

**"WHAT SHOULD WE READ, HOW SHOULD WE READ IT,
AND WHY?":**

The Cultural Politics of English Studies
in British Columbia's
Language Arts English (Graduation) Program

by

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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial critics such as Benedict Anderson, Robert Morgan, Homi Bhabha, and Ian Hunter explore the study of English literature within a context of nation building or as an element of the "Imagined Communities" which Anderson finds to be the essence of nationness. These critics connect the study of literature to the shaping of both individual and collective subjectivities and, in doing so, offer a framework within which to explore one facet of the politics of English reading.

It is within the context of postcolonial theory that this thesis examines the politics of British Columbia's Language Arts English (Graduation) program. It examines the values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions--the ideology--about nationness embedded in policy documents, curricula and resources. The thesis takes its compass bearing from the questions of Francis Mulhern: "*What* should we read, *how* should we read it, and *why*?" It concurs with Mulhern that unexamined, unproblematized assumptions about the collective pronoun "we" settle in advance "[i]ssues of selection, procedure, and purpose" (Mulhern, 250).

The first chapter establishes a theoretical framework, one which recognizes the imbrication of postcolonial theory with poststructuralism and feminist theory. Chapter 1 also touches on current debates around multicultural and anti-racist education. Chapter 2 applies the theory outlined in Chapter 1 to a study of curricula and policy documents. Chapter 3 examines officially approved resources, and Chapter 4 presents the findings of an empirical study carried out in high schools. That study examines ways in which teachers interpret, and either implement or resist the ideology embedded in curricula, and ways in which students receive and understand or refuse that ideology.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Title Page | i |
| Abstract | ii |
| Table of Contents | iv |
| List of Tables | v |
| Acknowledgements | vi |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1 | 4 |
| Chapter 2 | 22 |
| Chapter 3 | 54 |
| Chapter 4 | 82 |
| Notes | 107 |
| Bibliography | 118 |
| Appendix | 127 |
| Certificate of Approval, Committee on Research, University of Victoria | 128 |
| Letters of Permission for Research. (Names replaced with pseudonyms) | 129 |
| Purpose of Study | 131 |
| Teachers' Consent Form | 133 |
| Consent Form for Student Participation | 134 |
| Questionnaire for Students | 136 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Table 1: | Comparisons of textual resources authorized and recommended for use in Language Arts English courses, grades 8 to 12, by British Columbia's Ministry of Education. Breakdown according to gender of author..... | 70 |
|----------|---|----|

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Introduction

Francis Mulhern begins his essay, "English reading," with the questions, "*What* should we read, *how* should we read it, and *why*?" His questions are perennial ones for education systems, questions which he asserts "are staple elements of the politics of English reading" (250). In analyses that have much in common with Mulhern's, critics such as Benedict Anderson, Robert Morgan, Homi Bhabha, and Ian Hunter explore some of "the politics of English reading" within a context of nation-building or as elements of the "Imagined Communities" which Anderson finds to be the essence of nationness. That is, all these critics connect the study of English to nation-building: they characterize English studies as a political or ideological instrument which participates in shaping both individual and collective subjectivities as part of a process of constructing the state.

The Kindergarten to Grade 12 Plan, September, 1994, a seminal document which "describes the policies that guide the changes government is making in its attempts to improve the quality of the B.C. education system" (n.p.), highlights the needs of the state or nation. English, which has been and continues to be a central or *core* subject at all levels of public school education in this province,¹ participates in the nation-building mandate which is rehearsed in *The Plan* and other recent documents. Those documents, which

outline significant-- some would even say massive--changes which are currently under way in education in British Columbia (hereafter referred to as either British Columbia or B.C.), assert that "[o]ur society, which depends on the individual contributions of its citizens, requires co-operative, principled individuals whose own work and achievement benefit both their families and the community" (i). Other recent policy and curriculum documents confirm that nation-building, through the moulding of particular sorts of citizens, is a primary concern of education in the 90s.

My thesis examines the politics of British Columbia's Language Arts English (Graduation) program within the context of nationness. That is, it examines the values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions--the ideology--about nationness embedded in curricula and resources. Taking a kind of compass bearing from Mulhern's questions, my thesis concurs with Mulhern in contending that, self-evident and disinterested though his questions may appear, *what* we should read, *how* we should read it and *why* are inextricably related to the question of *who*. That is, one must ask: who are the assumed citizens of this nation. Who is to be understood by the collective pronoun "we"? I argue, as does Mulhern, that unexamined, unproblematized assumptions about the "we" settle in advance "[i]ssues of selection, procedure, and purpose" (250).

This thesis asks what part, if any, the politics of English studies in British Columbia plays in reproducing cultural relations of power in which a narrowly defined "we" is privileged and protected. I attempt to understand who is at the centre, who at the periphery of concepts of "we British Columbians" or "we Canadians" as these notions play themselves out in Language Arts English policy and program documents and curricula in B.C. At the same time, I search for evidence, both textual and material, of counter-

discourses, of efforts to destabilize a narrow definition of "we" or narrow views of nationness.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Drawing primarily on the scholarship of postcolonial theorists, who have focused on the "Englishness" of English studies, Chapter I establishes a theoretical framework for the research carried out in Chapters II, III and IV. Chapter II applies that theoretical framework to an examination of the curricula of three graduation level English "strands," focusing on the current changes that English studies in B.C. is undergoing. Chapter III contextualizes its examination of current, officially approved resource materials within a quickly sketched historical framework. It considers the implications of particular choices of resources and of the resource evaluation process itself. The fourth and final chapter consists of empirical research which studies how teachers interpret and implement the ideology--or cultural politics--embedded in curriculum documents, and how students experience values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions embedded in curriculum. That is, the study observes how curriculum, as it is implemented in classrooms, conforms to, expands upon or resists the cultural politics of English studies as it is officially envisioned in British Columbia.

CHAPTER I

Keeping in mind both the historical and the current importance attached to English Studies in B.C., this chapter explores the responses of postcolonial theorists to what has traditionally been called "English" or "English studies." I will concentrate on three pivotal areas of analysis--the first of these taken up by Robert Morgan in his work on "The 'Englishness' of English Studies," and reiterated, albeit in a somewhat different register, by feminist theorist Valerie Walkerdine and by postcolonial theorist Gauri Viswanathan. Morgan's work also find a certain resonance in some of the writings of Gayatri Spivak and Catherine Belsey, among others.

My second area of analysis shifts the focus to "the apparatus [of popular education] itself" (Hunter, 3), and draws on Ian Hunter's signal text, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education*. The third examines postcolonial theory per se, and considers its applicability to Language Arts English curricula in B.C.

I begin, then, with Morgan. In "The 'Englishness' of English Teaching," Robert Morgan returns to the historical conditions that gave rise to and reproduced English studies. He argues compellingly (as do Viswanathan, 1989 and, briefly, Anderson, 1991) that the birth of English studies is complicit with British imperialism and that despite a history of claims to ideological innocence, English studies continues to be "a residue of its historical appearances" (Morgan, 230). As such, it is decidedly interested rather than neutral knowledge. It is the site of a particular cultural politics tainted by colonization, which, in the words of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "almost invariably implies

a relation of structural domination, and a discursive or political suppression of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (Mohanty, 61).

According to Morgan, "'English culture', English language, English Literature were as essential to the consolidation of English 'power and progress' as English armies had been in implanting them" (Morgan, 206). From its inception, English studies embodied homogenized notions of Englishness which it 'naturalized' as universal values or truths about the human condition, despite its being a discipline that arose out of a particular class, a particular ethnicity, a particular nationality, and a particular language--indeed a particular dialect within a language--despite the fact that (to use the words of Gauri Viswanathan) "the Eurocentric literary curriculum of the nineteenth century was...a vital, active instrument of Western hegemony in concert with commercial expansionism and military action" (167). Racial, ethnic, class and, as Brian Doyle argues, gender specificities (Doyle, 1989) were at work in English studies from the start.

In order to maintain its congruence the disciplinary boundaries of English studies necessarily excluded everything that failed to cohere with its own homogenized notions. The effect of the denials and suppressions involved in such exclusions were "real social costs, dispossessions of other classes and women" (Morgan, 222). People dispossessed by what Morgan calls "a 'racy' language and literature" (222) include those with other values, those with other accents, other nationalities, other voices, other races--in short, the Other. Notions of the Other, then, are also inherent from the inception in a discipline in which literature, nation and empire are closely intertwined and where "race was the explanatory category beneath all of them" (221).

Brian Doyle's *English and Englishness* resonates with

Morgan's study, although Doyle concentrates on the function of English studies not as a tool of imperialism but as a colonizing force within Britain. He too alleges that with the institutionalization of English studies, what was defined as literary was tied to notions of "national character," which he reveals to be repositories for the legitimization of particular social values. Remarkably, the sense of 'Englishness' that English studies came to specify

was apparently so free of any narrow patriotism or overtly nationalist or imperialist politics that any debate about the meaning of the term itself was deemed unnecessary until quite recently. (40)

However, that view of English studies conceals the ideological subtext explicated by Ian Hunter, wherein English studies, as a "specialized sector of the apparatus of popular education" (Hunter, viii), contributes to assuring the objectives of the apparatus, namely "the formation of a highly specific profile of cultural attributes" (ix). The specificity of those attributes is highlighted by Doyle when he exposes contradictions at the heart of early English Studies discourse in, for example, the influential 1921 Newbolt Report. On the one hand that report makes universalizing claims that 'Literature' is the expression of "the native experience of men of our own race and culture" (Newbolt, quoted in Doyle, 48). On the other it argues for English education because it

would form a new element of national unity, linking together the mental life of all classes by experiences which have hitherto been the privilege of a limited section. (48--49)

Consonant with Morgan's argument, Doyle suggests that English or literary studies represents a "feat of cultural self-assertion" (40). That cultural self-assertion naturalizes the values of a particular class, ethnicity and gender, and in so doing 'colonizes', in the sense of the word used by Edward Said,² other classes, members of other ethnic groups and people whose gender is not heterosexual masculine.

I return to Robert Morgan's analysis. While the bulk of Morgan's paper concentrates on English studies "long compact with cultural imperialism" (206), the first part of his paper focuses on how the imperialist project is implemented. Quoting Foucault, Morgan describes a system of "hierarchical surveillance," enacted through examinations, assignments etc., in which students are perpetually assessed and classified. However, the power of regulation and government enacted by that surveillance is mystified or concealed by "the pleasurable routines of the English classroom" (Morgan, 201), which, through their focus on personal response in reading and writing seem to be geared to "setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself" (Foucault, quoted in Morgan, 201). Thus, by overtly stressing the personal, that is, "personal growth," "personal values," "personal aims and goals," English studies converts a very public realm "into a purely private and 'personal matter" (Morgan, 200). Through an act of ideological interpellation,³ English studies superintends "government by individualization" (Foucault, quoted in Morgan, 201) and persuades "individuals...to adopt unconsciously the institutional norms embedded" in the discipline (Morgan, 201). Morgan would, I believe, agree with Gayatri Spivak's claim that, "[l]iterature buys your assent in an almost clandestine way, and therefore it is an excellent instrument for a slow transformation of the mind" (Spivak, 1993). The effect is that English studies forms "both public 'citizen' and private 'subjectivity'" (201) according to a very particular set of values. Through such interpellation (or regulation), the "minority, the exilic, the marginal, and the emergent" (Bhabha, 300), to use Homi Bhabha's descriptors, are (potentially) 'domesticated', or silenced, or assimilated, a practice which brings to mind Said's

explication of "culture [as] a system of discriminations and evaluations...for a particular class in the State able to identify with it" (Said, 1983, 11). It is through the conflation of private self and public citizen that Morgan posits English studies' complicity in constructing particular relationships "between nation and signification, the textual and the sexual, culture and class," (201) and, one might add, between race and reading.

Feminist critic, Valerie Walkerdine, similarly 'de-doxifies' (to purloin Linda Hutcheon's adaptation of Barthes' *doxa*) the "self-regulating, democratic citizen" (1990, 218) that education systems hold up as the 'humanized' model. While her critique is directed at schooling in general, not at English studies in particular or even predominantly, nevertheless, in her work we see a reiteration of what Morgan, drawing on Foucault, calls "subjectification," by which he means "'the way a human being turns him or herself into a subject' by means of discourses and practical routines" (Morgan, 199). Walkerdine too draws on Foucault's constructs, stating that efficient government of populations requires "not... authoritarianism but... normalization" (1992, 16). That normalization assumes "a concept of a norm, a normal individual" (22) which, Walkerdine infers, acts as the foundation stone of pedagogy and which, at the same time, encodes its concomitant Other through the "pathologization of difference as deviance from the standard" (18).

Again one is reminded of Edward Said, who suggests that culture is a system of exclusions...by which such things as anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority, bad taste, and immorality are identified, then deposited outside culture and kept there by the power of the State and its institutions. (1983, 11)

While Morgan cites 'Englishness' as the source of those exclusions, and Walkerdine cites the bourgeoisie--where "bourgeois culture is taken as nature" (1992, 22)--both

critics link the "training in how to say 'I'" (Morgan, 203), which they locate within the school system, to nationalist objectives such as a "stable populace" and the "construction of a unified nation" (Walkerdine, 1992, 18). Both draw similar conclusions with regard to a process of subject-formation in which any 'I' but the 'appropriately' self-regulating one is repressed. Moreover, Walkerdine states that although "a notion of freedom as freedom from overt control" is announced in this process of subjectification, "such a notion of freedom is a sham" (16).

Gayatri Spivak levels an even more damning condemnation than does Morgan at a colonizing process which, while it contains elements of the "subjectification" described by Foucault, is characterized by Spivak as something resembling a process of objectification. Spivak points to the colonizing power in the person of an English officer, Captain Birch, who is reinscribed as "the sovereign as Subject with a capital S, even as the native shrinks into the consolidating subjected subject in the lower case" (1985, 254). Benita Parry describes Spivak's representation of the imperializing project as enacting a subject-formation which forces a rewriting of the colonized self through a process which "make[s] the 'native' see himself as 'other'" (Spivak, 1985, 254) effectively blotting out the native, individual self. In Parry's words, "the native is prevailed upon to internalize as self-knowledge, the knowledge concocted by the master" (Parry, 36). Parry maintains that Spivak's analysis of imperialism tells a tale of "the self-consolidating other and the disarticulated subaltern" (36). To borrow Viswanathan's words, such a position fails to "sufficiently recognize[...] the colonized as possessor of another knowledge and history and as producer of alternative traditions" (Viswanathan, 12). Those two opposed positions point to the necessity for anyone who wishes to examine discourse to seek both zones of silence or silencing, *and*

apparent fault lines, by way of uncovering concealed alternative knowledge, either as it is suppressed or as it applies pressure from the margins.

Despite the differing focuses of the work of Morgan, Doyle, Walkerdine and Spivak, the nexus of citizen and subjectivity, of nation-building and subject-formation that informs all of them *makes* all of them assimilable to a postcolonial theoretical model of investigation.

The second area of analysis that I propose to survey by way of establishing a theoretical framework for my investigations is, as suggested above, closely related to the first. It does not dispute the notion that English studies participates in the shaping of subjectivities; however, it shifts the power of transformation from the subject matter (for example, Language Arts English) to what Louis Althusser dubbed the Ideological State Apparatus.⁴ Ian Hunter argues compellingly in *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* that practices of "self-discovery and personal development" (34), those mainstays of English studies which are assumed to facilitate "the complete development of human capacities" (33), pre-existed the emergence of English as a privileged discourse in the school system. Further, Hunter shows that the Arnoldian notion of culture--as the promise of "'man's' cultural realization" (viii), a notion which has traditionally been proffered to explain the taken-for-granted centrality of literature in English studies, was not, at the outset, "the driving force[...] behind the teaching of English." Rather, he argues, culture entered the school system at one remove, in the persons of "the corp of ethical exemplars deployed to oversee the machinery of popular education" (5).

Through a "system of observation...emulation and competition," built into the very structure of popular education, the "internalization of norms" could be attained in a sphere which had the capacity to "normaliz[e]

observation"; that is, the popular education system created "a space organized around a type of observation through which children came to *see themselves* according to new social norms which they struggled to attain" (37). The result was "an apparatus in which new social norms for the government of population could surface inside the formation of the individual conscience" (64).

Closer in focus to Walkerdine than to Morgan, Hunter would, I believe, agree with Walkerdine's statement that "[p]ower exists in the apparatuses of regulation themselves" (1990, 220). Whereas familiar characterizations depict literature as having the capacity, through the self-evident and inherent value of texts, "to promote free growth within the individual ungendered self" (Doyle, 1989, 5), thereby effecting the reconciliation of 'man' and culture, Hunter advances the argument that it is the imperatives of the pedagogical apparatus which engineer the shape of literary education and which indeed "function as historical determinants of what is to *count* as 'literary'" (27).

The third and final area of analysis that I want to address by way of establishing a theoretical framework for my thesis is that of postcolonial theory *per se*. Postcolonialism has been "loosely defined as a body of theories which offers a place to speak for those who have been excluded from Western metaphysics" (Gunew and Yeatman, xiii). Within that body of theories, one finds some decidedly agonistic (some might say antagonistic) "subject positions, professional fields and critical enterprises" (Slemon, 1994, 16). But, despite radically different and even hostile positions and practices, there is a nexus which connects the disparate enterprises of postcolonial studies. That nexus is colonialism--"as an economic and political structure of cross-cultural domination" and "as an ideological or discursive formation" (17) which subordinates subjects through the manufacture of consent. In the words

of Gyan Prakash, the postcolonial exists as a kind of "aftermath" to colonialism; that is, "after being worked over by colonialism." As a result, it is "neither inside nor outside the history of western domination but in a tangential relation to it." From that position, "the postcolonial force[s] a radical re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and western domination" (8). It should be added that it does so in the knowledge that colonialism itself consists of neither unified nor unitary sites or discourses, but rather fractured and ambivalent ones.

Because postcolonial studies' "referent in the real world is a form of political, economic, and discursive oppression whose name, first and last, is *colonialism*" (Slemon, 31), it "functions in the academy as a political analysis of *what to do* about the 'problem' of colonialism both as a structure of historical power and as a debate within 'theory'" (25). In particular, though not solely, the proactive nature of that function gives postcolonial criticism appeal for my research. However, the question must be asked: what particular purchase does postcolonial criticism have for the study of Language Arts English in the British Columbia school system? After all, while there can be no argument that Canada was a colony, the Canadian colonial experience is not the same as that of India or Africa. Indeed, some critics argue that the expansion of postcolonial criticism to include the experience and production of settler colonies involves an appropriation which, in levelling difference, participates in a neo-colonizing process.⁵

As a settler colony, Canada has a complicated and ambivalent relationship to postcolonialism. Canada has a large population with strong ties to Britain and to the privilege of being on the side of Empire. It also has large

populations of second, third, fourth, fifth generation immigrants from Eastern Europe whose relationship to the colonial is far less straight-forward than that of people of British origins. It has a First Nations population, whose experiences of colonialism are vastly different from those of peoples of European heritage.⁶ And, Canada has a growing population of new immigrants, many of whom are themselves enmeshed in postcolonial histories elsewhere, and who, therefore, enter Canadian society strongly marked by a British (or other) colonial past and its values. I again borrow the words of Stephen Slemon to say that "the *illusion* of a stable self/other, here/there binary division has *never* been available" in Canada. While Slemon states that such an illusion is not available to "Second World" writers, I contend that it is not available to "Second World" critics, theorists, scholars, or teachers either, and for the same reasons: "the sites of figural contestation between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized, have been taken *inward* and *internalized*." Slemon points to that internalization "in Second-World post-colonial textual practice" (Slemon, 1990, 38). I would suggest that it exists in a whole range of lived experience as well.

It is the blurring alluded to above--and described by Slemon as being characteristic of the Second-World, post-colonial literary text--that makes postcolonial theory an appropriate framework in which to study Language Arts English curriculum in British Columbia. Within the education system, it is my observation that the tension and anxiety that the hybridity described by Slemon creates is inherent in both official discourse on education coming out of the Ministry of Education, and in the discussions and strategies of teachers in classrooms. I concur with Slemon that settler cultures such as Canada inhabit "the space of dynamic *relation*" between "binaries such as colonizer and colonized, foreign and native, settler and indigene, home

and away" (38). As such, settler cultures incarnate the ambivalences which postcolonial theorists insist are present in the colonial experience. A critical field which theorizes these ambivalences is surely eminently appropriate to the study of that location which is sometimes excluded on the basis of its sullied participation in both poles of the binaries.

Concepts of nation and nationness are of central concern for postcolonial theorists, who differentiate between "nationalist pedagogy," and "the nation as narration." While "nationalist discourses persistently ...produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress," self-generating and arising out of the *Volk*, (Bhabha, 1), Homi Bhabha and other contemporary critics, such as Benedict Anderson, Tom Nairn, and Eric Hobsbawm, as well as 19th century critic Ernest Renan, suggest that a process of selective remembering and forgetting structures the creation of nations--so much so that Benedict Anderson characterizes nations as "*Imagined Communities*" (emphasis mine). What is (selectively) remembered and what forgotten constitutes what Homi Bhabha calls "nationalist pedagogy" (294) which, he suggests, is at the heart of the principle of nationalism. "Nationalist pedagogy" encompasses the metanarratives, those particular narrations of the nation which authorize stories that consciously or unconsciously work toward a single voice and, in doing so, repress knowledge of difference. Renan states that the unity of a nation "is **always** effected by means of brutality"(11, emphasis added). Critics like Bhabha would add that the illusion of unity can only be maintained by a narrative that does daily violence to those narratives that are spoken (or, more often, silenced) from the margins.

In contrast to "nationalist pedagogy," "nation as narration" (Bhabha, 294), a concept that informs Bhabha's vision of postcolonial theory, is an ambivalent, agonistic

perspective. Resonating with Slemon's argument, it maintains that the locality of national culture is neither unified nor unitary, that the 'nation' is an "irredeemably plural modern space" (300). The plurality of that space subverts the "complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of 'the people' or 'the nation'" (292); that is, the plurality of the nation-space subverts nationalist pedagogy.

The concept of nationalist pedagogy politicizes what might otherwise appear 'neutral' discourse by pointing to indicators of homogenizing impulses or narrow notions of nation as well as to indicators of counter-narratives, transgressive strategies and pluralities. Informed by the concept of "the Janus-faced discourse of the nation" (Bhabha, 3), wherein the very genetic code of the nation inscribes not homogeneity, but "both progression and regression, political rationality and irrationality" (2), postcolonial theory seeks the disjunctions at the heart of the "homogenized" nation. It finds those disjunctions articulated in such signs of national culture as "'zones of control or abandonment, of recollection and of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing'" (Said, 1989, 225), signs that reveal what is inside, what outside the nation's ambivalent boundaries.

My examination of British Columbia's Language Arts English Graduation Program will be colored by the concepts of nation, ideology and multiplicity noted above. Ideology, as I am using the term, refers not only "to a conscious and explicit theory" but to "those usually unspoken assumptions upon which the most untheoretical, undogmatic, and 'common-sense' arguments rest" (Baldick, 2). It is not "a set of deliberate distortions." Rather, it is "a necessary condition of action," existing in all those commonplaces that are taken for true or obvious. However, if it is true, "it is not the whole truth. It is a set of omissions, gaps

rather than lies, smoothing over contradictions, appearing to provide answers to questions which in reality it evades" (Belsey, 594).

