groups are entrenched, and how, despite fragmentary elasticity, the boundaries snap back into place when privileged status is at risk.

The jurors, members of the Old Sarum community, are not persuaded by Atticus to find Tom Robinson innocent of rape charges; they cannot break with the racial loyalty that compels them to find Robinson guilty instead of recognizing Ewell's implied guilt. For his part, Atticus, the chief voice of enlightenment and reason in Maycomb, succumbs to Aunt Alexandra's edict that his children will no longer associate with the "trash" of Old Sarum (237). The tricky combination of Old Family history, money, property, and education, which establishes the white benchmark in Maycomb, is not within reach for the country folk of the story.

6.4.5 *Patterns and Contradictions*

Having established the shape of the system, it becomes important to me to look at texture. The texture of the system becomes apparent by answering the “Reading from the Margins” questions from the Systems column, which ask: What similar patterns are repeated in social arrangements? What contradictions exist within the social system? What things consistently stay the same? What is changeable? As I answer questions about patterns, I find inconsistencies and irregularities within the social structure. Having ignored or underexplored these inconsistencies in my conventional studies of the text, they appear hidden from open view. The inconsistencies and irregularities of the social system, however, are the necessary incongruous underpinnings of a polished hegemonic systematic presence. As I consider the questions of the analytic template, I find myself attending to some of the descriptive details within the text that I had previously disregarded.

Outwardly stable and predictable, the world of Maycomb is nevertheless rife with contradictions. Even the natural setting participates in a process of pattern and rupture. “It was hotter then—even the shade was sweltering—” (11), states the narrative voice, and yet the shingles of houses are described as rain-rotted (14). Maycomb was a tired old town where there was nowhere to go and nothing to buy, and yet, the narrator describes it as a time of optimism (11); and further, “A day was twenty-four hours long but seemed longer” (11). Atticus derived a reasonable income from the law, but there was no money with which to buy anything (11). The courthouse sagged in the square (11), but the concrete pillars supporting the roof were too heavy for their light burden (173). Maycomb

had been told it had “nothing to fear but fear itself” (12). These contradictions in the narrative description establish a reader response of unease, distrust and bewilderment.

The main residential street in town is lined by relatively large southern homes with high ceilings, long windows, well-kept lawns, flower beds, fruit and nut trees, and friendly front porches. To all outward appearances, Scout and Jem live in a neighbourhood where the homes are filled with tight-knit nuclear families, the building blocks of a stable middle-class society. But this is not the case. The only children in the neighbourhood are Scout and Jem, who are joined by Miss Rachel’s nephew in the summer. During the time frame of the story, not one home on the street houses a married couple, or an unmarried couple, for that matter. Atticus is a widower who never mentions his wife; the text tells us only that she was a member of a Graham family. Uncle Jack has never been married. Several older single adults along the street live alone.

The marriages that are mentioned in the text are fractured in one way or another. Aunt Alexandra and her husband do not speak to one another, and she eventually leaves him. Dill’s parentage remains a muddle, which is not clarified—Does he have a mother? Of course he does, but who is she? Does he have a stepfather? Several successive stepfathers? Is he shuttled from relative to relative? That we are left uninformed about Dill’s family life seems strange because Atticus and the children have such detailed information about almost everyone else. They know, for example, that the judge and his wife rarely kiss. Mr. Dolphus Raymond seems happy with his family life and his marriage, but the narrative does not explore that marital relationship except for its transgression of the colour line. From the response of Tom Robinson’s wife to his death, it might be inferred that they had a happy marriage and family life, but it too remains

unexplored; textual attention, instead, centres on the rape charge that Tom faces, his incarceration, and eventually, his death. Even the numerous children in Mr. Ewell's squatter's shack "ain't got no mother" (33).

The law figures prominently in the story. The central location of the courthouse in the town square, the vital community role played by Atticus, the lawyer, the frequent appearances of Sheriff Heck Tate, the brushes with the law that shape Boo's life and the critical action of the rape trial would seem to lead to an appreciation for the efficacy of the law in Maycomb. But the ubiquitous presence of the law is misleading; in practice the law operates much like the nearly empty family homes in the Finch neighbourhood—it does very little.

As an 18 year-old, Boo Radley was charged with stealing a car and disturbing the peace; fifteen years later, he faced assault charges when he stabbed his father with a pair of scissors. In both incidences, the judge's role is problematic. Boo's father instructs the judge in the first incident to place Boo under house arrest, and in the second, tells the judge that charges cannot be laid and that Boo cannot be sent to an asylum, but that it would be alright to lock him up in the courthouse basement. Seemingly, this arrangement is made outside of the formal processes of the law, since town council members eventually ask Mr. Radley to take Boo home as he may die of mold from the damp basement environment.

When Sheriff Heck Tate is called out to the Finch home to kill the mad dog terrifying the townsfolk, he hands his rifle to Atticus, exclaiming, "I can't shoot that well and you know it!" (104). In this instance, one of just a few in which Atticus takes an active role, he replaces the sheriff assigned to manage the safety of the streets. Atticus

also takes over Sheriff Heck Tate's role when he sits at the doorway of the downtown jailhouse, protecting Tom Robinson from a lynch mob before the trial opens. Heck and his officers have been "called . . . off on a snipe hunt," so Atticus does not have the practical support of the law as he faces the shadowy group of Old Sarum men (162). Now it is Scout who rushes in to the rescue, and affects it, by recognizing and making conversation with Mr. Cunningham, the father of Walter, a school acquaintance. With the children present as witnesses, Mr. Cunningham instructs his compatriots to disband.

While the text tells us that Atticus "can make somebody's will so airtight can't anybody meddle with it" (99), readers are never actually privy to this definitive work. We do, however, see Atticus in fine form at the trial around which the novel is built; Atticus shines as the prototype of an intelligent, humane, articulate, polished practitioner of the law. Even though he builds a convincing argument on both circumstantial and physical evidence, Atticus loses his case. Tom Robinson is convicted of raping a white woman despite supposed safeguards built into the legal system to determine the truth and save the innocent. The law does not overcome the discrimination of the people; the law, instead, enshrines it. The law confirms that white privilege is above the law, and a necessary part of white entitlement.

The law, too, fails to protect the children from Mr. Ewell's attack, even though he has made his intentions for revenge against Atticus explicit. When it finally becomes clear that, in attempting to protect the children, Boo Radley murders Mr. Ewell with a kitchen knife, Sheriff Heck Tate makes his only authoritative move in the text. He decides to do nothing. Boo will not come to trial, Heck Tate decides, because Boo is too shy to face the limelight and his intentions were clearly good. Atticus corroborates Heck

Tate's story that Mr. Ewell fell on his own knife when he realizes that it was Boo, not Jem, who wielded the knife. Between the two of them, Heck Tate and Atticus become judge and jury; they represent the inner sanctum of Maycomb society; they own the law. What becomes apparent is that it is not the practice of the law, but the presence of the law, which is critical. The law's chief function within the narrative is to accomplish Atticus Finch as a man of the law and also above the law; having been established by white men to define, protect, and privilege them, the law actualizes Atticus's whiteness.

The contradictions within the novel suggest a systemic texture with lumpy inconsistencies. For the dominant and complicit characters within the text, the social contradictions that abound are smoothly covered by daily processes of avoidance, rhetoric, traditional expectations, and substitutions. The homogeneity of the systemic surface belies the feared heterogeneity beneath it.

6.4.6 *Gaps and Silences*

Subjugation and privilege work like the warp and woof of the systemic fabric. Like the interplay of warp and woof, the patterns of the societal system are created as much by the light that is shone on speech, actions, and relationships as by the darkness of gaps and silences. The "Reading from the Margins" questions—Where are the gaps? What is so well understood that it is silent? Where is the silence? What possibilities are silenced?—call up the characters' shared assumptions on which the system is founded. Within the text of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the silences that grip me are those of mothers, and of the marginalized representatives of the outer limits of Maycomb society.

The absence of mothers is a striking gap in the social fabric constructed by the text. In the telling of patriarch Simon Finch's life, the text simply indicates that after he

had established a cotton plantation, he also found a wife and “with her established a line” (10). The Finch’s residential street—“a settled neighbourhood” (99)—is filled with older women, but no mothers. Obviously, there are mothers in the wider community, but they remain largely silent. The women of the missionary circle may well be the mothers of children at school but the text completely avoids their parental roles. By title, they function only as wives—such as Mrs. Merriweather, Mrs. Farrow or Mrs. Perkins—and as Christian ladies gravely concerned about missionary activities in foreign places. At the end of the story, the women of the community, assuming that a recent mischievous prank in town was perpetrated by traveling salesmen, “Da-ark they were” (265), decide that Halloween will be celebrated in the school gymnasium rather than on Maycomb’s streets. This is the only action reported by the text that implicates these ladies in the lives of their children.

The action of mothers in the text is extremely limited. Scout, Jem and Dill see “a small boy clutching a Negro woman’s hand” walk past them outside the courthouse where Tom Robinson is standing trial; they make the assumption that the child belongs to Mr. Raymond, but the Negro woman, presumably the mother, remains nameless and silent within the text (172). Helen Robinson speaks only twice in the text, once to offer Atticus a seat and once to beg her employer not to do anything about the harassment she is experiencing from Mr. Ewell: “Just let it be, Mr. Link, please suh” (262). When she hears about her husband’s death, she falls to the ground with her children around her. Mr. Ewell’s dirty brood no longer has a mother. While Aunt Alexandra has an adult child, he plays no part in the storyline, and her one grandson makes only one appearance, goading Scout. Dill’s mother is so distant that we question her reality.

What is so well understood, but is silent within the system of the text, is that mothers are expendable. Paternity, not maternity, is of significance to establishing family identity. It is a father, like Atticus, who can be all in all—a god-like figure—to his children. There is no perceived lack in paternal function that must be filled by a female presence; whatever parental functions a father chooses not to fill are either not of much importance, or are tasks which can easily be hired out to others. The patriarchal nature of the system is beyond question.

What the patriarchy of the system allows is that Scout and Jem have relationships with three women who function somewhat as surrogate mothers. It seems that Miss Maudie, their across-the-street neighbour, once had some relationship with their Uncle Jack, a relationship that remained undeveloped and perhaps, unresolved. She takes an interest in the Finch children to the point that she advises them about the position of their father in the community, she allows them to play in her backyard arbor, and she bakes little cakes for them on occasion.

When Aunt Alexandra leaves her husband, she moves in with her brother, Atticus, and attempts to take over the running of the household and the social instruction of Scout and Jem. All three Finches initially resist her in these efforts. Her attitude is not maternal, but judgmental. She is highly concerned about proper behaviour and about making a proper social impression. She would like Atticus to end Calpurnia's employment with the family. The community women regard Aunt Alexandra as highly as Atticus is regarded within the wider community of both men and women. She is not silent; rather she operates, not so much as a surrogate mother, but as a social corrective within the Finch family.

Calpurnia, we are led to believe, mothers Jem and Scout in the absence of their birth mother. However, when Scout first introduces Calpurnia it is as the family cook, a woman who has a tyrannical presence in the kitchen. Her chief functions seem to be to manage the kitchen, call the children home from their play, and keep the children clean. Atticus supports her role as the manager of household affairs and instructs the children to listen to her. The text allows Calpurnia to speak directly when she corrects Scout's manners, sounds a warning to the neighbourhood about the coming of the mad dog and takes the children to First Purchase African Church. It is during this outing that we learn that Calpurnia grew up at Finch's Landing, the descendant, no doubt, of slaves who earlier helped to establish the plantation. She says she has "spent all [her] days workin' for the Finches or the Bufords" and moved to Maycomb along with Atticus and his bride in order to work as their cook (135). She learned to read and "talk right" by reading the Bible and a legal text given to her by the children's grandfather (136). While preparing to take the children to church, Cal fusses over their appearance muttering that she does not "want anybody sayin' I don't look after my children" (128). Additionally, she calls Scout "baby" (125); and after sternly reprimanding Scout about her table manners, she kisses her. However, evidences of affection between her and the children are infrequent.

For most of the storyline Calpurnia is simply there; a silent presence who helps to keep the family home functioning during the daytime, who keeps track of the daytime activities of the children, and who goes back to her home in the African American settlement at night. When she plays a part in furthering the storyline, as when she goes along with Atticus to see Helen Robinson in the settlement, her words and actions are reported in the third person. Even though Atticus asserts that the family could not have

done without her, Calpurnia virtually disappears from the narrative after Aunt Alexandra arrives in the Finch household. The white Finch family is constructed by the black presence of Calpurnia in much the same way that the town of Maycomb is constructed as a white place because of the African Americans living quietly outside of it, but supporting it.

Missing mothers is one dark thread woven through the pattern of Maycomb society; the other dark thread is one of presence—the presence of docile black bodies. The historical reality of black slavery and black labor in the establishment of the American south is acknowledged only by a partial sentence—“having forgotten his teacher’s dictum on the possession of human chattels, bought three slaves and with their aid established a homestead ...” (10). The African Americans who now quietly serve the white elite of Maycomb are descendants of slaves. By deliberately looking for them, the reader can find hushed black bodies in virtually every scene of the narrative. There are “Negroes who ... cut across” the street to avoid the Radley Place (15), superstitious stories attributed to coloured folk, an assumption that Mr. Nathan Radley “shot at a Negro in his collard patch” (61), and African Americans who are assumed to be available for any difficult chore that comes up. “Why don’t you get a coloured man?” Jem asks Miss Maudie when she starts to clean up her yard after hers was devastated by a fire (82). In addition, Mrs. Dubose “lived alone except for a Negro girl in constant attendance ...” (108). While there are African Americans working quietly in the town’s kitchens, gardens and garbage trucks, we hear from very few of them.

When black residents of Maycomb speak in white society, they say little, and what they say is noted, and often corrected. Mrs. Merriweather reports to her friend,

Gertrude, on a conversation that took place with her domestic servant, whom she addresses both in offensive terms as “a sulky darky” and in possessive terms as “my Sophy:”

... there’s nothing more distracting than a sulky darky. Their mouths go down to here. Just ruins your day to have one of ‘em in the kitchen. You know what I said to my Sophy, Gertrude? I said, ‘Sophy,’ I said, ‘you simply are not being a Christian today. Jesus Christ never went around grumbling and complainin’ and you know, it did her good. She took her eyes off that floor and said, ‘Nome, Miz Merriweather, Jesus never went around grumblin’. I tell you, Gertrude, you never ought to let an opportunity go by to witness for the Lord (245).

By presenting Tom Robinson’s trial from the children’s perspective, Harper Lee is able to focus reader attention on the presence of the silent black audience. The “Negroes” wait quietly for the white people to go upstairs to the court room, before they come in and make their way to the coloured balcony (174). Adult men rise and give their front row seats to the three white children. Tom Robinson is very still and silent as the Ewells testify against him. The reader’s first clear introduction to Tom comes as he stands at Atticus’s command and displays his powerful but crippled body to the courtroom. When Tom Robinson speaks, it is only in answer to the questions put to him by Atticus and Mr. Gilmer, the lawyer for the prosecution. He is terse and tense until Atticus’s manner puts him somewhat at ease. He speaks quietly “with no hint of whining in his voice” (204). His testimony comes across as believable; there is room to hope that he may be acquitted. Then he makes an unpardonable mistake. He says that he, an African American man, felt sorry for Mayella, a white woman (209). After this point in

the cross-examination, Mr. Gilmore resorts to calling him “boy,” every iteration of the term effectively putting Tom Robinson back into his subordinate and silent place. When Dill expresses his objection to the sneering tone taken by Mr. Gilmore, Scout takes up the community voice, stating, “... after all he’s just a Negro” (211).

