Journal of Arts, Vol. 25, Number (3), pp.9-27 ,king Sand Univ., Riyadh (2013 /1434H.)

The Enduring Hegemony of the English Literary Canon: Symptoms of the Monopoly of Power Relations in Academia

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(Received 1/11/1434H; Accepted for publication 27/5/1434H)

Key words:Post-colonialism, English literature, cultural capital, ideology, power relations

Abstract. Debate over the English literary canon has been revolving around questions of inclusiveness, representation, voice, relations of power,pedagogical practice, and others. My purpose, in this paper is, however, to explore issues around canons beyond the established arguments of 'institutional capital', and those of classic post-colonial arguments such as issues around representation. In an era that could be described by 'liquid post-modernity', criticisms should be directed to the core of the idea of canon itself, or the question one might ask: are canons still valid?While Guillory and other critics have thoroughly dealt with issues around the canon in the Western academy, the present paper investigates the post-colonial higher educational settings, in general, and the Jordanian setting in particular. For an investigation into this context, a qualitative case study was employed to gain in-depth insight into how the current English literary canon is perceived and disseminated by the instructors of literature at a Jordanian university. The data obtained via semi-structured interviews with these instructors suggested dichotomous and competing discourses regarding the canon.Drawing on Foucault's view of relations of power, Bandura's 'human agency' and 'self theory' and post-colonialist arguments, Iconclude that the problem of the Jordanian English Literary canon could be understood as a variety of ideological thinking or what Icall 'canonical ideology', where the proponents (conservative generation) and opponents (modern generation) of the current literary canon perceive themselves as having the capacity to understand their students and to make choices and impose these choices on them. Whether these instructors are for or against the canon, it does involve the promotion of a particular ideology; the canon, as a reflection of academic and theoretical fashions of the western academy.

Introduction

Canonicity[1] signifies a crisis in modern literary studies in the institutions of 'Third World' countries, or those that have passed through the experience of colonialism (Ashcroft, et al., 1989; Chrisman and Williams, 1993). It also signifies a problem in world relations that are still governed by ideologies of supremacy and elitism practiced through hegemonic powers (Ghandi, 1998; Davis and Schleifer, 1998). Although colonised nations have gained political independence, colonial legacies still perpetuatethe regulation and dissemination of particular forms of knowledge in a process that Spivak (1999), rightly,calls'neo-colonialism' or 'colonial ideologies'. Whiletheflowsofknowledgefrom the 'centre' to the 'margin'are evident in political and economic spheres, educational settings – and in particular higher educational institutions – also appear to manifest this mono-directional bearing.

The origins of the Western literary canon and its relation to cultural representationshave been extensively examined by early post-colonial theorists (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Said, 1983, 1993, 2001; Spivak, 1990, 1999; Thiong'o, 1981; Viswanathan, 1987, 1989), and continued to occupy a significant space in the works of current post-colonial scholars such as the encyclopaedic works of Boehmer (2005), Lomba (1998, 2005), Willinsky (1998, 1999) and Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995, 1999, 2000), among many others.While adopting different historical and cultural modalities, post-colonial theorists have one common denominator: the critical rereading of texts in the Western canon that have been thought of as embodying universal and trans-historical values. The primary concern of these revisionist projects has been, according to Lee (1997: 42) "with the conjunction of colonialism as a politico-economic reality and colonialism as a system of cultural representation, namely, with literature's complicity or involvement in the enterprise of empire making". While those projects focused on textual analysis for critiquing the canon, the present argument supersedes these projects through aggregating a post-colonial stance with the notion of 'institutional cultural capital' (Guillory, 1993),Foucauldian(1978, 1980d) understanding of relations of power and Bandura's (1999, 2001) 'self theory' and 'human agency' to explore institutional practices regarding the English literary canon at post-colonial educational institutions.

The fact that this paper is an attempt to answer issues aroundThe English literary canons, the Jordanian English departments, in particular, moves beyond the established arguments of post-colonialism regarding issues of representation, inclusions and exclusions. Therefore, in addition to responding to the old argument regarding the hegemony of canons, this paper follows a more non-western and context-specific arguments. Specifically, I attempt to answer major questions that include: 1) Why does a Jordanian university privilege the current English literary canon? 2) What might it embrace or promote in terms of literature and culture studies? 3) Does that obviate the need to open the canon, or, more precisely, to disrupt the *idea* of canons itself? 4) For all of these, what is the human role in constructing or reconstructing the academic English literary study in Jordan? In my conclusions, I perceive answers to these questions as an endeavour to move the long-established arguments regarding canonicity into further alternatives by means of opining up canons, and deconstructing 'canonical ideologies' and relations of power that perpetuate and nurture them. In short, a response to the question of 'what is next?' or 'what works?' regarding canonicity problem should be provided.

The hegemony of the canon: claims for universality

According to Hall (2005), the idea of the canon developed in the nineteenth century to embrace the 'classic' literary works which were deemed to have a particular value; thus a list of 'authoritative' texts was generated to constitute the centre of the literary curricula that flourished in the process of the growth of literature as an institutional practice. With the belief that the 'classics' of English literature hold everlasting aesthetic, rhetorical, and moral values, they constitute the core of the English literary canon (Atkinson, 1995; Eagleton, 2000). Morley (as cited in Hall 2005: 43), for example, affirms that 'moral truth' and 'human passion' exist in literarytexts, through which literary students can explore moral reasons, impulses of the human heart, and chances to change the human ideals towards virtue, happiness, and morality. In this way, ithas been believed that the 'classics' of English literature largely embody the humanistic enterprise of universal values and uniform human experience.

Post-colonialism, however, discloses the dire insinuations with which such claims are fraught.

[1] I use the terms 'canonicity' and 'canon' throughout the paper to delineate the English Literary canon.

From a post-colonial perspective, the concept of universal human nature aims to eliminate cultural differences, unify human communities and speak of people in static terms. Sadiq (2007) maintains that the claimed universality of the 'First World's' literature is only relevant when it touches on relations with the 'Third World', and when the implementation of the principle of universality in Western literatures and criticism is performed with an informed discourse that denies the cultural identity of the oppressed nations. Mukherjee (as cited in Ashcroft et al., 1999: 450-1), on the other hand, argues that ignoring "the realities of power, class, culture, social order …has not changed a bit during the course of history". Thus, such a claim of universality is another tool for passing ideologies of power and supremacy to those in disadvantaged positions. As Tompkins (1980: 4, 14) contends; "works […], believed to embody universal values, are in fact embodying only the interest of whatever parties or factions are responsible for maintaining them in their pre-eminent position". He argues that "a literary reputation could never be anything but a political matter [and that] the literary works that now make up the canon do so because the groups that have an investment in them are culturally the most influential".Dasenbork (1999: 692) estimatesthatthe English literary canon as "an exclusive men's club, with membership restricted to those of the right ethnicity, gender, and class".