But before moving on to the analysis of those texts that are the topic of my thesis, I will touch on two other debates, both of which must necessarily color the lens through which I look at Language Arts English policy, curriculum and resource documents.

The first of those two debates centres on the discourse of 'multiculturalism.' Canada is, de facto, a country which is linguistically, ethnically, religiously, and culturally plural. Moreover, it is officially multicultural. As a federal policy of official pluralism, enacted in 1971, multiculturalism is a shaping characteristic of what Homi Bhabha would call nationalist pedagogy--the official (meta)narrative of the nation. Thus, despite the fact that "there is no national policy on multicultural education" (Moodley, 89), multiculturalism shapes curriculum in a variety of ways from province to province. As a result, one would expect to find multiculturalism as a concept of nation being used as one of the focuses in the resource selection process of B.C.'s Ministry of Education and, similarly, one would expect to find multiculturalism as a value embedded in Language Arts English curriculum. Thus one might expect a reflection of the irredeemable plurality of which Bhabha speaks to be a given in B.C.'s Language Arts English curriculum. One might even expect that such pluralism would radically subvert the universalizing impulse with which critics like Morgan, Doyle, Hunter, Viswanathan and others have identified English studies. And in fact, with even a cursory glance at B.C. Language Arts English curriculum and resources, one finds that multiculturalism as a value has had, and continues to have an impact on policy and programming. However, as the debate on multicultural education makes clear, making sense of what you find is not

necessarily as simple as thinking that you've found something. What multiculturalism has to say about 'the Nation' or 'the People' can itself be, and indeed is, read in many (sometimes contradictory) ways.

Jon Young, editor of *Breaking the Mosaic: Ethnic Identities in Canadian Schooling*, situates multiculturalism within a larger debate between multiculturalism and anti-racist education. In his "Introduction," Young states that the discourse of 'multiculturalism' has provided an analysis which, in its simplest form, suggests that "inequality is based upon individual prejudices stemming either from ignorance or from fears," and that the solution resides "in educating people about cultural differences"; that is, he says, according to this model inequalities within Canadian society are understood "within a framework of individual, psychological and cultural phenomenon [sic]" (Young, 10).

Embedded in such a concept of multiculturalism is a notion of nationness that marries very comfortably with conventional narratives about Canada. According to those narratives, Canada is an essentially open and tolerant country which, while misunderstandings or temporary blindness have resulted in occasional injustices or even oppression, is able to learn from its mistakes and make the necessary accommodations. According to this scenario, Canada can make those accommodations precisely because inequities among members of the society are caused by individual, psychological and cultural phenomena rather than differential, structurally embedded power relations.

Ann Manicom gives examples from elementary school texts for social studies that illustrate the conception of nation that inheres in the discourse of multiculturalism described above. She cites books in which, for example, "the appalling treatment...of the Chinese building the railroad through the Rockies" becomes "the unpleasant backdrop[...] against which current individual successes can be

highlighted" (Manicom, 84). Such 'success stories' point to a regrettable past but an admirable, redemptive present, concealing the fact that despite individual achievements and perhaps because of official multiculturalism,⁷ the "existing cultural hierarchy was", and perhaps still is, "in no way threatened but stabilized" (Moodley, 80).

In contrast to the analysis of multiculturalism suggested above, the essays in *Breaking the Mosaic* argue that it is impossible to understand relations of exploitation and oppression in Canada "without making sense of them in terms of 'the Nation'" (10). Roger Simon argues that multiculturalism, as a federally instituted policy, participates in *creating* ethnicity, "a procedure that 'ethnifies' by defining who and what is Other and how such social groupings are to be charted on a social map" (35).

To return to Young:

Each and every form of ethnic, linguistic, religious, racial and, indeed, national social identity in Canada has been fabricated into a certain *nationality* through maintaining the dominance of some social identity (a certain patriarchal Englishness) against and under which 'hospitable shield' all others were subordinated. (11)

The salient feature of 'the Nation' that is revealed by that rendering of multiculturalism is, oddly, not its plurality but its 'binarity.' A notion of the 'One' (which is in some mysterious way not ethnic) is set against the 'Other' which embodies all difference from the 'One.' As Philip Corrigan observes sardonically: "I know of no multiculturalist program for the Anglo *minority*" (24)! (see also, Roman, 1993, Gunew, 1990, 1993) The effect of such a concept of multiculturalism on Language Arts English curriculum might be that, while 'ethnic' and 'minority' literatures occasionally make their way into the classroom, once there they find themselves measured against the 'standard' of 'the Great Tradition,' reconfirming the binary logic which

Shoshana Felman, drawing on Derrida, has argued is a "mechanism of hierarchization which assures the unique valorization of the 'positive' pole" (3).

At one extreme of the debate touched on here is a structural-functional view of schooling. This view represents "an apolitical posture" in which, according to critical theorist Henri Giroux, schools appear to exist "beyond the imperatives and influence of class and power" (Giroux, 1983, 103). Structural-functionalist discourse, Giroux contends, defines students "as passive recipients, [and] conflict is explained mainly as a function of faulty socialization" (103). It is this model that Young criticizes as a discourse which "demands that inequalities within Canadian society be understood within a framework of individual, psychological and cultural phenomenon [sic]" (10).

At the other pole of this debate is a "neo-Marxist approach" which, in the words of Giroux, "is a recognition of the relationship between economic and cultural reproduction" and which represents "an intersection of theory, ideology, and social practice."

Schools are viewed in this approach as agents of ideological control which function to reproduce and to maintain dominant beliefs, values, and norms.... [and] are linked to the principles and processes governing the work place. The cutting edge of this perspective is its insistence on connecting macro forces in the larger society to microanalysis such as classroom studies. (Giroux, 1983, 105)

That curriculum and policy documents and resource selection for B.C. schools are informed by notions of 'the Nation' as multicultural can be taken, I believe, as a given. However, understanding the ideological subtext inherent in those documents requires, at the very least, that the debate described above be brought to bear on any analysis of them.

The final debate that I will touch on is intertwined

with, indeed overlaps, positions already discussed. Over a decade ago, Brian Doyle observed that concern over the efficacy of English studies has deflected scholarship from an investigation of "the ways in which teaching of a 'national' language and literature operates as a key feature in reproducing the cultural relations within what is usually called 'our' society" (1982, 17). That observation is based on the premise that teaching a 'national' language and literature *does* reproduce cultural relations. The same premise is implied by Terry Eagleton when he quotes George Sampson who, in 1921, warned: "Deny to working-class children any common share in the immaterial, and presently they will grow into the men who demand with menaces a communism of the material," to which Eagleton adds ironically: "If the masses are not thrown a few novels, they may react by throwing up a few barricades" (64). The same premise regarding the power of language and literature to reproduce cultural relations is reiterated by Morgan and Hunter as I have shown earlier, and is, I think, based on the broader premise, formulated by Althusser and reiterated by many many others, including Giroux as shown above. That premise reads as follows:

[t]he central ISA [Ideological State Apparatus] in contemporary capitalism is the educational system, which prepares children to act consistently with the values of society by inculcating in them the dominant versions of appropriate behaviour as well as history, social studies and, of course, literature. (Althusser, quoted in Belsey, 594)

I borrow ideas from Benita Parry (1987) to suggest that there is a danger in focusing exclusively on the reproductive nature of the education system, a danger of occluding reverse discourses, of being blind to evidence of resistance to dominant values, resistance which might have its genesis either within or without the system. Surely Gramsci's "organic intellectuals"⁸ are to be found within the education system just as they are to be found elsewhere.

Moreover, if one's focus is too constricted, there is a danger of forgetting that tools of power have the potential both to colonize and to liberate and that the difference will not always be a straight-forward matter. That is not to bring a Pollyanna view of schools to this discussion; rather, it is to be aware that the institution, like the nation, is not monolithic or homogeneous, no matter how convincingly a given position might characterize it to be so. Michael Apple, admittedly focusing on American schooling, argues that in the face of calls by dominant interests to rescind "gains made by women and men in employment, health and safety, welfare programs, affirmative action, legal rights, and education" (26),

there are signs throughout the country of multiracial coalitions being built among elementary and secondary school teachers, university-based educators, and community members to act collectively...to support the democratization of curriculum and teaching and a rededication to the equalization of access and outcomes in schooling. (36)

That is, from within the institution, collective action is taking shape, aimed at undermining the reproduction of dominant interests.

To conclude this chapter, I return to the words of Francis Mulhern with which I began: "*What* should we read, *how* should we read it, and *why*?" These questions, says Mulhern, "are staple elements of any politics of English reading" (250). It is within the framework described above that I propose a reading of the policy documents, the curriculum and the resources that shape and constitute the Language Arts English Graduation Program in B.C.--that discursive field which defines what, how and why high school students in B.C. should read.

CHAPTER 2

The use of the term Language Arts English, or simply Language Arts, side by side with the continued use of the terms English and English Literature reflect, on the one hand, a conscious movement away from some of the kinds of unconscious values and assumptions about nation and subjectivity that English Studies has been criticized by postcolonial theorists for disseminating, and on the other, the continuing presence of a "nationalist pedagogy" which maintains the dominance of particular notions of nation and subjectivity based on class, ethnic, race and gender specificities.

This chapter explicates the several versions of nation and subjectivity embedded in those curriculum and policy documents which shape current Language Arts English programs in British Columbia. It seeks to understand the disjunctions among those versions, doing so in the context of the curricula of three graduation level "streams": English Literature 12, Communications 11-12 and English 11-12. My analysis suggests that changes which are currently taking place incorporate a range of values, some of them in tension with each other. The chapter concludes with reference to the discourse on Education and the (Global) Marketplace with its buzz words: "the 'real' world," the marketplace, standards and skills. I argue that this last discourse impinges on all of the other discursive positions that are embedded in curricula.

I begin with English Literature 12. While it is not a graduation requirement and therefore not a core subject, it is arguably the highest status Language Arts English course available at the Graduation level, offering a scholarship exam upon completion, as well as the routine provincial

exam. I begin with it because it is at once the site of an English studies ideology that has been most resoundingly criticized as colonizing, and the site of the most radical changes currently in progress in Language Arts English curriculum revision. As such, English Literature 12 offers an example of English studies acting in its traditional role of reproducing dominant ideology and notions of culture. It also offers indications that resistance to and (potentially) transformation of that ideology and those cultural notions do occur within the educational institution.

For more than twenty years, English Literature 12, like English 91 before it, has been a "survey in chronological sequence [of] the major figures of English literature from Anglo-Saxon times to World War I" (*Senior Secondary School English: English Literature 12*, 2). That curriculum, which was last revised in 1972, is rigidly prescriptive, specifying which poems, plays, and (excerpts from) novels or other prose pieces are to be studied. The list, which focuses overwhelmingly on poetry and drama, includes the work of thirty-four authors, all British, of whom none are women.⁹ The 1992-93 Examinations Specifications update that list to include "Song" by Emily Brontë and an excerpt from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Except for the addition of six new names,¹⁰ the thirty-four men remain virtually unchanged, as do the selections authored by them. Other changes, which involve minor reconceptualizing of periodization, in no way affect the exclusively Eurocentric point of view: "The Anglo-Saxon Period" and "The Medieval Period" are combined to form "The Middle Ages"; "The Elizabethan Age," "The Seventeenth Century," and "The Eighteenth Century" are reshuffled to become "The Renaissance" and "The Restoration and Eighteenth Century." Otherwise, the 1992 list is a virtual replication of the 1972 one.

Two of the objectives stated in the 1972 guide are: "To

give students some idea of our cultural heritage so that they can better understand themselves and their society," and "To assist students to see contemporary literature in perspective" (*English Literature 12*, 2). If the course were underpinned by postcolonial or deconstructive strategies, the assumptions, authorizations, exclusions and power relations inherent in its own mandate would indeed offer insight into the society of the students taking the course, enabling them to better understand their own assumptions and those of their society. Such understanding might be engendered, for example, by inquiry into why such a remarkably unrepresentative sample is so widely identified as representing "our cultural heritage." A deconstructive strategy might also illuminate who comprises the "us" in "our cultural heritage," as well as the extent to which that "us" represents the ethnographic/cultural reality of British Columbia. A deconstructive strategy might indeed encourage students to look at contemporary literature from a broader perspective.

However, a review of recent English Literature 12 Provincial Exams indicates that the intent of the course is decidedly not deconstructive. The following questions, which rely heavily on memorization--not on critical thinking--are typical of exam questions since at least 1988:

1. Beowulf's battle with Grendel is fought in
 - A. Herot.
 - B. Finland.
 - C. an underwater cave.
 - D. the land of the Geats.

15. Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes" is written in
 - A. terza rima.
 - B. ballad stanza.
 - C. heroic couplets.
 - D. Spenserian stanza. (*English Literature 12 Provincial Exam, June 1991, 3*)

Select the author of the quotation, or the title of the selection from which the quotation is taken.

21. "Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend."

- A. Pope
- B. Swift
- C. Bacon

D. Addison (*English Literature 12 Provincial Examination* (hereafter *E.L.12 P.E.*), June 1992, 4)

3. With specific references to the ideas and images from the poems, show THREE contrasts between Blake's "The Lamb" and "The Tiger." (*E.L.12 P.E.* June 1992, 9)

Henry Giroux's comment that what students "do not need is to treat history as a closed, singular narrative that simply has to be revered and memorized" (1991, xiv) apparently finds little sympathy in English Literature 12. Heavy reliance on memorization is implicit in the fact that none of the literary selections referred to in the above questions appears on the respective exams. The inherent value of committing to memory the form of "The Eve of St. Agnes" or the details of "The Lamb" and "The Tiger" is assumed.

English Literature 12, in perpetuating the claim that English (or British) literature is the embodiment of "our cultural heritage," balances on a particular narration of the nation--one that unifies "Canadian" under the sign of "English gentleman," and "our cultural heritage" under the sign of "an evolutionary narrative of historical continuity" (Bhabha, 3). Remarkably, that continuity ends at the beginning of the twentieth century (just about the time that women had gained a significant foothold in the publishing industry), and excludes even a single cultural artifact created within the borders of the Canadian nation, an eventuality whose obverse would, I suspect, be unthinkable in, say, an English high school. What emerges is a narrative which is woefully silent on even the incomplete, official narrative of Canadian culture--the "two founding nations" story.

Questions on Provincial Exams, such as those noted above, reveal that English Literature 12 as it is currently conceived ignores values articulated in more recent policy or program documents, which should impinge upon the English Literature 12 course. It ignores, for example, the assertion of the 1990 *Language Arts English Primary-Graduation Position Statements* on "First Nations Learners," which insists that "[a]ll children have a right to see their own values and beliefs reflected in their literature experiences" (37), and which also warns (ironically, under the circumstances) that "[t]eachers should be alert to cultural bias in reading materials, particularly in North American classical literature" (37). English Literature 12 seems unaffected by the "Rationale Statement" recorded in the 1990 *Language Arts English Primary-Graduation Curriculum Guide* (hereafter referred to as *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.*) which says, among many other things, that literature "allows young people to explore imaginatively the places where they live..."(13).

In being silent on all but an acutely limited notion of "our cultural heritage," English Literature 12's mapping of "our literary heritage" not only testifies to the unassailable value of the Englishness of English literature; it silently testifies to the absence of value of the majority of Canada's cultural heritage which is not embraced by the term Englishness. In identifying as English Literature its particular corpus of texts, English Literature 12 reimposes silence on everything that is excluded, effectively establishing for students who take the course a grammar of what is (good) literature, what not--a grammar constructed along ethnic, racial, class, and gender lines. Rather than assisting students to see contemporary literature in perspective, it is possible that English Literature 12 would interfere with students' ability to see contemporary literature

undistorted by the very limitations of perspective that the course imposes.

However, I said at the beginning of this chapter that concepts of nation and subjectivity embedded in curriculum documents are not unitary but multiple, and that discourses on curriculum are fluid and shifting. Evidence: English Literature 12, on the road to becoming Literature 12, is undergoing (potentially) radical change. What amounts to the study of British male literature from 449 to 1906 is about to become a study of "Literature written in English and works in translation (Homer, the Bible) 700 BC to the present" (Summary, *Literature 12 Prescribed Curriculum and Integrated Resource Package*, January, 1995 DRAFT, 6). Whereas in the current course a rigid canon is observed, with the effect that all selections are specified, allowing no room for student or teacher choice except in the area of drama (where selections are limited to one or two options), the new curriculum will include no specified list of literary works. It *will* include suggestions for content; however, according to the September, 1994 draft of the proposed curriculum, "[t]he major focus of the Literature 12 course [will be] the close reading of a body of literary works chosen by the teacher" (*Prescribed Curriculum and Integrated Resource Package*, 4). A focus on periods, to be referred to in the future as "Historical Divisions," is maintained, but where study of all periods is required by current curriculum, the study of "at least three divisions" is required in the new, draft curriculum (6). One of the divisions in the draft curriculum is the Twentieth Century. That in itself represents an expansion of the course which has the potential to disrupt the class, race and gender hegemony that has hitherto been protected by the rigid canon of English Literature 12. Moreover, the 1994 draft

curriculum expresses the intent to disrupt that hegemony. It states: "[b]ecause we are citizens of an increasingly multicultural and global community, it is important that new curricula address the divergent backgrounds, attitudes, learning needs, and sensitivities of students in our educational system" (1).

The effect of exponentially broadening the base from which literary selections can be drawn will be that provincial Literature 12 examinations, which are necessarily undergoing parallel revision at this time, will no longer be able to rely on memorization of a rigid canon as an objective to be tested. That will result in a significant increase in the number of sight selections on exams and a corresponding increase in questions which test critical reading/thinking skills, rather than recall. In other words, the changed curriculum will compel a change in the exams, forcing them to move away from the canonical regime that has held sway for more than twenty-five years; moreover, there is every reason to expect that, reciprocally, changes in the exam will engender a further broadening of resource selection in the classroom.

The changes I have alluded to, however, are not certainties. Some exist in draft form in official documents. Others represent my own speculation based on the directions curriculum seems to be taking. The proof of this pudding will be in the revised resource list and in classrooms.¹¹ The former is the subject of Chapter III. As for the latter, it is in the classroom that the new freedom of teachers to choose whatever selections they see fit for study in Literature 12 has the potential to explode the hegemony of the old course.

The changes in English Literature/Literature 12 are substantial, but are they radical? Certainly they have the potential to be. When a course which is conceived

wholly in terms of a canon has its canon dismantled, it has undergone radical change. In other respects, however, the changes are more difficult to assess. As mentioned earlier, Eurocentrism continues in the periodization. Similarly, it might be suggested that it continues in the off-the-record statement that what Literature 12 is *not* is a course in world literature-- that its guiding principle is the study of literature that contributes to English language or thought. Such a statement raises the questions: Which English language? What constitutes English thought?

Only the final version of the Curriculum Guide will reveal whether or not the course will encourage students to question how the concepts "English language" and "English thought" are shaped. The very brief draft overview to which I have had access suggests that such scrutiny will not be the focus of the new curriculum guide. As mentioned, the final Guide will describe "divisions," the study of three of which will be required. In addition, it will prescribe what poetic terminology and which forms and techniques are to be covered, suggesting that the emphasis will be on what Candace Mitchell calls "the genres of schooling" (xix). Focus on those "genres," which tend to "claim transcendental and transhistorical status" (Giroux, 1988, 30), deflects concern from the production and legitimization of cultural difference in which literature courses participate whenever they fail actively to engage them. That is, focus on "genres" deflects inquiry from notions of a "nationalist pedagogy" of Canadian culture which may be built into concepts like "English language" and "English thought," and which, if so, would be instrumental in building a new (de facto if not official) canon. It is possible, though not unavoidable, that Literature 12 will recuperate previously excluded voices

into a new curriculum while still doing little to change the primary message embedded in the old one. It is my contention that it is the individual teacher in the individual classroom who will have the greatest impact on which of the possible scenarios plays itself out.

In contrast to Literature 12, which is described as an elective and, as such, is not a required course, English 12 and Communications 12 come under the heading of Foundation Studies. Other than Career and Personal Planning 12, the only grade 12 course in any discipline prescribed as a graduation requirement under the September 1994 *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan* is one of either English or Communications 12 (or Français langue 12). For the great majority of students in British Columbia, Communications 11 and 12 or English 11 and 12 represent core subjects.

Of the two options, Communications 11 and 12 offer the route of least prestige. Communications courses are "designed for students who have not achieved a high level of success in English, and who will probably have difficulty in completing English 11 and 12 successfully" (*Comm. 11-12 Guide*, 3). It might be added that those student will not be eligible to enrol in English Literature 12 and, indeed, may not be eligible to enrol in English 12 either, even if they wanted to.¹² Communications 11 and 12, while they are portrayed as alternatives, are set against the norm of English 11 and 12, with English Literature 12 set apart as a specialists' course.¹³

The attitude expressed toward Communications courses by students and teachers within the system is a telling one. Dismissed by students as a course which "is just the minimum," Communications is described in off-the-record comments by teachers and other professionals as a dumping ground that can be a pretty depressing place. The

danger seems to exist that Communications classes may be among those "zones of abandonment" (Said, 1989, 225) in which groups of people (possibly particularized by race, ethnicity and/or class) are deposited outside the boundaries established by a nationalist pedagogy to face barriers that inhibit, if not foreclose, their entry into the fold of "Educated Citizen[s]" (*L.A.E.P-G.C.G.*, 14) and, potentially, into the centre of the society itself.

Officially, Communications 11 and 12 focus on the "gradual improvement of basic skills." The rationale for that focus is that students who enrol in these courses "generally have skill deficiencies...and require assistance in reading to improve their information gathering skills" (4). Arguably the restoration of that lack has the potential to empower students.

It might be expected that literature, despite its apparent position as "high status knowledge," would be displaced in favour of skills training. At first glance that appears not to be so. In fact, the first of the four goals of Communications 11 and 12 is "[t]o provide students with opportunities to develop an enjoyment and appreciation of literature" (5). However, in the body of the curriculum guide it becomes clear that literature is incidental to a focus on the skills or technologies of language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (to which the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* adds viewing and representing). In Communications 11 and 12, the Arnoldian concept of English¹⁴ reflected in the English Literature 12 curriculum appears to have been virtually superseded.

Literature has not lost *all* currency in Communications courses, however. The Guide states that "[t]he reading and study of literature for enjoyment and appreciation forms approximately 30 percent of course time" (6), a focus that is reaffirmed in the *L.A.E.P-G.G.* (which must be read as a companion document and an update

of the Communications curriculum guide). Nevertheless, in Communications courses, rather than being an end in itself, literature is enlisted as a medium through which competencies are taught.