The black silence continues as the African Americans in the balcony give Atticus a silent standing ovation. Even though Atticus asserts the claim that “in our courts, all men are created equal” (218), Tom Robinson is found guilty, and his reaction to that charge is not recorded by the text. Rather, it is Maycomb’s response that is of interest to the narrative. Following the trial, already damned, Tom disappears in the first person. We hear in the third person that he got tired of “white man’s chances” (249), tried to climb the penitentiary fence and was gunned down by the guards. At the news of his death, his wife gives one cry and then falls silently to the ground. The textual eyes are averted from the ways that the black community deals with the Robinson family’s legal, social, and personal nightmare.

What we do know from Lee’s powerful descriptions of endemic racism is that the white elite of Maycomb quickly find self-justifying ways to put the trial behind them. The ladies of the missionary circle are not only unable to see Tom Robinson’s innocence, but they transfer his guilt (in their eyes) to the entire African American community, and in relationship to that general perceived guilt, they can perform again in the role of good white Christian. The spokesperson for the group, Mrs. Merriweather states, “If we just let them know we forgive ‘em, that we’ve forgotten it, then this whole thing’ll blow over” (244). Maycomb is interested in Tom’s death for about two days, then the attitude of “easy come, easy go ... nigger always comes out in ‘em” (253) prevails and routine is

again established. Atticus tells his children that “things had a way of settling down, and after enough time passed people would forget that Tom Robinson’s existence was ever brought to their attention” (256).

Maycomb’s jail sits in the town centre near the courthouse. Wedged between the hardware store and the newspaper office, the jail is a “miniature Gothic joke, one cell wide and two cells high ... [with a] red brick façade and thick steel bars ... its supporters said it gave the town a good solid respectable look and no stranger would ever suspect that it was full of niggers” (161). The sad image of a small jail filled with only dark bodies is made even sadder by its superficial respectability and its silence. The text graphically draws a picture of its own system of superficial white respectability contradictorily supported by and imprisoning a silent African American presence.

6.4.7 Origins, myths, and rites

We are led to a consideration of validation by the “Reading from the Margins” Systems’ questions that ask: Where and what is the origin of life? How do people relate to the past? What rites or festivities are repeated? Answering these questions reveals to me the basis on which privilege is deemed to rest, and the ways in which power and privilege are validated throughout the system in an ongoing way.

The origins of the Finch family narrative and the town of Maycomb begin with Simon Finch’s personal history in Cornwall, England, and his participation in the colonization of the new world. The importance of a British/European background is established when the narrative voice admits that the Finch family has sought for recorded ancestors as far back as the 1066 Battle of Hastings, the last successful invasion of

England by Normans which established on the island a European, rather than a Scandinavian, society.

Allusions to battles, governing personalities, and agreements that brought shape to the United States of America also frame the place, time, and events of the text.

References to the War Between the States (the diplomatic southern term for the American Civil War), Reconstruction (the division of the south into military districts to establish universal male suffrage after slaves were freed), and Andrew Jackson's opposition to Reconstruction on the grounds that it interfered with the American citizen's rights establish the mainstream nature of the social struggles in Maycomb. Allusions to the performance of American soldiers in World War I, in the Second Battle of the Marne, and to the efforts of the federal National Recovery Act to stimulate the economy after the depression bring authenticity to the text, but also an alignment with military and government might. Similarly, references to Thomas Jefferson and Rockefeller in Atticus's summation at the trial place the concerns of the text into a national perspective, and work to reinforce the political, legal, and economic power of the Maycomb elite, even as the text asks where black Americans might fit into the national vision.

The children's world, however, is shaped by myths about phantoms. Scout, Jem and Dill, for example, frighten each other with tales of Hot Steams. When you walk along a lonesome road at night, they tell each other, and you pass a hot place, that's a Hot Steam, somebody who cannot get to heaven, somebody who just wallows around on lonesome roads and if you walk through him, when you die you'll become a Hot Steam too, going around at night sucking people's breath (43). If you have to go through one,

there is a special chant that can keep you safe. Hot Steams, haints, incantations and secret signs, however, are superstitious beliefs that Calpurnia says is “nigger-talk” (44).

Supposedly it is “coloured folks,” too, who have created and perpetrated the myths about another ghost. Boo Radley is said to be a malevolent phantom that goes out at night to peep in windows, and breathe on flowers to freeze them. Small stealthy crimes in the town are attributed to him; the pecans that fall from the trees on the Radley lot are deemed to be poisonous and although they lie scattered on the school grounds, they remain untouched by children. Boo’s voluntary incarceration in his own home, his attempt to stab his father with a pair of scissors, and his disappearance from everyday life make him an object of horror and fearful curiosity.

The elite adults, from whose strata of society this text is narrated, live with, by, and perpetuate myths about racial and class identity, fearful difference, a natural understanding of progress, and the impartial nature of the law. Fostering essentialist notions of identity means that they too, like the children, are haunted by phantoms—the phantoms of the unacceptable other. Having relegated country folk to the level of trash, squatters to the level of animals, and African Americans to a dark abyss, the white elite must expend daily energy to keep these others in their place and to keep themselves separate from their contaminating influence.

On a physical level, this confines those who reside in the Maycomb social centre into their homes and their neighbourhoods. They do not move freely across boundaries into Old Sarum; they pass the squatters’ “nests” and turn their vehicles around in “the Negro Quarter” (131) only once a year when they take their Christmas trees to the dump. On a social level, they perform complicated maneuvers of displacement. They are able to

look at the needs of others as long as they are at a safe distance; the missionary circle's study of the poverty, darkness, and immorality of the Mrunas is a combination of exotic curiosity and a zeal for good works. They are unwilling, however, to dirty their hands and reputations by associating with the under-privileged in their own community, and they work hard to overlook and minimize the indispensable work done by black servants in their homes. There is a fear that underwrites these efforts not to look at local black people; white status depends on not noticing the indispensable work of others that constructs and maintains white privilege.

It takes effort for the white elite not to recognize that the structure which privileges them is dependent on, and shaped by, the strata of humanity around them. In fact, it is the other—the not I—that establishes the preferred identity of privileged whiteness. To be acceptably white is to be not heathen, not poor, not illiterate, not dirty, not black. The practices of everyday life must make evident a rejection of all that is other. In the process of disavowal, the Maycomb elite become fugitives of their own shadowy doubles.

Engaging in continuing practices of disavowal, the white elite are unconsciously disciplined by figures of whiteness encasing blackness—the respectable red brick jail filled with silent “niggers” (161), Jem’s “nigger” snowman built around a muddy inner core and its association with hermaphrodites (74), a white-skinned child carrying black genes (172). The white elite are further disciplined by the degenerate Ewells, whose moral and physical dirtiness is never completely covered by white skin.

The rites that deliver a safe white identity are those that involve separation, cleanliness, goodness and Christianity. So, Miss Rachel prefers to stay within her own

home, Aunt Alexandra is overly-anxious about proper appearances, Mrs. Merriweather supports foreign missions and takes an educative tone with her domestic worker, the town supplies Christmas baskets and welfare money to squatter families along with “the back of its hand” (204), and they all, Finches included, go to the Maycomb Alabama Methodist Episcopal Church, or its Christian equivalent, on Sunday mornings.

Myths of racial difference and moral identity accomplished through practices of disavowal, separation, and cleanliness are associated with the myth of progress based on reason. The myth of progress centres on the notion that individuals choose their identities and their lifestyles, and through the use of (Eurocentric) reason, can think their way out of their “othered” predicaments. Through cleanliness, godliness, hard work, and goodness, so the myth goes, individuals can move into the mainstream of privileged society. But the fact that the Cunninghams, Calpurnia, and other members of “the Negro Quarter” (131) are clean does not make them the social equals of the Finches. The fact that Tom Robinson is hard working, performs good deeds, and is a well-respected member of First Purchase African Church does not protect him within the confines of the law. Miss Maudie feels the community has taken “baby steps” forward in the defense offered to Tom Robinson, not recognizing that boundaries that are fractured will simply be redrawn. The privileged centre will remain so because it holds political, economic, legal, and policing power.

Atticus’s final statements to the jury indicate the contradictions with which he struggles—his belief in the foundational nature of the law which, in America, is summed up by the statement that “all men are created equal” and his understanding that “a court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up” (218).

The myths of identity and difference, and progress based on reason, are subsumed by the overarching myth of law—law that somehow has a force of its own, separate from the power conferred on it by the privileged centre.

6.4.8 *Death and its Iterations*

How does death occur? How is death repeated? “These Reading from the Margins” framework questions open to an understanding of the ecology of the system and lead me to the brink of the laws that maintain it. Three significant deaths occur in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. These are the deaths of the mad dog, Tom Robinson, and Mr. Ewell. Atticus is implicated in each of these deaths, as are the figures of reason, desire, identity, law, and goodness.

The mad dog is a threat to public safety. He walks dazedly as he enters the neighbourhood, shivering, twitching, his jaw opening and shutting, “alist ... far from dead ... he hasn't got started yet” (103). Before his madness degenerates into foaming at the mouth and lunging at throats, Heck Tate directs Atticus to shoot him: “The rifle cracked. [The dog] leaped, flopped over and crumpled on the sidewalk in a brown-and-white heap. He didn't know what hit him” (105). Madness has deprived the dog of strictures on its behaviour—the dog can no longer be anticipated to behave reasonably according to its training. The mad dog's death asserts the primacy of reason and the understanding that safety is accomplished through violence. Atticus's identity as someone aligned with power, who has “an unfair advantage over most living things,” but who is also a gentleman, “civilized in his heart” (107) is reinforced through this incident.

The figure of the mad dog arises again during the Robinson/Ewell trial. It is Atticus's memory rather than his shot that now becomes accurate. In his final cross-

examination of Mayella, Atticus drops his glasses, as he did to shoot the mad dog, turns his good eye on Mayella and rains questions upon her “in a way that hit her hard” (200). Waiting for the jury’s decision, Scout senses that the atmosphere in the courtroom is exactly the same as on the deserted, waiting, empty street on the winter morning when the mad dog rounded the corner. She sees her father and the sheriff conferring in low tones, sees her father’s slow deliberate movements, and almost expects to hear Heck Tate say “Take him, Mr. Finch ...” (223). Atticus directs his argumentative shots at Mayella in the name of reason. Her testimony must be decimated, and Tom Robinson, the threat to public safety—according to reasoning that supersedes the supposed intentions of an individual or the courtroom rules of logic—which must be destroyed.

Tom Robinson is an object of white desire which must be repudiated. Although it is Mayella Ewell who has initiated physical contact with him, Tom is guilty of transgressing the colour line by feeling sorry for her. The white community elite, as a privileged group, and Mayella Ewell, as a marginal member of white society, require an absolution from the contamination that has occurred through the desire for contact with blackness. The death of Tom Robinson is the public repudiation of desire in the text; his death accomplishes the primacy of law. Law is upheld by force and a white identity is reinforced through violence.

Atticus’s close identification with Tom Robinson and his impassioned defense of Tom make him temporarily suspect in the eyes of much of the community. Although Atticus has initiated an appeal process, Tom will be sentenced to the electric chair if the appeal fails. Instead of waiting, Tom, “tired of white man’s chances,” attempts a prison break and is repeatedly shot by prison guards (249). The combination of Atticus’s high-

minded ideals and Tom's death, seen as a result of choosing the black man's way over the white man's way, provides enormous leverage for Atticus's identity and reputation within the community. His goodness becomes almost legendary and he can do no wrong; his central position in the community is entrenched and he is returned to the legislature as the representative member of Maycomb. Tom's death works to create a self for Atticus, an identity that is wrought both through brute force and the law substituted for it.

The central elite recognizes in Atticus an alignment of undisputed power and almost supreme goodness, a representative identity that also works to effect the salvation and goodness of the community. Through his defense of Tom Robinson, Atticus procures a personal and communal whiteness that comes from a strenuous effort for justice coupled with the rejection of Mayella, a symbol of moral blackness, and the removal of Tom Robinson, a symbol of guilt through his physical blackness. Atticus's goodness and whiteness saves the town from being racist because they are white and they have chosen him to represent them.

Mr. Ewell is not good. His black heart and evil nature are made apparent through textual performances which show that he raped and beat his daughter, lied to the court about Tom Robinson's behaviour toward Mayella, and attempted to execute revenge on Atticus by killing his children. Mr. Ewell is the abhorrent other. To Atticus's identity, he is the not-I. He is a dirty man who, when scrubbed, reveals a weak superficial whiteness that encases a black identity. Ewell's inability to perform whiteness/goodness, that is, his blackness, prefigures his death. That he dies in the dark by the whitest hand in Maycomb is established as poetic justice. His death is not mourned by anyone; it is a textual necessity. Mr. Ewell's death accomplishes the primacy of whiteness and its alignment

with moral goodness. But the reminder of his person will remain a powerful disciplinary tool among the social elite, whose greatest fears are that, at some level, they also will be found to be not white enough.

6.5 Reading to portray system and power rather than setting

While one of the initial tasks of a conventional reading of a novel is to establish setting, the initial task of a poststructuralist reading is to draw a portrait of the societal system that underwrites the power relationships constructed within and by the text. There are overlaps in information derived from these two kinds of readings, but information from the text is put to different use depending on the reading lens used and different knowledge is created as a result.

A conventional reading establishes setting by making sense of time and place and revealing points of view and initial incidences of conflict. Readers come to know the hopes and fears of the central characters who are embedded in setting and who contribute to the developing drive of the plot. An understanding of the setting in *To Kill a Mockingbird* establishes a portrait of a town in the American south that is segregated on the basis of race and class. A conventional analysis of the novel notes that the story is framed within the context of the social and economic pressures of the 1930s and seeks to make explicit connections between incidences in the novel and those in recorded history. Most characters are seen to display attitudes that are contemporary with the time frame of the novel, leading to discussions of how times have changed, how obnoxious terms used in the novel have now been obliterated in common practice, and how freedoms and opportunities have improved for all races and classes in North America. In a conventional reading, Atticus is seen as a man of integrity, good will and good humor who promotes

the causes of justice and humanity in the town of Maycomb. A conventional analysis will lead readers to make comparisons and contrasts between black and white culture, as portrayed in the novel, and to elaborate ways in which the gaps between these two cultures are bridged by individual characters in the story. Just as the story is told from the perspective of a rapidly-maturing Scout, so we can expect that the emerging revelation of plot and theme will display a maturing social setting in which change for the good gradually evolves, prompted by events such as those which will occur in the storyline; or so a conventional modern reading of the novel focusing on setting would seem to say.

A poststructuralist reading undertaken to reveal system rather than setting leads to very different understandings. First of all, such a reading begins with a supposition that a text is constructed within an epistemological field and will replicate the discourses within which it arises. The textual analysis that follows the “Reading from the Margins” framework demonstrates that *To Kill a Mockingbird* participates in the modern epistemological field and establishes a social system that replicates the damaging discourses of imperialism and (post)colonialism, even as the author consciously reflects and critiques them. Drawing a societal system whose centre is composed of white middle and upper-class business and professional people who are European or English descendents, propertied, wealthy, educated and Christian, a poststructuralist reading of the text shows how common sense perspectives about knowledge and progress that favor the white elite are perpetuated. A poststructuralist reading demonstrates how the privileged white centre of the system is constructed and sustained through the outright removal of aboriginal inhabitants and the subordination and service of the laboring white class, poor white squatters and the African American community. Read traditionally, the

text continues to work for neocolonial and imperial ends; naming the modernist discourse and directing attention toward its reiterations in the text, a poststructuralist reading works to interrupt the replication of the text's damaging discourse by making the inconsistencies and the neocolonial and imperial workings of the hegemonic system explicit.