In this paper, I argue that discourses of universalism often embody hegemonic assumptions nurtured through ideological practice. I understand hegemony to be the political, institutional, ideological rule of power. It is the idea of the orthodox; a standard, historical and political narrative or discourse of the bureaucrats who have power, the decision-makers who directly maintain or influence the *status quo*. Understood as 'domination by consent', hegemony is fundamentally the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all (Ashcroft et al., 2000: 116). Such groups, however,"do not maintain their hegemony merely by giving their domination an aura of moral authority through the creation and perpetuation of legitimating symbols; they must also seek to win the consent of subordinate groups to the existing social order" (Adamson as cited in Lears, 1985: 269). As such, the notion of ideology is crucial to the consent given to any hegemonic order, as it embodies all forms of sentiments and prejudices which bear subjective meaning apart from the public realm of power relations, yet it can never be separated from that realm.

The concept of hegemony has been expanded to cover many social practices, and post-colonial educational settings witness heated debates regarding the hegemonic practices of Western forms of knowledge as well as the local practices of educational policies.Such debates often project what has been referred to as 'counter-hegemony'. Gordon (1992: 405), for example, contends that "Afrocentric education can be thought of as a response to or corrective for what has been perceived by some as Eurocentric education, with the latter's history having pre-empted the academic canon by imposing standards for knowledge content and validity that are associated with the cultures of northern Europe". In response to the universalist claims of the Western writer, Jan Mohamed argues, "...if he assumes that he and the other are essentially identical, then he would tend to ignore the significant differences and to judge the other according to his own cultural values" (as cited in Ashcroft et al., 1999: 18). Cultural differences provide the 'other' with the necessities of power that such discourses of universalism seek to eliminate. Rather than being an exploration of the 'other', Western literature merely affirms its own ethnocentric assumptions: "By depicting the outer limits of 'civilisation', it simply codifies and preserves the structures of its own mentality" (ibid: 19).

Since the very idea of universality maintains a locus of power in the 'class of cultural elites', post-colonial institutions - including the current research context - meet expectations of 'standards' and elitism that intersect with the notion of universality. In the Jordanian context, I perceive the idea of canon as constituting a crisis in the study of literature, a crisis that has largely been instigated by a class of institutional elites that still insists on the unique value of handful of canonical writers. Being haunted by the idea of standards and aesthetics as an autonomous category of value, advocates of the canon continue to propagate its unique value. Rather than meeting the demands of a changing world, they insist on the idea of canonicity as anexclusive representation, not only of their 'high cultural approach' but also of their claimed immortality and universalism.

Other concepts that intersect with the concept of hegemony are 'ideology' and 'human agency'. The concept of ideology is contestable in nature and includes many definitional elements which are at odds with one another as it is used in a multitude of

disciplines, and often represent incompatible systems of thought. I, however, introduce anunderstanding of ideology that refers to the conscious or unconscious doctrines or beliefs that inform individuals or groups to act in a particular manner. For my use of the term throughout this paper, I highlight a Marxist tradition that intersect with Gramscian hegemony and 'spontaneous philosophy' in an attempt to argue against the false consciousness of the ruling class that projects discourses of authority as justifying forces against alienated and marginalised groups or masses.

In an attempt to understand these concepts and the relationship between them, I build onHall's (1995) analysis of Gramscian hegemonyandideology and agency. In his analysis of 'hegemonic' projects, Hall moves away from a structuralistview of ideology as a preserved system of representation into a more dynamic manner. He argues that an understanding of hegemonic ideology as representing the interests of unitary ruling class is not sufficient to prevail. It is rather achieved through constructing 'new common sense' around which people's subjectivities or 'spontaneous philosophies' are articulated. Hall argues that ideology, in this sense, becomes a field of class-neutral elements within which the struggle of hegemonic discourses is articulated. Ideology, for him, becomes "a battle field where classes struggle for the appropriation of the fundamental ideological elements of their society in order to articulate them to their discourse" (82).Therefore, since hegemony seeks to establish articulating principles of diverse ideologies: "ideological categories are developed, generated, and transformed according to their own laws of development and evolution" (83).

Related to this is the concept of agency; the individuals' or groups' capacity to perform action in moral or in immoral way. It is, therefore, the ability to make choices for a given situation and enact them. Bandura (1999) perceives human agency as embedded in self theory that includes self-regulative mechanisms and argues that human agency can be exercised through direct self agency or by adopting a collective agency operating through shared beliefs of broad network of socio-structural systems.

A view of ideology as manifestation of human agency is also vital to understand ideological discourses over the canon or 'canonical ideologies'. Eagleton (1991) asserts that ideology does involve epistemological questions, and cannot be understood until it is 'worked out'. For both of these claims, I argue, the notion of human agency is of immense importance to categorise a certain belief or action as an ideology or not. Our epistemological stance (or how we know what we know 'ontology'),andaxiological judgement (the disputational contours of the right and wrong or the morality and values of our view of reality), determines what might be considered as ideolog(y)-ical or not. This argument resonates with the view of (moral)human agency that enables individuals to make moral judgments according to *commonly* held notions of right and wrong. Ideology is, therefore, encompassed in a broader view or reality; how we perceive the world around usorour epistemological stance. Whether shared or on their own, human beliefs inform agency to adopt particular discourses or actions towards a given situation.

More importantly, Eagleton (1991) argues that ideology must reflect a real action or practical social conditions; these conditions serve as underlining ideological framework. While human agency reflects the capability to do action, ideology reflects the productive forces that serve the interests of the dominant social group. Since ideology does not exist in abstraction, these productive forces become an action that qualifies for ideology. In other words, ideology should reflect praxis, which specific to human beings through which they shape the world around them through practice. As such ideology relates to human agency as ideology derives from a combination of the belief and human practice.