The peripheral importance of literature to Communications courses is reflected in the "Sample Activities" which expand on each "Skill" listed in the Guide. While activities include asking students to "present a poem," the rationale for such activity is to develop a skill to which the poem is incidental. The poem merely facilitates an opportunity for the student "to demonstrate speaking skills in oral and dramatic readings" (*Communications 11 and 12*, 36). The guide suggests that students might "[d]iscuss a film, novel, play, poem, or short story in a group" by way of "participating in informal meetings" (35). Elsewhere, they might "[t]each a novel, play, short story or poem" by way of "participat[ing] in formal meetings" (37). They might "[c]onduct selected readings from novels" as activities aimed at "us[ing] word attack skills" (39). Other sample activities include "[l]ist[ing] the 'messages' gained from a literary work; construct[ing] a plot line of the work; writ[ing] a diary from a character's point of view," all by way of "apply[ing] inferential comprehension skills" (41). Skill 6.0 proposes that "the student should be able to perform basic literary analysis," which, the guide goes on to say, involves "[a]pplying basic literary terminology [and] [r]ecognizing relationships between literature and life." However, sample activities such as: "read and write about fiction" or "[r]ead to write book reviews, biographies, and research essays" (44) suggest that the projected learning outcome is more closely connected to basic literacy than to literature. What is privileged is not particular texts or, by extension, the values

embedded in them but rather "standard usage, grammar and mechanics" (48) and "standard English" (5), all of which are manifestly identified as values of the curriculum.

It appears that in Communications 11 and 12 courses, the "traditional literary text" is not granted the high degree of authority that critics like Morgan, Doyle, Davies, Widdowson, and Viswanathan claim English studies has traditionally given it. One might conclude that in non-academic Language Arts English courses, English literature is no longer an instrument for the imposition of Englishness as a standard of value. After all, the seventy per cent of Communications course time that is not dedicated to literature includes attention to (presumably Canadian) "television and radio news broadcasts" (23), "editorial comment programs, or political speeches; ...student reports" (24), "job descriptions" (26), "student dramatic monologues" (27), "trade journals" (39), "newspaper and magazine articles" (40), "reports, letters, and instructions" (40), "political cartoons" (42), and "encyclopedias" (53), among other things. Here again, texts, in this case non-literary, are used as instruments to facilitate the learning of particular skills. Moreover, while they are enlisted to as great an extent as are literary texts, neither literary nor non-literary texts are granted a high degree of authority in and of themselves.

What is granted a high degree of authority in Communications 11 and 12 is "standard" English, which is represented as the most effective tool of communication and critical thinking. One is reminded of the words of the thirty year old *Junior Secondary School English 8, English 9, English 10* curriculum guide (1965) which states that "[t]he art of writing" is defined as "learning to express oneself effectively in the dialect of literate people in the English-speaking world" (9), a

dialect particularized a few pages later as that of "the literate minority of our nation--established writers, speakers, editors and officials" (14). Interestingly, in that document the diversity within that group is elided. At the same time, the dialect of a particular class is authorized as a national language.

In a document called *Language Arts English Primary - Graduation Position Statements* (1990), one catches a glimpse of the group, identified by class and, I would argue, by ethnicity, whose language continues to be authorized as standard. Under the heading "Language Arts English and Students of English as a Second Language/ Second Dialect," it is stated that ESL students "receive specialized support for a limited time and then are integrated into regular classes." It is also stated that "[t]he first task of such students is to acquire a functional command of the English language" (33). However, the descriptions of the various students who are the target of this limited support and training suggest that the boundaries drawn by language are not shaped by functionality alone. I quote at some length:

Not all students of ESL/SD are immigrants to Canada. Some are born in Canada but do not come to school with language acquisition expected of a middle class youngster from an anglophone milieu: some are speakers of a second dialect; some are speakers of a native Indian language or an Inuit language; some speak a second dialect of English.... (33)

It is interesting to note which "zones" are designated as zones of deficiency. Given that the mandate of Communications 11 and 12 courses (more so than that of English 11 and 12) is to impart standard English to those students who are seen as deficient in it, it is worth considering whether or not Communications 11 and 12 is designed for the kinds of students identified in the above passage. Some of the structures tested by the multiple

choice cloze questions¹⁵ on the June, 1992 Provincial Exam suggest that they may be.

Though clearly one cannot draw any firm conclusions based on the evidence of one or two exam questions, I would like to consider the following questions which are taken from a paragraph about buying a car:

Do you buy from a dealer who offers a low rate of interest and take the risk that, before you finish paying, the interest rate _____ 6 _____"

6. A. rose?
B. is rising!
C. will rise?
D. has risen!

or:

"I'll stick to _____ 10 _____ the bus."

10. A. take
B. taken
C. taking
D. be taking

(*Communications 12 Provincial Examination, June '92, 1*)

The usage tested in those questions would, I think, be taken for granted by most "middle-class youngster[s] from an anglophone milieu" (*Position Statements, 35*).

I digress for a moment to consider the implications of teaching a standard which is class and ethnically specific as if it were sufficient, and designating differences from that standard as deficient. Kogila Moodley points out that "success" in Canada "is strongly dependent on how well dominant mainstream norms, lifestyles and accents can be emulated" (8). In British Columbia, English--arguably a particular middle-class and therefore mainstream English--is a prerequisite to chances for occupational equality, regardless of the many and various forms of structural inequality that obtain despite the acquisition of mainstream (one might say standardized) language. When Robert Morgan highlights the potential of English to act as a weapon against others, he says that fact is more easily concealed

"if we think of 'language' as simply a medium with technical specificities, and literary forms as merely matters of genre, tone and taste" (231). However, he fails to mention that, given the reality of the structures of power as they exist in Canada at present, "standard" English, complete with its technical specificities, its tone and its taste, may well be a weapon which "others" need. James Collins states that language standardization "is an official representation, an official definition of speaking practice (as good and bad), an attempt to impose a class dialect on an always complex array of social dialects." As such, it offers only a partial view, but that view is "an undeniable aspect of life in modern nation states" (243). Most students are only too well aware of the power of mainstream discourse, a power from which they are excluded unless they have access to that class dialect. Those students would not, I suspect, thank a school system for withholding that dialect from them.

Perhaps what one has to consider, then, is whether or not Communications courses enable students to obtain access to that dialect. Unofficially billed as a vocational and business English, Communications 11 and 12 propose to teach that aspect of the mainstream discourse which is used in "business formats...letters, résumés, memos, short reports, forms" (54). The course proposes to teach the ability "to read and comprehend minutes of formal meetings" (45), participation in informal and formal meetings (35-37), "appropriate speaking behaviours" (32). These business and vocational emphases are reconfirmed by the descriptions of the contents to be covered on exams, and by sample items included in the Examination Specifications document (1993). Under the heading "Formats" is listed a variety of letter formats which students may be required to write, as well as a list of "Other examinable formats," including "schedules, accident reports, advertisements, pamphlets, brochures,

graphs, charts, regulations, résumés, memos, short reports, forms," among others (4). The section of the exam specifications entitled "Sample Items--Communications 12 Provincial Examination" contains a sample résumé, a sample British Columbia Tel earthquake preparedness pamphlet, and a business letter question.

It would seem that such a focus would have the ability to facilitate access to at least one discourse of power, the discourse of business and industry. Unfortunately, upon scrutiny, the vocational/business face of Communications courses appears suspect. On the exam, which must be taken as an indication of the level of competence that can be expected of most students who have completed Communications 12, the multiple choice and written response questions accompanying the résumé and the earthquake pamphlet are facile in the extreme. The ability to answer them would demonstrate at best some elementary reading skills. The written-response question that accompanies the earthquake pamphlet--"Name the TWO most common causes of injury during earthquakes" (21)--is little more than a measure of the student's ability to copy. Similarly, successful completion of the multiple choice cloze questions and the sentence combining questions, both of which are heralded as testing language skills, would demonstrate such an elementary level of language competence that it would indeed be surprising if individuals who function at that level were capable of working with English in a business or vocational setting.

What I am suggesting is that Communications 11 and 12 does not offer a viable alternative to the normative English 11 and 12 courses. Given the labour market, it is highly unlikely that students with such minimal skills as would be adequate to the successful completion of Communications 12 would find easy access (if any access) to the business world. To be fair, it could be argued that the Communications Curriculum Guide makes no (overt) claim to

prepare students to enter those niches. All that it claims to do is "[t]o provide an alternative...that meets the needs of students who may find it difficult to succeed in English 11 and 12," and "[t]o provide practical communication skills and experiences for students who will probably not attend academic post-secondary institutions" (4). However, the question that begs to be answered is exactly what the alternative is that Communications provides. Not only will the graduates of Communications 12 probably not attend academic post-secondary institutions; they probably won't attend non-academic post-secondary institutions either-- unless they retrain first. British Columbia universities do not accept Communications 12 as an admission requirement. Moreover, most courses offered at British Columbia provincial colleges do not accept Communications 12 either.¹⁶ While some colleges, such as Camosun, accept students on the basis of in-house placement tests or, alternatively, enrol graduates of Communications 12 in upgrading courses preparatory to admission to college level courses, the fact remains that credit in Communications 12-- despite the fact that the course fulfils graduation requirements for Language Arts English at the grade 12 level--is widely viewed outside the public school system as insufficient.

Communications 12 does not seem to offer much of a guarantee of success if success depends on the acquisition of dominant mainstream norms, lifestyles, and accents. Nor does it seem to fulfil the mandate of the British Columbia school system as delineated in the Mission Statement: "to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to *acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy*" (L.A.E.P-G.G., 14; emphasis added). Moreover, as part of an institutionalized structure which divides students into two camps, those who study high status

knowledge and those who don't, I am not sure that it could escape being complicit in the reproduction or even exacerbation of difference, whereby those who come into the system with power go out with more and those who come into it with little power go out with less.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu, Jan Nespör argues that "schools help make arbitrary inequalities seem 'natural' and inevitable" (170), because those children who come to school with *cultural capital* and *cultural habitus* (experiences, appreciations, actions, perceptions, tastes, interpretive skills learned in family and social groups) which most closely correspond to the *cultural capital* and *habitus* valued by the school tend to do better at school.¹⁷ In Nespör's words,

[a]lthough the cultural heritage of past generations is 'theoretically offered to everyone,' it is in fact available only to those who can 'decipher' the 'code' in which it is embedded. Thus, the capacities to acquire cultural capital are differentially distributed in such a way that those groups already possessing a specific form of cultural capital are also most likely to accumulate more of it (171)

Not only is it possible that the language and other forms of *cultural capital* of marginalized groups may not be legitimized by Communications courses, students identified as deficient in *cultural capital* ("standard English") and *cultural habitus* (appreciation, interest in, experience of literature) may end up being restricted from access to precisely the kinds of *cultural capital* in which they are seen to be deficient.¹⁸

As Moodley states, "education of subordinate groups [cannot] succeed in any meaningful sense unless the political question of 'education for what' is solved satisfactorily first" (90). The answer that comes to mind in the case of Communications 11 and 12 is a most unsettling one. If one of the mandates of a course is to give students access to high status knowledge and/or discourses of power,

even the study of English literature as it is limited to the production of white, British, pre-twentieth century, upper-middle class men looks preferable to this.

But, Communications 11 and 12 are about to change. As part of the Ministry of Education's "new way of doing business," three new types of initiative for curriculum development are being undertaken, one of which is the adopt and adapt model. That model involves adopting "successful" curricula from other provinces and adapting them to British Columbia needs. It is under that model that a modified version of the Manitoba 1994 *English Language Arts: Language and Technical Communication Senior 4* is slated to be piloted in British Columbia in the near future. The intention is to address some of the criticisms I have levelled above, one being that students who enter Communications 11 and 12 classes currently do so under a marker of deficiency; another being that Communications 11 and 12 as they currently exist do not represent a viable alternative to English 11 and 12. Rather, they represent a kind of segregation.

The intention of the new initiative is to implement a course that is conceptually different from English 12, a course founded not on literature but on technical communication. That course, unlike Communications 11 and 12, would enjoy articulation with the college and university systems, and may indeed satisfy requirements for college level credit. According to the Manitoba *Pilot Guide*, the clientele for Language and Technical Communications "will be...students who will become engineers, scientists, computer specialists, technologists, technicians, environmentalists, radiologists, and so on" (2.4). Assuming that the Manitoba course represents some variation on what the new British Columbia course will be, clearly the new course will not come into being under a marker of deficiency. Moreover, articulation with colleges and

universities would make such a course a viable alternative to "standard" academic English courses.

But according to the Ministry of Education, "[s]chools have always been highly effective in preparing young people who have academic interests. They have been less successful...in providing a high-quality education for those who enter the workplace or vocational or technical institutions directly from school" (*K-12 Plan*, i). So, what of the student whom I left puzzling over her or his transportation back on page 17?

An interesting example given in the Manitoba draft curriculum, in a section entitled "Overall Course Content: Range of Forms," brings that student to mind. The document states that "[t]he emphasis [in the Language and Technical Communication course] should be on a precise study of forms as a means to achieving a particular kind of communicative purpose" (5.3). An "Executive Summary" is included as an example of one of the forms to be studied. A definition states that one type of "Executive Summary" is the cover letter, which includes information which is "either confidential or 'sensitive,' and so intended only for executives." The advantage of that particular form of executive summary, the guide notes, is that "the executive or manager...can detach [it] before circulating the document to other staff members" (5.5). One wonders whether the creators of the Language and Technical Communication 4 course would expect that the student who is worrying about whether to A) take, B) taken, C) taking, or D) be taking the bus will end up in the executive/manager circle detaching the cover letter, or among the other staff members for whom "management, financial, or political factors...may not be spelled out" (5.5).

What drives the Language and Technical Communication curriculum is not the student, but "the workplace," "real-world applications," "real-world problems," "authentic,

relevant work experience," "technology," and "marketable work skills" (1.4). The course is "[d]esigned to simulate the technical communication process in work environments" in order to prepare students to produce the kind of products that "arise in the workplace, conform (in style, tone, and format) to current business and industrial standards, and exhibit basic functional technical communication principles" (2.3). These impetuses apparently demand an even more standardized language than "standard" English. They demand a language of "precision, concision, brevity, succinctness...efficiency, directness, specificity... accuracy and relevancy, objectivity, [and the] use of active voice and parallel construction" (2.6). In addition, the workplace requires a range of forty thinking skills which include "distinguishing 'tell' vs 'sell' messages," and "differentiating between 'need to know' and 'nice to know' details" (3.7), "labelling values, orientations, and ideologies," and "detecting emotional language or appeals [in order to] recognize appeals which are largely emotional and determine whether statements being made are sufficiently logical to warrant consideration" (3.9). The workplace does not apparently require much critical thinking about who is being served by such an agenda, or, more accurately, whether there are segments of the population who are not. Indeed, the degree of standardization that marks the *Language and Technical Communication* course makes one wonder whether it will encourage much critical thinking at all.

A number of things come to mind as one reads the Manitoba pilot document, in particular the words of Michael Apple in which he draws on Stuart Hall to say that "the common good is now to be regulated exclusively by the laws of the market.... In essence, the definitions of freedom and equality are no longer democratic, but *commercial*" (34). One wonders if we are witnessing a situation in which one dominant discourse is merely being replaced by another, a

kind of homogenizing and imperial process driven not by the British Empire but by the business one, a process in which educated and employable become synonymous. How gender, race, and ethnicity will play themselves out in this new vision remains to be seen. In the meantime, the words of Joan Thomas about offering "a subtle temptation to the middle class to unhitch the futures of their children from the futures of those with less privilege" (C21) has an uncomfortably resonant ring. On the other hand, this is a Manitoba draft curriculum. It has not yet even been piloted in British Columbia, never mind adapted and adopted.

To return to the official, as opposed to the potential, curricula, I move on to English 11 and 12. As I suggested earlier, the norm against which current Communications 11 and 12 courses are set is English 11 and 12. The latter two courses appear, at least in the curriculum guides, to be conceived in very different terms from Communications 11 and 12.

Fourteen goals outline "the intent of the [English 8-12] program." Each goal leads into a series of learning outcomes which "indicate what general skills, experiences, attitudes or knowledge the student should have acquired during the course of the program" (*Secondary Guide, English 8-12, Revised 1978*, 4). The first five goals, which focus on what I have elsewhere called the technologies of language, are strongly reminiscent of the goals of the Communications 11 and 12 curriculum. In the English 11 and 12 program they are stated as follows: 1) to "help students to listen effectively" (7), 2) to "help students to speak effectively" (8), 3) to "foster an interest in reading" (9), 4) to "develop in students a range of reading and study skills" (10), and 5) to "help students develop appropriate skills for writing sentences, paragraphs and essays" (11). But the first hint that the English and Communications programs are significantly divergent appears in goal 3,

where reading is valued not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. Goal 3 states that "[b]efore students can undertake a serious study of literature, they must be both able and willing to read" (9). What follows is evidence that in English 11 and 12, literature is assigned a significantly more powerful valence than was the case in Communications 11 and 12. The valorization of literature implicit in the statement quoted above continues in the goals that follow.

Goals 9-13 propose to "encourage students to read and enjoy literature, past and present" (15), to "extend students' knowledge of self and society through literature" (16), to "increase students' knowledge of literature, past and present" (17), to "increase students' ability to read literary works in depth" (18), and to "develop students' knowledge and understanding of Canadian Literature" (19). It is interesting to compare the assumptions that shape goals 9 through 13 with those that shape goal 8--the objective of which is to "encourage a critical examination of mass media" (14). The "Learning Outcomes" of goal 8 state that "[b]y the end of the secondary school English program, students should...*understand the functions and influences* of various mass media" (emphasis added). The guide goes on to say that examples of those functions and influences might include "to entertain and inform...to persuade [and] to sell commercial products" (14). Implicit in those learning objectives is an understanding of mass media as a social construct with a potentially self-serving agenda. Other learning outcomes detailed under goal 8 reiterate that understanding. They state that students should "be able to make discriminating choices in their consumption of media," and that they should "be able to identify and understand the use of various persuasive devices; examples might include: 1. oversimplification, 2, lighting effects, 3. background music." A fourth learning

outcome states that students should "be able to identify and understand the use of false logic in material heard or read [and that] examples might include: false analogy, red herring, 'straw man' argument" (14).

Critical and value judgements about the manipulative power of media and the relative merit or lack thereof of media artifacts frame the guide's attitudes toward the study of media. But the attention to "mass media" as an ideologically charged site does not in any way extend to the study of literature, which is the focus of five out of a total of fourteen goals.

The "Learning Outcomes" for goal 9, for example, state simply that "[b]y the end of the second [sic] school English program, students should...have read various types of novels and short stories...poetry...non-fiction...[and] drama," and that they should "be able to discuss, with some insight, literary works they have read"--indeed, that they should "have had the opportunity to read literature aloud" and "to memorize favorite lines or passages" (15). There is no suggestion that cultural politics may be at play in literature. Students are not warned that they should be aware that literature may function to "sell" particular sets of values, or to persuade them to see the world a certain way; nor is there any suggestion that they should be wary of its false logic or that they should learn to be discriminating in their consumption of literature.

What is concealed under the kinds of omissions noted above is the social function of assumptions about literature. Those assumptions are revealed when one examines the difference in the curriculum guide's characterization of the politics of reading literature and the politics of reading media. One of the learning outcomes listed under goal 9, the objective of which, as stated above, is to "encourage students to read and enjoy literature, past and present," is as follows: "By the end of

the secondary school English program, students should *desire to attend performances of plays, readings of poetry and prose, etc*" (15; emphasis added). Like the objective that students should have "an opportunity to memorize favourite lines or passages," or like those which state that students should "voluntarily read a broad variety of literature" and that they should "enjoy sharing with others their opinions, impressions, and feelings about their reading" (15), the assumptions underpinning these "Learning Outcomes" betray not "universal," or absolute, or even inherent values, but middle-class values. A statement that students should desire to attend movies, spectator sports events, watch television, do physical labour, or participate in some form of religious activity would be jarring in their obvious partisanship. It is only in treating the study of literature as a "disinterested 'aesthetic' or a positivist 'linguistic' knowledge" (to borrow once again from Morgan) (201) that the ideology embedded in the statements quoted above can remain hidden.

No rationale for the difference between the institutionalized legitimacy of literature and that of mass media is given. Silence conceals the arbitrariness of the hegemony accorded particular cultural forms. What one sees, however, in the assumptions is an assertion about the value of particular knowledges; but the conditions of intelligibility of those knowledges go unexamined, conditions which, as I have argued above, drawing on Bourdieu, depend on class, and possibly ethnic and other factors. If the *cultural capital* and *habitus* valued by English 12 curricula are class specific, then conditions of intelligibility of English 12 may well be class specific too.

The critique which I have offered above is complicated by the fact that neither the *English Literature 12 Curriculum Guide* nor the *Communications 11 and 12 Curriculum*

Guide, nor the *Secondary Guide, English 8-12 (Revised 1978)* can be taken out of a context shaped and defined by the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* As I suggested at the outset of this chapter, Language Arts English in British Columbia is a composite and sometimes discrepant mix of discourses, embodying multiple notions of nationness and subjectivity. Some of the potential contradictions of those discourses emerge when one attempts to overlay English literature 12, or Communications, or English 11-12 with the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.*, something that I think teachers of secondary Language Arts English have been expected to do since the publications of the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* in 1990. The marriage of any of the three "course" documents with the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* represents a difficult feat, given that the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* sets down integrated guidelines for Primary to 12, making no distinction between, for example, English Literature 12 and Communications 12. Thus, the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* registers directives in which Program Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes are apparently identical for courses which, as I have argued above, are profoundly disparate. Add to that the fact that (as an official at the Ministry of Education observed, off the record) the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* is overwhelming--there are so many learning outcomes and examples that the whole thing is inaccessible--and the result is that it is very difficult to state *anything* unequivocally about English studies in British Columbia. The *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* contains virtually every possible learning outcome that one might imagine. There are 213 "Sample Learning Outcomes" at the graduation level alone, not counting the several dozen more not listed as graduation level outcomes but which teachers at the graduation level are directed to teach at the level of "maintenance."

What is interesting for my purposes is the extent to which the *L.A.E.P-G C.G.* inscribes notions of nationness and subjectivity which are at odds with earlier curriculum

documents. Those inscriptions record, I think, traces of transgressive strategies and pluralities which are at work within the educational institution at all levels, from the Ministry of Education through the classroom.

There are numerous examples of such traces. Goal number 5, of the nine "Program Goals" identified by the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* for all Language Arts English courses, is "to develop and extend knowledge of self, the world, and our multicultural heritage through language, literature, and media" (23). It is under the rubric of goal 5 that objectives and learning outcomes address such issues as developing the student's "ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences among the variety of cultures in Canada" (23), an objective which simply would not be applicable under the terms of the current English Literature 12 course. One of the learning outcomes proposes that students identify and examine their own "attitudes, values, and motivations," an objective which, depending upon how it is implemented, could have profound implications for all the courses I have examined. Another outcome suggests that students recognize that "language helps to shape our view of the individual and our culture (for example: recognizing the continuation of racist stereotyping)" (66). The implications of such an objective for understanding not only race or gender stereotyping in language but notions of a "standard" language could, again, be profound. Other learning outcomes such as "identifying literature in its cultural context," or "showing awareness of Canada's diverse literary heritage" (70) could have the effect of breaking down the hegemony of particular cultural forms.