Secondly, a poststructuralist reading which follows the "Reading from the Margins" model demonstrates how the system both integrates and isolates individuals as it places them within its codified structural order. The oppressive social structure of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is sustained by racial hierarchies, gender stereotypes, religious norms, and legal statutes. Therefore, black is positioned as inferior to white, woman as inferior to man, non-Christian as inferior to Christian, and poor laborer as inferior to private property owner. A poststructuralist reading describes how seemingly rigid lines of colour and property ownership are sometimes stretched and distorted as long as the contortion furthers the privilege and whiteness of the central elite. So, masked by standards of morality, decency, professionalism, and right, Atticus's impassioned defense of Tom Robinson propels him even higher into the esteem of the social elite while securing greater rightness and whiteness for the town that has entrusted him with this task. A poststructuralist analysis demonstrates how white elitism is validated by British and European connections and through participation in the colonial history of the nation. The white centre of the textual system is shown to be synonymous with the political, legal, religious, and economic power of the community. A poststructuralist reading reveals that the purpose of the law is to confirm the primacy of whiteness and its alignment with moral goodness. I propose that an overt textual analysis of how systemic power operates

to establish individuals of dominance and subordination opens the possibility of interrupting these oppressive social processes.

In this chapter, I have taken the stance of a poststructuralist reader to problematize a conventional understanding of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Using the “Reading from the Margins” framework developed by following Foucault, I reconstructed the discursive system of the text that, while rooted in a particular fictional setting, inscribed in particular language, and revealed through the lives of particular characters, participates in the modern epistemological field and contributes to reified understandings and identity constructions in everyday life. While the novel has traditionally been seen as a guidebook for the development of tolerance and understanding in students, answering the questions from the “Reading from the Margins” framework that follows from Foucault’s archaeology of the human sciences, the deconstructive reading of I have begun slowly destroys the security of a traditional reading. Without privileging textual knowledge of time and place, the poststructuralist reading given to the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, has reproduced the system of white elitism, drawing attention to who benefits when concerns for social justice are framed in conventional ways.

In the next chapter, I will continue this counter-discursive reading approach, focusing attention on how the system of white privilege is constructed through rule and maintained by the norm. What becomes apparent is that through processes of interpellation and normalization, students of the text, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, are constructed as proper, good, correct, morally-upright, and normal citizens as they participate in the abjection of those who are poor, dirty, uneducated, non-Christian, non-

European, female, indigenous, and black. This poststructuralist study contends that in a myriad of identity-making ways, the spoken and unspoken rules that establish the norms of elitely-approved texts join those of society to constitute and reinforce identities of privilege and disadvantage. The “Reading from the Margins” framework that follows from Foucault leads me to delineate and speak discursive assumptions and so lay bare oppressions that are common both to the text and society and that are played out in the everyday worlds that students inhabit.

7. *To Kill a Mockingbird*—CONSTITUTING SUBJECTIVITY

7.1 Governing structures

If one imagines the social system in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a circular object, at its margins and outward into the abyss, there is only blackness. This is the outer, determinedly unknown ring of the system—the African American community that falls dismissively beyond the colour line. The ring next to the colour line is deeply shaded, a decadent stratum of humanity made up of squatters who are so poor, uneducated, dirty, and morally suspect that an acceptable recognition of their skin colour is nearly impossible. The next inward ring lies in the shadow of the centre—a stratum of society that is composed of white laborers, some of them recent immigrants, who struggle to maintain ownership of their land and to feed and clothe their families. Finally, the centre of the system emerges—clean and white. This is the circle of the social elite—those from Old Family British and Eurocentric backgrounds whose ancestors participated in the colonial mission in the new world, who own considerable property, are well-educated, well-bred, well-mannered, Christian, and white. Their privileged and powerful whiteness is made possible by the services of the shadowy and black humanity surrounding them; at the same time, dark othered presences haunt the identity of those in the central elite and threaten understandings of themselves as white and good. Clearly, the textual system of *To Kill a Mockingbird* participates in the modernist discourse from which imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism garner their strength and reinscribes its debilitating hierarchies.

In Chapter Six, I used the poststructuralist analysis tool “Reading from the Margins” to unearth the structure of the social system of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, allowing

me to name the discourse of modernity and Eurocentrism from which the text arises, and to trace the cultural values of white elitism embedded in its pages. Placed in a particular setting, inscribed in particular language and revealed through the lives of particular characters, the system of the text slowly and surely materialized, guiding me to elucidate a hierarchy of white privilege that participates in the modern epistemological field and contributes to reified understandings and identity constructions in everyday life. The “Reading from the Margins” analysis of the last chapter announced who benefits in a system of white elitism when concerns for social justice are framed in conventional ways.

In this chapter, I review other anti-racist studies of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, continue to compare and contrast conventional and poststructuralist approaches to novel study, and extend a counter-discursive reading approach which illustrates the usefulness of the “Reading from the Margins” methodology to produce an original deconstructive reading. This chapter focuses attention on how the system of white privilege is constructed through rule and maintained by the norm, an approach that leads me to consider how the student of the text is constructed by it as either favored or marginalized. A conventional reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* leads to the appreciation of two broad themes: tolerance and justice brought to reader attention by the abhorrent racial and economic inequality profiled in the text. For readers who assume a normative identity, a traditional study operates as a reassuring guarantee of the correctness of the cultural system. Working methodically through the deconstructive questions of the “Reading from the Margins” textual analysis tool, however, reveals to me the damage to be done in normative identity construction for students who approach the novel through conventional modern practices of reading. What becomes apparent through a

poststructuralist approach, is that through processes of interpellation and normalization, students of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are constructed as proper, good, correct, morally-upright, and normal citizens at the expense of those who are poor, dirty, uneducated, non-Christian, non-European, female, indigenous, and black. The rules that are necessary to maintain the privileged order and how the characters of the novel perform whiteness/goodness to establish their elite identities within that order, or how they fail to do so, is explored in the text below. A poststructuralist reading, such as the one suggested by “Reading from the Margins”, recognizes that normative identity is constructed through the repetition of discursive norms, is present in elite-approved curriculum, exists within pedagogical practices which shape conventional novel studies, and prevails within the structures and daily procedures of traditional schooling and modernist society.

7.2 Other anti-racist readings of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Having chosen to deconstruct *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I searched for other studies of the novel, noting, in particular, other studies concerned with an anti-racist approach. Carol Ricker-Wilson describes the trouble and dismay she and her students experienced in their endeavor to understand how blackness is portrayed in the novel. Ingrid Johnston describes a similar study undertaken with teacher education students, which was pursued through conventional novel study practices and focused on racism and stereotyping.

In her article “Reading and Resisting Silent Spaces of Whiteness in School Literature,” Johnston talks about the pedagogical experience of reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* with teacher education students. Johnston had hoped that her students would “critique the novel for its modernist ideals and liberal humanist stance,” see in Lee’s novel “a vision of righteous white lawyers “saving” voiceless and marginalized black

characters” and “begin to recognize how texts work to construct audiences” (231). Johnston says her goal was to challenge her own and her students’ “understandings of race, culture and whiteness through a reading, viewing and discussion activity that focused on issues of racism, prejudice and intolerance” (229). The strategies she used in an effort to accomplish this goal included: a comparative novel study using *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*, a Newberry award-winning book by the African American writer Mildred Taylor; an engaged pedagogical approach in which she talked about her own experiences of living and teaching in apartheid South Africa; and assignments that required reflective writing and journaling (230-31). Johnston writes that she was disappointed in the journal responses of her students; very few students offered any resistance to being constructed as the “ideal reader” of Lee’s novel (232). The majority loved the novel, identifying effortlessly with the novel’s strong white characters, displaying anger at racist views, and vocalizing empathy about the plights of the weak (232). Only three students of 21, Johnston says, began to question how the writer had filtered experiences of racism in particular ways; two of these students were immigrants to Canada and the other had a background in postcolonial studies (233). Johnston cites Pearl Rosenberg to suggest that a reading model of “social imagination” helps white students imagine themselves in the shoes of “others” and allows them to indulge in nothing more than a “harmonious experience of reversibility and the pleasure of identification” (232). The effect of such a reader stance, states Johnston, is an affirmation, rather than a challenge of personal identity platforms, and a stronger identification with the white heroes of the text (235).

I am grateful for the insights offered by Johnston about the difficulties of moving “beyond cultural silence” in the classroom (234). But while Johnston cites Stuart Hall to suggest that “the Other is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity,” she chooses to pursue a deeper understanding of such identity through a focus on the other rather than on the self (228). Pursuing a deconstructive approach to the novel, I question the responsibility Johnston places on the author, Harper Lee, for the implicit racism in the text and reject a pedagogical focus on racism, intolerance and prejudice as a way to conduct a classroom novel study. While I pursue aims similar to those of Johnston, those of challenging and resisting discourses that privilege or marginalize, my argument in this dissertation is that a deconstructive reading, which maps the dominant discourses of white elitism and Eurocentric western humanism that speak through curricular texts, has the potential to help students fracture the binaries that equate goodness with whiteness.

Ricker-Wilson describes her experience studying *To Kill a Mockingbird* in a secondary school classroom composed of students with African, Asian, and European (primarily Portuguese) ancestry (70). She observes that white students are able to close the novel, angered by injustice but with their racial identities unscathed, while black students react negatively to the novel, often experiencing some form of distress (70). Ricker-Wilson contends that the novel positions black readers as “others,” while it invites white readers to share in the pleasurable experience of identification with the main characters of the text: “White students are rarely required to consider what it means to possess white skin ... they tend to see racial identity as something troublesomely possessed by other people and are unaware of how their own privileges them” (71-72). Ricker-Wilson clearly identifies the difficulties of teaching the novel through

conventional approaches and points toward the desirability of a different reading experience of the novel, one in which white students learn to see themselves as raced.

Learning to see one's white self as raced may be experienced as a point of crisis for students; but resistance, crisis and resignifying the self are useful theoretical constructs for anti-oppressive education, states Kevin Kumashiro ("Posts" 8). Stances that disrupt one's commonsense view of the world and involve learning something different and new, work to bring a change in society by a change in oneself ("Posts" 8). The poststructuralist, deconstructive approach of the "Reading from the Margins" method of reading is designed to assist students in this resignifying process. In the case of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, this is accomplished, not by focusing on racism and the portrayal of blackness, but on the dominant discourses of modernity that construct whiteness.

7.3 A conventional reading of plot, characterization and theme

A conventional novel study frequently moves from a consideration of setting, with its associated interests in genre, context, authorial intention, point of view, and the introduction of characters, to a concern with plot, which evolves into studies of characters and discussions of themes. In common practice, the pedagogical drive is to teach components of the text, which assist the student to summarize and restate content. Looking for evidence of various types of conflict, students chart the flow of events in the novel, noting and labeling points of rising conflict, climactic moments of conflict and resolution of conflict. Speculative discussions occur about the basis for decisions made regarding chapter organization. Outlines or webs or other graphic organizers are used to visualize relationships between events of the text, and between people of the text, as well as relationships between events and people.

Teachers work with students to explore character development, making inferences about motivation, summarizing behaviour, and drawing conclusions about the values held by major characters. Students are asked to learn character types—static, dynamic or stereotypical. Observations are made about how characters change from beginning to end of the storyline. Students are asked to analyze the choices and motivations of characters, to compare and contrast characters, and to identify and articulate implicit and explicit ideas that arise from characterization and plot. Thematic ideas are related to students' own emotions, personal experiences, and interests and might be compared or contrasted to themes from other literary works. Critical thinking might be invoked to consider the credibility of elements of text such as plot, characterization, narration, and authorial voice, while metacognitive abilities might be called on to explain individual preferences for specific genres or specific ways of approaching the text or to encourage creative responses to the text (Language Arts Professional Development Committee 1-10).

Such conventional novel study approaches may lead a student to conclude that the narrative drive of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is to trace how Scout and Jem learn about fighting prejudice and upholding human dignity through the example of their father. The causes and effects of racist conflict are explored, and the character of Atticus Finch is held up as a model of tolerance and courage. The coexistence of good and evil within individual human beings is developed as a fundamental and universal theme by marking the transition from childhood innocence to an adult perspective that confronts evil and incorporates it into an understanding of the world. The destructive effects of hatred, prejudice and ignorance are juxtaposed with a faith in human nature that results in acts of

justice and humanity. In a conventional reading, the moral force of the novel rests in the development of Atticus's character as one who has experienced and understood evil without losing his faith in the human capacity for goodness. The lessons he tries to teach his children, and thus his readers, is that it is possible to live with conscience without losing hope or becoming cynical. So, for example, the children are led to admire Mrs. Dubose's courage even while deploring her racism. A modern approach to the novel leads students to follow the findings of the child narrator who makes explicit the layering of society by race, class, and gender, and who finds such layering perplexing and generally dismaying. But this dreadfulness occurs at a remove from the reader—in the fictional world of the novel.

7.4 A poststructuralist reading of rule and norm

Firstly, the difference between a contemporary and poststructuralist reading is the poststructuralist rejection of the Cartesian subject as a self-evident individual dichotomously split between subject and object. Skills of interpreting text, such as identifying main ideas, summarizing content, interpreting text organization, making inferences, associating meaning, drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes, and assessing arguments, are as useful to poststructuralist analysis as they are to conventional analysis; the difference rests in the stance of the reader. The poststructuralist reader understands that the stable, rationally-thinking self evaluating text from a detached Archimedean point is illusory; rather there is an acceptance that the self is discursively constituted and performed and that this construction, and deconstruction, is part of the reading process. Reader is text. Accordingly, the poststructuralist reader approaches text as a power/knowledge nexus, as a discursive site within which the reader operates as a

subject, where the text operates on the reader as on an object, by which the subjectivity of the reader is normatively constructed, and through whom the text performatively speaks.

Secondly, setting and theme are of less interest to a Foucauldian poststructuralist analysis than characterization and plot. Since the theoretical frame is that of discursive performativity, study is centered more on the social aspects of characterization and plot in order to provide information from which the reader can draw an understanding of the system of/by the text, the rules that manage daily life in the system, and the norms that emerge which maintain the system. Once the discursive system of the text is made evident, this finding can be placed within historical contexts. For example, the discourse of *To Kill a Mockingbird* can be placed within the epistemological age of modernism, the misadventures of imperialism, the political shaping of the postcolonial American nation, and the educational molding of appropriate citizens in white-settler nations, such as the United States and Canada as well as other countries in which the novel has become curricular fare.

Thirdly, in following Foucault, a poststructuralist reading makes evident the discourse within which the text participates and unveils knowledge taken as truth at the very moment these truths are (re)produced, interrogated and perhaps, repudiated. How the discourse of the text is at work in the process of performance is as much the purpose of study as an academic rendering of the discourse itself; furthermore, the reader/researcher is part of the textual performance and is complexly aware of revealing the rules and norms of the textual system, which work to discursively produce normative subjectivity at the same time as those same rules and norms discursively produce the subjectivity of the reader. At the same time, the poststructuralist reader is self-

consciously engaged in the kind of alternative reading practice that Deborah Youdell says might “make” him or her differently (180). In poststructuralist analysis, these double visions occur on many levels—reader as subject and object bound together in a reciprocal questioning of one another, the articulation of binary hierarchies on the basis of which normative identity is formed (the dominant term dependent for its existence on the subordinate term), the notion of the discursively-constituted subject both separate from and inseparable from the material body, and the dual actions of taking up a normative identity that is an effect of discursive power while, at the same time, working to disrupt it.