Canonicity the disguise of power relations

Exploring the hegemonic role of the English literary canon requires a probing into an understanding of the concepts of 'power' and 'relations of power'.The traditional view of power is grounded in law or economics where the state or a class of 'elites' imposes its control over other disadvantaged groups. Perceiving power in this sense leads to an understanding of power as a fixed entity possessed by groups or individuals and imposed on others. With this linear understanding, power is perceived as negative, visible, and, above all, stable. Foucault (1978) argues that this view of power is inadequate in capturing the complexity through which power relations operate. Additionally, perceiving power as such fails to justify its perpetuation, hegemony and domination outside institutional, hereditary or class structure. That is, it fails to encapsulate "the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalisation, not by punishment but by control, methods that are

employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (Foucault, 1978: 89). Additionally, a static view of power that is based on law or force overcomes the fact that power relations adopt changing mechanisms, which do not emanate from a particular source.

Foucault (1978) introduces a strategic view of power and argues that power is not a commodity, a right or a privilege handed down to a particular group. Power is not an institutional body or a defined structure, it is "a multiple and mobile field of force relations" (102). He asserts that power is not restricted to certain class or group but in constant circulation and in a multitude of directions. In this sense, groups cannot possess power nor can they escape it, but are 'the vehicles of power, not its point of application (Foucault, 1980d: 98). Therefore, the argument is that rather than search for where power is located, the search should focus on how power is exercised. As Kocatepe (2005: 10) argues: “power does not exist as an entity, but is present only when it is put into action: power is action upon action”. As such, it qualifies as a structure of a potential locale of actions of people as a way it inhibits or allows further actions to emerge. Hoy (1986: 142) observes that “Foucault tends to think of the network [of power] as being like a grammar, which conditions what can be uttered in a language, but does not determine which actual utterances emerge (and when)”. Therefore, power relations actualise certain outcomes not by the deployment of constraints and prohibitions on the disadvantaged or powerless groups, but through "manoeuvres, tactics, techniques andfunctionings" (Smart, 1985: 77). In sum, Foucault’s understanding of power and power relation allows a focus on analysing how mechanisms can allow or inhibit particular actions or discourses. Therefore, rather than exerting efforts on who owns power or the notion of power as a grand, the focus should be directed to the complex relational process of power relations.

Foucault’s (1978, 1980d) arguments provideareifying conceptualisation of the monopoly of power relations in the current context. It characterises the relationship between canon proponents and opponents not as parties whose attraction or repulsion to the canon is a question of research, but rather how both parties seek to stipulate their positions in a matrix of power relations. In other words, rather than seeing some instructors as with or against the canon, the very notion of the objection or support, which exists in fluctuating relationship to the idea canon allows an understanding of the canon as a colonising agent. In this sense, Foucault’s (1980d) argument offers a twofold analytical tools for the present research: first, a reading of the *relational* processes of power relations (i.e. analysing *how* each group whether proponents or opponents of the existing canon uses strategically deployed discourses to secure its position). Second, an understanding of power as less visible and mobile entity assists to read the canon as charismatic or denounced notion according to where both groups locate themselves in the matrix of power relations.

Canonicity the symptom of cultural capital

Canonicity is an idea that is entailedbyBourdieu’s (1989, 1996) notion of ‘cultural capital’, and, by embracing the idea of ‘institutional cultural capital’, the notion of ‘cultural capital’ is useful to understandhowa class of institutional ‘elites’ shape and perpetuate the English literary canon in the current research setting. The concept of 'cultural capital' has gained its theoretical foundations in the works of Bourdieu, particularly his two seminal books *The Forms of Capital* (1986) and *The State of Nobility* (1996).Bourdieu expands the notion of capital from its economic context to delineate the social relations of power at all spheres of cultural productions including arts and literature. For him, the notion of cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, extending the concept to include ‘all the goods material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation.

Theorising the concept, Bourdieu (1983) delineates two kinds of capital: embodied and objectified. Embodied capital is acquired through invested time and is accumulated within a physically conscribed individual. Objectified capital, however, comprises the signs of distinction that correspond to ‘conspicuous consumption’. In an intimate relation to embodied capital, objectified capital comprises the goods that the individual consumes by virtue of their capital. Embodied capital is necessary to properly consume objectified capital, which Bourdieu (1983: 8), lists as “pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.”. Together, embodied and objectified capital, indicate ‘the habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 20). The habitus occupied by an individual can be classified, but it is also, itself classifying. It reflects a hierarchy of values that are symbolic and have a social value.

Furthermore, the concept of 'class' is pre-eminently a sociological concept: "If there exists a form of capital which is specifically symbolic or cultural, the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of this capital presupposes the division of society into groups that can be called classes" (Guillory, 1993: viii). Bourdieu's(1998)idea of sociology acknowledges such a division, but takes it beyond a purely economic account. Consumption, in the form of 'cultural capital', thus, produces a sociological 'mythical system'. In this sense, in institutions, there exists a class of representation and consumption which produces the distinction of a 'class-oriented habitus' (Ihlen, 2005).

Adopting Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital', Guillory (1993) argues that the idea of the canon is an 'institutional' practice that names the fashion of the old bourgeoisie who maintain power over decisions. Although he admits the necessity of the evaluative judgements of the canon, he emphasises that such judgements are not sufficient without understanding the 'the human labour' in preserving them. Guillory recognises the category of 'class' implied in the notion of 'cultural capital' for analysing the 'school' and its literary curriculum, hence, directing his critique to the syllabus and curriculum. He believes that the process of canon formation cannot be understood without acknowledging the 'social function' and the 'institutional protocols' that "preserved, reproduced, and disseminated [the canon] over successive generations and centuries" (vii). For him, the problem of canon formation and distribution is "best understood as the problem in the constitution and distribution of cultural capital, or more specifically, a problem of access to the means of literary production and consumption". The 'means', in question, is provided by the school, which regulates and distributes cultural capital unequally. Additionally, 'Interpretive communities' or what Holliday (1999) calls 'small cultures' determine whether a work is literary or not. Hall (2005: 94) defines these cultures or communities as "the institution(s) of literature, principally educational sites and systems". Literature is "seen as a social practice: exam boards set texts to read, teachers are trained in approved methods, literature is an institutional practice. Approval and sanction will not be given to unorthodox ideas that do not meet with the consensus of professional peers and superiors, and so will not be disseminated and taken up more widely" (94).

Since the 'institution' determines the nature and shape of any canon, the concept of 'cultural capital' foregrounds the category of university as a form of a 'class'. In other words, the class of the university by virtue of holding power over the curriculum and through its Eurocentric background education is very similar to those representatives of 'the great tradition'. The distribution of 'cultural capital' in such institutions reproduces a hierarchical structure of social relations, 'a structure of complex and ramifying inequality' (Davis and Schleifer, 1998: 8).