As well as literature being scrutinized more closely, there are sections in the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* in which "language," too, is treated as interested practice. The *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* proposes to "develop the student's ability to

analyze language as a mode of expression and as a means of influence" (25). The difference between the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* and the English 11 and 12 guide is that in the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* a critical response to language is to take place "within the context of language, literature, and media," not in media alone. In place of the valorization of the literary text as an unproblematic window on the world and the self, the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* suggests that students should learn to recognize "that text may perpetuate stereotypes" (51). Moreover, it suggests that students should develop an "understanding [of] the effects of various forms and techniques on the reader's or viewer's ideas, values, beliefs" (60). Thus, form loses some of the comfortable innocence it enjoyed earlier. While the *L.A.E.P-G.C.G.* does not abandon "standard" English as a core value, it nevertheless valorizes "dialects other than standard English," saying that students should come to be able to recognize other dialects as having "power, grace and precision" (46).

It cannot be claimed that the moves incorporated in the goals and objectives mentioned above overwhelm the discourses which underpin English Literature 12, English 12 and Communications 12 as they currently exist. Nevertheless the shifts I have described temper those discourses, suggesting that Peter Brooker is right when he says that while "[p]ower...is immanent in social, economic and knowledge relationships...it follows also that resistance is likewise immanent, fluid and ubiquitous in power relationships" (67-68). Moreover, the presence of incommensurable differences within documents that are meant to overlap suggests that the institution is no more unified or unitary than is the nation, that within the institution boundaries are crossed, erased, translated and transgressed, just as they are outside the institution, albeit sometimes with equally disappointing and insufficient results.

On the other hand, in the face of the traces of resistance I've mentioned, dominant discourses sometimes tend to look decidedly indomitable. Spurred by fears about unemployment and the economy, shifts in power are taking place within the education system, shifts in which English studies, as it has historically been fashioned, is being challenged for its erstwhile position of privilege. If one agrees with Morgan, Viswanathan, Doyle, and others, s/he might feel that the challenge is long overdue. If one feels optimistic about the counter-discourses which, as I have argued above, are also embedded in curricula, the challenges might seem disheartening. Regardless, I doubt that postcolonial critics will be particularly enamoured of the direction the institution of public education appears to be going. A draft overview of the Language Arts English K to 12 Curriculum which will be distributed in October 1995 for a planning year makes it clear that the forces that seem to be driving the Manitoba *Language and Technical Communication* curriculum are having an impact on "regular" English classes as well. The draft is dotted with phrases like "[a]n applied focus...technical/ transactional/'real world' modes of communication,... measurable performance, [and] 'mechanical correctness' of language use" (n.p.), some of which give the impression that "English classrooms...are gradually being transformed into "pre-employment centres," to use the words of Joan Thomas once again (C21). One of the "Training and Support Activities" for teachers listed in the February, 1995 *Update on Implementation* underscores Thomas's observation. The activity slated for July-August, 1995 is "Work Experience for Teachers (one to two week placements for teachers at business and labour sites)" (4).

But is this a case of "Business" taking over where the British left off? The five Ministry of Education documents published in September 1994 to describe the directions that curricula in British Columbia are taking maintain that, far

from representing imperialistic moves, values and interests which are embodied in education policy and program documents are expressions of widely held, popular beliefs and values about employment, the economy, and, by extension, "the Nation." The September 1994 *Report to Parents*, for example, states that the *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan* is the result of a consultation process that involved, among other things, the input gathered from 16,000 responses to the 1993 draft policies. The *Report* also states that the new K-12 skills plan, *Skills Now*, which will have an impact across curriculum, having dedicated \$19 million to "a new skills training plan to give students, workers and the unemployed real skills for the real world" (*The K-12 Skills Fund Overview*, 1), is the reflection of program initiatives which received "unanimous support" in the spring of 1994 when "17 Business/Labour/Education forums were held in communities around the province" (*Ministry News*, 3).

So what is the view that has led to such a wide consensus? In the recent documents published by the Ministry of Education, there is much to suggest that it is a view which strongly links education with job training and sees unemployment as the product of a failure of education. The September 1994 *Report to Parents*, for example, promises that the changes currently being undertaken in the education system will "include more workplace skills" and "increase respect for vocational and technical skills training." The *Report* also states that the *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan*, "which responds to changing public needs and expectations, ensures that our schools prepare young people for the world of work..." (n.p.). The "Introduction" to the *Plan* itself points to "the skills [needed] to succeed in the workplace," to the importance of skills which "[t]he new workplace... requires," and to the kind of graduates "[e]mployers expect." It mentions that "[o]ne of the major goals [of the Skills Now initiative] is to promote strong

relationships between schools and the business and labour communities."

While the *Plan* states--as mentioned earlier--that "[s]chools have always been highly effective in preparing young people who have academic interests," it expresses concern that "they have been less successful in providing a high-quality education for [young people] who enter the workplace or vocational or technical institutions directly from school." Thus, students are divided into two groups, the academically oriented and the non-academically oriented. The next sentence states that "[i]n today's competitive world, no society can afford the high social and economic costs of an unprepared or undereducated population" (i). That sentence links social and economic costs to unpreparedness and undereducation; but only two sentences earlier, we were told that schools have been highly effective in preparing academically oriented young people. It would seem that those unprepared or undereducated, who become a social and economic liability, are the non-academic group who have not been well prepared.

Michael Apple contends that "[t]he first thing to ask about an ideology is not what is false about it, but what is true. What are its connections to lived experience?" (27) In this case, the ideology that underpins the discourse on Education and the Marketplace taps into the lived experience of unemployment. Unemployment does indeed exact enormous social and economic costs. Moreover, there is no denying that many students who come out of the school system unprepared and undereducated end up unemployed. But at this point in time, many students who are well prepared and well educated end up unemployed too. What's more, those who come out of the school system unprepared and undereducated are not necessarily going to be better prepared or educated by shifting the focus of education from *their* needs to the needs of industry.

Displacement of the crises of unemployment and of the effects of an increasingly global economy onto individual skills deficits functions to make it possible to suppress the historical oppressions which have disenfranchised people of color, particular ethnic groups, working-class people, gays and lesbians, and women. Similarly, those displacements make it possible to sideline struggles which attempt to make irredeemable plurality rather than standardization and job training the concept that shapes curriculum. They justify colonizing particular groups yet again. They justify a rigidly prescriptive model that can reputedly deliver what "employers expect,"¹⁹ but which evades such hoary questions as why "poverty [is] associated with race and replicated in succeeding generations" (Barlow and Robertson, 9).

As Barlow and Robertson argue with unsettling cogency, the discourse on Education and the Marketplace has enormously powerful proponents. There is substantial evidence that this discourse, perhaps more than any other, is shaping curriculum policy as we prepare to enter the twenty-first century. On the other hand, I have characterized curriculum not as a unitary discourse, but as a discursive field--multiple, fluid and shifting. Its fluidity and multiplicity are visible not only in curriculum and policy documents but throughout the educational institution, from Ministries to classrooms. In Chapter 3, I will assess the extent to which multiple versions of nation and subjectivity exist in the context of resource materials currently approved for use in English 12, English Literature 12, and Curriculum 12 courses in British Columbia.

CHAPTER 3

The classroom is one site in which the power of selective representation is enacted by the very choice of texts. John Willinsky

In British Columbia's public schools during the past fifteen years, there appears to have been an almost explosive broadening of the learning resource base, by which I mean those resources which have received Ministry approval for use in schools. Because the policy of prescribing resources has been terminated, and because the policy of authorizing resources is being phased out in favor of a policy which merely recommends resources, the possibility now exists for a virtually unlimited variety of texts to be studied. Given such a radical change in policy, it could be argued that the ideology which has hitherto defined what British Columbian public school students should read, how they should read it, and why, is emptied of its hegemonic power. If one looks at the most recent learning resource catalogues, the mere increase in bulk suggests that the effect of these changes has been an unbarring of the resource selection floodgates.²⁰

In Chapter III, I examine the evolution of the resource policy as it has applied to Grade 11 and 12 English courses in British Columbia over the past half-century and more. Then I turn my attention to a detailed study of the specific resources which are widely in use at present in Grade 11 and 12 English classrooms. I consider the inclusions and exclusions of those selections in an attempt to read the politics of the canon as it currently exists in English classes at the graduation level. Finally, I look at the

changes that are currently underway, and I consider the implications of my findings for a more democratized English studies.

Prior to 1979, all resources were prescribed.²¹ Just how restrictive that structure was is revealed in a brief look at resource catalogues from the first half of this century. In 1932-33, for example, one of either *The Tempest* or *Macbeth*, plus one anthology called *Nineteenth Century Poetry* were the sole prescribed texts for English Literature Grade XII "Junior Matriculation and Normal Entrance" (3). The anthology, by the way, doubled as one of the three prescribed texts on the grade 11 course as well. That same year, the companion course to English Literature XII--English Composition XII--included one novel by either Eliot, Thackeray, or Dickens; one play by Drinkwater, Barrie, or Goldsmith; and one essay by Ruskin, Carlyle, or Addison.

The "Great Tradition" which shaped the 1932-33 list went unchallenged ten years later. The 1941-42 *Prescribed Text-books* catalogue lists *A Selection of English Poetry* (Grade XI), a *Treasury of English Verse* (Grade XII) (emphasis added), and, of course, the ubiquitous Shakespeare. Once again, there were very few texts listed. The very paucity of prescribed resources transmitted particular meanings about cultural values, linking "greatness" with "Englishness," and with males. Thus an already narrow vision was narrowed even further by mere scarcity. Writers included among such a rarefied elite must, by their very exclusiveness, have taken on an air of almost archetypal significance, making it possible to represent as universal, values which were merely common to a limited sampling of ideas.

By the late 60s, the lists had become somewhat longer, but it was not until 1979-80 that the new category of "authorized materials" appeared. Authorized titles are described by the *Catalogue of Learning Resources 1984-85* as

"suitable to supplement prescribed materials" (iv). Like prescribed resources, authorized resources were ordered by schools from the Ministry warehouse. In either case, schools continued to be required to purchase the specific resources identified by the Ministry of Education, and for some time, texts denoted as "literature" continued to be prescribed.

In contrast, changes incorporated in 1989 represent a radical shift. That year, another new category, "recommended," appeared. According to the 1991-92 catalogue, recommended resources "have the same status [as authorized resources] as regards to approval for use in schools. The difference rests in how schools obtain these materials" (*Catalogue of Learning Resources Primary to Graduation, 1991/92*, 1). In the case of recommended resources, individual schools make purchases directly from publishing houses, using "targeted learning resource funding" (Emperingham, 1), that is, money allocated to schools in the form of trust funds and dedicated to the purchase of resources.

But the difference does not rest solely, or even, I think, primarily, in how schools now obtain materials. The radical nature of the shift which the addition of the recommended category expanded on²² is that while particular resources which are subjected to the Ministry selection process receive official recommended status and, as a result, are widely used throughout the school system, individual schools are no longer obliged to make their selections from the recommended list. In the words of the 1991/92 catalogue, "[s]ince it is the curriculum which is 'prescribed' only curriculum guides are 'prescribed'" (1). Resources are not. In effect teachers or schools can now select *any* resource which they feel serves the needs of their students. Plurality rather than uniformity begins to characterize the very definition of resources. It becomes

possible to include in curricula the cultural production of all the cultural groups that make up British Columbia's classrooms.

That is not to suggest that teachers or schools can select resources willy-nilly without their choices being monitored or scrutinized. For local choices to be authorized, a formal evaluation process must be in place at the district level--a process which could be costly and would most assuredly be time consuming. Both of those factors have the potential to deter local initiatives, thereby again limiting the democratizing effect I have suggested above. However, as of July 1994, the district selection process receives funding support, as stated in the *Revised Guidelines--Learning Resource Funding* announced on July 25, 1994:

To support district and/or school planned activities designed to facilitate the evaluation and selection of Recommended or locally approved learning resources, an amount up to 5% of the annual Learning Resource allocation may be expended. (2)

These changes point to a political will which seems committed to dismantling the erstwhile enforced unisonance of a "nationalist pedagogy."

In the same way that local resource selections are required to be subjected to a process of evaluation, so are Ministry of Education selections. In fact, since the implementation of the recommended category of resources in 1989, a rigorous evaluation process has been in place at the Ministry level. That process assesses resources in the light of forty-nine criteria, several of which make untenable the kind of homogeneity that has shaped the canon in the past.

The criteria examined by the evaluation process are clustered under four headings: content, instructional design, technical design, and social considerations. In the sections designated content and social considerations,

articulated values about nationness which are substantially different from the unarticulated values historically embedded in English resources are formalized as criteria for resource selection. The articulation of those values offers the promise that courses supported by materials selected under this process will be very different from the ones which preceded it.

Resources are evaluated for "Gender equity/Role portrayal of sexes...References to belief systems... Political bias...Multiculturalism content...First Nations culture/roles" and "significant Canadian content" (*Print Evaluation Form*, 1-2). Those criteria alone, now formally embedded in *all* resource selection, offer evidence that resistance to the hegemony of dominant ideology has been at work within the institution and does effect change.

By the end of the seventies, the resource catalogue-- which, in the early 40s listed all resources for all grades in a matter of twelve pages--had grown to sixty-one pages. But in 1989-90, with the addition of the recommended category, dramatic increases began to occur. That year, the catalogue grew to 108 pages. By 1991-92, the Learning Resources Catalogue had 267 pages; by 1992-93, approximately 668.²³ In 1993 and 1994, the catalogue was split into two publications, the 1993 catalogue covering primary to grade 7, the 1994 one, grades 8 to 12, the two totalling at least 700-odd pages. It appears that "explosive" is the only term to describe the changes that have been taking place. The increase in bulk alone seems to announce that substantial expansion has occurred. However, in the area of Language Arts English, that bulk is misleading. I will detail precisely what has changed and what has not by surveying those resources prescribed and authorized as early as 1981 which continue, as of the most recent resource catalogue, the *Catalogue of Learning Resources Grades 8 to 12, 1994*, to be recommended for use in English classes at the grade 11 or

12 levels.

In 1981, following revisions to the *Secondary Guide English 8-12 (Revised 1978)*, part of the mandate of which was to "develop students' knowledge and understanding of Canadian Literature" (19), a "real" shift took place in prescribed resources at the grade 11 level. One set of novels was replaced by another with a new emphasis on Canadian writers where there had previously been none. Of the eight titles on the new list, four were written by Canadians: Laurence (two titles), Mitchell, and St. Pierre. Also, there were now two women writers, instead of one. However, all the writers were white, Anglo, and pretty much mainstream. There was not so much as a whisper of French. In 1981, in the Language Arts English program in British Columbia, Canadianness, as it was embedded in prescribed and authorized novels, could be understood to mean English-Canadianness.

A Bird in the House, *The Stone Angel*, *Who Has Seen the Wind*, *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse* and *Grass Beyond the Mountain* (which, while written by an American, Richard Hobson, has a Canadian setting) collectively present an image of Canadian nationness as white, either small town, agricultural or frontier/wilderness, and Anglo, notwithstanding W.O. Mitchell's brief encounter with the sad, outcast "China Kids" (140), Tang and Vooie, and their broken father, Old Wong; and Paul St. Pierre's representation of the Chilcotin natives, Ol Antoine and Gabriel Jimmyboy. All the characters in St. Pierre's *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse* prop up a great Canadian narrative wherein the white, self-sufficient, independent, non-violent (unless irresistibly provoked, and then only in defense of the weak) cowboy/frontiersman provides shelter and then rescue for the after-treaty Indian who is represented via the conflation of several characters as silent (except for the occasional highly poetic, naïve, and

digressive oratory), incomprehensible and uncomprehending, "natural," innocent, dependent, unreliable and confused. Both Ol Antoine and Gabriel Jimmyboy need translators--to interpret both language and white customs, which they seem unable to understand or to express. The protagonist, Smith, on the other hand, speaks their language and intuitively understands their behaviour. The novel, while it breaks with a canon based on the "Great [British] Tradition," in no way interferes with the image of a norm in which Canada is white, rural/frontier/wilderness, Anglo, and in this case, almost exclusively male. The voice represented here is not substantially different from the British-adventurer colonial voice.

Native Canadians are virtually erased from the British Columbian landscape in another novel that appears on the 1981 list, after the shift to a focus on Canadian literature. Hobson's *Grass Beyond the Mountain*, is a book described on its dust jacket as an "epic tale of discovery and exploration of North America's last great cattle frontier." Hobson, who dedicates his book to "the nine courageous horses who conquered the silent, lonely trails" (dust jacket), more or less obliterates any native presence, except to comment briefly that while "years before, massacres of white adventurers...had been the order of the day,...now, outside of an odd murder, the Chilcotins...were content to quarrel only among themselves" (22).

Hobson's is the story of the fearless, white rancher/adventurer (male), pushing into "virgin" country that is "unexplored--unknown" (24). The native people are reduced to "[a] horde of ragged women, children and wrinkled old men pick[ing] their way through the garbage" (23), or to nameless, apparently dependent families who, when the moose are scarce become "dangerously hungry" but unable to galvanize themselves into action, instead having to wait until white men come up with a plan, carry it out, and

provide salvation in the form of "about a ton and a half of meat and hides" (24).

Other than the representations mentioned above, the only non-white character that appears in novels included on the approved English 11 resource lists in the 1980s is a black American, Gordon who rescues, the main character, a blind, white girl named Selina, in Elizabeth Kata's novel *A Patch of Blue*. Kata's novel deals with abuse, poverty and racism and does indeed open a space for the inclusion of a character who is not white, not to mention for a discussion of "race" as a category. However, despite the Kata novel, which I feel represents an important break with tradition, none of the stories or novels approved in the early eighties were written by non-white authors. And even the Kata novel does not present black people as simply people living their various stories. They exist only in racialized terms, in their relationship to whites.

If one turns to prescribed and authorized short fiction or drama approved for English 11 in the early eighties, one finds more or less the same, bleak picture. The anthology *Tigers of the Snow* comprises works of Canadian fiction only, including, according to its introduction, stories by "Indians and Eskimos" (n.p.). In reality, of the eighteen stories in the collection, there is one story by George Clutesi, a story based on one of the fables of the Tse-Shant people of the West Coast (MacNeill and Sorestad, 141), and one, two-page story by Markoosie, an Inuit writer from Resolute Bay, whose narrative also deals with mythical characters. As well, *Tigers of the Snow* includes one story by Ethel Wilson and one by Phyllis Gotlieb, both of which feature female characters.

However, the rest of the stories in *Tigers of the Snow* are overwhelmingly white and male. The eighth story, "The Late Man," by Andreas Schroeder, seems aptly to characterize the place of women in most of the stories in this anthology.

Three references to women occur in Schroeder's story. They are, in their totality: "The sound of his prow on the pebbles, [sic] therefore grates in an unusually harsh way on the nerves of the woman waiting for him" (99); followed by "His wife said nothing" (102); and finally, "Obviously his wife had said nothing" (104).

"The Last Husky," by Farley Mowat, another of the stories in *Tigers of the Snow*, takes this exclusion to an extreme in a kind of "orientalizing" of the Inuit. In this, the only story in the text in which "modern," non-white individuals appear, Maktuk, an elderly Eskimo man gives his dog the name "Arnuk--The Woman--for she was wife and mother to him in the last winter of his years" (172). Knowing that he is dying, Maktuk gives his (pregnant) "Woman"--who is, by the way, the *only* female other than a fox to appear in the story--to his son. Human women are so pointedly excluded that the Eskimo camp is referred to as the "camp of men" (182), the reunion of the dog with the people is signalled by "the voices of men" (184) and remarkably, it is a man, the old man's son, who is said to "share[...] his own meagre rations equally between his aged father and his starving child who also bore the name that linked the three together" (171). The child's mother, if she's not dead, which I have a suspicion she is not, since a little later we are told that Maktuk "spoke to his family" (173), apparently kept all her rations for herself.

Add to the exclusions discussed above the strange homogeneity of content which occurs in the stories--a homogeneity that leaves one to ponder claims of "universal values" and "truths about the human condition." The first story contains a suicide, the second, fourteen murders and a suicide. In the third, an old man is dying of cancer. The fourth story describes the ridiculing of a child that leads to the death of his innocence. The fifth story contains a suicide, the sixth a firing squad (which, admittedly reneges

at the last minute), the seventh a hanging, and the eighth a mysterious suicidal kind of practice in which a man ages overnight and dies. While the theme of death is concentrated in the first eight stories more than it is in the remaining ten, death occurs with remarkable frequency in the remaining stories as well.

Tigers of the Snow most assuredly does not give an impression of Canadian literature as a site of the irredeemable plurality Homi Bhabha argues for. Rather, Canadian literature appears as a remarkably homogeneous site where differences from the male white norm are included, if at all, as curiosities. Moreover, even the "content" of literature is relatively homogenized here. A dominant cultural hierarchy is in no way challenged by such a text.

The marginalization of both women and all non-white people in *Tigers of the Snow* is underscored by visual representations in the form of twenty-three pages of photographic reproductions. Of the five photographs which open the book four are pictures of white men, the fifth a picture of children who are too distant to identify according to any individual traits. Of the eighteen remaining photographs in the book, only six include women, in one case so distantly as to be almost unidentifiable as such. One picture depicts a female figure which is so extremely out of focus that she appears as a ghost, her features distinguishable only as dark blobs; and one depicts an elderly, "primitive," Native couple beside a rough shack. In contrast, a whole range of white men are included in the photos, men of varying ages, demeanours, and lifestyles.

Tales of Mystery and Suspense, another text authorized for English 11 in the early eighties and later included on the recommended lists, maintains the same rigidly exclusionary notions, if not of Canadianness *per se*, then of what constitutes cultural value. The authors are all mainstream American and British: Poe, Bierce, Conan Doyle,

Agatha Christie, Mark Twain, Jack London, O. Henry, etc. with two notable exceptions: Dorothy Sayers and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The inclusion of "The Yellow Wallpaper" in the text seems like a significant break with attitudes and values which seemingly motivated so many of the other choices. However, the questions following the Gilman story undo any radical interpretation one might make of that story's presence. Below are, in whole or in part, three of the four questions that follow the story:

1. In the narrative itself the wallpaper is described for the reader. Draw it or something equally sinister.

3. When do you first realize that the narrator is going insane?...Do you believe that a physical environment can have that much effect on someone?

4. Write a brief diary-like account of someone slowly going insane....[Y]ou may choose to give the cause of the insanity....Think of things such as the constant drip of a faucet or the crawling of invisible insects. (Hipple, 53)

Those questions reinforce, rather than subvert, traditional notions of femininity that link it to insanity, irrationality, or Otherness. They in no way interrogate the institutions of marriage, motherhood, or "hysteria" which, I would argue, Gilman herself addresses.

Not only are most of the authors in *Tales of Mystery and Suspense* staunchly mainstream, all the characters are. There is not a single character in the whole text who is identifiable as not white and anglo.

The one other Grade 11 short story anthology I will examine is *Insight and Outlook: A Collection of Short Stories*. It is the last of the short fiction anthologies which were prescribed or recommended for English 11 during the eighties and which continue to be included in the most recent catalogue of resources.