Following the textual analysis tool, “Reading from the Margins”, the poststructuralist reader works to make that which is tacitly understood, explicit, and that which is obvious, strange. Common, everyday assumptions are called into question. A poststructuralist inquiry asks the reader to attend to some material in text that a conventional study slides across or neglects to “state”, or to combine elements of the text differently to reach different insights or to bring what has seemed relatively obvious into a more defined focus. An analysis following from Foucault encourages the reader to confront the “fatal” contradictions inherent in any reading/writing of a text. For example, the poststructuralist reader demonstrates not only that the rules of daily life establish cultural norms within the textual society, but how enacting hegemonic rules through the micropractices of daily life binds characters to normative identities of privilege or marginalization. Poststructuralist analysis draws a picture that illustrates how privilege is constructed and at whose expense privilege is maintained. For example, while it may be tacitly understood that the white, middle-class characters of the *Mockingbird* text stand to

benefit in a racist system, a poststructuralist inquiry makes explicit how whiteness is constructed, maintained, and privileged expressly through the marginalization and repudiation of black characters in the text. Of even greater significance, a poststructuralist analysis clarifies how students are interpellated by text, how the text works as an elite discourse to speak students as normal/abnormal and how the text engages hegemonic cultural norms to produce normative subjectivity which includes or excludes students—for whom the text is a curricular reading requirement—from the cultural elite.

7.5 The rules of daily life in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

7.5.1 *Imperatives*

Having established the shape and structure of the textual system, and recognizing it as a Eurocentric modernist discourse which produces, for example, elite white masculinity as powerful and lower class black femininity as powerless, the textual analysis tool “Reading from the Margins” directs the researcher to the question: What rules manage daily life? To begin to answer this question, I am guided to inquire of the text: Within the system of the text, what is imperative? What rules or laws are advanced or championed? What is prohibited or taboo? What limitations are put on people?

To maintain the system of privilege in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is imperative for the social elite to establish an identity of whiteness and to clearly mark boundaries of difference between white and black. Whiteness is performed through cleanliness, proper attire, good manners, good deeds, right thinking, and right speaking. The caste system that structures community life is not to be transgressed; the boundaries that establish the colour line are of singular importance. The law is to be obeyed. For children, obedience to the law begins with obedience to the father. The implications are clear, of course; the

law that structures the system is the law of the father; the law encodes the paternal power of the privileged majority.

Contamination results from contacts with the subordinate other; in order to re-establish an elite white identity, the abject other must be marginalized and kept in plain sight even while the boundaries are re-drawn and reinforced and habits of clean living intensified. When Mayella Ewell breaks the “rigid and time-honored code” by kissing a black man, out “of necessity she must put him away from her ... she must destroy the evidence of her offense” (Lee 216). In much the same way, proper Maycomb society puts the Ewell/Robinson trial out of mind by a further rejection of Tom Robinson after his death. Despite the understanding that Tom espoused Christian beliefs and kept himself physically clean, the white elite who have seen Tom, or imagined Tom’s black skin, feel as if they have been contaminated by his physical blackness. The townsfolk discipline each other to an even higher standard of whiteness by suggesting that cleanliness and Christian living can be just a veneer and that the colour line is an innate and essentialist condition. So the gossip on the street runs like this: “... they say he kept himself clean, went to church, and all that, but when it comes down to the line the veneer’s mighty thin. Nigger always comes out in ‘em” (254).

Atticus is also contaminated by contact with the other; his horror of the subordinate other, however, is focused on Mr. Ewell, a member of the decadent stratum of squatters who are so poor, uneducated, dirty, and morally suspect that an acceptable recognition of their skin colour is nearly impossible. After the trial, Atticus quietly exclaims to Jem and Scout, “There’s nothing more sickening to me than a low-grade white man who’ll take advantage of a Negro’s ignorance” (233). His performance of

abjection is no less pronounced than that of those who cleansed themselves of the black connection through a rejection of Tom Robinson. Almost immediately following his vehement statements to his children about Mr. Ewell, Atticus allows Aunt Alexandra to draw the boundaries between the Finches and the subordinate classes more strictly. If there used to be some discussion about visiting the Cunninghams in Old Sarum or Calpurnia's home in the Quarter, those doors have now been shut as the Finch family regroups to re-establish their privileged position in the community.

7.5.2 Production and Regulation

Human culture operates, among other complex systems, as a network of circulation for consumer goods, of which men and women are the intermediary stages. People make objects and tools, exchange things they need, and are socially interwoven with others (Foucault, *The Order* 383). Of the system reproduced within the text, we can ask foundational economic questions: Who produces? What is produced and how? Who benefits from production? Who or what is regulated? How are people regulated? These questions, taken from the Rules column of the "Reading from the Margins" template guide me to define ways in which individuals and groups of the text publicly represent themselves, what positions they occupy in the economic system, and how they reveal and conceal themselves within their economic interactions.

On the surface of the text, it seems that not much is produced in Maycomb. Despite the depression era setting, there is an ease to life in the Finch neighbourhood that speaks of Old Family money, generated in the case of the Finch family through the work done in the past on a cotton plantation. It seems that no one on the Finch family's street leaves for work in the morning, except for Atticus. However, the town square is filled

with businesses; Maycomb is an active commercial centre. Banks extend or revoke mortgages, the court produces trials, lawyers and the police enact laws. Agricultural goods are produced in Old Sarum and brought to market; services are rendered to the town, its citizens and the surrounding farms by laborers from the African American settlement. Schools use routines, curriculum and pedagogy to produce educated children. Official power, in the form of government regulations, affect banking, policing, legal, social welfare, and educational systems, and by extension, normative identities.

The laws structuring life in Maycomb are so pervasive yet so undisputed that they nearly disappear. It is obvious that white children must go to school and that black children do not. It is obvious that land must be bought and bills paid, and that those who cannot afford to do so are operating outside of the laws of decent society and cannot expect legal protection. It is obvious that black workers must show respect and deference to their employers and to other white people whom they meet. It is obvious that property rights must be respected, gender roles enacted, reasonable arguments accepted, and figures of authority obeyed. It is obvious that correct speech is proper English. It is obvious that black and white will only relate as dominant and subordinate, never as equals, as Mayella Ewell, for example, had hoped.

What is less obvious is that the law is the voice of the hegemonic white majority which privileges a capitalistic, democratic, Anglo-Saxon state, and that through practices of systematic habituation, the law constitutes subjects that are the effects of the hegemonic power as well as their own overseers in maintaining those effects. For Scout and Jem, no less than for Atticus, other members of the dominant class, and all members of society—black, white, rich or poor—regulatory daily practices shape the development of

normative identity. Through routine acknowledgements of boundary markers, obedience to the father or the law, attendance at school or work, punctuality, good work habits, deference to authority, appreciation of reason, and daily practice to form habits of cleanliness, proper attire, and proper behaviour, the citizens of Maycomb's elite perform themselves as normal, proper, morally-upright, dominant, and white. Having been well-schooled, dominant subjects then extend disciplinary and regulatory practices which subordinate others. In complex ways, these regulatory practices extend the norms of the hegemonic structure while establishing rules of exclusion. While the black population of *To Kill a Mockingbird* exhibit the hegemonic norms of clean clothes, clean homes, clean living, and Christian worship, no opportunity is afforded to them to participate in the privileged life of the dominant elite. Instead, they simply reflect the fundamental inequality between dominant and subordinate social groups.

7.5.3 *Winners and losers*

As if in a game of profound significance, the rules that permeate daily life within the textual system determine which members of society lose in cultural contests, and which win. After the plot of the novel has run its course, the "Reading from the Margins" template directs me to consider: Who wins? Who loses? Who suffers? What is lost?

Atticus is clearly the unqualified winner in the text. He benefits from his family background with its roots in European and British history, its participation in the imperial invasion of America, and its accumulation of land, money, and educational opportunities. He benefits from the lifelong work of his black servant Calpurnia, who runs his home and helps to care for his children after the death of his wife. Within his town and the wider county, Atticus is held in high esteem; this benefits his career and paves the way for his

children, particularly Jem, to experience success in their own time. He benefits by being closely associated with the power of the law, the courthouse being both his place of business and the central symbol of authority in Maycomb. His location, as the most prominent lawyer and statesman of Maycomb, allows him to demonstrate a level of goodness that reaches over the colour line. Atticus's ability (entitlement and righteousness) to go back and forth is a sign and performance of his whiteness. What the missionary, J. Grimes Everett, is to the Marunas of New Guinea—"not a white person'll go near 'em but that saintly J. Grimes Everett" (Lee 343)—Atticus is to Tom Robinson and the Negro Quarter in Maycomb. He is never whiter than when he stands next to a black man. That his accomplished defense exposes how the rules of exclusion operate in the courtroom and fails to bring justice to Tom Robinson generates sympathy for Atticus and gives him greater social capital. He is so closely identified with the powers of goodness and the law that in the final episode of the text he operates as the law, dismissing Boo Radley's case from his back porch courtroom without a formal trial. Likewise, Jem is the heir apparent. As Atticus wins, Jem wins.

Aunt Alexandra, on the other hand, is a less qualified winner in the text. As a woman, she is continually positioned as subordinate to Atticus within the Finch household. Yet, her attention to all matters of propriety gives her a formidable position in the social centre. Through her strong performances of elite whiteness, she wins greater approval for Atticus and his children on the home front.

Boo Radley wins by making a connection with the children he has observed from his windows and has come to love. He is absolved from all guilt in the death of Mr. Ewell

and is able to retire to the peace and privacy of his hermit environment with greater self-respect and community respect.

Scout is schooled. She learns to respect the voice of reason and to consider things from many perspectives. She loses her feisty behaviour and the peer relationships she enjoyed with the boys; she acquiesces to demands that she act like a girl. What she most feared as a young child—confinement in a pink cotton penitentiary—she accepts as inevitable by the end of the textual narrative. Helping Aunt Alexandra to entertain the missionary circle, she says resignedly, “There was no doubt about it, I must soon enter this world, where on its surface fragrant ladies rocked slowly, fanned gently and drank cool water” (246). In Scout, Harper Lee has constructed a character who comes to understand herself through contradictions.

Mayella Ewell and her father may have won their case against Tom Robinson in court, but in all other respects, Mayella loses and is lost. Accustomed to strenuous labor, a friendless existence in a squatter’s shack and an unwanted incestuous relationship with her father, Mayella enters the text as an extremely marginalized character. That she is a woman who desires a sexual encounter with a black man demonstrates the abhorrence of the text and its elite society to such a relationship. This, by the way, is somewhat contradicted by the arm’s length tolerance given to Mr. Raymond who also has broken the colour code—but, of course, he is male and wealthy.

At the trial, Mayella is revealed as ignorant, uneducated, beaten by her father, terrified of the mainstream community, and compelled by the demands of her father and the laws of society to lie about her attraction to Tom Robinson. It should be noted that despite her extremely marginalized position, she is able, in a round-about fashion as she

is led by Atticus's line of questioning, to disclose the iniquities of her father. During his closing remarks, Atticus speaks contradictorily of his attitude toward Mayella. He states, "I have nothing but pity in my heart for the chief witness," and "I cannot pity her: she is white" (215, 216). Mayella is not vindicated by the jury's decision; within the minds of the community, she is guilty of an unspeakable offense. She is relegated back to the trash heap, a woman even more subjugated and filthy, and left to her own devices to face the evil father she has betrayed on the courtroom stand.

Bob Ewell does not need a jury to convict him; in the eyes of the community, he is guilty of almost every crime against the elite code of law. He is a drunkard who does not provide for his family. He is uneducated and does not make attempts to see that his children become educated. He is dirty, poor, takes charity, and owns nothing. He displays none of the virtues of a Christian. He speaks with a lower-class English dialect, beats his children, rapes his daughter, lies in court, threatens finer members of society, and intimidates women and children. He lives in a shack cast-off by the African Americans. Ewell himself is a cast-out because his lack of respectability has disgraced white society. Ewell is everything that Atticus does not want to be. Atticus agrees with Heck Tate when he states that by killing Ewell, Boo "has done you and this town a great service," and agrees to cover up the death by saying that Bob Ewell fell on his own knife (290). Atticus has everything to gain by the death of Ewell; Ewell, justifiably, according to the story, loses everything. The text offers no shred of evidence that would grant sympathy for Ewell on any grounds. In the end, even his own death will be laid to his sinful account.

Tom Robinson also loses everything—family, freedom, life, reputation. His crime is not moral blackness, but physical blackness. To the white elite and its law, Tom's

black skin is evidence enough to find him guilty of any crime with which he is charged.

While the text offers a mixture of reactions to Tom's trial, even Atticus joins the majority in agreeing that Tom's life and death is of little importance to the community, and that he will soon be forgotten. "Atticus said...people would forget that Tom Robinson's existence was ever brought to their attention" (256). The drama of justice into which Tom is drawn is a case "as simple as black and white" (215). The dice of power has been rolled; because he is black, Tom loses.

7.5.4 Needs and conflicts

In a conventional novel study, considerable attention is paid to how conflict establishes the plot and propels the storyline. Following the "Reading from the Margins" questions about the rules of the system, however, I evaluate the needs and conflicts of characters and group them to determine the unstated rules that govern emotional expression within the system. How are needs expressed? How are needs satisfied? How is conflict expressed, evaded, reduced, or solved?

The needs that are expressed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are needs for sameness, generally expressed as needs for acceptance. Scout has no female friends and wants acceptance into the world of boys, Jem wants acceptance from his father, and Aunt Alexandra wants the acceptance of the community. For all of these central characters, these needs are met through conformity. Scout imitates the ways of the boys in dress and behaviour and choice of activities. When she finds that she is no longer welcome in their gender-specific world, she gradually replaces the dress, behaviour, and activities of the boys for those of women, securing an identity as a young woman in Maycomb society. She leaves the text, her hand tucked into Boo's crooked arm, looking—should they be seen

by a casual passerby—like a proper southern woman escorted down the sidewalk by a proper white gentleman.

Jem's imitation of his father is also deliberate and detailed. He copies his father's preferences for reading and reflection, tests his ideas through questions and reasoned discussion, and studies and duplicates his father's manners of speech and movement. Aunt Alexandra knows how to be accepted into the centre of Maycomb society and she does so by entertaining the church and neighbourhood ladies and by raising the standard of cleanliness and proper dress and behaviour for Jem and Scout. Obedience to the social law meets the identity needs of these members of the elite and assures them continued acceptance within the world of privilege.

Atticus enters the text guaranteed of acceptance to the world of privilege; he, in fact, operates as its centre. For that reason, he is able to take a calculated risk that tests the social law. His dependence on reason as a mode of living demands a reasonable explanation of the colour line. While he continues to follow the daily codes of identity that establish him as a member of white privilege, he uses the case of Tom Robinson to fracture and reset the colour line. The result of his exploration is a clearer understanding by various members of the elite—Miss Maudie, Heck Tate and Jem included—that moral blackness can be equated to physical blackness. His use of hegemonic reasoning to establish this understanding garners gratitude, praise, and higher esteem for him as well as a raised emphasis on personal responsibility for clean living for white community members. His efforts in court, it can be argued, are disciplinary measures that re-establish the hegemonic norms.

Wherever conflict occurs in the text, it is met at its least sophisticated level with physical force, as in fighting, spanking and lynching, and at its more sophisticated level with reasonable argument, as in family and community discussions about appropriate behaviour. The official force of law incorporates both, but reverses the order—its first attempt to enforce compliance to the law and adjudicate consequences to offenders is through reason, as through the court system. Its final answer to end conflict is violent force, as in the use of capital punishment.

Tom Robinson's great need is for justice, acceptance within the law. At two points in the text, Tom runs from the law. He runs when Mr. Ewell sees him with Mayella, knowing that appearances will incriminate him, and he runs from imprisonment and is shot down by prison guards while he waits for the appeal process. Tom knows from experience that he is not accepted under the hegemonic code of the law, and that he will not find justice within it. While Scout, Jem, Aunt Alexandra and Atticus focus on visibility to establish their normalized identities, Tom needs the protection of invisibility to hide his marginalized one. In a system established on identity and difference, Tom is the feared difference, and the final force of the law to end conflict is all that he can expect from it.