The English literary canon in post-colonial educational contexts

Any canon is a representation of writing that holds a "particular value for a particular group with particular purposes at a particular point in time" (Hall, 2005: 44). Kermode (as cited in Hall, 2005) argues that since the canon is not a static list its value is subject to regular changes. These changes ensue from the idea that the canon tells more about the community that produces and endorses it than the value of the literary work itself. Considering the traditions of several post-colonial educational settings that insist on a conservative and restricted version of the English literary canon (Hall, 2005), one can recognise the paradox in such practices. Any canon is presumably representative of its immediate context through a 'network of values', and particularly 'aesthetic value', which though controversial, cannot be distinguished from other values in the social realm; "value is not intrinsic but rather relative, contingent, subjective, contextual, or, in other words, extrinsic" (Guillory, 1993: 26). Beyond its context, the assumed attribute of aesthetic value as an autonomous vehicle for transporting value to other contexts is questionable. In response to this, Iturn to Guillory's (1993) 'politics of image' and a critique of post-colonial argument. The politics of image reflects the role of the university as 'an interventionist mediator of representation'. Canonical or non-canonical texts supposedly stand for particular social groups where the canon is a kind of mirror in which social groups either see themselves reflected or not. With the assumption that canons exist only in academic contexts through prescribed course plans or curricula, the university's role becomes a 'particular social institution' that mediates, and to far extent, intervenesbetween these two sites of representation: the social and academic.

Identifying the ways in which the academic canon is part of the colonising political agenda, both Spivak (1993) and Giroux (2005) view canon

formation as a form of cultural and political production and call for a challenge to the social uses that the canon has served in order to change the power relations. Giroux asserts that the issue of canon formation must be engaged in terms that address the historical formation of the canon and the pedagogy through which it is taught and how these pedagogies have either provided or excluded the conditions and knowledge necessary for marginal people to recover their own histories and to speak and learn in places occupied by those who have the dominant power to shape policy and act.

Spivak reiterates Giroux's notion of a political canon and identifies the ways in which the canon is connected to institutions. She calls for an expansion of the canon in a way that would change the manner in which English is taught in the postsecondary institutions. Spivak(1993: 143) believes that:

canons are the conditions of institutions and the effect of institutions. [...] it is within this constraint that some of us in the profession are trying to expand the canon. Since it is indubitably the case that there can be no expansion without contraction, we must remove the single authors from the English major curriculum. We must make room for the coordinated teaching of the new entries into the canon … the undergraduates will have their lives changed perhaps by a sense of the diversity of the new canon and the unacknowledged power-play involved in securing the old.

Both Spivak and Giroux acknowledge the political power of the canon and recognise that exclusion from it silences marginal groups.

Guillory argues that the historical process of canon formation is too complex to be reduced to a single factor. It, however, involves a corpus of notions and instruments, which are imbibed through institutions to form a cultural capital that regulates access to forms of knowledge. Among these notions, is the belief that canonical texts are the repositories of cultural values, where the selection of texts is the selection of values. The institutional instruments that activate such beliefs include access to literacy, books or anthologies, and pedagogy.

Anthologies, course lists, and syllabuses, for example, are the concrete institutional instruments that posit the existence of the canon as an imaginary list. The totality of the canon as an imaginary list thus renders "the finite materiality of the syllabus, the fact that it is constrained by the limits imposed by its institutional time and place" (Guillory, 1993: 30). Anthologies play a crucial role in fortifying the idea of canonicity as they constitute the handy and solid instrument through which the institution administers its canonical agendas. The effect of anthologies and course lists as institutional instruments is that works not included on these apparatuses appear to have no status at all.

If the traditional politics of the image of the 'self/other' binaries have failed in achieving a representation of the subordinate in the Western context, Iargue, several English departments in post-colonial educational context, including the Jordaniancontext, continue to rehearse such representative traditions of the ongoing imaging of the 'self' and the 'other'. The assumption is that 'institutional capital' at the 'margin' replicates its counterpart at the 'centre' and identifies itself with it. Under the influence of a globalised world ideology, institutional modelsexperience a flow from the 'centre' to the 'periphery', where the latter is dependent on the experience and the aids of those of the former, they are a replica of the 'centre'. For example, Schiller (1976: 73) as affirms that:

...cultural imperialism is the sum of processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system.

As English literature has become entrenched as an academic subject at post-colonial universities, such as those in Jordan, where the majority of the English literature courses in the English department listed are Anglo-American canonical texts, the study of English literature has passed off'tradition'. Paradoxically, while literary study at the 'centre' today has overthrown such an approach, post-colonial institutions continue to propagate its everlasting value. They continue to rehearse a 'colonial ideology' that seeks to perpetuate its cultural products as having a taken-for-granted significance. Such a paradox might be optimised by Davis and Schleifer (1998: 8) accentuating a view of the canon as a "historical snapshot of what is valued. What constitutes canon depends on who is taking the snapshot and to what end". The current snapshot is often referred to as the 'Anglo-American literary tradition' that forms the core of the accepted version of the Jordanian English literary canon. Yet, this snapshot is akin to a 'colonising agent' that finds its roots in the schools of the empire. It enabled a hierarchy of literary value that established the English literary canon as

the normative and exclusive embodiment of beauty, truth, and morality and as a textual standard that enforces the marginality and the inferiority of other literatures compared with the great English tradition (Ghandi, 1998).

Like several other post-colonial settings in the region, the Jordanian context continues to importune canonised literature with the idea of universality and standardisation as a locus of perceived power. Not only the Jordanian curricula, but also the whole structure of its institutions is passed off in terms of 'tradition'. Such a tradition is deeply rooted in what Mathieson (1991: 4) calls 'the Victorian educators' tradition' which believes in the 'character building powers of the classical English curriculum', where the study of these literatures becomes not just a subject for academic study, but one of the chief temples of the human spirit, in which all should worship. Such a tradition is imported in its totality without considering the cultural, social, and moral backgrounds of the host context (Hall, 2005). Through the force of both colonialism and institutional class, such a tradition was overthrown in the 'Third World's' educational systems.