Insight and Outlook is a wholly American text which locates itself on the site of a seminar of conscience. It

is stated in the introduction that the stories collected here "can be profitably discussed in class, and *if properly thought through*, lead to a deeper, more adult understanding of yourself and the world" (vii, emphasis added). In the notes that precede "One Friday Morning," by Langston Hughes, the only African-American writer included in the anthology, one gains some insight into one of the possible meanings of "properly." The notes state: "only if we understand the devastating effects of prejudice, only if we fully realize how un-American prejudice is can we fully devote ourselves to fighting it" (39). Such a statement suggests that a "proper" understanding is one in which racism is understood not as a structural component of a system, but rather as an anomaly within it, an anomaly which can be eradicated through raising people's consciousness. That position has considerable purchase for some proponents of multicultural education in Canada, as argued in Chapter I, but it is a position that is strongly opposed by many anti-racist educators.

Another belief or attitude embedded in *Insight and Outlook* is that a "proper" understanding of success is one which harnesses it to competitive individualism. Within that context, race (or gender, class, ethnicity) can be denied as having structural significance. One remarkable story, "The Chance of a Lifetime," implies that race need not hold a person back if she has enough backbone. The main character, Sirene Scott, is a young black woman, inspired by a college teacher, Mr. Brant, to enrol in college. Mr. Brant, who happens to be admitted to a hospital ward on which Sirene is a nurses' aide, refuses to be pushed around by petty rules or hamstrung by lack of initiative. Such irritants are represented as all that stand in Sirene's way. Subsequently, Sirene goes to the college to try to register, is rebuffed for one reason and another, is told Mr. Brant doesn't know her, sets out to find him, runs up against

several failed attempts, finally goes into a public cafeteria and shouts, "Excuse me, but can any of you tell me where Mr. Brant's office is?" (Culver, 96) As one might anticipate, everything works out happily ever after.

Sirene, the girl who has hitherto been painfully unable to speak to almost anyone, is released from the straight-jacket that some people might have thought had something to do with race, but in fact, as it turns out, had only to do with her own lack of assertiveness. I would suggest that the connotation of "proper" alluded to in the "Introduction" is one which identifies the American system (and possibly any system, Canadian included) as innocent of systemic or structural barriers to success that disadvantage particular individuals or groups in real and significant ways. Success or lack of it is a measure of individual initiative.

I do not wish to leave the impression that *Insight and Outlook* concentrates on people of color. As in the other anthologies discussed above, the majority of the stories in *Insight and Outlook* involve white, mainstream characters. Working class characters, who do get a fair amount of space, tend to be represented (arguably sympathetically) as victims, innocents, and "simple" people. The few non-white characters who appear include Li Chang, the genericized Chinese child, "an anonymous boy" whom an American pilot sees in "the great bazaar in Peiping" (Felson, 232) and, not knowing his name, dubs him Li Chang. Out of pity, the pilot decides to make the child "a millionaire" by giving him the equivalent of two hundred American dollars, a plan that never comes to fruition. The last lines of the story give us China as Other:

I don't know what you think about when the talk gets around to what's wrong with China. Maybe you think about the lack of communications, or ancestor worship, or politics and civil war, I think of little Li Chang. (238-39)

Here, then, as elsewhere in these anthologies, the non-

white, non-mainstream character is measured against or understood in terms of a white, Western, mainstream norm.

The anthology of drama approved for English 11 in the catalogues compiled in the eighties and included in the 1994 resource catalogue reveals similar values to those mentioned above; but in this text again, the works are subsumed under a sign of Canadianness. *Transitions I: Short Plays, A Source Book of Canadian Literature* is a collection of fifteen plays and fifteen abstracts in which the authors comment on the plays included in the book.

The "Foreword" touches on Quebecois theatre. It states that "the Quebec play is now receiving more attention throughout the country and will, one hopes, become a genuine part of our theatrical heritage" (n.p.). Moreover, in the "Foreword," Gratien Gelinas' *All the Children Were Dancing* is identified as a play "which dramatizes through the generational conflict in a family many of the cultural and political questions that Quebec and the rest of Canada face today." Pamela Hawthorn, who wrote the "Foreword," goes on to state that *All the Children Were Dancing* "is a play that should be seen and read by all Canadians" (n.p.). Ironically, in view of all those accolades, no Quebecois plays are included in the collection.

Despite the absence of Quebecois plays in the *Transitions I*, there are two plays by immigrant Canadians whose first languages are not English: Hrant Alianak and Rudi Dorn. There is also a play by Ukrainian Canadian, George Ryga. However, once again, there is an almost total homogeneity of characters. While it might be argued that characters in most of the plays could be any race or ethnicity (as, for example in Beverley Simons' "Prologue," where the three characters are identified simply as First Woman, Second Woman and Man), I had the sense that in fact they are white. The fact that not a single one of the illustrations which precede each play depicts a character

who isn't white suggests that my intuition is grounded in more than my own bias.

In 1990, six novel titles are added to the grade 11 list, all Canadian, four of them by women. With these novels, the cast of character types broadens, suggesting that values articulated in the new 1990 *Language Arts English Primary-Graduation Curriculum Guide* are reshaping the ideology embedded in the canon identified by the Resource Branch of the Ministry of Education. For example, one of the 1990 novels, *Children of the River*, by Linda Crew, depicts the struggles of a Cambodian refugee as she tries to reinvent herself in the U.S., struggling to remain a "good Cambodian girl" at home (dust jacket), all the while that she has fallen in love with a white, American boy at school. Another novel, *Blood Red Ochre*, by Kevin Major, intertwines the stories of Nancy, a native Canadian, and David, a non-native Newfoundland boy, with a narrative about the last days of the Beothuk. Nancy is exoticized from the beginning, and radically so by the end, although, admittedly, in the end the reader no longer knows whether the whole story is a figment of David's imagination or not. The main Beothuk character, also exoticized in both language and his mythic nature, is presented as noble, "too fearless" (23), archetypal. In another of the four new titles, Marilyn Halverson's *Nobody Said It Would be Easy*, Lance, the main character, who identifies himself at one point as "the big, dumb, half-breed kid" (106), is called Geronimo by his friend, Red, who, in turn, is called Paleface by Lance. While Lance's nativeness doesn't seem to have anything to do with the story, it appears that by the nineties, nativeness is in. That is, native characters are in. Native writers however are still out. By 1990, there are still no novels on the grade 11 lists written by Native Canadians, and only two short stories.

The "Introduction" to the curriculum guide, *Language*

Arts for Native Indian Students, 1982, includes an excerpt from "the Ministry of Education's Policy Statement on Indian Education (October 1979 working statement)." That statement recognizes that "native Indian children have not achieved their full potential within the public schools." But despite the stated intention to make "the goal of parity for native Indian children...a priority concern," and despite the commitment to address the lack of parity by "adequately reflect[ing] in the overall curriculum of public schools" "the culture, history and contemporary life" of Indian children"(emphasis added, 3), and despite the fact that the guide lists "Published Books and Materials Related to British Columbia Native Life and Culture" (99), "Native materials" remain compartmentalized in Native Programs, set apart from the norm of "regular" English. I am reminded of Donna Bennett's comment that Canada has "effectively institutionalized marginality," an action which Bennett says "is always associated with postcolonialism" (194). The notion of nativeness as an integral component of a culturally diverse and heterogeneous literature simply is not there.

A detailed study of the 1994 *Catalogue of Learning Resources* shows that the texts I have discussed above remain the core textual materials recommended for use in English 11 in 1995. Recent Ministry of Education policy documents, which I will discuss below, articulate gender and ethnicity as key concerns for curricula. New titles like *Blood Red Ochre*, *Children of the River*, and *Nobody Said It Would be Easy* reveal that those concerns are beginning to have an impact on resource selection. But the task is far from complete. In 1995, the books which continue to be the main resources used in grade 11 and 12 Language Arts English classrooms continue to portray a Canada emptied of many of its citizens.

The findings of Carl Leggo of the University of British

Columbia's Department of Language Education lend support to my own in the area of gender inequity. The following chart, using data collected by Leggo, shows a breakdown of Language Arts English materials from grade eight to twelve.

Table 1: Comparisons of textual resources authorized and recommended for use in Language Arts English courses, grades 8 to 12, by British Columbia's Ministry of Education. Breakdown according to gender of author.

| | Raw total | By women | | By men | | Anonymous | | Joint authors | |
|---------------|-----------|----------|-----|--------|-----|-----------|----|---------------|-----|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Short stories | 529 | 142 | 27% | 374 | 71% | 13 | 2% | | |
| Novels | 103 | 36 | 35% | 66 | 64% | | | 1 | 1% |
| Plays | 84 | 13 | 15% | 71 | 85% | | | | |
| Non-fiction | 366 | 67 | 18% | 186 | 51% | 2 | 1% | 111 | 30% |
| Poetry | 1498 | 236 | 16% | 1161 | 77% | | | 101 | 7% |

Leggo states that

not only are women underrepresented as authors in the literature used in secondary schools in British Columbia, but women are typically represented as subservient, submissive, supportive, sexy, sensitive, self-conscious, security-seeking, shallow, soft-hearted sources of succour. (14)

He goes on to say that "[f]requently women have no role at all--they are totally invisible" (15). As I have argued above, the same can be said of people of color.

I now turn briefly to the grade 12 Language Arts English lists. In 1982, one year after the grade 11 resources were updated, the grade 12 novel list was revised, growing from five titles to sixteen. In the new list, one finds three Canadian authors, and four women: Emily Brontë, Cassie Brown, Agnes Keith, and Josephine Tey. But again, there is a relative uniformity of mainstream, "Western" voices represented in the sampling. Male authors include Camus, Carroll, Hemingway (two titles), Le Carré, MacLennan, Orwell, Pasternak, Remarque, Ross, St. Exupery, Steinbeck. There are no non-Europeans, no people of color, no native authors represented.

In 1990, Rudy Wiebe's *The Mad Trapper* and Don Sawyer's *Where the Rivers Meet* are added to the grade 12 novel list. With the inclusion of the Wiebe novel, more native characters make it into the curriculum in the persons of William Nersyoo and others. With the inclusion of Sawyer's novel about Nancy Antoine, a Shuswap First Nations High School student, another Native Canadian character appears. In both cases, Native Canadian characters are once again represented by white authors; however, Sawyer is a white author who apparently worked closely with Shuswap elder Mary Thomas. According to the "Acknowledgements," "[m]uch of the spiritual content of the book is based on her experience and rich knowledge of Shuwap [sic] traditions" (n.p.).

Despite the exceptions represented by Sawyer's and Wiebe's novels, representations of voices from the margins continue to be few and far between in the officially approved novels in 1990-91. In fact, except for Nancy Antoine and the characters in *The Mad Trapper*, not a single non-white character appears in the Grade 12 novels included on the 1991-92 list and subsequently incorporated into the 1994 list.

A brief look at the Grade 12 anthologies shows that Canadianness as a value shapes currently approved selections of literature (however narrowly Canadianness might be interpreted). Laurence Perrine's *Story and Structure*, which first appeared as a prescribed resource for English 12 in 1967-68, was replaced with the Canadian edition in 1981 and continues to be on the 1994 recommended list. The stories in *Story and Structure, Canadian Editions* are split about equally between Canadian, American, and British authors. Ten of the forty-one stories are written by women, hardly an equal balance, but certainly an improvement over the anthologies discussed above. Female characters like Paul Gallico's "crippled" Essie, whose "soul [is] imprisoned in the enchanted doll[s] she makes," while she herself is

"d[ying] for lack of love" (268), are balanced against the less stereotyped girls and women who appear in Margaret Laurence's "Horses of the Night," in Alice Munro's "Boys and Girls," Ethel Wilson's "Haply, the Soul of My Grandmother," and Carson McCullers' "A Domestic Dilemma." As well as the stories by women, *Story and Structure* contains a story in translation by Quebecois writer, Roch Carrier; a story about Jewish characters by Jewish American author, Philip Roth; and "That Evening Sun," a story about the unequal and tragic relations between blacks and whites in Faulkner's south. Once again, however, the characters are overwhelmingly white, and mainstream.

The anthology, *Sunlight and Shadows*, edited by James A. MacNeill and Glen A. Sorestad, the same editors who produced *Tigers of the Snow*, contains seven Canadian stories out of twenty-one. Three of those are by women. All the writers are white; and overwhelmingly, so are the characters, with the exception of the Crow people who form the supporting cast for "A Man Called Horse," and "the black boy" who is one of the group taking refuge under a wagon in "Out of the Rain." Coincidentally, death is, once again, a common theme, as it was in *Tigers of the Snow*.

Canadian content in *Inventing the Future*, an anthology of science fiction and non-fiction that deals with "scientific" speculation, closely parallels that of *Sunlight and Shadows*. Of the twenty-one contributors to *Inventing the Future*, eight are Canadian. And as was the case with *Sunlight and Shadows*, three contributors are women. Titles like "Who Can Replace a Man?" "The Impossible Man," "The Old Man Lay Down," "Metropolis 2025--Man's Future Environment," and "Cloning: One Hundred Einsteins or One Hundred Hitlers?" show the by-now-expected androcentric viewpoint.

Designs for Reading: Short Stories contains twenty stories, of which three are by women, none by Canadians, and none by writers of color. A "disinterested 'aesthetic'"

(Morgan, 201) focus on "The Reader's Art" (*Designs*, 39)--by which is meant such short story elements as character, theme, symbols, structure, mood, and tone--keeps this text "miraculously uncontaminated by the grime of 'isms'," to use the words of Robert Morgan (201). The cultural politics of class, race, and gender are buried in the alleged neutrality of such considerations as "the significance of the story as a whole--its comment on the human situation (40), and "universal" themes (247).

I have been arguing that not a lot has changed over the last few years. Yet, I pointed out that in 1992-93 the learning resources catalogue doubled in size. Where the increase is dramatic is in media and software. The audio-visual resources for Language Arts English, grades 11 and 12, 1989-90, comprised a total of four videotaped Shakespearean plays. In contrast, in 1994, thirty-nine titles, classified as optical media, software, video or audio resources, are recommended by the catalogue. Those titles include video resources like the following, which appear to represent an altered concept of the canon: *It's Only Rock and Roll*; *Call My People Home*; *The Elders are Watching*; *The Pool--Reflections of the Japanese-Canadian Internment*. However, the majority of additions deviate very little from "tried and true" notions of canonicity. Added to the list are: *Afterglow: A Tribute to Robert Frost* (video), *The Bible as Literature, Part I* (Video), *Classic American Short Stories Series* (Audio-cassette), *George Orwell (Famous Author Series)* (Video), *A Great Cry at Dawn (Early English Aloud and Alive Series)* (Video), *The Last Dreamer: Sir Laurens Van de Post (Man Alive)* (Video), *My Fair Lady* (Video), etc.

Textually, there are far fewer additions. But of the additions which do exist, some of them represent a marked change of directions. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* has been added to the list, both as text and audio-cassette,

something of a breakthrough in that Dickinson's work is included here under a separate title, not merely as an entry in an anthology. But there are other breakthroughs which are more significant. In fact, I would suggest that *Home and Homeland: The Canadian Immigrant Experience*, is a signal text. Recommended as appropriate for grades 9 to 12, this anthology, which first appeared in the 1994 catalogue, is a collection of poetry and short prose written by immigrants to Canada. Both the diverse backgrounds of the writers and the subject matter of the literature itself represent a radical change in the *de facto* canon. The text is not merely "an advertisement for Canada, the promised land." The stories and poems express attempts "to reconcile ambition and nostalgia, hope and regret, their futures with their pasts" ("Introduction," n.p.). By way of criticism, it can certainly be argued that this text ethnifies the immigrant, presenting only stereotypically immigrant experiences. On the other hand, here, in a "literary text" is the nation as narration, spoken in the voices of some of the many Canadians who have hitherto been silenced or erased.

Not only its content, but the very text itself offers evidence that the educational institution, like the nation, is not monolithic. Within as without, strategies are in place to subvert what has been characterized as the imperialism of English studies. Evidence of that claim resides in the fact that *Home and Homeland*, edited by Canadian immigrants, Peter Fanning and Maggie Goh, drew on "Reviewing Consultants" from within Canadian school systems: Lynn Archer, Surrey School District, B.C.; Bil Chinn, Edmonton Public Schools, Alberta; Tom Rossiter, Roman Catholic School Board of St. John's, Newfoundland; Ken Roy, Etobicoke Board of Education, Ontario. The "discursive... suppression of the heterogeneity of the subject[s] in question" (61) which, according to Chandra Mohanty,

characterizes colonization, is here undermined from within the boundaries of the institution.

Other texts which break through homogenized notions of nationness are *My Left Foot*, by Christie Brown; *Looking at Women: Literary Images; Points of Departure*, Jane Brown (ed); *Raking Zen Furrows*, Inge Israel; and *Paradise Café and Other Stories*, by Martha Brooks. The last of these, a collection of short stories recommended for grades 10 to 12, is mostly about love. The main characters, girls and boys, young women and young men, are portrayed in ways that, in many cases, transgress traditional gender boundaries. Boys, in this book, are capable of tears; girls, capable of demanding explanations. In neither case are the characters reduced or dismissed as a result of those expressions. As well, numerous women appear in *Paradise Café*, women of a variety of ages, some of them old. Taken together, they embody dignity, a sense of humour, generosity of spirit, wisdom. Many of them are central to the stories, and they are allowed the full range of humanity that, in so many of the other anthologies, is available only to male characters.

While the characters in *Paradise Café* do not represent the range of people that make up Canada's population, there are a handful of characters who are not mainstream. In the story "In Orbit," Native young people are represented in ways that refuse either stereotype or archetype,²⁴ even though the narrative deals with the "Native" experience of being "ship[ped] off the reserve" to spend time at a partially converted T.B. sanatorium where Native kids were sent "for some months of upgrading and what they called 'social skills'" (50). Similarly, in "The Crystal Stars Have Just Begun to Shine," Deirdre, whose "dad is Jamaican," and her boyfriend Brad, who "is half Japanese" (101), try to start a romance between Rita, the check-out person at the grocery store, and Deirdre's father. The characters are not exoticized, racialized, or othered.

In contrast, the novel *My Love, My Love or The Peasant Girl*, by Rosa Guy, another new listing recommended for grades 10 to 12 in 1994, is a Cinderella story turned sour. It tells the tale of Désirée, a black, Antillean girl, also known as Ti Moune or the orphan. She falls in love with the son of one of the "grands hommes" of the island, a Creole who makes her over, Pygmalion-like. Thanks to the help of a magic red comb, Désirée is transformed from the primitive innocent, one of the "gentle people" (2) whose lives are governed by superstition, into a pseudo-princess, complete with frothy white gown. Finally she is presented at the ball, only to be displaced in the affections of her lover by a fair-skinned Creole woman. In the end, she is expelled from the palace and trampled to death. The book, whose theme is "the curse of the Antilles, created by the enslavement of our fathers," concludes that "[w]e peasants hate them [the Creoles] because they reject our blackness. They hate us because we remind them of theirs" (99).

My Love, My Love is a novel in which all the characters are people of color, not, apparently, mere foils for white characters. The main character is a girl. The author, Rosa Guy, is a woman. On those counts, it could be argued that this novel is "politically correct." Yet, it is steeped in the dichotomous oppositions of primitive versus civilized, innocent versus knowing (and guilty), naïve versus sophisticated, superstitious versus rational, binary oppositions that define a centre and a margin, an inside and an outside. The Cinderella story, while it is interrogated on one level, nonetheless is the model on which the novel proceeds.

As I've stated above, the textual additions to the 1994 list are scant. Most of the novels and anthologies are the same ones that were on resource lists a decade ago. It is only because the form of the catalogue has changed so dramatically that one has the impression that an equally

dramatic increase in approved resources has occurred. On the other hand, some of the new selections--books like *Home and Homeland* and *Paradise Café*--provide compelling evidence not only that the political will exists to resist naturalizing a severely circumscribed cultural tradition as universal but that, as a result, some significant changes have begun to take place.

All new resources, including *My Love, My Love*, *Home and Homeland* and *Paradise Café*, are now subjected to the evaluation process developed by the Ministry. As a result, lists published since 1989 *should* look radically different from those that preceded them. Part of the reason that, as yet, they do not is a problem of catch-up. When the recommended category was implemented in 1989, those resources which had previously been prescribed or authorized were included in the new lists without first being subjected to the new evaluation process. According to an official of the Resources Selection Branch of the Ministry of Education, the hold-overs from pre-1989 lists (which include almost all of the Language Arts English graduation level course materials and most of the material I have examined above) will be rolled over into the recommended category in March of 1995, subjected to the evaluation process, and included or discarded from recommended lists accordingly.

That said, it should be reiterated that regardless of what resources are approved by the Ministry, schools need no longer teach any of those texts. As stated earlier, there is no longer a prescribed canon for Language Arts English in public schools in British Columbia. Teachers and schools can now select *any* resources which they feel serve the needs of their students. Articles in *UPDATE*, the journal of the British Columbia English Teachers' Association, suggest that the effect of that policy change is a further expansion of the range of resources being used in schools.

The Fall and Winter 1994 issues of *UPDATE*, for example,

contain a two-part article which outlines a unit developed for English 12 classes. Based on a structural-functionalist model²⁵, the objective of the unit is "to expose students to a diversity of culture through literature" because "[i]f the students begin to understand that the external, the color of our skin may differ, but the internal, how we think and feel may be very much the same, they may come to appreciate, not merely tolerate, people of many cultures" (24). The unit involves the study of six novels, all of which deal with discrimination or racism. Three of the novels can be found in the 1994 *Catalogue of Learning Resources* as well as in earlier catalogues. *Where the Rivers Meet*, a story about a Native Canadian girl, is recommended for English 12. *Children of the River*, a novel discussed earlier in this chapter, is recommended for English 11. *Monsoon Country*, the story of a Thai boy in Thailand, is recommended for English 10. The other three novels are locally approved resources. *The Singing Bowls* tells the story of a British boy of South Asian heritage; *Waiting for the Rain* is a story about apartheid; and *Rice Without Rain* is another story set in Thailand involving a young woman struggling with "radical ideas for change" (28). The fact that this unit is published in *UPDATE*, a publication that would be widely available to English teachers in the province, insures that this broader notion of "universal values" will make its way into some classrooms.

The Summer 1994 issue of *UPDATE* outlines a unit "dealing with gender issues, sex stereotyping, and media depictions of men and woman." The unit focuses on video resources which are radically different from, for example, traditional film interpretations of Shakespeare plays. Among them are: *Images of Women*, *Women in the 40's and 50's* [sic], *Still Killing Us Softly*, *After the Montreal Massacre*, and *The Masculine Mystique*. None of those resources appear

in the *Catalogue of Learning Resources*, 1994. That is, all of them are locally approved. Textual resources outlined in the article also reveal a move away from provincially approved resources. Teacher Steve Naylor incorporated current issues of *Cosmopolitan*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *Chatelaine* into the lessons, as well as old magazines, "mainly the *Saturday Evening Post*" (11), drawing on a strategy that admittedly teachers in classrooms have been using for years, a strategy of drawing on cultural forms and voices which have not traditionally been authorized as literary. Naylor describes how this focus on the ideology of the text spilled over into his class's analyses of *Hamlet*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and Cavalier poetry, suggesting that a change in focus from what Henry Giroux called "a closed, singular narrative that simply has to be revered and memorized" (1991, xiv), to a study of the ideology embedded in the text makes it possible to study a range of literature without imposing colonizing values yet again.