7.5.5 Truth

To make an epistemological field explicit, explains Foucault, we must make an analytical attempt to define the way in which individuals and groups represent words to themselves, revealing and concealing in them what they are thinking or saying, perhaps unknown even to themselves (Foucault, *The Order* 385). Taking these questions from the Rules column of the "Reading from the Margins" guide—What are the totems or

expressed fundamental beliefs? What is seen as the truth? Who is understood to speak the truth? What is sayable?—asks me to attend to the meanings characters give things rather than to the things themselves.

To secure their privilege, the great need of the social elite in Maycomb society is white homogeneity; the truth in Maycomb, however, is heterogeneous difference. Difference from the norm is feared and for that reason must be made completely and unambiguously visible so that it can be avoided. The text establishes the boundaries of difference in terms of gender, class, and race.

While the novel supposedly deals with these concerns from a childhood perspective, no romantic notion of childhood innocence is generated by this text. Children are different only in that they are extended a period of time to accomplish tasks of schooling as adults in training. The structure of adult society is already well-formed, in terms of gender, class, and race, in the classroom and on the school grounds. There is no difference drawn between private and public worlds. The text marks the progress of Jem and Scout in their habituation to societal norms and in their manipulation of reason to justify their normative identities.

One of the truths about difference, according to the text, is that women are subordinate to men. This truth is preached from the pulpits of Maycomb's churches, both Methodist and African, as the doctrine of the Impurity of Women. If bootleggers and gamblers cause problems, women are worse. The law supports this subordination—women are not allowed to serve on juries; upon marriage by the church, they take the legal name of their husband, indicating a transfer in terms of possession and identity, and are then socially known as the mistress or “missus” of a male member of the community. In the

Finch neighbourhood, women are dependent on men, who are the breadwinners and heads of the homes. While men like Atticus take central positions of authority and privilege in the community, women like Aunt Alexandra take supportive and subordinate roles managing the home. As Scout does, girls navigate childhood with slurs to their gender, while at the same time, absorbing and duplicating the gender norms that will render them acceptable in privileged society. The text's disdain for women is shown in the absence of Scout's mother and in the indifference that Scout must learn her gender assignment without a mother's example. The absence of strong and caring mothers and Scout's habituation to the norms of "Southern womanhood" (Lee 158) reflect the text's confidence in gender maintenance and its disinterest in disrupting gender boundaries.

Another difference, according to novel, is that people can be organized into classes that have little in common with one another. The four classes of society—the white elite, the country folk, the squatters, the "Negroes" (239)—that make up the Maycomb social system are so well recognized that 10 year-old Jem walks his sister through the characteristics specific to each class and 6 year-old Scout and her classmates explain to the new teacher why country folk or squatter children behave as they do (26-28). According to local wisdom, country folk are hard-working, honest, poor, and uneducated, squatters are dirty, lazy, ignorant, immoral, and destitute, and African Americans are black, superstitious, laborers, sulky, sneaky, and dangerous. The white elite, of course, knows how to live correctly and properly and can be known through cleanliness, decency, good deeds, well-bred manners, wise use of money, educational excellence, right speech, and right living.

Despite considerable attention paid to class structure in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, class boundaries remain intact at the end of the storyline. The ladies of the centre evade the stark reality of the caste system, their class privilege, and even their own subordination within that class, by good works, especially in relation to foreign missions. Jem finds it difficult to understand how class structure is formed and how it is maintained. His faith in the goodness of the townsfolk is shaken through the results of the Ewell/Robinson trial. Atticus states that Jem needs to “sort things out” and that when he is able to do so, he will “be himself again” (261). Atticus is well aware of the broad strokes as well as the fine lines that draw the community’s caste system, and he is able to move freely within the various classes as he chooses. He accepts his position within the privileged elite and, while he is a compassionate, nonviolent and reflective character, does nothing within the text to contest class boundaries, either in public or in private life.

What Atticus does is to draw attention to the colour line by masterfully arguing for the substitution of moral blackness for physical blackness. His argument fails, at least for the general population within the time of the text. What does seem to occur after the trial is a bleeding and broadening of the colour line to include those who are morally black with those who are physically so. The resulting emphasis on individual responsibility and self-improvement reinforces the hegemonic norms of proper behaviour and right living. The textual exploration of racial boundaries elevates no one; it is not a liberatory text. By providing gripping examples of how white can be seen as black, the text graphically gives instruction in achieving and maintaining whiteness. In doing so, it reinforces racial classifications. The system of privileged identity and feared and repudiated difference remains.

7.5.6 *Desire and death*

The rules that manage and govern the desires and fears hidden within the human psyche are frequently unspoken, but well understood by members of society. “Reading from the Margins” asks a barrage of questions designed to collect and organize textual information that brings what is hidden and unconscious to light. What are people afraid to know? To what ends are emotions harnessed? What is desired? How does desire reveal itself? How does desire make rules necessary? How is desire satisfied? What is unthinkable? How is death managed?

The desire of the novel is for knowledge of the black body. This desire is revealed through the goals and discussions of the Missionary Society, through the relationship of Scout and Calpurnia, through Mayella Ewell’s attempt to seduce Tom Robinson, through the desire of the mob, and through Atticus Finch’s need to rationally articulate blackness in terms of the law. The great taboo of Maycomb society, however, is intimate contact and union of black and white, meaning that the desire of the text, as expressed through its characters, is almost entirely subsumed, frustrated, repressed, and denied.

As the ladies of the Missionary Society lunch on delicious dewberry tarts and coffee, they study the social life of the Mrunas. They are horrified and entranced by information about sexual arrangements which “leave so little sense of family that the whole tribe was one big family. A child had as many fathers as there were men in the community, as many mothers as there were women” (264). Talk about the poverty, darkness, and sexuality of the jungle oppressed is interspersed with gossip about “that darky’s wife. Tom’s wife ...” (244). Expressions of dismay about the sin and squalor of the Mrunas run parallel to expressed fears that “there’s no lady safe in her beds these

nights” (245). The desire to know the black body, socially or individually, is conveniently removed to another world entirely. Passion is expressed as distaste for sulky, domestic, female, African American servants and as emotional responses to missionary Everett’s desperate needs for prayer.

Scout’s mother died when she was two, so she has known no other mother than Calpurnia, the family’s cook. That she has had some contact with this black body is indicated by her description of Calpurnia as “all angles and bones ... her hand was as wide as a bed slat and twice as hard” (12). Scout defies Calpurnia and tries her patience, yet Atticus declares that “the children love her” (147). As Scout turns more and more to the world of women, she begins to seek out Calpurnia’s company. She is gradually initiated into the secrets of the kitchen, and as Jem becomes less of a confidant, Calpurnia consoles her, “Baby ... you come right on in the kitchen when you feel lonesome. We’ll find lots of things to do in here” (125). The visit to Calpurnia’s church generates a growing curiosity to know more about Calpurnia’s life. How did she come to know their father? Who are her grown children? Who are her friends? Where does she sleep and call home? This desire for greater intimacy with Calpurnia is expressed in the request to visit Calpurnia in her home in the Negro Quarter. In this quest, Scout is shut down by Aunt Alexandra who, in turn, is supported by Atticus; “I might as well have wanted to see the other side of the moon,” Scout muses (237).

For a novel that centres on an alleged rape trial, sexual desire is a remarkably under-developed topic in the text. Before Mayella Ewella enters the narrative, there is no hint of sexual curiosity, no furtive glance across the room, no skirt that swishes, no muscles that ripple, and her arrival does nothing to stir up passions other than pity. Want

and loneliness pour from her person as she arrives on the courtroom stand. That she is in need of a loving touch is more than evident and that, as a young woman, she seeks to find it in the body of a kindly and attractive man is made entirely understandable. The problem is that the body she seeks to know is black, and this is the concern of the text. That she is poor, simple, uneducated, lives in an abandoned African American shack, and has already been sexually tainted through incest puts Mayella, the text suggests, as close to the colour line as a white person can be. Even though the rules are elastic and the colour line is continually crossed depending on what is needed to keep dominance in place, Mayella has so little respectability that she cannot cross the line and still expect to return. Mayella's sexual desire for Tom Robinson is not only frustrated, it is ridiculed and reviled. Mayella has no option under social law but to repudiate Tom's claims that she was the one to initiate the illicit contact. She is an improper white woman simply for showing desire, and even worse, for a black man. That a union between Mayella and Tom is unthinkable is due both to the impurity and inferiority of women and to the feared and loathed colour of blackness. The force of the hegemonic system operating through the text is to position Mayella as sexually improper and socially undesirable and Tom as socially stupid and racially dangerous.

It is through Atticus, however, that the textual desire for knowledge of the black body is made most evident and partially satisfied. Atticus, like the white missionary to the Mrunas, is able to make contact with the alien world of the Negroes on their home ground and report back the findings. Although Scout is forbidden to visit Calpurnia's home, Atticus and Jem are guided by Calpurnia through the Negro Quarter and make close contact with Helen Robinson, observing her in the most private moments of initial

grief. The sexual energy represented in Tom Robinson's body is made evident, not through Mayella's account, but through Atticus's legal maneuvers. Preparing to defend Tom in court by pointing out his weak arm, Atticus demands, "Tom, stand up," and directs the audience to "'have a good long look' ... Tom Robinson's powerful shoulders rippled under his thin shirt" (197).

That Tom is the object of Atticus's desire is made evident through his lonely and passionate defense of Tom and his identification, in several complementary ways, with Tom. The physical descriptions of Atticus and Tom are played one against the other by the text. Atticus is an old man, according to his children, somewhere in his fifties; Tom is a young twenty-five. While Atticus used to be athletic, he has become studious and physically inactive; Tom is strong and muscular and capable of strenuous physical labor. Each of the men has a symbolic defect. Atticus is nearly blind in one eye—his vision is impaired. Tom has a withered left arm, which was caught in a cotton gin—his power is impaired. In his concern not to harm Mayella, not to push her or be "ugly" to her (207), Tom displays manners that are as good in their way as are Atticus's well-bred manners. Tom's misguided efforts to be good to Mayella find their equivalent in Atticus's unsuccessful efforts to be good to him. Scout watches her father question Tom and sees in him what her father, and the text, sees—"a black-velvet Negro, not shiny, but soft black velvet. The whites of his eyes shone ... when he spoke we saw flashes of his teeth ... a fine specimen of a man" (204), a man not to be feared and reviled but to be admired and even wanted. "Positioned as yin/yang, each lacking, but part of the whole, Atticus and Tom embody the yearning of the text for a whole, good man and a whole, unified social order" (James McNinch, personal communication).

Constrained by the hegemonic system, Atticus's desire to know blackness is restricted, however, to the blackness that is constructed, contained, and controlled by the law. Through Tom, he is able to investigate black associations with the law, family relationships, daily habits, work history, and attitudes towards whites. He is able to pinpoint the transgressions of the colour line as well as the workings of the law in defining social codes and establishing guilt in breaking them. He is able to test the reasoning ability of a subordinate class through the verdict of the jury and to raise the question of a blackness that exceeds that of skin colour. In so doing, he is also able to hold up an exacting standard of whiteness, and by alluding in his summations at the trial to the founding fathers of the American State, he is able to place that standard of whiteness within the framework of national identity. In the process of representing Tom, he is also able to instruct his children on the most subtle aspects of moral goodness. Atticus uses Tom as a tool to further his own knowledge and goodness. When Tom dies, to be sure, Atticus expresses grief and dismay, but it is short-lived, and like the rest of Maycomb, Atticus quickly forgets the person behind the blackness and, engaging the agency he has always had, moves forward with the life of privilege he has helped to perpetuate.

7.6 The norms of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

7.6.1 *The normal way of life*

The rules that govern the system enable a way of life that is accepted by societal members as normal. "Reading from the Margins" asks of the text: What is the normal way of life? What is normal work? Articulating the normal way of life brings me back

full circle to view the discursive structure of the textual system, but with a greater sensitivity to the lived reality of the various members of the system.

The normal way of life produced by *To Kill a Mockingbird* is one in which classes of people are kept separate through lines drawn by unwritten and written social and legal codes. To be a member of the white elite is to be highly visible in society, to own property or a professional designation, to participate in the commercial life of one's community and to benefit financially, to have a comfortable home and enough food to eat, to enjoy the benefits of a good education and leisure time to spend with family and friends. It means to worship as one chooses, to expect the service of others, to have a voice in community affairs and the respect of fellow citizens, and to be able to depend upon the protection of the law.

To be black means to remain as invisible and silent as possible, to find work serving others within commercial and community life, to struggle to maintain adequate housing and sufficient means to feed and clothe oneself and one's family, and to work such long hours in that attempt that family relationships suffer. It means not having the time, means and opportunity to be educated. It means to be dictated by the rules of employers, landlords, business people and police, to be suspect in white society, and to be presumed guilty under the law.

To be marginally white means to have tenuous ownership of property, to struggle to make ends meet, to work with one's hands, and to have minimum levels of education, minimal recognition as members of the community, and to be under the strictures of the law and financial institutions. To be even more marginally white is to own nothing, to live off government welfare and charity, to be unemployed, uneducated, and to know that

one is seen as unclean and morally depraved, not welcome in general society, and ambiguously suspect under the law. The danger of being marginally white is to be associated with, and therefore identified as, black.

7.6.2 *Normative identity*

Having established a discursive system, which privileges some and disadvantages others, and the rules that manage daily life within the system, the “Reading from the Margins” textual analysis guide brings me to a question of central importance. By following the rules, written and unwritten, of the societal system, and by performing the hegemonic norms, characters are normatively produced as elite or marginal. Through processes of interpellation and normalization, a similar production of identity is occurring in students of the text. The question, then, is crucial: What identity is normative?

Normal identity, as produced by *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is unambiguously white; all other identities are measured against this standard. Some of the most visible markers of an unambiguously white identity are cleanliness, goodness, prosperity, intelligence, initiative, energetic engagement, community involvement, masculinity, and alignment with the law. All members of the social structure, seen as individuals responsible for their own personal development and their own life circumstances, are disciplined by these normative expectations. Individual experience comes to be lived as a life of continual self-improvement, investing time, energy and money into efforts to remain or become clean enough, good enough, wealthy enough, educated enough, involved enough. Part of this process is a disavowal of all that which, and all those who, are unclean, immoral, poor, simple, uneducated, undisciplined, and unlawful; through associative processes, this disavowal includes persons of colour and the female gender. These “cleaning up” or

“whitening” processes can be extended into the community as concerns for community improvement, progress, and success. Dirt is a fetish because it marks blackness and therefore must be both attended to continually, and expunged.

7.6.3 What can normally be said

Through a symbolic universe of discourse, human beings constitute representations by means of which they live. In addition to thinking about the speech act of the text as a whole, “Reading from the Margins” asks us to attend to the individual speech acts of the fictional characters as they are presented within the text. What is normally said? What is not said? Who normally speaks? How does she/he speak? What communicative gestures are repeated? What figures of speech are repeated? The norms of speech both express and produce the society in which life takes place.

As a standard-bearer, normative identity comes to be seen as ethical identity. That everyone wants to be considered an ethically and morally-upright citizen becomes a common sense assumption. The hegemonic view of social reality is accepted as the natural order—as just the way things are—even by those who are subordinated and subjected within it. For that reason, things can be said which maintain the natural order, which encourage or discipline those who are trying to maintain or establish an ethical identity within the social order, and which mark those whose identities clearly fall outside of community ethics.

The normal way of life constructed by the text makes possible, even necessary, forms of speech which clearly establish boundaries between the classes and between behaviours that are ethically acceptable, associated with markers of whiteness, and behaviours that are ethically unacceptable, associated with markers of blackness. So

children can be scolded for having dirty clothes and for using dirty speech, women can be reminded that they do not have the authority to make certain decisions within the home or wider community, unclean and morally degenerate people can be called animals, and people of colour can be ignored, silenced, belittled, reprimanded, and verbally designated in ways that clearly mark them as outside of acceptable ethical human society.