Elsewhere,Zughoul(1999: 24) asserts that "the present English literature syllabus was imposed for historical reasons, the most important of which is the fact that the early British education wanted to acculturate the subjects in India in particular and in the rest of the colonies in general". Although thirteen years separate us from Zughoul's observation, the current literary syllabus, according to the findings of the study, remains almost the same without substantial change. This statuscontinues to our contemporary times as evidenced by the insistence of these universities to impose and institutionalise English literature syllabuses that cover the British and American culture from 'Beowulf through Chaucer and Shakespeare to contemporary Western writers'. Under the notion of 'standards', any attempts to bring about change in such syllabuses, and opening the canonare often unsuccessful.Zughoul (1999: 13) asserts that "some chauvinists still maintain that English literature is not only superior to other literatures but is the best literature in the world, and that such effects … can be brought about only through the study of English". Recognising the role of the institution in disseminating this 'culture', Zughoul acknowledges the university's role in consolidating an authoritative position of the English canon in local contexts: "indeed, the structure of the departments of English at Arab universities and in Third World universities in general has been either inherited or borrowed. [They] were a replica of the department of English at home, i.e. at British universities" (23).

Challenging such an 'institutional culture' is far from easy. Within the understanding of the 'institutional cultural capital' that seeks to maintain its power, any attempt to change, As Zughoul (1999: 16) observes, "could be difficult and slow paced because a whole generation of old-timers running those institutions may feel more secure with the established patterns". Yet, challenging such traditions is not impossible; it is a task that prioritises a 'discursive practice' that espouses all forms of knowledge as valid. However, in so doing, the challenge should be first directed to those in power (*i.e.* the institutional class). It also requires an understanding of the less visible notion of power, andhowrelations of power regulate hegemonic discourses over the canon.

Context and methodology

Jordan is a small country in the 'Middle East', and most of its population is homogeneous in terms of linguistic and cultural background. The country fell under the British mandate from its establishment until 1947. Since the establishment of the first Jordanian university fifty years ago, English departments have imported and applied English literature in universities in a very conservative and over-specified manner. Undergraduate study of English is a combination of linguistic and literature courses, the latter constituting 68% of the overall program. These courses include the Anglo-American classics (Old English/Anglo-Saxon, Medieval [including Chaucer], Shakespearian, Renaissance and/or 17th century [including Milton], Restoration/18th century/ Enlightenment, pre-Romantic/Romantic, and Victorian literatures). In addition to this, there exist several courses in American literature and few courses for modern literature and one course in world's literature written in English.

Since case study methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2007) provides holistic understanding of people or phenomena under investigation (Merriam, 1998), I deem case study the most proper for gaining deep understanding into the beliefs and sentiments regarding the English literary canon as held by the instructors of literature in the Jordanian context.Specifically, the questions that guide my investigation are

a. How do instructors of English literature perceive the current 'Jordanian' English literary canon?

b. What roles do these instructors play in maintaining and disseminating the English literary canon?

I conducted semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2000) to explore the instructors' experience of the literature syllabus in a more open manner and to allow them to articulate their opinions and ideas in their own words. Semi-structured interviews involve structured conversations to elicit rich and 'thick'data that can be used in qualitative analysis. In this, I sought an intersubjective bridge between the respondents' realities and my own in order to maintain an imaginative sharing of and subsequent description of their realities. In my questions and discussions, I used an'insider's role' (Bloor and Wood, 2006) and experience of the context as well as the data obtained from the participants. Therefore, questions and responses were guided towards the topic of the study with a certain degree of flexibility and freedom, which allowed for proper adjustments for unanticipated developments.I interviewed 12 instructors of English literature; each session lasted an hour. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

Within the tradition of qualitative research, a general inductive approach was employed to analyse the raw data, in order "to allow research findings to emerge from frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraint imposed by structured methodologies" (Thomas, 2003: 2). The underlying assumptions for using the general inductive approach are outlined as follows: a) Data analysis was determined by research objectives and multiple readings and interpretation of the raw data. b) The primary mode of analysis was to develop categories from raw data into a model framework that captures key themes. c) While research findings result from multiple interpretations of data, the findings were shaped by my assumptions and experiences. The usability of findings is thus attained through theory-laden decisions about what is more important and less important in the data. I analysed the data using Ritchie and Lewis (2003) indexing technique which is a matrix-based analytic method.It involves a conduction of analytical hierarchy which facilitates rigorous and transparent data throughout all analytical stages. In presenting the findings, I adopt Holliday's (2002; 2007) style consisting of discursive commentaries, data, and argument. I use discursive commentaries to talk about the data within the context of the argument. My commentaries and argument are presented in plain type and the occurrence of data is always in italics, whether in text or in extracts.

Findings

In this particular research setting, there are two generations of instructors, the conservativesandmodernistgenerations as the research participants referred to themselves. This classification is important not only as it is a frequent theme in the instructors' responses, but alsoIrecognise the responses of these two generations as representing largely distinct and conflicting worldviews. In reporting their views, Iadopt a thematic classification of their responses regarding the different issues I talked about, which include their views of the canon andthe English literary syllabus used in the English department where they currently teach.Generally, data revealed the following themes: first, discrepant and competing views between the two generations of instructors, second, this debate mirrors a wider debate of their own literary education, canon debate, third, moving beyond canon to question their own status in the department (i.e. reflection of professional dichotomy regarding what is 'suitable' for the students), fourth, major inherited principles (such as standardisation and universalism) that govern the establishment of English department in 'post-colonial' contexts, and fifth the perception and dissemination of 'culture' in the given context, among others.

The current Jordanian English literary canon

The Anglo-American 'canon' dominates the English literary syllabuses in the English departments at Jordanian universities[2]. Omar[3], a professor of English literature, who belongs to the conservative generation (CG) henceforth,explains the history and status of the Jordanian English literary canon: that the canon holds such a place is due to *an implicit consent* or a 'tradition' that has been developed as a result of the instructors'British/American education. In addition to indicating the nature of the literary syllabus, this view suggests a rationale for holding up this tradition. Omar refers to himself and others in the

2This is based on a review of literary syllabus for undergraduate students in the English departments in all Jordanian public universities.