Those kinds of articles, plus the yearly summaries in *UPDATE* of the trends and issues reported by the American NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), lend credence to arguments which suggest that moles (and indeed decision makers) are constantly at work within institutions, attempting, and sometimes succeeding, at undermining the reproduction of dominant ideology. The 1994, NCTE "Trends and Issues in English Instruction," "supports...teacher and student collaboration on curriculum, text selection, and evaluation" as well as "student construction of personal canons." It "urges adequate resources for delivering a multicultural literature classroom" and states that "literature should be defined beyond traditional genres" to include "non-traditional texts and interdisciplinary discourse" (7). The report recognizes the "cultural, economic, and political basis of our reading and our students' reading"(8) and "believes that the politics of

curriculum should be raised to a more conscious level." At the same time, it recognizes the results of increased consciousness, such as "the implementation of curricula and methodologies that accommodate pluralism." It "supports use of literary texts that reflect cultural and gender diversity at all grade levels" (9). While the NCTE is an American organization, many of the values it espouses are reflected in articles published in *UPDATE*, suggesting, that English studies is no longer a monolith, ignorant of its complicity in the reproduction of dominant relations of power.

Before drawing to a close, however, there is one more complication that I must add to this equation. The Resource Branch of the Ministry of Education is currently in the process of developing Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) to accompany the new curricula which are scheduled to be implemented in 1995 and 1996. Intended to provide teachers with more support than they normally receive when they are presented with new programs, the IRPs will have five components: "Learning Outcomes," which are statements taken from the curriculum guides; "Instructional Strategies," which include "techniques, activities and methods of teaching, ...the course's main focus or theme, relevant background information"; "Assessment Strategies," "Recommended Learning Resources" linked as much as possible to learning outcomes; and "Evaluation Guidelines" which will include, among other things, "student work samples that clearly reflect the learning outcomes and identified criteria" (*Update on Implementation*, 2). One wonders if such a structured, integrated package will have the effect of, once again, establishing a *de facto* canon that, while different, is not necessarily less reified or therefore less colonizing than the old one.

To conclude, I return briefly to three of the recently added resources: *Home and Homeland*, *Paradise Café*, and *My*

Love, My Love. All three texts have passed muster since the new evaluation process has been in place. All three resources will presumably appear in the new IRPs. Clearly, I would contend that *My Love, My Love* has the potential to perpetuate some colonizing attitudes. On the other hand, individuals whose politics are different from my own might have criticisms of *Paradise Café* or *Home and Homeland*. In this chapter, I have been highly critical of *Tigers of the Snow*, yet I would argue that there are some compelling stories in that anthology--stories which could be defended as worthy of study for a number of reasons. And even those that I take exception to could form the basis for a study that subverts dominant power relations by deconstructing the assumptions, authorizations, and exclusions embedded in the stories--as the Steve Naylor article in *UPDATE* demonstrates. My point is that I think it is misguided to assume that the problem of the politics of English studies can be solved merely by establishing a more politically correct canon--whatever that may mean. While concepts of what constitutes "good literature" need to be acknowledged to be ideological categories and as such need to be very carefully scrutinized for the differential power relations they support; and while great care needs to be taken in choosing the texts that are to be used in school (if for no other reason than the fact that making choices is unavoidable and had therefore better be recognized as carrying implied values); nevertheless, no canon can escape the problem of its own exclusions. It seems to me that what is necessary in order that English studies deliver itself of its colonizing impulse is that it shift from the study of a particular body of literature to the study of the ideology of all texts and canons. Unless and until English studies at all levels becomes radically self-conscious, it must continue to perpetuate some form of "nationalist pedagogy."

CHAPTER 4

At the outset of my thesis, I proposed to explore the ideological subtext of the discipline of Language Arts English in secondary schools in British Columbia as that subtext is revealed in notions of nationness and subjectivity. The fourth and final chapter of my thesis represents a shift--not in the focus of my study, but in the procedure. This chapter consists of an analysis of empirical research. My intent in carrying out an empirical study was to attempt to observe how ideology embedded in curricula and resources is translated into classroom practice.

Principals, counsellors, teachers, program directors and students were approached in a total of seven schools in three districts; however, the bulk of the research was carried out in three large high schools and a fourth, smaller school. Having received ethical approval from the school districts involved and the University of Victoria,²⁶ permission to contact teachers and students and to begin the process of data collection was requested from principals. Once approval had been received and teachers had agreed to participate, parental approval was obtained for those students who wished to participate in interviews (see Appendix).

Data was gathered from one hundred and three student questionnaires and twenty-four audio-taped interviews, thirteen of which were conducted with students and eleven with teachers. Of the individuals interviewed, six of the teachers were men, five were women, one was a Canadian of color, one was a person who is physically challenged. Teachers ranged in age and experience from a second-year

teacher in his early twenties to a senior teacher in the final year before retirement. Of the students, nine were girls and four were boys. Two were Canadians of color. The reason that significantly fewer boys than with girls are represented in the interviews was twofold. First, I interviewed only students who volunteered to be interviewed; it happened that more girls than boys made that choice. Second, some of the boys who agreed to interviews failed to keep the appointments we made.

Participation by both teachers and students was completely voluntary, and the anonymity of all participants was assured. It was made clear that participants could choose not to answer any or all of the questions on either the questionnaire or in the interviews without explanation.

All interviews were transcribed. Quotations used in Chapter 4 are accurate renderings from those transcriptions with the exception that verbal tics, such as "uh" or "like" have been removed, and minor grammatical adjustments have been made for the sake of clarity, but only where they in no way alter the spirit of the original statements. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of all participants.

As I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3, documents issued by the Ministry of Education of British Columbia, and Ministry-approved resource materials express a plurality of values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions about nationness and subjectivity as they shape education in general, including specifically Language Arts English education. It is my hypothesis that those values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions are further qualified when they enter English classrooms, where teachers and students conform to, expand upon, or resist the ideology of English studies as it is officially envisioned. Thus I expected the plural and sometimes contradictory notions of nation and subjectivity which exist in official documents to be multiplied when curriculum policy is translated into practice.

That anticipation was to some degree borne out by my findings although I discovered somewhat more homogeneity than I expected. In part, that homogeneity reflected "common sense"²⁷ notions which see "the Great Tradition"²⁸ not as a construct based on particular and interested values, but as a self-evident continuity--a disinterested compilation of those works which are inherently great and which express "universal values" which purportedly transcend the particular. That view was summed up by a teacher I will call Richard:

The sensibilities that are enunciated in the finest literatures...are ones which transcend sexual bias and are about universal suffrage, are about dignity for everybody.... [T]he literatures...which have withstood the test of time almost universally seem to be ones which are not gender biased one way or the other.

That vision of "fine literature" tends to engender courses which conform to traditional notions of English studies, in which "Englishness" as a value is unproblematicized and, as a result, remains undisturbed.

A second assumption that led to support for the continued "Englishness" of English courses is one that is closely related to the first. It is expressed in terms of "common sense" notions about affirmative action. This assumption maintains that a selection process which privileges ethnicity, gender or class is ideologically driven, while one which privileges a category unproblematically understood as excellence (or literary merit) is not. Such an analysis assumes that excellence is measured exclusive of factors other than excellence and that works which are meritorious transcend the self-interest of particular groups. According to this reasoning, to privilege gender, race, ethnicity or class would be to use ideologically charged, rather than ideologically innocent, criteria in the selection process. By extension, such a practice would undermine the aesthetic value of the canon by

the selection of inferior work.

The third assumption that underlies a certain homogeneity of attitudes seems to be shaped by an adherence among some individuals to the idea that it would be impossible to incorporate into English studies all the voices that are excluded by it, so there is no point in trying. I will speak more of that in the discussion that follows.

What was most striking about my findings, however, was that it was often, though not exclusively, "border crossers"²⁹--those individuals, both students and teachers, who in one way or another inhabit the border zones of nation and who therefore, daily, negotiate more than one cultural space--who were conscious of, vocal about, and in some cases actively engaged in confronting the cultural politics of English studies. Among the individuals I spoke to, those teachers whom I observed to be most energetically engaged in subverting homogenizing tendencies in curricula were women teachers who were uncomfortable with the paucity of female writers and characters, young teachers who were relatively new to the system, or teachers who for one reason or another were outside the mainstream, by virtue of such factors as ethnicity or a physical challenge.

Elaine, an experienced, senior teacher, who teaches English 12 and English Literature 12, is one such teacher. Judging from the comments her students made on questionnaires, she includes in her curricula a relatively wider range of voices than students noted in most other courses.

"I think that English is very much too heavily geared toward the study of British literature," she says. "I think that it has led to some rather unhealthy attitudes among students, especially the Shakespeare cultism that exists among our intellectual elite in this country." Elaine attempts to counter-balance those attitudes using a variety

of strategies. For one, she "allows students to make their own selections, at least occasionally." She has developed innovative assignments, one of which involves "tak[ing] a look at banned books.... [W]e have a whole collection of those." In addition, over the years she has actively lobbied for change:

[W]e've made recommendations through various committees, we worked on various panels of teachers who've structured curriculum material, made selections, and...I worked for a while with McGraw Hill doing some editing on a book that was used in Ontario--but never here. [Laughter] And whenever we have an opportunity, we add things to our own pool of literature....We certainly talk about it enough at our department meetings.

On the other hand, Elaine expresses frustration when she says: "I don't know how to get through the bureaucracy to do it. I've done everything I could myself." Her comments about budgets highlight some of the barriers to change: "We have very little cash," she says. "Our English department budget is usually around a thousand to fifteen-hundred dollars a year and we have 800 students, so you can figure that out."

Janice, who registered considerable frustration with what she sees as sexism in the system, teaches Communications. "I've been in this school for thirteen years," she says. "We [used to have] four, now [we have] three administrators and...we've had no female administrators." Janice makes a concerted effort to expose "the double standard for women," and she is concerned about exclusions of ethnicity, class and race as well. She says, for example, "we have Native counsellors...but they mainly deal with native students....We don't have any [Native] administrators." Janice talks about trying to find "stories from several countries....I do a video on the Hopi people" she says. "[W]e do short little plays from *Scholastic-Scope Magazine*. One that we've just completed was on a Guatamalan

woman who was dealing with the class struggle there."

Individuals like Elaine and Janice, both of whom experience some degree of marginality by virtue of gender, actively resist exclusionary cultural politics which they perceive to be present in curricula and resources.

As well as observing individuals like Elaine and Janice, who were vocal about what they saw as a colonizing impulse in English studies, I observed other individuals caught in a tension similar to the one that I found expressed in official documents. Bill, a Communications teacher whose specialization is not English, but who is occasionally assigned Communications classes to make up a full teaching load, complained that

Canada's supposed to be a multicultural country...but in all the subjects, all we do is teach about European inventors, European scientists....Social studies teachers don't know of, for example, Cheng Ho, the Chinese explorer that did virtually the same thing as Vasco da Gama--before him!...Never heard of him throughout my whole school career.

But despite Bill's criticism of those kinds of exclusions, he felt that "English is a little bit of a special case." He said "the language did come from England, [so] it's unavoidable, it's inevitable that the majority of good literature is written by people from England. That can't be helped and that's reality." He went on to say that "work that's not good shouldn't be legislated just because it's written by a native Canadian." He said, "[i]f it's something that's good and of good quality, let's get it; but let's not get it just because it happens to be written by an Inuit....[W]e're teaching English...so it has to be articulate."

At the opposite end of the spectrum from teachers like Elaine and Janice were teachers who argued against change, particularly in English Literature 12. One male teacher, Ted, a department head who teaches both English 12 and

English Literature 12, said of English Literature 12,

I know it's white, Anglo-Saxon, male-dominated literature, but that's what it is. I mean, you can't rewrite history....If they [the Ministry of Education] want to make a world literature course then that's something entirely different. I don't see that there needs to be an apology for the content of a course.

Similarly, Richard expressed a certain defensiveness about the possibility of changes that would lead to a multicultural curriculum on the grounds that "the reality of Western Canadian experience is not a multicultural experience." He based that conclusion on "never, ever [having been] in a position to speak French with anybody."

French, in Richard's analysis, is, like other minority voices, situated outside of the centre which is exclusively English. Significantly, perhaps, those teachers who argued most strongly for the continuation of "Englishness" at the centre of English studies were not "border crossers," at least, not in any way that I was privy to.

Jeff argued that Canada is, "in some people's point of view, an English culture.... He added that "these works [in English Literature 12]...have been regarded as touchstone works for literature in general"; and, he said, "[There is also] the whole issue around who really is an expert in African literature etcetera...[and] the whole argument around erosion of what has been...our culture and constantly giving away, and at what point does that end?"

Arguments such as those put forward by Ted, Richard and Jeff privilege a view of "our culture" and "our literary history," which seems to be based in large measure on a homogenized and exclusive view of "us." Moreover, concerns about the "erosion of...our culture and constantly giving away" imply a felt experience that "our" culture is threatened. An us/them dichotomy is an element of this picture of "nation."

However, it would be false to imply that the

homogenizing impulse that shapes those arguments is altogether secure. Some teachers pointed to changes in curricula which have already come about as a result of resistances to gender and race bias. Ted, who had defended the white, Anglo-Saxon, male dominated bias of Literature 12, criticized the "secondary or tertiary role[s]" that female characters in stories and novels used in English classes tend to fill, and described "the way we sort of address that issue." In his school an option has been developed as one component of the English 11 course. That option is called "Women in Literature." He said that the teacher who offers that section "will attract one class." The course "takes a little sprinkling [of women's writing] from different ages--[some] highlights....It does make the point." Ted went on to say that the class may include "a couple, two or three [boys], but mostly girls."

Elaine described a similarly compartmentalized course in the school in which she teaches. That course "is called 'Native Studies.'" When I asked her who takes the course, Elaine replied, "[a]lmost exclusively Native students." She went on to say that in English classes, "as far as our course material [by Native writers or about Native experiences], it's pretty thin so far."

It is my concern that such compartmentalization helps to sustain an epistemology which adheres to a centre versus margin model. Certain knowledges are characterized as curiosities or as special interest group knowledges which are, by implication, not important or true or disinterested or universal enough to be included in standard courses. The danger is that such courses prop up the notion that some knowledges are ideologically situated while others are not.

Some teachers who did not resist the curriculum on the basis of ethnic, racial, class or gender bias nevertheless did voice resistance to some of the values taught in English 12 and Communications. It was Ted who voiced strong concern

about an atmosphere of pessimism among students and about students who are "lost, and...will remain lost unless someone grabs [them]." One of the things Ted felt is urgently needed is that English courses present material that has a "positive theme." In his view, "English 11 and 12...is all negative....[We] do really want to see some other materials, other than death, doom and destruction and we're really anxious about that in this atmosphere."

Ted's concern was reiterated by Bill, who said, we have too much death and destruction....75% of the books used in English end with death. I think that may be a function of the fact that maybe when a lot of this was being chosen it was back in a brighter time....When things are good you can talk about things being bad.

Ted also mentioned contemporaneity as a concern. "You cannot give kids names of hockey players of twenty-five years ago...you've got to have contemporary material.... It's badly lacking in English 12," he said. Neither Ted nor Bill, however, extended those critiques to issues of race or ethnicity.

Resistance to the curriculum among students was more difficult to observe than it was among teachers; and where resistance did appear to exist among students, I found it difficult to interpret. One reason for that difficulty is that certain segments of the student population--those who appear to be most resistant, a characteristic which seems to coincide with being least well-served by the school system--were for the most part unwilling to talk to me. While I had no difficulty in making arrangements to interview English Literature 12 and English 12 students, I was able to arrange an interview with only one Communications student, and that, only after several attempts. I spoke to a small group of Communications students informally, but they were not willing to talk to me in a formal setting. Moreover, a number of them were unwilling to respond on the questionnaire either. The difficulty in finding

Communications students willing to talk to me was exaggerated by the fact that Communications classes are smaller than English or English Literature classes, and there are fewer of them. In fact, some schools do not offer Communications courses at all (see Endnote 13). Thus, my findings in some ways reinscribe some of the silences which I have criticized in official documents.

Despite the gaps in my research, I found some patterns in student responses. The questionnaire query that asked, "Do you see your own cultural heritage reflected in Communications or English or English Literature courses?" prompted many responses which sounded something like these:

I am a white Canadian so I see a lot of my heritage.

My cultural heritage is British so in the English Literature classes I do see it reflected since they are about England's people, places and events.

Yes, but this is merely because I am of mainly European heritage.

There were, however, many responses like these, as well:

I do in that I have English ancestry...[b]ut I also have Native Indian ancestry and there is not a lot of focus on it.

My heritage--1/2 English, 1/2 Lithuanian Jew. I see the English part of my heritage completely covered by school in all respects from the sciences to literature but there has been very minimal Jewish/Yiddish culture, or any other culture put into the literature course.

I'm still waiting to read of English-East-Indian, Chinese, Native Canadians' work.

Being a Chinese-Canadian, I see very little of my culture in the English courses.

I never and probably will never see any of my Hebrew or Morocco in this country.

Being Dutch-Canadian, the only course I remember taking with the slightest reflection of my heritage is Western Civilization.

I am half Indian and some English teachers make racist comments.

Chinese Filipino...I don't think so.

Eastern European (Slovakian). No, I don't see it reflected.

Not really. I'm East Indian in origin.
I come from Taiwan, and I don't see any reflected.
I have never seen any reference to my cultural
heritage (Swiss German).

Many students simply wrote, "No," or "Nothing," although, I should point out that there was one student who wrote:

"Well, last year we read 'The Joy Luck Club' which was more or less a Chinese intensive novel, if you know what I mean."

Questions about the presence of French-Canadian or Québécois literature elicited an almost unanimous "I can't remember any," or "Not at all," from students and teachers alike--even from teachers such as Barbara, who had been involved in an innovative, integrated curriculum program that linked French, English and Social Studies, and who is optimistic about change. Barbara teaches both French and English, and feels that the unified, uniform, homogenized voice that has, for years, characterized the kind of literature approved for use in English classrooms "is breaking down...may be breaking down fairly significantly." In my discussion with Barbara, I indicated that my own examination of curricula and resources led me to conclude that French-Canadianness is a loud, and rather odd silence in curricula--given Canada's history. "That is what I perceive," Barbara agreed. Her perception was reiterated by all the teachers I spoke with, and was summed up by Paul, a second year teacher, teaching English 12 in an independent school setting: "I see very little that's French and nothing that's French Canadian."

What struck me in these particular discussions with students and teachers was the extent to which their views resonated with postcolonial theoretical concepts of nations as *Imagined Communities* (Anderson, title). The selective remembering and forgetting process whereby the history of English literature is remembered as encompassing only the writing of white males, and only those white males who

happened to live in England, radically shapes the English Literature 12 course (although, as I stated in Chapter 2, that is about to change). That kind of selective remembering and forgetting has strongly affected the selection of resources in other courses as well. Moreover, it leaves a phantasmatic legacy³⁰ for both teachers and students. While students repeatedly offered the standard description of Canada as "a very mixed society," "a multicultural country," "a land of many cultures," "a diversity of people," "a great mosaic...of different races and cultures," they also repeatedly said such things as "the literature that is on the course [English Literature 12], does a fairly good job of describing Canada's literary history." Such statements suggest that at least some students see no contradiction between the views that, on the one hand, Canada's population is diverse, and on the other, the literary history of that population is monolithic.

For example, one English Literature 12 student said, "I would choose literature that is on the course because we have a British history." Another said that "most of the writings in English 12 or Lit. 12 have been English, but their culture is similar to Canada's." Remarkably, an English 11 student who identified her or himself as "Chinese-Filipino," and who said that her/his cultural heritage is not reflected in English courses also stated that "[s]ince we are a part of Britain, we have the blood or 'identity' of the English."

Foucauldian notions of "dividing practices"³¹ leapt to mind as I listened to a young Canadian-born Chinese woman. "I usually refer to myself as C.B.C.," she said, but "I'm almost completely...I have a lot of Caucasian values." She added, almost as an aside, "I also have Chinese traditional background, but that's just a thing I enjoy." Although she marginalized her Chinese heritage as a matter of course in her own understanding of herself, she insisted, "there's

really nothing that I think I need to fit into because...the range [of Canadian cultural values] is so large." A "dividing practice" which splits this young woman's Canadianness from her Chineseness, thereby dividing her inside herself, appears to shape the formation of her subjectivity.

In tandem with fragmented and sometimes conflicting notions of Canadian subjectivity came numerous statements along the lines of the following:

I have no heritage. (English 11 student)

What is my culture? (Communications 12 student)

I don't really know my heritage. (I am without a story.) (English 12 student)

I don't see myself as having a cultural heritage. (English 12 student)

Canadian identity? Ha! What a question. (English Literature 12 student)

Thus, while students voiced a loosely official notion that defines Canada as "an irredeemably plural modern space" (Bhabha, 300), many of them saw that plurality as an absence of identity.

That is not to say that students unanimously accepted the exclusions in curricula and resources. In fact, many of them complained that the literature studied in English courses is drawn from too narrow a base. For example, English 12 and English Literature students made statements that they should study "English, French and Nu-uan-nulth," or that they should look at "other literature that isn't influenced by European backgrounds." One English Literature 12 student complained, "We're not in England...our country speaks many, many languages. Let's see literature from foreign lands." Another Literature 12 student, when asked what kind of literature s/he would choose, given the power to do so, printed in inch high, upper case letters that gouged the paper: "INTERNATIONAL."

On the question of gender bias, students were even more vocal. That is, female students were more vocal. In an

interview in which two young women participated, I asked whether or not they saw any gender bias in the literature they study. Rachel answered, "it's in everything.... Everything...even when they hand out a sheet, it's always he this, he this. It's never she."

The other young woman, Kerri, said "we're somewhat insulted when we're called he."

"Somewhat!" interrupted Rachel. "I'm incredibly insulted."

Another young woman, Leah, who was studying English Literature 12, complained "there's one woman in the entire English lit. textbook."³² Leah went on to say:

I'm really sensitive to that because I've just started noticing how weak the female characters in all the stories that we read are...and it's always men writing about women too--if there are even female characters. But even if they start out strong, they always back down to the will of the man, and it just reinforces everything that you've already learned about how women are supposed to act and you think that school should be getting over that, trying to change that.

On questionnaires, when asked what literature they would choose to study if they were in a position to do the choosing, one student who identified herself as a female wrote:

In English we studied perhaps 2 or 3 short stories written by women; in Eng. Lit., a course that stretches from 449 to the end of the 20th century, the only women studied are a little bit of *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen, 1 poem by Emily Brontë, a poem by Christine Rosetti, a small selection from George Eliot and two of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnets. It is so very politically correct to speak of women's rights and equal rights, but we do not change curriculum[sic] to reflect this; we continue to use the same textbooks, written by men, that were used twenty years ago."