Through iterations of praise for proper behaviour and reprimands by means of racial slurs, the classed structure is constructed and reinforced, and normative identity is constructed, performed and affirmed, or denied. This is seen not only as the prerogative of the dominant class, but its educative responsibility.

7.6.4 Death as a norm

Foucault reminds us that death dominates every psychological function and stands above all else as a unique and devastating norm (*The Order* 409). Analyzing the text of the novel, I ask: How does death make a normal way of life possible? The three significant deaths that occur in the text—those of the mad dog, Tom Robinson, and Bob Ewell—work to maintain the dominant system.

The mad dog's death establishes the normative rational foundation of the discursive system. The threat of the mad dog is made real, immediate and personal on sight for the Finch family through the recollection of culturally-shared stories of other mad dogs foaming at the mouth and lunging at throats. In much the same way, the community shares a fear of irrationality in human behaviour, a fear which is stirred even by the sight of a black person. The norms of the prevalent ideology appear to citizens of the system as self-evident truths. Behaviour that differs from these norms is deemed irrational and a threat to public safety. It is justifiable, according to commonly-held

public opinion, that the law operates on members of society who do not conform to normative identity in order to separate them from the rest of society, if necessary, by force, if necessary, to the death.

The behaviour of Mayella and Tom differs radically from the lawful, therefore rational, norms of society that call for the subordination of blackness and separation between black and white; left unaddressed, such behaviour threatens the stability of the dominant regime. Behaviour that does not align with discursive norms is so abhorrent to normative subjectivities that contact with abnormality is seen to result in contamination, requiring a public cleansing effected by law through the removal of persons, as well as a personal cleansing through repudiation of moral and physical blackness, and more fervent adherence to the practices of whiteness. Through “necessary” acts of violence and disavowal, and greater conformity to normative performances, the goodness of the discursive system and the naturalness of normative subjectivities are strengthened.

Ewell’s death operates primarily as a warning to the social elite that the inability to perform normativity, that is, whiteness/goodness, at its extreme results in death. In Ewell, moral corruption and physical blackness are conflated; his dirtiness, criminality, irrationality—his blackness—require a resolute abjection from the discursive system, best effected through physical death. The primacy of whiteness and its alignment with moral goodness is made possible and highlighted by Ewell’s unethical darkness. The memory of Ewell will become a story culturally circulated—much like that of the mad dog—to discipline the social elite, whose greatest fears are that, at some level, they also will be found to be not white enough. Death operates in the text to fortify the discursive system by confirming its foundational norms, removing marginal subjectivities and escalating

the self-surveillance of societal members towards the accomplishment of even-more strictly normative identities.

7.7 What is obvious and what is not

Cultural systems are projects of panoptic power, which impose a standard of normalization as the only acceptable way to live. The disciplinary techniques of a milieu of force establish norms that operate as codes of proper behaviour and common sense to structure social life. Taking up these normative codes, human beings are constructed and perform themselves as proper and ethical subjects. Citizens so constructed understand the dominant discourse as obvious and its way of life as common sense. "Reading from the Margins" asks us, as readers, students and researchers, to dig deeper to expose the underside of the prevalent ideology of the text, which is also the prevalent ideology of our culture. What does the normal way of life preclude? How do people establish themselves as credible? What is established as fact? Using the language of Judeo-Christianity acceptable and understandable within our culture, who is good, pure, typical, proper, defended, justified, forgiven, redeemed, innocent, guilty? Who is free and who is subjected? Who is dominant and who is subordinate? In other words, what seems obvious about the cultural system to those for whom the prevalent discourse has created an acceptable identity; and reading against the common sense assumptions of the prevalent ideology as much as we are able, what emerges as less than obvious?

Within the system of *To Kill a Mockingbird* it is taken as obvious that people are individuals with the power to improve their own behaviour and to advance the circumstances of their own life. The characters of the text as well as the uncritical conventional readers of the text accept that truth is absolute and that truth can be

discovered within churches, the law, the school, and family life. The text assumes that class, gender, and race are natural categories into which one falls at birth and that the law has the power to bring order to social and communal life by rewarding normal ethical behaviour and punishing behaviour that is abnormal, and therefore immoral.

A poststructuralist reading makes strange these assumptions of normality, obviousness, and common sense. The perspectives that emerge from a poststructuralist reading are that individualism is a philosophical construct of modernism, and that the rhetoric of individual moral self-improvement supports commercially-driven, property-owning, bourgeois interests. Truth emerges from a deconstructive reading as constructed and relative to the needs and desires of the elite, who are privileged by the truths held to be self-evident. A poststructuralist perspective shows how the law has been invested with power by those who are already dominant and privileged and how the law works to maintain and protect that privilege. This reading can show that people are born into a matrix of power that has become depersonalized, diffused, and anonymous and that operates by totalizing all dimensions of social life.

Some of the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* struggle with trying to understand why justice or privilege is extended to members of one social class, and not to another. A breakthrough in their thought about justice, as well as in the reader's thought, might occur by recognizing that class, gender, and race are constructed classifications that function to increase control through more and more specific measures of acceptable identity and unacceptable difference.

What remains under wraps within the text and within a conventional reading of the text is how the continuous, anonymous power of the hegemonic order produces not

only understandings of normativity, but normative subjectivities. Under the constant surveillance of the law, documented in a myriad of ways by social processes, educated formally and informally by a cultural collection of rules, the characters of the text and the student subjects who read the text are constituted as effects of power. Subjects become their own supervisors in maintaining that power through monitoring their own alliance with hegemonic norms and through efforts at self-improvement. Norms of behaviour, communication, and hierarchical relationships are internalized and become common sense understandings of ethical identity and common sense understandings of how to live well.

To be creditable, according to the text, is to speak reasonably, following patterns of Eurocentric scientific logic. To be good is to be morally-upright, as taught by the Christian religion. To be guilty is to disobey the law. Innocence can be established by the reasonable application of the law. Dominance is a responsibility and subordination is either an unfortunate circumstance or a justified consequence of illegal or immoral living. In either case, according to the text, subordination presents an opportunity for self-improvement.

What a poststructuralist reading makes apparent is that the construction of a normative ethical identity is dependent on the construction of binary oppositions. For certain performances of identity to be recognized and rewarded, others must, necessarily, be disqualified. The structure of the hegemonic system within *To Kill a Mockingbird* depends on marginalized human beings in order to construct those who are dominant and central to the system. The notion that boundaries that mark marginalization could simply melt away either for a class or an individual is an impossibility. Resistance to boundary

classifications between normality and abnormality, dominance and subordination may temporarily give some fuzziness to what was well-defined, but the bleeding of boundaries causes personal suffering and a societal regrouping which quickly re-establishes markers of dominance and subordination, morality and depravity, normality and abnormality, centre and margin.

What is not widely recognized by teachers and students of the text is that they are being interpellated—personally called—by characters of the text to take up identity markers of normativity, and to repudiate those that are abnormal. The text emerges from a hegemonic Eurocentric bourgeois order; it replicates that order. The text calls upon students to take up a normative ethical identity, the implications of which are often left unexamined through conventional reading and pedagogical methods.

7.8 How our Lives and Thinking are Ordered

In showing how our words and concepts fit into discursive formations—layers of thinking and acting—Foucault also shows how our lives and thinking are ordered. Through attention to specific details of text and fictive relationships within the text, the poststructuralist reader is able to make of the text an open site for an archaeological dig. What is excavated through a post-structural reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a discursive system that is premised on, and reinscribes, modern Eurocentric white elitism and instructs its readers—us—that in order to be normal, ethical, and good, we must also be white. As we read, the text is at work, constructing our identities as normative, and rejecting us when not. Students are positioned as powerful, proper, correct, and morally-upright as they are able to perform identities that are English or European referenced, property-owning, educated, well-mannered, Christian, male, and white.

Students who perform identities that are non-Christian, non-European, female, and black find that they are also marked by the text as poor, uneducated, unclean, morally suspect, and certainly powerless. No matter how hard it seems to try, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not a liberating text. The thematic drive of the novel is the necessity of perspective to understanding. Following that thematic drive we might say that a poststructuralist study of the novel poses new perspectives to consider, and therefore new understandings of ways to resist the text's hegemonic construction of normative subjectivity at work in those who study it.

What is excavated in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the modern European discourse at work, focusing on meaning, and emphasizing rules that establish norms that, in turn, govern structure or system and ultimately constitute subjectivity. The "Reading from the Margins" framework that follows from Foucault delineates and speaks discursive assumptions, exposing oppressions that are common both to the text and society and that are played out in the everyday worlds that students inhabit. Reinscribing white hegemony, the novel positions students as powerful or powerless and perpetuates a hierarchical system of privilege, maintained by rule, in which a normal way of life becomes obvious.

In this chapter, I have discussed the questions from the "Reading from the Margins" framework that ask the reader to consider the rules that structure social life and the norms that emerge to constitute normative subjectivity. I have extended my contrast of conventional and poststructuralist pedagogical approaches to the study of literature, suggesting that reading differently can interrupt identity formations that continue to inscribe white elitism. I have worked to perform such a reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

by asking deconstructive questions about the rules of daily life within the dominant and hierarchical system of Eurocentric modernist white elitism. Investigating how rules establish imperatives, control production and regulation, establish winners and loser, monitor needs and conflicts, make truth possible, and negotiate desire and death has led me to name the norms established in the dominant discourse of the text. Described in terms of the normal way of life, normative identity, and what can normally be said, the reading I have undertaken concludes that *To Kill a Mockingbird* replicates a hierarchical system of white elitism and that through processes of interpellation and normalization, white students of the text are constructed as proper, good, correct, morally-upright, and normal citizens at the expense of those who are poor, dirty, uneducated, non-Christian, non-European, female, indigenous, and black.

In the next and final chapter, I suggest that an educational crisis follows the recognition that modernist discourses accrue benefits and privileges for some and disadvantages and difficulties for others. I join other theorists in speculating that studies of curricular literature—powerful discursive practices that school our desires, domesticate our energies, and produce us as docile bodies and normative ethical citizens—can, through poststructuralist perspectives, be reinvested with the duty of naming and tracing processes that produce white elitism. I suggest that the “Reading from the Margins” framework has the efficacy to produce readings of curricular literature that expose in mundane and frightening detail exactly what the official curriculum has set out to accomplish—the normative subjectivities of its captive audience. The chapter brings full circle the debate about the purposes of education in Canada and suggests that re-envisioning the purpose of public education in a postcolonial, postmodern time and place

is our problematic and that a poststructuralist interrogation of the texts that structure our worlds and our identities is a way to begin.

8. (RE)MARKABLE IDENTITIES

8.1 Calls for justice and political engagement

“The condition of possibility of deconstruction is a call for justice” (Derrida qtd. in Gazetas 201).

This dissertation answers a call, posed for me by theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Helen Tiffin, Elizabeth St. Pierre, Deborah Youdell, Kevin Kumashiro, Carol Schick, and others, for a deconstructive method that might be engaged by educators. It recognizes the school and curriculum as a site of politics within which enormous powers struggle for the hearts and minds of students. This dissertation is premised on the understanding of the subject as a continually changing, contextually-situated effect of multiple discourses subjectified through relations of power that are themselves constituted through discourse. In spite of the recognition that identity is constructed discursively in various and multiple ways, this study suggests that particular discourses are dominant, enduring, and wily shape-shifters that produce and reinforce subjectivities of privilege and marginalization in school classrooms explicitly through the uncritical study of curricular texts. “Reading from the Margins” is based on the deconstructive notion that exposing dominant and enduring discourses of privilege and working to unsettle them is “politics in education” (Youdell 181) that offers possibilities for re-imagining, re-learning, and re-inscribing in order to interrupt processes of elitism and create and be created as different selves. Reading literary texts “from the margins” participates in an anti-oppressive approach to education that involves an arduous re-thinking of pedagogy (Kumashiro, “Posts” 3), troubles established knowledges, and has potentially dangerous political side-effects. At the same time, a poststructuralist approach

to literature studies using deconstructive methods, such as the “Reading from the Margins” framework, serves postcolonial interests by exposing white privilege and the mutations of racism and by fracturing the binaries that divide us.

In Chapter Seven, I completed a poststructuralist reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by asking deconstructive questions about the rules of daily life within the textual system; investigating how rules establish imperatives, control production and regulation, establish winners and losers, monitor needs and conflicts, make truth possible, and negotiate desire and death led me to name the norms established in the dominant discourses of the text. Using the “Reading from the Margins” framework, my poststructuralist study concluded, that despite surface anti-racist messages, *To Kill a Mockingbird* replicates the hierarchical system of white elitism. The study demonstrates the processes of interpellation and normalization through which students of the text, like characters within it, are constructed as white and privileged as they perform hegemonic norms that mark them as proper, good, correct, morally-upright, and normal citizens. This construction occurs at the expense of students of color, who, like characters of color in the text, are variously associated with characteristics staining them as poor, dirty, uneducated, non-Christian, non-European, female, indigenous, or black. The deconstructive analysis of the *Mockingbird* text shows how systemic white elitism is dependent on the construction of marginalized others to produce those who are dominant and privileged. The normative and harmful subjectivities of students, thus secured, accomplish the purpose of the official curriculum.

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I revisit the ideas that are central to this dissertation and explore the possibilities that reside in deconstructive literary work, both

for educators and for students. I call up difficulties that are implicit in poststructuralist pedagogy, naming what might be foreclosed through deconstructive studies of literature and where places of danger for educators and students might lie. I describe thoughts that led me to choose the title “Reading from the Margins”, and I consider what it might mean to study literature with students from a position of marginality. I pose the key argument that undergirds this dissertation: mapping dominant modernist discourses at work in curricular literature is made possible through the “Reading from the Margins” method of literary analysis which follows from Foucault’s description of the modern episteme in *The Order of Things* and further, such a mapping serves the postcolonial interests of disrupting and dismantling a hegemonic order that supports white supremacy.

8.2 Ideas central to this dissertation

Born into specific ideologies and interpellated by notions that we come to recognize as truth or obviousness, we are enlisted into belief systems and constituted as subjects. The hegemonic culture into which we are inserted exerts a general matrix of force whose disciplinary techniques structure social life through codes of normalcy. Relying on cultural understandings of common sense and taking up familiar codes of normalcy in our everyday actions, we are constructed as—and perform ourselves as—normative, proper, and good.

In producing normative subjectivities, the modernist discourses of our time and space accrue benefits and privileges for some and disadvantages and difficulties for others. Following in the wake of a Eurocentric imperial drive, the liberal democratic government of our settler-invader society depends, not on authoritarianism, but on normalization, utilizing panoptic strategies of surveillance. Normalization operates

through the construction of difference. Normal social arrangements and normalized identities have intrinsic value, and in processes that produce increasingly differentiated sets of anomalies, social arrangements and identities created as marginalized are recognized as problems to be treated and reformed. For reasons of social justice, I believe that naming and tracing processes through which privileged and marginalized identities are produced is an educative responsibility.

The identity of choice that holds the elite social position in our culture is white, associated with markers that are masculinist, property-owning, and English-speaking. Invested with power and showered with privilege, the construction of this central elite is no accident. The school system of the Canadian West has deliberately used, and still uses, formal education for nationalistic purposes in creating a homogeneous citizenry that is founded on a common language—English—and referenced to a Eurocentric homeland. Through the discourse of Canadianization, a common language, a common pedagogy, and a common curriculum continue to mold students toward an appreciation of historically British-inspired institutions, language, and literature; identification with colonial and neocolonial endeavors; a pride in the so-called Anglo-Saxon race, its accomplishments and its enterprising spirit, and, in the process, construct normative identities of complacency, docility, and white supremacy.