3To maintain the confidentiality of the research participants, I use pseudonyms. I avoid using titles such Doctor. or Professor to maintain the natural flaw of the argument. I, however, insist that all of the research participants do deserve all respect and indebtedness for their time and constructive ideas.

same positions as graduates of the American universities who returned *with the curriculum in their minds*. Irecognise this comment on an 'institutional culture' that aims to maintain certain tradition regarding English literary education at Jordanian universities.Similarly, the instructors who identified themselves as part of the second generation (MG) emphasise this idea of canonicity. Khalid, a former undergraduate student during the early eighties and a current instructor of English literature in the same department, emphasises the continuation of this syllabus by recalling courses he studied, which remained the same.In the flowingquote,Khalidsuggests the long history of this syllabus, andimpliesoppositionto this tradition:

... actually, the study plan depends on the first people who established this department who mainly came from the USA and [UK] Britain when it was established probably in 1976/… the periods, the titles, the description of the courses/ teachers who established this department, and the courses I studied in the early eighties remain the same (instructors'interviews, modernist generation, (MG) henceforth).

The instructors take up diverse positions regarding the canon and canon formation. Although some provide a rationale for canon formation, generally, their responses reflect disagreement regarding adopting it at this particular department. This diversity delineates the status of the instructors in the department; whereas the CG strongly supports canon, the MG strongly opposes it. The MG perceives the tradition of the *old* professors' support of the canon as a way to maintain their power in the department. This section details these findings regarding the issue of the canon.

The claimeduniversality and standardisation represented by canonised literatures or writers provides a rationale for canon proponents. Kareem maintains:

... to be in the canon, you must be accepted by some scholars/ these scholars have certain criteria/ good literature has to be universal/ Shakespeare is great because he talks about universal issues, he talks about all kinds of issues that are bound to be found almost everywhere/ / this is what you might call human condition/ this is the canonical writer/… if you take gay writers, what kind of canon/ what are the criteria that you are going to use in order to include these writers in the canon/ I never read a novel or a poem/ a good poem by a gay writer/ (instructors' interviews, CG).

Another representative of CG explains how works become accepted in the canon. Scholars (agents) participating in canon formation work with informed criteria on which to judge the canonicity of a work. For Kareem, universality is the standard through which a work is canonised. Shakespeare, thus, is the ultimate example of canonical writers, since according to canon proponents, he holds an 'immortal talent' of understanding and expressing human passion, *everywhere and at any time*, assuming that all people are essentially identical. Non-canonical writers, on the other hand, such as gay, lesbian, and non-White writers, by the virtue of these identities, are not capable of feelingthe*humancondition*. Irealise that such positions assume humans form a homogeneous category that is identical to canonised themes. Moreover, this view seems to imply the idea of Bloom's (1994: 3) 'strangeness'and 'immortality' of the 'sacred texts', such as those of Shakespeare whose scripts "constitute a perpetual challenge to universal performance and criticism". The *hegemony* of 'standardisation' *guides* literature instructors in several 'Third World' educational institutions to adopt a very strict and conservative version of English literary tradition (Hall, 2005).

On such claims of 'standards' and criteria is the 'claim for universality. The hegemony of Universalists' claims constitutes a presumed normative discourse of canon supporters. For example, Omar says:

we have to admit that man is man everywhere/ man is governed by certain drives, desires, fears/ and those writers who address these universal desires are to be universal (instructors' interviews, CG).

This discourse seems to reflect how hegemonic assumptions attain the appearance of reality. *Man* [not a woman], *certain drives*, *universal desires*, *etc.*, all reflect a homogenising assumption of people regardless of age, gender, cultural and historical backgrounds and differences. Arguably, such assumptions and discourse take up the 'Other' as essentially identical and then they ignore the significant differences of the 'periphery' that the universality of the 'centre' seeks to eliminate (Ashcroft et al., 1999). Nevertheless, the canon is an 'imaginative category', and the backdrop of this category resonates with the classics of English literature (Guillory, 1993), which implies that these classics bear 'the moral truth and human passion' through which students explore 'moral reasons' and

'impulses of the human heart' (Morley as cited in Hall, 2005). Omar goes on:

we all know that certain writers are considered major ones such as Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, Yeats, Eliot/ if you are not to teach those what to teach/ you teach the major five Romantic poets/ Coleridge, Keats and Wordsworthare universally accepted as major Romantic poets, this goes on for the rest of the Ages… (instructors' interviews, CG).

Choosing to teach the *great* English writers is a reflection of an *institutional* practice that adoptsa'high cultural' approach to literary education. Non-canonical literatures are neither in the minds of the instructors nor on the curriculum. It seems that when referring to the canon, Omar has the classics in mind. These classics are however personified by the *great* English writers such as those in his list. Irecognise that such a connection is a reflection of an institutional practice that adopts 'high cultural' approach to literary education. Additionally, the reference to the classification of the these writers according to *ages* or *periods* indicates that literature is referred to as periods which are defined historically as a portion of time marked or defined by certain human conditions (Kouritzin, 2004). This portion of time is also attributed to 'representatives' as five major writers of each age. Such an elitist approach appears to place boundaries and divisions between canonical texts, 'the ideal productions' of culture and other products of culture. Arguably, such a proportionally and quantitatively defined approach to literature implies that 'the history of man', 'of the earth', etc., is marked off by certain distinctive features or characteristics. This implies that the canon is selected only on the basis of 'important figures', which, presumably, students take up as an arbitrary categorisation when applied to literature (ibid).

The instructors' responses demonstrate diverse and conflicting views of the idea of canonicity in terms of their support and opposition of the canon and their perceptions of how writers gain canonical status. The following passage of Kareem discusses the first of these:

...those canonised writers deserve to be there/ and it is left to some scholars to come up with an obscure work and prove that it has the qualities of a canonical work/ for example some writers die for a long, until they are discovered, uncovered by some writers who proved that they are great writers/ for example Donne had to remain in the grave for a long time until he was discovered by T. S. Eliot/ When T. S. Eliot discovered Donne, somehow, he introduced him within a history of European thought/ he made him a landmark in the history of European thought/ so it wasn't personal because nobody would have bought it/ that was I think very worthy because you cannot study the history of the European culture if you exclude John Donne (instructors' interviews, 1st).

This statement constitutes a form of consent to the current nature of the canon in terms of the names it includes, which emphasises the idea of the canon as a representation of the elitist approach performed by cultural agents. This echoesArnold's concept of culture as 'the best that has been thought and said in a society' (Hall, 1997a);a post-Enlightenment approach, which theorises culture as a process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development exercised by a privileged minority, and represented by canonised elites (Eagleton, 1996). Therefore, *John Donne, canonised not least by T. S. Eliot*, is introduced as a *landmark in the history of European thought*, where artistic abilities of other writers were taken to be anarchic and vulgar (Carey, 1992). Such an elitist approach seems to reflect the institutional tradition of literary education. More explicitly, Kareem maintains:

… how many in this modern world are really interested in great literature/ how many people in the Arab world read literature? how many people have ever heard of Al Motannabbi, Ibin Al Romi/ Al Jahith? I talk about the elite, whether you like it or not/ this age is not a reading age/ this is a seeing age/ take any pop singer in the Arab World, he is more famous than Al Motannabbi … (instructors' interviews CG).