Two students, neither of whom identified their gender, wrote:

I would appreciate that many more woman poets and authors were included in our material. It's time to update!

More female authors, contemporary female authors. I assume that women do play some part in a Canadian identity.

Clearly, not all students accepted as "natural" homogenized notions of literary heritage implicit in officially approved and widely used resource material, particularly when those notions homogenized the category "author" as a male category. Indeed, many students were very critical of exclusivity based on gender. But as stated above, it was mostly individuals whom I have called "border crossers" that were conscious of, vocal about, and in some cases actively engaged in confronting the cultural politics of English studies.

Male students whom I interviewed did not see a gender bias in courses. For example, a male student who was in the same class as Leah and, therefore, studying the same material, stated that "this year we've read a pretty good blend...I don't think there's a bias" (Paul).

I noted earlier that my observations suggest that those students who are well-served by the school system do not, for the most part, resist its values and assumptions even though they criticize them. English 12 and Literature 12 students whom I interviewed frequently stated that even though the literature they study is narrow in its vision, they wouldn't change it. Paul is a case in point. He is an English Literature 12 student in a special program for gifted students. "[H]alf of my family is Russian Jewish and half my family is English," he said. "[W]hen you see literature that reflects your background it sort of gives you a sense of belonging...And there's not a lot of that, I don't think." But when asked whether that narrowness should change, Paul said, "if they tried so hard to have one of every culture in the course, like a Hindi Canadian and a... it could get really diverse and you might be compromising the literature...you'd be choosing things on the basis of

ethnicity and not on the basis of their literary merit." Even though Paul does not see any of his Russian Jewish heritage reflected in the English courses he studies, half of his cultural identity is strongly represented. Moreover, as a gifted student, he is among the elite of the student population, and therefore, it can be assumed, he is very well served in many ways. While he is articulate and perceptive in his criticism, as an individual who is not directly excluded, he is prepared to defend the status quo.

Unlike Paul, Nadine's heritage is British and, as such, she says, it is thoroughly represented in English courses. Nadine is an intelligent, well-spoken, young woman and a very successful student, who sees herself as being well-served by the school system. Ironically, she feels that way not so much because she values, for its own sake, the *cultural capital* which the school system enables her to accumulate, but because the school system confers on her the *mark* of one who has accumulated *cultural capital*.³³ Asked about the benefits she receives from her English courses, Nadine said, "Lit. 12 on transcripts shows people at universities and scholarship committees that I am interested in subjects other than the core basics, that I enjoy learning intense amounts, as Lit. covers almost 2000 years of literature and tradition, and this requires will power and perseverance if you want to succeed."

Nadine thinks it is important to see one's own values and culture reflected in what one does, but she waffles regarding changes, stating that it would be "very difficult to do, because we have so many people from so many different places--like how are you going to find examples and role models for everyone?" Similarly, while she is very vocal about the fact that women are underrepresented in English courses, she says, "if we tried to do the same for women, [resurrect the writings of women and include them in courses in the same numbers that men are included] it's so against

what society has always done that it would be kind of really almost pointless...because it won't change us in the long run."

Nadine's perceptions and conclusions are echoed by Marcus, a private school student, enrolled in English 11. Marcus, whose cultural heritage is partly Eastern European, stated that he does not see that part of his heritage reflected in English courses. But he is non-committal about the need for change. "Perhaps there should be [more variety] and perhaps not," he said, "because it could be quite difficult just because there are so many."

Another student studying Literature 12 in a gifted program was Philip. He said that the exclusions in curricula "don't really make a difference to [him]...as a person whose heritage is the most predominant," his heritage being "Scottish and English." Nevertheless, he stated that he "feel[s] it has too much influence in our Canadian literature." Yet, despite his high level of awareness, Philip said English Literature shouldn't change. "[I]f you're studying English literature," he said, "it doesn't make sense to put a French book in there. You're studying English literature and you signed up for the course for that, so I don't think it's biased."

In contrast, Inder, an English 12 student who is a Canadian of color, was much more vocal about the need to change curricula by opening up a space for a variety of voices to be heard. An articulate young man, Inder seemed to have done a lot of thinking about questions of voice and silencing. "I think we must bring in other poets, other people that will bring kind of like a comparison," he said. "[I]m sure in some of the Native poetry and Native novels you'll find evidence of oppression, and...in the African-American...you know it's everywhere, and...we only discuss the European aspect of it." Inder talked about Rap music as a site where oppression is expressed. "[I]t's there for a

reason," he said, "...because the violence has been experienced, so now the violence is going to be experienced and put upon somebody else because of their anger.... It's pointing out the wrongdoer, and...it's making their voice heard and it's making people aware."

Similarly, a handful of students in Communications classes expressed strong criticism of courses or, through their behaviours, expressed what might be understood to be resistance. Several teachers noted students who take Communications are often students who are marginalized in some way. For example, Elaine noted that "we have a large Native student population and I'd say they are probably over-represented in Communications 12." Bill commented that a higher percentage of Communications students than of other Language Arts English students actively resist what they are being taught. "[T]here are more kids in Communications with an attitude problem," Bill says. As well as students who simply have difficulty with English, that is, who "can't write grammatically correct English, can't read a book," Communications classes draw students who "are lazy or just aren't interested in putting the effort into doing regular English." On that score, a number of teachers concurred. In Ted's words, "A lot of them have no business being in there," but they simply "are not willing to put the time into school." Bill added, the result for the teacher is that "you stand a greater chance of running into that kind of thing [rudeness and anger]" in Communications classes. There is "more grief in trying to teach Communications," he said. Comments like those of Bill and Ted point to more resistance on the part of at least some Communications students than one finds among English 12 or Literature 12 students.

There is some indication that students of color resist English Literature 12 by voting with their feet though that hypothesis would have to be tested much further to be

substantiated. Jeff told me that "we've not attracted a lot of peoples of color to English Lit. 12, maybe because of the nature of what it covers." When I asked if students of color comprised a significant percentage of the school population, he replied, "Yes, between oriental and Indo-Canadian, yes."

Based on questions on Provincial Communications 12 exams, I speculated in Chapter 2 that perhaps Communications courses were aimed primarily at E.S.L. students. Contrary to those speculations, teachers unanimously maintained that such is not, typically, the case. Rather, their statements were in agreement with that of Elaine, who said, "[m]ost of our English second language students end up taking English 12, because they ordinarily are highly motivated and usually very good in science and math and so they struggle with English 12 rather than opting for Communications."

My textual analysis in Chapter 2, which claimed that Communications courses and, to a certain extent, Communications students are seen as deviant or deficient as measured against a norm of English courses/students and against an ideal of English Literature courses/students, is revealed to hold true for classroom practice as well. Ted, who is Department head and teaches primarily English 12, stated that students in Communications classes are "at the bottom level of the taxonomy. Those kids tend not to be critical thinkers. They tend not to make inferences and judgements. They tend not to synthesize information." Janice, who teaches both English and Communications, said that the difference between the two groups of students is "night and day." Communications students "don't know the difference between a 'g' and a 'q.' They don't understand the number of loops on an 'm' and an 'n.'"

Marnie, the only Communications student who was willing to be interviewed told me that she had "been tested in stuff

and gone through all that psychology and all that stuff, and...I was put back a grade because my comprehension was really bad in grade four...and so I've had problems with that ever since." She said, "I don't know where I would be right now if I wasn't involved with other things in the school--like I'm on so many committees and stuff--because I would be so discouraged by the system." Interestingly, Marnie is no longer discouraged, though she told me that it is in the last year or two that she has turned her life around, prior to which time she was "[i]nto drugs and alcohol because I was really discouraged...I was failing. I kept on failing." She went on to say, "I didn't fit. I don't know why." I asked her if she didn't fit in with other students or if it was the material on courses that she was unable to grasp. She said it was the latter. "I really had problems. A lot of it. I mean I was getting Ds and Es and failing."

Marnie is now involved in "CTAV, Committed Together Against Violence.... So we're going to a conference pretty soon, and talking to students....I've been to many conferences. I've done conflict resolution and gender equity." She had also acted as an advocate on behalf of other students who have "been very discouraged." Interestingly, in classes that have nothing whatsoever to do with that project, she reports that she is now getting Bs and As.

Marnie's analysis of her problems seemed to me to echo Bourdieu's analyses of *cultural habitus* and the costs to the child who comes to school with the wrong version. The dissatisfactions of other Communications students also seemed to express disjunctions between their cultural values, as expressed in *cultural habitus* and *cultural capital*, and those of the classroom: "I would prefer some topics of relevant issues, such as teenage pregnancy, relationship relating to teens with each other, family,

authority figures, Aids, etc," a Communications 12 student wrote. A Communications 11 student wrote, "I like Stephen King books and don't like reading other stuff that sucks."

Some Communications students expressed bitterness at what appeared to be the devaluing of their *cultural capital*: "I do sign language at home because my mom is deaf and no one will accept it as a second language," said one.³⁴ Others responded to a question that asked, "What benefits do you feel that you receive from this course?" by saying, "Nothing at all," "I learn nothing," and "Donuts."

Some of the behaviour of the Communications students, as described by teachers, might be interpreted as rejecting, resistant or subversive. It might also be interpreted as defeated. Marnie interprets it as the effects of discouragement. What her discouragement caused her to reject, for a number of years, was herself. Sporadic attendance is one of the characteristics that all the teachers of Communications remarked on. Unwillingness (or inability) to read or respond to texts was another. Those behaviours suggest a rejection of something that is being offered or imposed.

I would like to close by relating an anecdote--an experience and discussion I had with a woman I will call Mary. Mary is director of a Native Edu-centre on Vancouver Island. She is a white woman, married to a Native Canadian man. She has lived in a Native community for twenty-six years, has children and grandchildren. Mary is a border crosser.

I spent a day at the Edu-centre in Mary's office, the door of which opened onto the kindergarten where Mary's daughter, a young woman in her early twenties, taught seven children. The door of the office was open during most of my visit, providing me with the opportunity to observe and eaves-drop. At one point, the young woman, I will call her Ruth, was talking to the children about different ways that

animals move. She pointed to a picture of a frog and asked, "What do frogs do?" From my vantage point, I was unable to see the students, but I could clearly hear what went on in the room. The children made no audible response. Ruth then said that frogs hop and asked the children if any of them would like to hop like a frog. Since I have occasionally observed white, middle-class kindergartens, my eyebrows shot up at the prospect of the bedlam I feared was imminent. But none ensued. Ruth asked, "Should I hop like a frog?" Apparently the children indicated that she should, because she did. After that, she said, "Maybe some of you will want to try hopping like a frog when we go outside to play or after school."

I talked to Mary about that incident. She said, "As a white person, everything you do is foreign to these children--the way you move your mouth so fast when you speak, the way you stand, the way you instruct as opposed to demonstrate, the way you push yourself forward. The Indian way," she said, "is that until you are absolutely confident that you can do it right, you do not cut into a fish. The white person's way is: if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. These two ways of being are in direct opposition to each other."

Mary described years of watching little kids, bright eyed and eager, ready to begin school, and a few years later--little people with heads hung low, bereft of confidence. She said, "we decided we had to do something. We had to give them some of the survival tools they need to cope in a white school system." Ruth is trying to teach the children in her kindergarten to push themselves forward, because not to do so is often interpreted in white schools as failure--failure to comprehend, failure of initiative, failure of intellect, failure to try, just plain failure. Mary sees some success in the kinds of initiative she and her daughter and others are taking at the Edu-centre. The

initiatives are having a positive impact--but that does not make this an entirely happy story.

Mary related another incident to me about a Native girl whom I will call Loretta. Loretta entered an essay in a competition sponsored by a number of different bands. The prize was a trip to Disneyland. Needless to say, there was a sea of entries. The competition was judged by elders and chiefs.

I digress for a moment to suggest the significance of the fact that the competition was judged by elders and chiefs. A poster tacked to the wall in the Edu-centre reads:

In the knowledge of my People, the Elders and the children are as one in the Circle of Life. The Elders are the holders of knowledge, the Teachers of our culture, songs, heritage and survival. The children, our future, represent the carriers of this knowledge that never grows old. (*Tradition and Education*)

The elders and chiefs--"the holders of knowledge, the Teachers of [her] culture"--selected Loretta's entry as the winner. As Mary put it, the most respected adults among Loretta's own people declared that Loretta was a fine, even a gifted writer. According to their judgement, she expressed herself in ways that were powerful and effective. But unfortunately, this is not an entirely happy story either. Loretta now goes to the local white high school. In English, she gets Cs and Ds. "She may have been recognized by her own people as a writer," said Mary, "but at the school, she's dog do-do." What the school system's evaluation of Loretta's ability implies about the same system's evaluation of the ability of her elders to judge is certainly not lost on Mary. I doubt that it is lost on Loretta either.

The elders of the band, faced with the reality of the terrible costs to their children of entering a white school system without a white, middle-class *cultural habitus*, have developed strategies to inculcate in their children that

cultural habitus. But they, and Loretta, the children in the kindergarten, Mary and her daughter Ruth, all are caught in a trap. If a white, middle-class *cultural habitus* were to be merely one among many, that the children in Ruth's kindergarten class, Loretta, and indeed all British Columbian children, would be introduced to in schools, the experience of learning about it would surely be an educationally enhancing one. But since it will be the norm against which other *cultural habitus* and values, including their own, are measured--and invariably found wanting--I am convinced that Loretta, the children in the kindergarten and a lot of other Canadian children are still in for a rough ride.

I return to the place where I began, to Francis Mulhern's question, "*What* should we read, *how* should we read it, and *why*?" I remain convinced that unexamined, unproblematized assumptions about the "we" settle in advance "[i]ssues of selection, procedure, and purpose" (Mulhern, 250). I find heartening the fact that official documents record a variety of sometimes contradictory notions of nation, among them a commitment to a more plural vision of nationness. Yet I am persuaded that a narrowly defined "we" continues to enjoy considerable privilege and protection in Language Arts English courses.

Where Language Arts English fails to interrogate its own cultural politics, it participates in a process that buttresses the power of a dominant centre. It does so by adding the force of its own authority to those power relations that naturalize the right of particular groups, defined by race, class, ethnicity and gender, to disseminate their own ideology, misrecognized as universal or transcendent value.³⁵ While I think it is a gross overestimation of the power of Language Arts English to suggest that it is responsible for or has the ability to singlehandedly change a system which privileges certain

groups and oppresses others, it is undeniably one of a complex of factors which imbricate race, ethnicity, gender, and class in a pattern of cultural politics. As such, when it asks "*What* should we read, *how* should we read it, and *why*," it had best begin to ask, first and foremost, whom do we mean by "we"?

ENDNOTES

1. Current changes in program requirements introduce a slight increase in high school English requirements. *The Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan* states that under the new guidelines, Language Arts English in B.C. at the grade 11 and 12 levels, that is, the Graduation Program, will comprise slightly more than 28% of the course work classified under the heading "Foundation Studies." "Foundation Studies" is defined as "prescribed provincial courses that meet the requirements of a common core of learning" (*The Plan*, 5).

2. Said talks about a post-World War II world, whereas Doyle refers to the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century; nevertheless, Said's characterization of "'the colonized'" as a category which "has since expanded considerably to include women, subjugated and oppressed classes, national minorities, even marginalized or incorporated academic subspecialties" (1989, 207) has currency for understanding the process that Doyle analyses.

3. Louis Althusser stated that "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals to subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (162-63). Althusser argues that an individual recognizes her or himself as subject in ideology, but that recognition is in fact a misrecognition because the individual assumes that s/he is the author of the ideology in which s/he recognizes (or apparently constructs) herself. Chris Weedon elucidates Althusser's hypothesis, adding that through the process of interpellation, individuals "become the agents of specific ideologies, sustaining particular material social relations" (31).

4. See "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus," in Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 1971. Althusser argues that all "ideological state apparatuses," such as schools, the family, churches, etc. contribute to the reproduction of capitalist relations.

5. My own position draws heavily on that of Stephen Slemon. Slemon argues for the inclusion of the "Second World"--that is, the inclusion of white Canada, Australia, New Zealand and southern Africa--in the "*field* of the post-colonial." (For his usage of the term "Second World," Slemon draws on Alan Lawson, who dubbed the "neither/nor territory of white settler-colonial writing...the 'Second-World'") (Slemon, 1990, 30).

See Ella Shohat for an example of an oppositional position. She states that the expansion of the term postcolonial to include the production of "Second World" writings "level[s] with an easy stroke of the 'post,'" "[t]he critical differences between the [sic] Europe's genocidal oppression of Aborigines in Australia, indigenous peoples of the Americas and Afro-diasporic communities, and Europe's domination of European elites in the colonies" (Shohat, 102).

6. First Nations peoples have come to be named the "Fourth World" by postcolonial theorists. As Stephen Slemon points out, in debates about "what *authentic* forms of post-colonial textual resistance" will look like, there exists a critical position which implies that the "authentic" post-colonial comprehends Third- or Fourth-World cultures only, including "First-Nation constituencies dispersed within First-World terrain" (Slemon, 1990, 32), and excluding Second-World writings. Slemon argues against that simple binarism on the grounds that the ambiguity that marks the terrain of the "Second World" embodies the quintessential gesture of the postcolonial. The appropriateness of postcolonial theories to the study of Second-World texts is, in part then, that for Second-World cultures there is no (even partial) escape from the residue of colonialism. There is no (even idealized) "before," and no possible "cauterized after." Paradoxically, the "post" refuses ever to leave the "colonial" behind.

Roxanna Ng states that the identification of First Nations peoples as a group is, "the result of the colonization process which destroyed, reorganized, fragmented and homogenized the myriad tribal groups across the continent" (204). That is a process which is still going on and in which numerous Second-World constituencies are both complicit and resistant, a fact that makes the study of the Second-World text essential to postcolonial studies.

7. Moodley maintains that discourses on multiculturalism neutralize both immigrant and Native minorities "to the status of 'equal groups'," thereby concealing historical difference and mystifying current, differential relations of power.

8. Antonio Gramsci theorised that "[e]very social group...creates..., organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function" (5). Gramsci distinguishes between "organic" intellectuals and "traditional" intellectuals who, erroneously "put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group." He argues that in contrast to traditional intellectuals whose mode of being is founded on their experience of (a misrecognized sense of) autonomy and on "an *esprit de corps*" (7), both of which apparently dis/affiliate them from any particular class, "[t]he mode of being of the new intellectual," who is organically bound to a particular class, exists "in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator" (10).

The Gramscian concept of the "organic intellectual" as *interested* intellectual, neither autonomous nor independent, incorporating both theory and practice, brings to mind Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's dialogue, "Intellectuals and Power." Says Foucault: "The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse'" (207-208). Foucault goes on to say: "In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice."

Deleuze adds that "[e]ither reforms are designed by people who claim to be representative, who make a profession of speaking for others...or

they arise from the complaints and demands of those concerned. This latter instance is no longer a reform but a revolutionary action that questions (expressing the full force of its partiality) the totality of power and the hierarchy that maintains it" (208-09).

I am convinced that both reforms "designed by people who claim to be representative," and revolutionary actions, brought about by "organic intellectuals," operate simultaneously and most probably oppositionally within the education system, resulting in a heterogeneity of voices and actions. To borrow from Deleuze again: "Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts" (206).

9. The authors included on the 1972 course outline for English Literature 12 are as follows:

- the "single gifted poet...a Christianized West Saxon" who wrote "Beowulf" "sometime during the seventh or eighth century" (*Adventures in English Literature*, 48).

- Geoffrey Chaucer
- Sir Thomas Malory
- Christopher Marlowe
- Sir Walter Raleigh
- Shakespeare
- Ben Jonson
- Francis Bacon
- George Wither
- Robert Herrick
- John Suckling
- Richard Lovelace
- John Donne
- John Milton
- Samuel Pepys
- John Dryden
- Alexander Pope
- Jonathan Swift
- Joseph Addison
- James Boswell
- Oliver Goldsmith or Richard Sheridan
- Thomas Gray
- William Blake
- Robert Burns
- William Wordsworth
- Samuel Coleridge
- Lord Byron
- Percy Shelley
- John Keats
- Alfred Tennyson
- Robert Browning
- Matthew Arnold
- Thomas Hardy
- George Bernard Shaw

There are also three selections from "The English Bible."

10. The authors on the 1992-93 list of literary selections for English Literature 12 differ from those on the 1972 list by the deletion of Sir Thomas Malory, and the addition of Sir Thomas Wyatt, Andrew Marvell, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, Emily Brontë, and Jane Austin.

11. It should be noted that the September, 1994 DRAFT form of the *Prescribed Curriculum and Integrated Resource Package* includes examples of several course outline options. While many of the authors and selections from the old course reappear in these examples, there are a number of additions as well, particularly in the 20th century listings. Among the additions are:

T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Earle Birney, Stephen Leacock, Andreas Schroeder, Ray Bradbury, Robert Graves, Mahatma Ghandi, George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway, Raymond Carver, Northrop Frye, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Gaskell, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Carol Shields, Katherine Mansfield, Doris Lessing, Virginia Woolf, George Eliot, Ursula Le Guin and Christina Rossetti.

12. Some schools indicate that students who achieve less than a specified grade in English 10 or English 11 may be assigned to Communications 11 and Communications 12 respectively. See for example, the course outlines of Parkland Secondary School and Mount Douglas Secondary School.

13. Some schools do not offer Communications courses at all. St. Andrew's Regional High School, Glenlyon-Norfolk School and St. Michael's University School are cases in point. All three of those schools are independent schools. In a fourth independent school, St. Margaret's, Communications 11 is offered but not Communications 12.

14. Matthew Arnold argued that poetry or "great" literature is of itself uplifting and ennobling. He claimed that it has the ability "to nourish us in growth towards perfection" (441). Indeed he said that "[m]ore and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us" (502). Thus, he saw the study of poetry (or "great" literature) to be an end in itself. So high is the full benefit of poetry, "the benefit of clearly feeling and of deeply enjoying the really excellent, the truly classic in poetry, that we do well...to set it fixedly before our minds as our object in studying poets and poetry..." (506). Elsewhere Arnold stated: "if [a poet's] work belongs to the class of the very best...then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which is not the same high character. This is what is salutary, this is what is formative; this the the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry" (505).

15. Wilson L. Taylor, "generally credited with being the 'father' of the cloze procedure" (Jongsma, 6), offers the following circular definition of cloze procedure: Cloze refers to "a method of intercepting a message from a transmitter (writer or speaker), mutilating its language patterns by deleting parts, and so administering it to 'receivers' (readers and listeners) that their attempts to make the patterns whole again

potentially yield a considerable number of cloze units" (Taylor, 416). In colloquial language, cloze questions are those in which selected words are omitted from sentences. Students being tested are expected to supply the missing words, based on such considerations as context, logic, or sentence structure. Multiple-choice alternatives are not necessarily given in cloze questions. Synonyms for correct answers may or may not be considered acceptable (Jongsma, 5-19).