The norms which structure schooling have become common-place, intrinsic, and natural, and through them, students produce identities based on binary oppositions—punctual/not punctual, industrious/not industrious, clean/not clean, abled/disabled, rational-thinking/not rational-thinking, well-adjusted/not well-adjusted, English/not English, masculine/not-masculine, white/not white. The first term of these binary

constructions is the valorized identity, dependent for its realization on the secondary and subordinate term, which is a repudiated identity. Caught up in discourses of liberalism and capitalism, educational processes work, first, to construct normative subjectivities of privilege and otherness, and then, in the name of all that is good, expend energy on the impossible task of eradicating the difference.

The study of literature is one of the powerful discursive practices which schools our desires, domesticates our energies, and produces us as docile bodies and normative ethical citizens. Reflecting an elite group's definition of what it means to be a Canadian, curricular literature reproduces hegemonic norms; through the study of English literature, students are interpellated by hegemonic norms of whiteness, patriarchy, rationality, individuality, and middle-class privilege. Narrating the nation with the rhetoric of empire, the discourses operating through curricular literature are used to discipline, subdue, and inscribe dominant mores on students in identity-making ways.

Problematizing and complicating the identity-making machinations of conventional literature studies is made possible through critical practices such as poststructuralist deconstruction. Following from Foucault's deconstruction of "the human sciences" in *The Order of Things*, this dissertation describes the evolution of a poststructuralist method of deconstructive literary analysis. This deconstructive approach, "Reading from the Margins", lays bare the discursive bones that structure a literary text and holds to open view the processes of interpellation and normalization through which students of the text are constructed as elite subjects of privilege or as marginalized subjects of denigration.

Following Foucault, who insists that in the modern era everything may be thought on the basis of life, labour and language within the order of the system, the rule and the norm, “Reading from the Margins” asks multiple questions about matters such as centres, margins, speech, silence, desires, daily activities, law, and death. The analysis asks and answers three basic questions regarding the literary text: What does the system (social system in the text) look like? How do the rules of the system enable people to live together—enable a normal way of life? What norms are established? In other words, what ethic prevails in the text and what knowledge is subjugated in order for that specific ethical production to occur?

I propose that by following the framework of the “Reading from the Margins” guide, teachers and students can deconstruct curricular texts and produce a poststructuralist analysis that clearly maps the power/knowledge nexus of modernist discourses. The poststructuralist reading of this dissertation demonstrates that the curricular literary text studied participates in the modern epistemological field, replicates the damaging discourses of imperialism and (neo)colonialism, and works within the structures and pedagogical practices of modern schooling to construct normative subjectivities which benefit and disadvantage students in complex and contradictory ways.

8.3 Possibilities of deconstructive reading

The archaeological performance, which takes up the most space in this dissertation, unearths the modernist Eurocentric discourse at work in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, constructing normative identity and perpetuating a hierarchical system of privilege maintained by rule in which a normal way of life becomes obvious. Through

interpellation and normalization processes, students are constructed as proper, good, correct, morally-upright, and normal citizens as they perform white male identities that are also English or European-referenced, property-owning, well-educated, well-mannered, and Christian. Identities that are black or indigenous, female, non-European, and non-Christian, are relegated to the margins of the hegemonic system and are further marked as poor, uneducated, unclean, morally suspect, and certainly powerless.

Complexly produced through binary oppositions, students of the text drawn as, for example, white and feminine, or black and masculine are simultaneously and contradictorily validated and subjugated. Multifariously constituted and disciplined by austere hegemonic norms, students are called by the text to endless self-monitoring and self-improvement and continual rituals of cleansing and whitening. The system's privileged centre emerges from the text colourless, luminous and dominant; *To Kill a Mockingbird* starkly instructs its readers—us—that in order to belong to that dominant centre and be considered normal, ethical, and good, we must, most certainly, be white or have the desire to read as if we were.

A poststructuralist analysis, such as the one I was able to produce through the “Reading from the Margins” framework, accumulates details—mundane at first and then frightening—as the realization dawns that the official curriculum accomplishes exactly what it was intended to do. In the most trusting and fateful ways, through routine acknowledgements of boundary markers, obedience to the father or the law, attendance at school or work, punctuality, good work habits, deference to authority, appreciation of reason, observance of correct English, care for the public good, and daily practice to form habits of cleanliness, proper attire, and proper behaviour, students, like dominant

characters in the texts they study, strive to perform themselves as acceptable, normal, morally-upright, preferably masculine, and desirably white. The stakes are high; those who cannot perform the preferred identity of hegemonic whiteness are of negligible value within their cultural homeland.

The widely-regarded literature that teachers introduce as classics and students come to value as guidebooks to navigate difficult ethical issues work alongside pedagogical practices, such as, for example, classroom management strategies, as sites of construction that produce and normalize damaging social identities and relations of dominance and subordination. The rhetoric of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for example, which equates physical blackness with moral blackness, becomes a vehicle of interpellation and normalization that functions to discipline students toward an ever more adequate performance of hegemonic whiteness. The poststructuralist analyst begins work with the recognition that the curricular reader is positioned as white and masculine and accepts that the discursive production of self is part of the reading process. The pedagogical challenge of the anti-oppressive educator is knowing how to disrupt the construction of normative subjectivities that cause harm, and how to produce and encourage the production of diverse identities exactly at the site of a hegemonic power/knowledge nexus that continually works to reinscribe its resistances and absorb them in a way that maintains structures of privilege and marginalization.

8.4 Possibilities and foreclosures in following Foucault

To construct the “Reading from the Margins” method of investigating dominant discourses of modernity within curricular texts, I closely followed Foucault’s archaeology of the human sciences in *The Order of Things*. For that reason, the reading

method I created not only shares Foucault's understandings, but also some of the qualities of his stance. *The Order of Things* is one of Foucault's earlier texts, which Dreyfus and Rabinow describe as quasi-structuralist (*Beyond Structuralism* 6). My reading method proceeds from a poststructuralist orientation, borrows from some of Foucault's later understandings of the subject, and produces a deconstruction of dominant discourses, but does so in a way that is orderly and systematic. Foucault writes out of and from within white, male, educationally elite, European privilege. Only by implication does his work address race, class, gender and ethnicity and/or name the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism as harmful. I share the limitations of writing from and within white, middle-class, university-educated North American privilege, yet my academic work is underpinned by the hope that I will not silence the language of race, class, gender, ethnicity and Eurocentric white privilege. Foucault uses only the generic term "man" in reference to humanity and except by implication, does not write woman into his text; in this, I have differed from his writing approach.

A deconstructive method following from Foucault's archaeology of knowledge forecloses the possibility of warranting practices, valid closures or claims of legitimacy that come from an a priori subjectivity or a perspective outside of a modern/postmodern epistemology. Foucault's notions of subjectivity, constituted as an effect of power, foreclose notions of individuality and de-emphasize notions of human agency. It seems that his observations of the workings of discursive power and reinscription of cultural norms therefore constrain political action and whole-hearted commitment to a cause. For example, Foucault's theories seem to work against notions of consensus and intersubjectivity, because even the idea of consensual politics still serves at a given

moment as a regulatory principle (Foucault qtd. in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism* 62).

At the same time, there are assumptions implicit in Foucault's theories that suggest a politics of engagement that does not run counter to a concern for social justice. A Foucauldian deconstruction and analysis, for example, opens a space for questions, for paradox, for problematizing and for disruption. The notion of productive power avoids both a politics of blame and an affirmation of innocence. While the notion of discursively constituted subjectivity works against solidarity in communities of action, it invites discussion between persons recognized as subjects having the right to speak. A Foucauldian deconstruction reveals the regulatory principles at work in everyday life. Recognizing how these regulatory principles are at work in the processes of reinscription helps to liberate the act of questioning. Instead of reinscribing particular political doctrines by framing questions from within a particular political doctrine, a Foucauldian perspective enables a plurality of questions posed from outside of the particular political doctrine. This has productive implications for disruption and local change. Deconstructive research undertaken from a Foucauldian perspective offers a method by which we may take risks in what we say. By revealing the effects of power, a Foucauldian deconstruction problematizes problem-solving. While it forecloses on the possibility of global solutions to problems, it recognizes contradictory elements in discourse and opens the possibility for local actions, contingent principles and procedures, and temporary results.

A Foucauldian analysis makes accessible the notions of games, play, choice, and change. Through an examination of domains of knowledge, we gain an awareness of the

interplay between cultural/political structures and ethical attitudes, which inversely change one another. We recognize how our experiences are implicated in games of truth, relations of power, and forms of relation to oneself and others. From the idea that the self is not given to us but constituted in symbolic systems, there emerges the notion of utilizing technologies of the constitution of self in ways that cut across symbolic systems in order to make of the self a work of art (Foucault, "On the Genealogy" 369). This is a seductive idea that can be played out as a narcissistic one, unless Foucault's notions of reconstituted subjectivity, care of the self, and an art of living are recognized as the fields of agency open to the constituted subject by which harmful normative discourses can be disrupted.

The rhetoric of the power of one has been mythologized in our culture as the method by which incremental change occurs and great edifices eventually crumble or are transformed; while Foucault's approach is antithetical to such rhetoric, there is academic debate that questions whether Foucault is reinscribing a version of a humanist subject. It seems to me that there are at least two ways in which Foucault's thinking about the subject leads to different stances vis-à-vis the self and others. Firstly, in recognizing the self as constituted by systems of signs and created by the self within and across those systems in complementary and contradictory relationships of self and other, there is the potential of a face-to-face encounter. In such an encounter, responsibility to the other is suggested by Emmanuel Levinas as an imperative (qtd. in Raoul Mortley 16). Because a Foucauldian perspective does not lay blame or justify claims of innocence, a one-to-one encounter can be a non-colonizing recognition of the other's distinctive presence as a subject who, like the self, is also idiosyncratically produced through a multitude of

discourses. Secondly, Foucault's model of the human sciences depends on a self that is both symbolic form and alienated wo/man, a human being who negotiates the plane between the order of life, labour, and language and the order of philosophical reflection in order to activate regional ontologies and transpose domains of knowledge. This self of Foucault's conception, both subject and object, makes reflexive praxis possible. A deconstructive analysis that follows Foucault, such as "Reading from the Margins", then, does not lay blame or justify claims of innocence; it recognizes the strength of dominant discourses to constitute normative subjectivities, those of self and others; it leads to an interest in the interplay of contingent local discourses that rework notions of self; it stimulates the pleasures of disruption; it supports risk-taking in daily life; and it encourages care, reflection, and respect for self and others.

Foucault's method of investigating a field of knowledge makes the familiar strange. As a theorist, I am compelled by the paradox of his discourse—the double vision that removes all illusion about our cohesion and autonomy as individuals, yet allows us to be conscious of our own conception as well as our own end.

In analyzing data accumulated from answering the questions of "Reading from the Margins", I found that I supplemented understandings acquired from reading Foucault's *The Order of Things* with notions of: interpellation (Althusser); internal surveillance, normalization, pastoral power, governmentality (Dreyfus and Rabinow; Foucault); progressive education (Walkerdine); hegemony (Gramsci); middle class respectability (Schick); bodies that matter (Butler); incessant purification (Stoler); national narratives (B. Anderson; Bhabha; Henderson); semi-mythical cultural constructs (Said); the subject/object split (Lacan); representation (Foucault; Heidegger); ethics

(Derrida; Foucault; hooks; Levinas); deconstruction (Derrida); literary theory (Barthes; Eagleton; Kelly; Morrison; Nodelman and Reimer); discourse analysis (Wood and Kroger); cultural studies (Hall); postmodern theory (Derrida; Lyotard; Natoli); poststructuralist theory (Britzman; Lather; St. Pierre and Pillow; Youdell); feminist theory (Butler; Davies); and postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin; Cherland; Cherland and Harper; Dyer; Lane; Lopez; Slemon; Tiffin; Willinsky).

8.5 Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this dissertation is that a critical literature study practice in teacher education and secondary school classrooms should involve a deconstruction of curricular texts. Using methods like the “Reading from the Margins” textual analysis guide, students may gain an awareness of literature as a regulatory technique producing normative subjectivities through interpellation and the normative assumptions present in the dominant discourses of the text. Postcolonial and poststructuralist theories call teachers and students of literature to assess and reassess their relationships with classic works, popular culture, identity formation, and resistance struggles and to make processes of subjectivation and performative politics explicit (Youdell 183). Deconstructive thinking can tease apart categories and practices that create educational inclusions and exclusions (Youdell 183). As David Smith suggests, the western canon must be perpetually reread for its inherent suffocations and dependencies (Smith xi).

Classroom teachers might also combine poststructuralist and contrapuntal readings in which novels can be read against feminist and aboriginal writers who speak from marginalized positions within the (post)colonial structure, exposing the dominant

discourses of these texts as well as considering the construction of subjectivity throughout. As hooks contends, “Radical postmodern practice, most powerfully conceptualized as a ‘politics of difference,’ should incorporate the voices of displaced, marginalized, exploited and oppressed black people” (“Postmodern” 6). Investigating such texts through a deconstructive approach works to avoid harmful citations of the exotic other, unsettles preconceptions and suggests that things might mean otherwise. There is a need for continued deconstructive work in all works of literature at all levels of education. The impact of postcolonial studies and the rise of indigenous knowledges are still to be felt within the overall operating procedures of the knowledge industry itself (Smith xxiii).

The influence of, notably, Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* and Dyer’s *White*, lead towards critical approaches that focus on representation and iconographies of whiteness in both literary and visual contexts. Lopez explains how very little scholarship has moved to the salient question of how the representational power of whiteness has historically operated in the service of colonial and neocolonial regimes (4). Lopez claims that race-blindness is evident in Routledge’s *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, “arguably the most comprehensive and widely read survey in the field; in a nearly five-hundred page anthology featuring excerpts from more than eighty texts, the word *race* emerges in only five essays for a total of eight appearances ...” (3). The stubborn persistence of whiteness as a cultural norm in many of the postcolonial world’s official and unofficial cultural practices suggests that assessments of the convergence of postcoloniality and whiteness is an important and burgeoning field of study (Lopez 4-5). If whiteness can be made to see itself, or more accurately to see itself as others see, it will reach a moment of crisis, says

Lopez; no longer able to portray itself as benign or able to constitute the norm, whiteness will have to reckon with its own history of aggression and hegemony (12).

8.6 Personal reflections

8.6.1 *What it Means to Read from the Margins*

In this dissertation, I use the term “reading from the margins” in three slightly different but complementary ways. I use the term as the title of the reading analysis framework that follows from Foucault, and since that reading methodology contains the key to my dissertation, I use the phrase “Reading from the Margins” as the title of the dissertation itself. I also understand reading from the margins as a reading stance.

As a reading stance, reading from the margins does not focus on those who are marginalized; instead, reading from the margins emerges from a respect rather than a fear of difference and focuses on powerful hegemonic discourses that produce sameness by announcing who is in and who is out. Initially, what it means to read from the margins, then, is to focus, not on racism or categories that name differences, but on the tyranny of dominant discourses that demand sameness.

Reading from the margins means to see oneself as raced. Until recently, states Dyer, to say one was interested in race meant one was interested in racial imagery other than that of white people (1). He explains, “As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people” (1). Reading from the margins is a willingness to make commonsense understandings strange and to “other” oneself by being open to the exploration of self-identity in terms of one’s own race and

privilege. Notably, in the western world, these investigations will focus on white privilege.