I realise this opinion echoes the ideology of the ruling class in its estimation of what counts as the best to be read or heard, and by distinguishing it from the taste of the public. As such, the category of literature conflicts with the taste of contemporary people, who are preoccupied *by pop singers*. To a certain extent such a view reflects the status of the classic literatures, whether Arabic or English, outside academic institutions. However, this view of the current nature of the relationship between people and literature recalls a position of a privileged minority who distinguish themselves from tastes and values of 'ordinary people'. This also replicates opinions of the 18th century intellectual elites who held definite views on the new phenomenon of 'mass' culture, and which is reproduced as a 'mob' in 19th century, and as 'literacy' in 20th century. Such a modernist approach to arts in general and literature in

particular suggests that the privileged minority of the 'fine senses' seek to distinguish themselves from the 'ordinary people' and adopt an image of this 'ordinary' 'other' according to the wish of the imaginer (Carey, 1992). The conflict between the older generation who focus on English and Arabic classics, including the writers of the Abbasid Age, and the younger generation who are more attuned to pop culture and non-canonical literature might raise a question of the current nature of not only English departments, but also of the status of classic literatures *per se*. I deal with this issue more fully below.

Institutional 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1983) appears to be a recurring theme in the responses of several instructors' regarding maintaining the canon. For example, Schadiasaid:

... indirectly, our canon means that the old professors are the best while the new ones are not good/ the idea of standard is questionable/ … you say this like a safe zone for them/ if you try to impose on them something that they have not read, it threatens their integrity as professors/… I think this is one of the ways we have a conflict with them/ for example, my field about women of minorities in the U.S./ I used Bhabha, Foucault, Derrida, eclectic, and feminism/ you can classify me as a post-modernist… (instructors' interviews, MG).

The canon could be understood as a manifestation of 'institutional capital' (Bourdieu, 1983) and 'human agency' (Bandura, 1999). The opposition between the two generations recalls the crisis in theory represented by two schools of criticism during early twentieth century; those of F.R. Leavis and his student Terry Eagleton, which, according to Easthope (1991), also signifies 'a moment of crisis' in professional affiliation. While Leaves calls for maintaining the high cultural approach through the perseveration of the absolute value of a handful of writers, Eagletontalked about the 'Long Revolution' through which all forms of popular culture are to be taken up as worthy of study.

The relationship between the canon and its proponents implies that the canon is an agent for social and academic inclusions and exclusions. Thus, the canon is a source of power for those who insist on its application in its current, conservative and strict form. Similar relationship might be appropriated between the canon and its opponents who perceive their power through holding a counter-hegemonic discourse. Therefore, I deem the 'social function' and 'institutional protocols' constitute a similar problem for both groups by means ofprojectingthe canon as 'the constitution and distribution of cultural capital' (Gullory, 1993).This is to argue that, on the one hand,proponents of thecanon seek to achieve their perceived power through the validation and perpetuation of particular knowledge, or 'doxa', implying that the distribution of 'cultural capital', in particular, is intimately tied up with the normalising and universalising of a specific 'knowledge' for the purpose of maintaining a safe zone for its proponents. As Spivak (1991: 47) contends, 'canons appear to be the conditions of institutions and the effect of institutions'. On the other hand, canon opponents, who advocate recent literary criticism theories represented by Schadia's remark regarding *Bhabha, Foucault, Derrida, feminism* and *post-modernism*, perceive their power through adopting an 'anti-old' position. Advocating contemporary academic trends, like the ones mentioned by Schadia, I argue, is a manifestation of the other face of the coin (or another canon) as a source of perceived power.

A further analysis of the current canon suggests an intersection of the canon as a representation of cultural capital, relations of power as well as its role as a colonising agent. For example, Schadia said:

I think the canon is politicised/ who has the authority to classify the canonised texts or writers as the self and the un-canonisedones as the other/ why should they[CG]*categorize literatureaswhite and non-white/… they graduated in the early 1980s or late 1970s and when they came back they only knew the canon/they are stuck in the canon/… they are colonising us, the new ones/ they think that canon is power and therefore they stick to the classics (instructors' interviews, MG).*

This interpretation of the canon suggests a reflection of a wider dichotomy of the White/non-White 'divide', on the one hand, and a conflict of power relations, on the other. By identifying the proponents of the canon as similar to that of the 'self' and opponents as the 'other', Schadia goes beyond the direct opposition of the canon to show discontentregardinga tradition of classifying academics as the 'self' and the 'other' according to their academic affiliations . I recognise this debate over the canon as reflectinga monopoly of power relations, through which eachgroupholds themselves as the owners of the righteous positions. Although identifying the canon with this 'self'/'other' binary is contestable, since many works by minorities have gained the status of canonicity, Schadia's realisation of the problem

implies that the current Jordanian English literary canon signifies hegemonic and counter-hegemonic traditions through which each group perceives itself as having the authority over the selection of the 'proper' literary curriculum.As Pratt (2004) puts it, the counter hegemony signifies the creation of an alternative hegemony.In other words, as soon as those who are against the current canon gain enough power, they might create another canon, yet, with different identity.The shape of this expected canon might reflect the professional affiliations of the counter-hegemonic group.

In sum, I find it necessary to end this section with some closing remarks regarding the views of the participants as well as my readings through these views. To start with the last quotation, although Schadia makes a good point by implying that some graduates during 1970s and 1980sdo not update their knowledge, and, therefore, are supporters of the canon, we cannot generalise this opinion to all of these professors. Many professors who graduated in the seventies and eighties are very well-informed about the non-canonical literature. The reason why some of these 'conservative' professors avoid teaching lesbian or gay literatures, as indicated by Kareem, p. 17, is because Middle Eastern society does not accept the eroticism and profanity. As the case in the Western context, professors are careful when they teach these literatures to undergrads.