16. At Camosun College, the following programs specify that Communications 12 fulfills admission requirements:

- Enterprise Development
- Horticulture
- Major Appliance and Vending Machine Repair Technician
- Professional Cook Training

A number of programs specify English 10 as fulfilling admission requirements. In most cases (though not all), students who take Communications courses would have completed English 10; therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of students who take Communications 11 or 12 would be eligible to enroll in these courses:

- Tourism Management
- Fine Furniture
- Welding
- Mechanical Engineering Technology Access
- Technology Bridging
- Electronics and Computer Engineering Access

The vast majority of programs, including trades programs, require English 12:

- Applied Chemistry and Biology
- Applied Communications (requires placement test; suggests English 12)
- Criminal Justice
- Environmental Technology
- Music
- Pacific Rim Studies
- Visual Arts
- Business Administration
- Hotel and Restaurant Administration
- Office Management
- Public Administration
- Human Resource Management
- Travel Counselling Certificate Program
- Part-time Office Careers Program
- Nursing
- Community Support Worker
- Dental Assistant
- Early Childhood Education
- First Nations Teacher Assistant
- Recreation Leadership
- Entry Level Trades Training (This program also accepts English 11 but, it specifies, *not* Communications

11 or 12.)

Business Systems Technician
 Electronics Technician
 Electronics and Computer Technology Bridge
 Computer Engineering Technology
 Electronics Engineering Technology
 Civil Engineering Technology
 Computer Systems Technology
 Mechanical Engineering Technology
 Accounting
 Anthropology

A handful of courses have no academic prerequisites:

Adult Basic Education
 Adult Special Education
 Basic Job Readiness
 Employment Orientation for Women
 Basic Employment Skills Training

17. Bourdieu dissolves the distinction between "cultural" and physical capital as sources of power. Although cultural or "symbolic" capital masks its nature as capital, it has its genesis in material power. But the fact that economic and political power legitimize cultural or symbolic power is concealed. On the other hand, the correlation between material and cultural capital is revealed by the fact that material capital can be transformed into cultural capital. Certain groups can, for example, spend more money on books and education (Nespor, 171-174).

In *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron emphasize that the legitimization and imposition of what they call the "cultural arbitrary" (vi) demands multiple concealments. Not only is its relationship to material power concealed. What functions as cultural or symbolic capital is arbitrary, but its arbitrariness is concealed through the legitimization of particular cultural forms by such institutions as school systems. But, Bourdieu and Passeron insist, while what functions as cultural capital is arbitrary, it is **not** gratuitous. Rather it is necessary to the perpetuation and even augmentation of its conditions of emergence. In their words: "every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations" (4).

18. Concerns over the delegitimization of the cultural capital of marginalized groups through the imposition upon them of the cultural capital of the ruling class are complicated by the material reality of the power relations in which marginalized groups live. If, as Bourdieu and Passeron contend, cultural capital derives its force from its foundation in economic and political power, then participation in the economic and political power of a society is enhanced by access to the cultural capital that is associated with power. It is that logic that David H. Hargreaves uses in an essay called "The Teaching of Art and the Art of Teaching." Hargreaves contests Bourdieu, who, he says "greatly underestimates the extent to which educational institutions...can actively disseminate to

working-class pupils the cultural capital they cannot obtain from home" (128). Hargreaves maintains that if teachers do not transmit "high art," "working-class pupils...will be denied opportunities for the acquisition of the appropriate cultural capital" (129).

Hargreaves' argument focuses on furnishing to "disadvantaged" children the skills, attitudes, interests, feelings, etc, in which they are deficient so that they can fully and successfully participate in the society in which they live. He seems to accept "society" as a natural, disinterested entity. He does not problematize the perpetuation of power structures which Bourdieu and Passeron argue are bolstered by the legitimization of those cultural forms associated with (and legitimized by) the most privileged groups.

Hargreaves' argument is one commonly mounted by education policy makers who present skills and technologies as tools which are, of themselves, value neutral, but which, it is claimed, have the potential to facilitate entry into arenas of power. The fallacy in the argument is that in ignoring the concealment of power inherent in the legitimization of a particular "cultural arbitrary," (Bourdieu, vi) Hargreaves' argument ignores its own participation in the perpetuation of that power. The foundational principle of the argument of Bourdieu and Passeron is that educational institutions in legitimizing the "cultural arbitrary" of the ruling class reinforce differential power relations which privilege that class.

While I find Hargreaves' argument to be simplistic and, in fact, misguided, I find the problem he is attempting to address to be a very real one. I am persuaded that, pragmatically, in order to participate in the economic and political power of a society, all groups need access to the cultural capital that is associated with power. Yet I am equally persuaded by Bourdieu and Passeron that the dissemination of the cultural arbitrary of the dominant group to marginalized groups does not lead to participation by the marginalized in the structures of power. What it could conceivably result in is the disappearance of a cultural group over time, as language, traditions, and values of that group find no expression, and indeed meet with disapproval or even repressive sanction, in the dominant culture.

19. The subject of precisely what it is that employers--or at least, big business, expects is taken up by Maude Barlow and Heather-jane Robertson, Michael Apple, Stuart Hall, all of whom point to neoconservatism and right-wing alliances.

20. Learning resources have recently been defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education as including text books; other print materials--"including dictionaries, trade books, anthologies, [and] atlases...;" media--including film, video and audio productions; computer software; "[o]ptical [f]ormats"--for example, CD-ROM; "[i]nformation [s]ervices"--including such things as "network services...news, information, video-conferencing services, or other on-line services"; and "manipulatives: [which comprise material] usually associated with Mathematics, but also applicable to concepts and skills such as colour and classification" (*Appendix 'A,' Guidelines: Learning Resources Funding*, 1).

21. Prescribed titles, which no longer exist as a category of resources, are described in the *Catalogue of Learning Resources 1984-85* as "basic or essential" (iv).

22. Prior to the establishment of the recommended category there already existed what was called the 5% supplementary--an allocation of 5% of the textbook budget which could be used to buy books that were not on the prescribed or authorized lists. Those books could be purchased without being subjected to any formal evaluation procedure. Thus, a provision for local choice has existed for some years; however, that choice has been significantly limited by budget constraint. The 5% supplementary was dropped when the recommended category was put in place.

23. It is difficult to be precise about page length since, in 1992-93, the pages ceased to be numbered sequentially. It should be noted also that the last 249 pages of the 92/93 catalogue merely reorganize, according to several indexes, resources already listed in the previous 400-odd pages.

24. I use the terms stereotype and archetype as virtually synonymous concepts, both of which reduce characters to a narrow set of characteristics, or even a single characteristic. The difference between them is one of valence rather than substance. While archetype carries the connotation: larger than life, stereotype carries the connotation: smaller than life.

25. Where the focus is on "correcting" the canon, it is the structural-functionalist model that most commonly frames the arguments. That model is one which understands schools as existing "beyond the imperatives and influence of class and power" (Giroux, 1983, 103). As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, Henry Giroux contends that structural-functionalist discourse defines students "as passive recipients, [and] conflict is explained mainly as a function of faulty socialization" (103).

See Young, 1987, and Giroux, 1983, in Chapter I of this thesis, for objections to that model.

26. Approval for research involving human subjects was requested from and granted by the University of Victoria's Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects, in the Office of Research Administration, P.O. Box 1700, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y2. Permission to conduct research in high schools was requested from and granted by the two school districts, to which I will apply the pseudonyms Leicester Valley School District and Ferndale School District.

See the appendix of this thesis for the Certificate of Approval from the University of Victoria, and letters of permission from School Districts. Names have been obliterated.

27. I use the term "common sense" in the poststructuralist sense as it is defined by Chris Weedon in *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Weedon states that "[t]he key distinguishing features of common-sense knowledge [are] its assumption of the transparency of language and its appeal to experience." These, she says, "rely on a particular

understanding of the individual and of subjectivity" in which the individual is "the free, rational, self-determining subject of modern political, legal, social and aesthetic discourses" (78-790). Common sense notions of language see it "undistorted by such things as 'ideology', a term which is reserved for explanations representing opposed sectional interests" (77).

One of the claims of common sense knowledge is precisely that it is common--that is, obvious to almost everyone--and therefore true. It appeals to experience and "nature," or "human nature," as its guarantees. Its meanings, which, Weedon says, "inevitably favour the interests of particular social groups, become fixed and widely accepted as true irrespective of sectional interests" (77).

28. F.R. Leavis is perhaps the father of "the Great Tradition." In his book by the same name, he establishes parameters for the Great Tradition of "the English Novel," identifying as its most perfect exemplars Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad (1948, 1-3).

Leavis maintained that there was an "essential structure" inherent in "the English tradition" (1959, 2); and that the structure would reveal itself to the disinterested critic. He insisted that the critic's job was "to endeavor to be as little merely individual as possible" (1959, 2), in a word, to transcend his [sic] individuality and, thus, to transcend ideology and interestedness.

One of Leavis's worshipful followers, Martin Green, describes Leavis himself as "reduc[ing] himself to the residual essence of his experience, moral, social, sexual, intellectual, the single naked unprotected pulse, [which] records the reaction of the complex of nerves, so endlessly self-purging, to the play, poem, metaphor, opinion, etc" (512). According to the paradigm described by Green, the critic Leavis is not a mere individual with his own preoccupations, assumptions, values--ideology. He has purged himself of "interestedness" and reponds to literature from the position of human essence. Thus he is able to pare away all but the essential from the whole field of literature and, as a result, identify that literature which transcends the particular and expresses human essence.

Critic Frances Mulhern shows how decidedly interested Leavisian criticism is. Nevertheless, the "common sense" notions of "the Great Tradition" that are among the legacies of Leavis continue to have purchase among some teachers of English.

29. I borrow the term "border crossers" from Henry Giroux. Giroux uses the term in the context of what he calls emancipatory or critical literacy. He describes emancipatory or critical literacy as a "practice [which] requires people to write, speak, and listen in the language of difference."

Giroux contends that critical literacy "signals the need to challenge and redefine the substance and effects of cultural borders." He calls for "opportunities for students to be border crossers in order to understand otherness on its own terms" (1991, x).

While I have borrowed Giroux's term, I use it in a somewhat different way. It's my contention that individuals who *live* in two cultures have a different experience of border crossing from that of

individuals who merely *visit* other cultures. The former group have no alternative but to negotiate more than one cultural space. Moreover, and most importantly, their experience of self is differently constructed within different cultural contexts. While it is quite possible for visitors (both literal and literary) to understand otherness in their own terms, for the individual who lives on both sides of a border, "her own terms" can never entirely escape the self-referential difference of an/other culture.

It is those individuals who *live* in two cultures and who, therefore, move inescapably back and forth between them, that I am calling border crossers. There is a sense in which they straddle borders, seeing both sides of the looking glass simultaneously. I have included gender as an element that shapes particular cultural spaces and therefore contributes to the formation of borders. It is in that context that I see some women as border crossers, despite the fact that they may be located in mainstream situations *vis-a-vis* class and race.

My use of the term, border crossers, shares common ground with Edward Said's concept of the "contrapuntal" awareness of the critic as exile. Said "borrows [the term] from music to indicate a productive tension resulting from a type of double vision" (Gunew, *Framing*, 38). It is the doubleness of vision that is at the heart of the concept of border crosser as I use the term.

30. I use the term phantasmatic in the sense in which it is used by Homi Bhabha in his essay "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation." He connects it to the psychoanalytic idea of splitting--two things happening at the same time that are often in contradiction.

31. Foucault described "the different modes by which...human beings are made subjects." In particular, he "dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects" (1982, 777). The second of those is what he called "'dividing practices.' The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (777-78). Some of the examples of "dividing practices" that Foucault detailed were the objectification of "the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys'" (778).

32. In fact, there are twelve women authors represented in the most widely used edition of the English Literature 12 textbook, *Adventures in English Literature*, Heritage Edition Revised, 1980, 1985. In the main body of the text, the following ten women authors appear: Jane Austin, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Brontë, Christina Rossetti, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, and Edith Sitwell. In the two appendices, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot appear; also, there is a second selection by Katherine Mansfield. In total, there are 37 pages of text written by women out of a book that is 1024 pages in length.

The student I called Leah was mistaken in stating that there is only one woman author in the text; however, as I indicated in Chapter 2, only

two women authors are included in the 1992-93 examinations specifications for English Literature 12 and none are included in the current English Literature 12 curriculum guide, *Senior Secondary School English: English Literature 12*. It is possible that a student of English Literature 12 could encounter only one woman author in the course.

33. For a discussion of Bourdieu and cultural capital and habitus, see this thesis, Chapter 2, page 39, as well as Endnotes 17 and 18.

34. An official with the Ministry of Education confirmed that ASL (American Sign Language) is not, at the present time, a provincially authorized course. Language courses which are authorized for grades 11 and 12 are French, Japanese, Chinese, German, Spanish and Latin. There are also a number of courses called "Beginners Courses," that can be selected at the grade 11 level. Among those courses are Mandarin, Russian and Italian. In addition, provincial curriculum is currently under development in Punjabi.

In order to qualify for a Dogwood certificate (that is, to fulfill graduation requirements), a student may choose a total of two locally developed courses at the graduation level (grades 11 and 12). Presumably, given the expertise to develop such a course in any particular school, sign language could come under that rubric. That possibility does not exist in the school attended by the young man with whom I spoke.

An official in the Special Education Branch of the Ministry of Education told me that if the student in question had plans to enter a post-secondary institution, and if he were deaf, and depending on his career plans, he might be able to plead his case. There has been one case of a deaf student who enrolled at the University of British Columbia and who pleaded such a case and won. However, as I have shown elsewhere, there are very few post-secondary programs that accept Communications courses as fulfilling entrance requirements. The student with whom I spoke, being a Communications student and one who is not deaf, would, I think, be hard-pressed to plead such a case. His complaint that "no one will accept [signing] as a second language" appears to be accurate.

35. Once again my analysis is shaped by the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 8-12.

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APPENDIX



Certificate of Approval

University of Victoria
 Committee on Research and Other Activities
 Involving Human Subjects

Principal Investigator
Norma E. Depledge
 Grad Student

Department
English

Supervisor
Dr. S. Gunew

Co-Investigators:

Title: *Attitudes toward and perceptions of English in the Language Arts English Graduation Program*

Project No.
83-95


Start Date
21 Mar 95


End Date
30 Jun 95

Approval Date
21 Mar 95

Certification

This is to certify that the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulation Involving Human Subjects.


 Michael Corcoran,
 Associate Dean, Research


 Alex McAuley,
 Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. One year extensions may be granted provided there are no changes in the procedures.

**LEICESTER VALLEY SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

British Columbia, Canada

March 1, 1995

Ms. Norma E. Depledge

Victoria, B.C.

Dear Ms. Depledge:

Thank you for your recent application regarding your research project *Attitudes Toward and Perceptions of English in the Language Arts English Graduation Program*.

It is with pleasure that we inform you permission to proceed with the project has been granted by the Research Committee pending receipt of a University Ethics Committee approval form.

It is understood you wish to proceed with the project this month, that student participation is voluntary, pending approval of their parents, and that complete anonymity of the children's identity is assured.

We note you have already spoken with Ms. English at Leicester Senior Secondary and will be contacting another school in the near future. Please note it is your responsibility to obtain permission from Principals to conduct the research project in their schools.

We wish you success with your project and invite any further questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Coordinator
School Services

FERNDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT

British Columbia, Canada

March 14, 1995

Ms. Norma Depledge

Victoria, BC

Dear Ms. Depledge:

I am pleased to inform you that at the regular meeting of the Board of School Trustees on March 13, 1995, your request for research entitled "Attitudes Toward and Perceptions of English in the Language Arts/English Graduation Program" was approved, subject to the following:

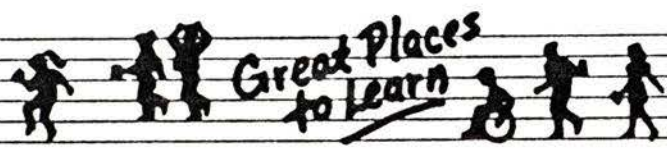
- 1. that the participation be on a voluntary basis as previously requested
- 2. that the identity of all participants be kept confidential
- 3. that part of the project involving students be carried out with a minimum loss of instructional time
- 4. the results of the research project be shared with School District X

We wish you every success with your project.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Executive Secretary
Office of the Superintendent



**PURPOSE OF STUDY:
ATTITUDES TOWARD AND PERCEPTIONS OF
ENGLISH
IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS ENGLISH GRADUATION
PROGRAM**

Traditional notions of "English studies" have tended to see it as free of any ideology, viewing literature as expressing universal human values and literacy as a merely procedural issue. However, recent scholarship has begun to examine the cultural politics of "English studies" in an attempt to understand the assumptions and values underlying notions of what is literary, and to comprehend the social implications of those assumptions. An understanding of the ideological subtext of "English studies" has profound implications for shaping curriculum.

It should be noted that ideology, as I am using the term, is "in no sense a set of deliberate distortions." In fact, it is "a necessary condition of action," existing in all those commonplaces that are taken for true or obvious. At the same time, it also includes omissions and gaps which smooth over contradictions (Belsey, 594).

The objective of my thesis is to examine the ideology and thus the nature of English as it is revealed in the B.C. Language Arts English program at the Graduation (Grade 11 and 12) level. The objective of the empirical part of my research is twofold: 1) to study how teachers interpret and implement the ideology, that is, the values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes embedded in curriculum documents. I am particularly interested in those values and attitudes which relate to what might broadly be termed culture, where culture is expressed in such things as literature, or a literary heritage, multiculturalism, or the nebulous concept of Canadian identity. 2) I want to ask students how they experience values and attitudes embedded in curriculum documents. In both cases, I want to study the ways that Language Arts English curriculum as it is implemented in classrooms conforms to, expands upon or resists "cultural ideology" expressed as official objectives, values, beliefs and attitudes within curriculum documents.

This study concentrates on similarities and differences among those three Language Arts English courses which have significant literature components: English 12, English Literature 12, and Communications 12.

The data for the study will be gathered from a student questionnaire, and a series of semi-structured, audio-taped interviews with teachers and students.

**TEACHERS' CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION
IN THE STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD AND
PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH IN THE
LANGUAGE ARTS ENGLISH
GRADUATION PROGRAM**

I understand that that objectives of this research project are twofold: 1) it undertakes to study how teachers interpret and implement the values, assumptions and attitudes embedded in curriculum documents. Of particular interest for the purposes of this study are those values and attitudes which relate to what might broadly be termed culture, where culture is expressed in such things as literature, or a literary heritage, multiculturalism, or the nebulous concept of Canadian identity. 2) The project undertakes to come to an understanding of how students experience values and attitudes embedded in curriculum documents. I understand that as a teacher, I will be asked my opinions about these concepts as they apply to English 12, English Literature 12 and Communications 12.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation.

I understand that my anonymity is guaranteed. Data records will not contain any means of identifying individual participants. Moreover, audio-tapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet. When the data had been compiled, all audio-tapes and transcripts will be destroyed. When data is incorporated into the final document, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of persons and places.

I understand that whether I participate or choose not to participate will have no bearing on my employment status or job and that no one except the researcher, Norma Depledge, and her M.A. thesis committee will have access to the questionnaires.

Date: _____

School: _____

Teacher's Name: _____
(Please print)

Signature: _____

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Dear Parent,

As part of my M.A. research at the University of Victoria, I am conducting a study of the values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes expressed in Language Arts English curriculum and documentation. I am particularly interested in those values and attitudes which relate to what might broadly be termed culture, literary heritage, multiculturalism, and concepts of Canadian identity. My objective is to gain an understanding of what notions of "Canadianness" inform curriculum and whether those notions are changing.

I request permission for your son/daughter to be interviewed as part of my project. Students will be asked to share details of their school Language Arts English experiences and to indicate what role those experiences play in their thinking about such concepts as culture, literary heritage, multiculturalism and "Canadianness."

Interviews with students will take place individually or in pairs, depending on which is more comfortable for the student, and will be taped on audio cassette. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be scheduled outside normal classroom instruction time.

I emphasize that participation in this research is voluntary and only students with written permission may participate. Furthermore, your daughter/son may withdraw from the study at any time.

I plan to interview 12 high school students.

This project has been approved by the University of Victoria Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects as well as the research officer for your school district.

Please complete the consent form for student participation if you are willing to allow your daughter or son to be interviewed. Thank you for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Norma E. Depledge

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

I have read and understood the request for my daughter/son to participate in the study about values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes expressed in Language Arts English curriculum and documentation.

I give permission for _____ to participate.

I do not give permission for _____ to participate.

NAME OF STUDENT: _____

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN: _____

I have read and understood Ms. Depledge's request that I take part in her study about cultural aspects of my English course(s).

_____ I agree to be interviewed as part of the study.

_____ I do not wish to participate.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT: _____

DATE: _____

Questionnaire for Students

The objective of this research is to study the Language Arts English program at the Graduation level in an attempt to understand how students experience certain values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes expressed in curriculum documents. For the purposes of this questionnaire, the values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes in question are those that relate to such things as literature, or literary heritage, multiculturalism, or the fuzzy concept of Canadian identity.

This questionnaire will ask questions about the ideas mentioned above as they relate to English 12, English Literature 12, and Communications 12. I would like to know which values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes coincide with your own; and I would like to get some understanding of how you see yourself fitting into the Language Arts English program.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and has no bearing whatsoever on your standing in your English course or any other course. You may choose not to answer any or all of the questions, without explanation. In the event that you choose to answer none of the questions, please return the blank questionnaire to me at the end of the allotted time period.

Do not write your name on the questionnaire. All data will be collected anonymously. Questionnaires will be kept in a locked filing cabinet until the results are compiled. Then all questionnaires will be destroyed.

VITA

SURNAME: Depledge

GIVEN NAMES: Norma Elizabeth

PLACE OF BIRTH: Bath, England

DATE OF BIRTH: July 31, 1946

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| University of Alberta. | 1964-1968 |
| Concordia University. | 1990 |
| University of Calgary. | 1990-1991 |
| Mount St. Vincent University. | 1993 |
| University of Victoria. | 1993-1995 |

DEGREES AWARDED:

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| B.Ed. University of Alberta. | 1968 |
|------------------------------|------|

HONORS AND AWARDS:

University of Victoria, Department of English Fellowship 1993

PUBLICATIONS:

"Except I Shall See in His Hands the Print of the Nails." *Malahat Review*. Number 67.

"Teachers wanted -- choose me!" *The Canadian School Executive*, April, 1984. (satiric essay)

"Etel's Influence." *Grain*. Volume XII, Number 2.

"Watch out for the Swamps." *Explore*. July/August, 1987.

"L'amour et le changement de nom." *Des échos de femmes*. Volume 1, Number 2, 1989. In collaboration with Michèle Ouimet.

"Watch. Wait." *Simone de Beauvoir Institute Bulletin*. Volume 10, Number 2, 1990.

"The Rains." *Absinthe*. Volume 1, Number 1. December, 1991.

"Me Jesus, and the Epistemology of Age." *Atlantis*. Volume 18, Numbers 1 & 2, 1992-93.

Accepted for publication by *Atlantis*: "Invasion, Separation and Solitude in Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*."

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Title of Thesis: **"WHAT SHOULD WE READ, HOW SHOULD WE READ IT, AND WHY?":**
The Cultural Politics of English Studies in
British Columbia's Language Arts English
(Graduation) Program

Auth

Norma E. Depledge
September 5, 1995



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