Dyer begins his definitive study, *White*, by connecting racial imagery to the discourses of modernity and to a market orientation, saying they are central to the organization of the modern world, determining at what cost regions and countries export their goods, whose voices get listened to internationally, who bombs whom, who gets which jobs. “The myriad minute decisions that constitute the practices of the world are at every point informed by judgments about people’s capacities and worth, judgments based on what they look like, where they come from, how they speak, even what they eat, that is, racial judgments” (1). The Industrial Age of the nineteenth century produced Economic Man, privileging economic considerations of human problems over all others (Smith xvii). In modernity’s market discourses, white privilege operates like the invisible weightless knapsack envisioned by Peggy McIntosh, filled with “special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques” (qtd. in Dyer 9). When white people feel they do not have a culture, or that white culture has no content, they are unable to see anything that accounts for their positions of privilege, power and security in a market-oriented culture. Rather than ignoring matters of race and elitism, reading from the margins pays attention to who benefits materially and economically in social arrangements and relationships; in doing so, it participates in the rejection of Eurocentric humanism and a market mentality that defines, in purely economic terms, the essential character of what it means to be human (Smith xvii).

Dyer notes, it is striking that recent writing by white people about whiteness arise predominantly out of feminism, labour history, and lesbian and gay studies—through identity politics (8). Each of these is founded on an affirmation of the needs and rights of a group defined in terms of gender, class, or sexuality; crucial to such affirmation is the sense of both marginality and a sense of oneness with a social group (Dyer 8). White people, of course, are also stereotyped in terms of gender, nation, class, sexuality, ability, and so on, states Dyer, but whiteness generally colonizes the stereotypical definitions of all social categories other than race, even when there are gradations of whiteness (12). The experience of marginalization, of being stereotyped and assigned, even temporarily, to a less-privileged social category, propels identity politics. Youdell suggests that identity politics in the form of feminism, race politics, and disability politics, for example, have had limited effect on social practice, displacing but continuing to cite normative discourses (181). What Youdell recommends for educational reform is a poststructuralist politics that deconstructs the discourses through which students are constituted and demonstrates how students are constrained in the possibilities of who they can be by prevailing normative discourses that ascribe meaning through embedded binaries and citational chains (182). Reading from the margins, then, means acknowledging one's own experiences of marginalization and stereotyping and marshalling the effects caused by such experiences toward a poststructuralist politics that continually interrogates identity markers and performative effects, including those that are unwanted or unanticipated (Youdell 182).

I come to poststructuralist work partially through experiences that denigrated me as a woman. In the process, I draw understandings of my own considerable white

privilege, and at whose expense I am afforded these privileges, as well as linkages between masculinity and whiteness, locating some of the conflicts at play in my identity. For me, an awareness of my changing self-identity underscores the efficacy of poststructuralist and deconstructive work to interrupt normative dominant discourses in the process of constituting subjectivity.

Reading from the margins, then, involves a willingness to engage crisis and resignify the self. It means paying attention to the tyranny of dominant discourses rather than to categories that name difference, and being willing to explore one's own identity in terms of race and privilege. It means learning to recognize who benefits when dominant discourses are uninterrupted, to reject Eurocentric humanist discourses of individuality, patriarchy, white elitism, and market mentality, and to continually interrogate commonsense understandings in the service of a postcolonial call to justice.

8.6.2 Re-envisioning the purpose of education

"The times are dangerous," exclaims Smith (xi). Postmodern awareness, says hooks, has impacted many people with a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, and a loss of a sense of grounding ("Postmodern" 9). Yet, these sensibilities, shared across boundaries of class, gender, and race, can be fertile ground for the construction of empathy and commitment and can serve as a base for solidarity and coalition. James McNinch writes that the classroom can be a site of possibility where students and teachers reach for "enlarged thought" (Kant qtd McNinch 58) or "anxious knowledge" (Britzman qtd McNinch 58). "If everything is dangerous," states Foucault, "then we always have something to do" ("On the Genealogy" 343).

Snapshot 5

I'm thinking about interruptions. I've been called away from editing my dissertation to pick up my six year old granddaughter and bring her home from a birthday party. I drive through deep snow on unplowed roads, still mulling over a knotty problem in sentence construction, to get—finally—to the indoor playground where the festive event has been held. Out of the swirl of busy, noisy activity, she rushes to greet me, her face flushed with joy and perspiration. As I bend toward her, a locker-room smell suffuses me, and I think fiercely, protectively, how much I love her—wild and frizzy curls, dusty knees, and saggy socks.

I am bombarded by contradictory thoughts. Is she more or less disheveled than her playmates? What do the stylish young women, unknown to me, who are supervising the event, think about my granddaughter? Why do I care? Are the hegemonic norms for cleanliness and little girl prettiness really so domineering that they will overcome the delight of this moment? How am I embodied by discourses, such as those of whiteness, to draw meanings about social acceptance from seeing this little girl at play? At this time in my life she is *my* Scout, I think suddenly, remembering the story I am retelling, and I want her to be happy in her skin, today and every day. Not at the expense of anyone else, yet feeling loved and validated. I want the words that will craft a beautiful life for her, a strong and healthy body, an inquiring mind, purposeful endeavors, mutual friendships, hope, elation, kindness, respect for others, self-respect. She grabs my hand for a moment, then runs, laughing, up the stairs of the play structure to say good-bye to her best friend. At my prompting, she says “thank you” to the hostess, who gives her a goody bag and places a red balloon in her hand inscribed with the words “Happy Birthday” on one side and the logo of the playground business on the other. It is harder to grasp how I am produced by language than to sense how the meaningful actions of others, the discursive practices that surround her and in which she participates, are in the daily process of constructing a self for her.

She puts on her jacket, pushes away the hat and gloves; she's just too hot. Inside the van, she pats the cocker spaniel puppy, fastens her seat belt, and sorts through the trinkets and candy in her goody bag. I, too, slide into my seat and prepare to drive. We are in performance. I feel anxious about the years of schooling ahead of her. Is it really possible, I ask myself, my thoughts returning to my academic work, for poststructuralist thought to complicate the sway of power toward sameness and conformity? Can an understanding of normative discourse interrupt the docility, conformity, racism, sexism, and materialism that I fear as products of education? Of culture itself? Can learning to analyze and articulate power relations help to break the binaries that divide us from others and ourselves? Does any of the educational theory with which I am wrestling have the potential to keep my own granddaughter happy in her skin? We are both in process, I remind myself, our stories of self, like all narrative, formed and reformed each time we talk or act or think or write. Momentarily, I understand again that nothing is fixed; there are spaces of resistance and possibility in the shifting interplay of discourse, and there is liberation in these thoughts. She shares her gum. We chat. The roads are still unplowed as we drive slowly home.

This dissertation engages concerns about student identity, interests in literature, and poststructuralist notions to make recommendations for reformed educational practice. I believe that poststructuralist understandings of constituted subjectivity bring educational practice to a point of crisis with positive implications for rethinking the purpose of education itself. A poststructuralist understanding results in the recognition that, in common practice, most educators continue to reinscribe European humanism by teaching that: people are individuals with the power to freely make choices that will improve the circumstances of their lives; our laws do not differentiate on the basis of class, gender, and race; equal opportunities abound for those who are willing to work for them; credibility can be established through scientific reasoning; goodness can be achieved through morally-upright conduct; and that unfortunate and oppressive circumstances which may occur in our lives and subordinate us to others offer occasions for personal growth and self-improvement. These are the messages of the dominant culture through which educators' own values, ways of thinking and subjectivities have been constructed and the basis on which approved curricula are selected. The hegemonic discourses that are reproduced through modernist pedagogy reinscribe the rhetoric of individual moral self-improvement that supports commercially-driven, property-owning interests and disguise how truths held to be self-evident are relative to the needs and desires of culturally-elite populations. I think, however, that the imperialistic, racist, sexist, and classed view of the world that is actively and deliberately taught in Canadian classrooms can be interrupted and made explicit through poststructuralist and deconstructive methods. At the same time, within poststructuralist thought there is also the clear acknowledgement that there is no way "to do it right"; that bricolage rather than

dichotomy is a productive direction for theorizing and teaching; that modernism and postmodernism, structuralism, and poststructuralism do not always work at cross-purposes and that poststructuralist readings, my own included, participate in the replication of the hegemonic culture from which they rise.

Despite, and because of, the contradictory nature of academic readings and the understanding that all we do and say is directed toward our subjectivity and is, in some sense, always autobiographical, I propose that students who choose a reading from the margins stance, and use methodologies for study such as the “Reading from the Margins” framework, can learn to operate from marginalized perspectives, allowing them to question and articulate the discursive structures of texts, and therefore those of society and subjectivity. Such a stance can lead them to consider ways to disrupt the rules that secure dominance and to complicate the norms by which privilege and disadvantage are perpetuated. Readers, so situated, are engaged in second world reading positions in both unconscious and self-conscious ways—imperial subjectified and yet locally resistant, desiring the comfort of a cultural home yet choosing to become strangers who cross forbidden boundaries within one’s own land.

8.6.3 *Complicity*

My own subjectivity has been interrogated as I have written this dissertation. Articulating how subjects are entangled with the systems they produce and that produce them, I have often found that I am looking in a mirror. Bringing systemic understandings, rules, and norms which I had ignored or of which I had been unconscious, to consciousness, I sometimes felt like I was “seeing the light” and uncovering a truer “me.”

With each mask I took off, however, another took its place and I began to recognize that, concerning subjectivity, the unmasking process is endless.

What bites at my heels continually as I write is my own complicity as a white, middle-class, literature teacher reproducing the colonial discourse in so many high school classrooms. Even as I write the “always already” conditions of imperialism, my inscription as white and the reproduction of whiteness and academic privilege are at work. Yet, if the interrogation of whiteness is to possess ethical integrity, it must accept such ambivalence, says Lopez (23). Self-reflexive moments occur in the process of deconstruction and some acknowledgement of guilt is functional, appropriate, and far from paralyzing as long as the critic does not languish there. Self-flagellation is ultimately self-serving and is not the point, says Lopez (23). Melissa Steyn explains that whites who are shifting their paradigm from preserving privilege for some to taking responsibility for promoting development for all, have grappled with and at least have not evaded, these uncomfortable experiences (132). Poststructuralist studies that focus on whiteness cannot be apologist in terms of revisionist history or a distancing, cannot reinstate whiteness as a standard of reference, and cannot settle for elaborate expressions of guilt as a substitute for, or excuse from, the most minute and rigorous analysis of what exactly whiteness has been and continues to be today (Lopez 24).

8.6.4 *A poststructuralist responds to postcolonial calls for justice*

“The predation of empire continues to divide the world into a site of war between friends and enemies, winners and losers,” declares Smith (12). When I first began doctoral studies, I was gripped by Ted Aoki’s pedagogical notions of “neither this nor that, but this *and* that” (qtd. in Smith xv). Renee Norman recalls Aoki’s classroom

instruction to consider “the re at work” (247). “It is binaries (‘this or that’) that divide us, that force us to choose, to discriminate, that set up the social architecture for categories of insider/outsider, that establish the conditions of conflict over race, class, gender, childhood, and so on,” states Smith (xv). In privileging a space between binary terms, “in-betweenness,” Aoki seeks a third ground, an ethical space out of which it might be possible to negotiate a conversation between factions, between persons, between traditions (qtd. in Smith xv). This hermeneutic space always assumes an other, or others, says Smith, and such others are always specific and particular in nature, never generic (xvi). Renee Norman, a former student of Aoki’s, explains that Aoki lives and teaches pedagogy in motion, re-reading, re-learning, and re-considering (247). As I continue to work on deconstructive projects, reading from the margins, exposing the tyranny of dominant discourses, complicating understandings of normative subjectivity and creating or encouraging the emergence of new subjectivities, I am reminded of “and,” a small and mighty connective word, and “re,” a prefix of possibility. And I wonder what it is these notions might accomplish.

Strategies that resist notions of progress draw on circular figures, “the re” in motion, currents of re-thinking, re-visioning, and re-constituting. The aims of the Canadian educational system to produce an homogeneous citizenry that privileges Anglo-Saxon males were, at their inception, openly announced and discussed. For a hundred and fifty years in the Canadian prairie west, the realm of public schooling has been a prime site of specific political and cultural processes, producing citizens who are marked, one for cultural success, one for failure, in ways that have quietly become accepted, commonplace, natural, and normal. In the past several decades, postcolonial and poststructuralist

theorists have articulated the way processes of interpellation and normalization favor liberal economic bourgeois interests, bringing the debate about the purpose of education in our time and place full circle. In spite of very real possibilities of fortifying the discursive system even through our resistances, silence about how education and literary studies participate in the construction of normative subjectivity is no longer an option for teachers in the classroom. Re-visioning the purpose of public education in a postcolonial, postmodern time and place is our problematic and interrogating the texts that structure our worlds and our identities is a way to begin. While it is not possible to live well without cultural norms (Butler, “The Question” 206), the continual marking of identity and difference that requires the subjugation and repudiation of the other in the development of normative identity is a form of social violence which the postmodern educator must oppose.

8.6.5 Beyond the scope of this study

I am interested in deconstructing other curricular novels, those well-established in the canon of Canadian literature study programs as well as those that appear to be chosen to represent a more marginalized Canadian presence. At the time of this writing, I am beginning a “Reading from the Margins” study of *A Complicated Kindness* by Miriam Toews. I am intrigued at what I may discover, not only about the novel and its dominant discourses as a piece of literature at once representing minority Mennonite experiences in Canada and elitely-chosen as the winner of the prestigious Governor General’s Award for English fiction, but also about the (re)constitution of my own subjectivity, as poststructuralist deconstructions will do. Set in East Village, the novel is considered to be a fictionalized account of growing up in Steinbach, Manitoba, the hometown in which

both Miriam Toews and I “grew up.” At the time of this writing, I have just finished reading Sherene Razack’s text, *Sates of Race*. As I think about Toews’ novel, I ponder the race-thinking captured in the phrase “they are not like us” (Razack 91) as it applies to the marketing of “minority” literature. I wonder if the novel might speak to Sedef Arat-Kroc’s notions of how whiteness may operate with cracks along the colour line within the economy of capitalist globalism (149).

I know, too, that I will look for further ways to share my deconstructive methodology and the readings, and re-readings, they produce, reaching for the ways in which the narratives of education can be continually disrupted and reinvested with meaning. As part of this process, I invite other educators to engage the “Reading from the Margins” method of reading developed in this thesis in order to investigate curricular literature, including a re-production of the readings that I have constructed, keeping in mind the purpose of questioning and disrupting harmful normative subjectivities as they are produced through the study of curricular literature.

8.7 Conclusion

The hope that propels this dissertation is that by mapping dominant discourses and articulating their underlying assumptions through a counter-discursive reading strategy, the dismantling of those assumptions has already begun. The “Reading from the Margins” literary analyst approaches curricular text as a subject and is operated on as an object, is normatively constructed by text and performatively speaking it, while simultaneously unveiling the arbitrary nature of textual knowledge and subjectivity taken as truth and repudiating it at the very moment of its reproduction. It is with such complexity and complicity that the poststructuralist reader engages word and world to

transgress modernist educational purposes, to cut the strings that make of literary studies an imperial marionette and to disrupt patriarchal white elitism and the constitution of injurious normative subjectivities.

The key argument of this thesis is that mapping dominant modernist discourses at work in curricular literature is made possible through the “Reading from the Margins” method of literary analysis that follows from Foucault’s description of the modern episteme in *The Order of Thing*. Such a mapping serves the postcolonial interests of disrupting and dismantling a hegemonic order that supports white supremacy and works to create identities that are (re)markable. Marking the identity of the reader in ways different from the norm comes from articulating how the dominant discourses of our settler-invader liberal democracy constitute subjectivities, and resisting, in multiple ways, the injustices of capricious boundaries and subject positions that secure that dominance. Deconstructing the discourses of white elitism and Eurocentric western humanism that speak through curricular texts has the potential to help students fracture the binaries that equate goodness with whiteness. As reading practices change, so do subjectivities and so do ways of living. Resisting conformity, favoring diversity, and searching for third spaces of “inbetweeness,” (re)markable subjectivities may yet do (re)markable things.

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