In my analyses regarding these views, I avoid over-generalisations beyond the immediate context. My interpretations are, however, inevitably tied to the horizon or value judgements of the dialogic exchange between the context and my theoretical underpinnings. As Bocock (1986: 181) claims that in accordance with the critical theory, "value-neutrality was dangerous, illusion, a chimera, something to be avoided, not to be treated as a guarantee of academic responsibility". In my encounter with post-colonial theory and post-modernity in literary, cultural, and educational studies – I sought to promote a critical attitude to axiomatic stances. It is crucial that I consciously direct my gaze onto embodiment of theory as all inquiries, interpretations, and propositions are meaningful and valid only within particular theories and discursive contexts, and within particular regimes of truth. As Ropers-Huilman (1999: 24) claims, "we [researchers] are fabricating worlds, not because we are falsifying data or lying about what we have learned, but because we are constructing truth within a shifting, but always limited discourse".In this sense, I challenged the practices and ideologies which inform essentialised constructions of discourse by adopting a discursive reading of the issue of canonicity ranging between local and global settings. As Said (1995) contends, the strengths of post-colonial theory lie in its attempt to grapple with issues of local and regional significance whilst retaining an emancipatory perspective.

Discussion

The evidence set out above suggests that the use of the English canon in a Jordan university creates a relationship between knowledge and power that constitutes a form of 'cultural capital' maintained by ideology. Knowledge and power are linked directly to education and institution. As Foucault (1978) sees it, people are inculcated into hegemonic systems of reasoning and the 'school' becomes a site where it is possible to resist dominant discursive practices. After Guillory, Ideem that the process of canon formation is the power of 'institutional protocols' that "preserved, reproduced, and disseminated [the canon] over successive generations" (Guillory, 1993: vii).

In this particular context, I find the dichotomous accounts of the two generations of instructors a reflection of what Guillory calls the 'politics of image', which reflects the role of the university as 'an interventionist mediator of representation'. More precisely, university members and legislators are a 'minority' in their beliefs regarding value; they are a class of cultural capital in themselves, and thus do not represent the social groups which they belong to. In short, the sole adoption of the Anglo-American literary tradition creates a problem of not only misrepresentation, but also one signifying a particular nexus of power relations (Foucault, 1978), which position the canon as a force for an enduring colonisation that marginalises and disadvantages those 'uncanonised' such as minority literatures.

For my understanding, any practice that perpetuates such a tradition creates sites of power that identify the canon as a 'self' and the rest of world's literatures as the 'other'. A further understanding of this tradition is that not only the 'other' remains as the 'other' *per se*, but alsoisadenied voice and agency. Under the guise of 'universalism' and standardisation, canon proponents (of any generation) will invent myriad systems where this formula of the 'self'/'other' identification continues to rob the voices of those who lack voice or agency.

In my attempt to theorise the current controversy over the canon, I recall Foucault's (1978, 1980d) understanding of the monopoly of power relations. Considering the discourse of the CG and MG, I observe that each group introduces themselves as agents of regulation and stability of 'what works' not by the force of their perceived power, but through the exercise of strategies of persuasions, and, more effectively, by deriving a hegemonic power informed by their locale in relation to the canon. Whereas CG perceive a supportive position as an informed power by virtue of their extensive knowledge of canonical writers or texts, MG, using a similar discourse, oppose the canon as they perceive their power through their academic affiliation of –post(s) and –sim(s) beyond the realm of the classic theories and texts. Therefore, both are not agents of power but are the effects of its circulation where power is not a unifying or totalising notion, but consist of a trajectory of multiple points in the matrix of the relations of power.

Foucault (1978) reminds us that individuals and groups exist into a network of power relations. Resistance or liberation is the ability to escape from relations of power. Accordingly, the demand for bringing about stability and resolution to dichotomy over the canon, and whether this stability is desired or moral,- we need to think of alternative ways that reconfigure, disrupt or 'deconstruct' the already defined, categorised and classified positions in relation to 'what works'.

Related to this, I understand that the idea of canonicity is complex in terms of how 'human agents' in academia could make themselves into regulative mechanisms according to the tenets of 'self theory'. Drawing on my findings, several observations could be brought into the discussion of how canonicity might be understood as a problem very much related to 'human agency'(Bandura, 1999) rather than merely related to the canonised text or writer. Human agency, understood as the capacity of human beings to make choices and impose those choices on the world, is embedded in 'self theory', which encompasses self-organising, proactive, and regulative mechanisms. It is exercised through shared beliefs of intermediaries or by a 'collective agency' that operates in group aspirations and incentive systems; thus, in the Jordanian context, canon proponents and opponents are "producers and products of social systems" (Bandura, 1999: 21).

In response to the problem of canonicity which endures in postcolonial contexts almost forty years after the Leavisite ramparts were toppled within UK and US universities (Easthope, 1991), the ancient questions remain: what could maintain stability and lead to resolution in this particular context; to what extent is this stability ethical; and what guarantees its validity? My contention is that particular ways of seeing the world and a perpetuatinginsistence on monolithic discourses as the right ones locate such discourses within the realm of ideology or the false consciousness of seeing the right. Therefore, I deem that canonicity, along with its identification as a problematic of representation, signifies an ideological issue that insists on fossilized form of knowledge, a 'doxa' that homogenises individuals through adopting normative, stable, and monolithic ontological, epistemological, and axiological concepts and models. The English literary canon in the current postcolonial context reflects a problem of an existing matrix of power relations between two dichotomous and competing discourses. Building on this, I suggest that the problem of canonicity is an 'ideolog[ical] problem'. Based on 'proxy agency' that relies on particular ways of perceiving what is 'proper', 'valid', or even 'ethical' knowledge.

To conclude, the problem of canonicity is an ideological symptom or what I refer to as 'canonical ideology'. To 'open the canon', my contention is, therefore, to develop a critical repertoire towards deconstructing and disrupting the normative discourses of'canonical ideologies' as a dynamic and less visible entity of power, which invalidates claims for a 'canonisedtruth'. Resisting the hegemony of the canon also requires the search for the possible ways to evade being trapped in dichotomous and competing discourses, which qualify and escape from the monopoly of the relation of power. Thus, in their claim for authority over literary tradition, CG and MG are subject to a similar critique: for no one can allocate themselves as owners of a definitive knowledge (or power) about a universe of cultural texts, which are contestable, dynamic, and hybrid.

As the act of resisting 'canonical ideologies'requires disruption of ideologies of superiority, the process of selecting literary texts or writers should consider what is worthy of any 'signifying practice' (Eagleton, 2008). It also requiresthe act to recover, celebrate, and validate alternative traditions, identities, and histories.Additionally,we need to continue challenging 'the selective tradition' (Hall, 1996b), that, within the terms of an effective dominant

culture, is always passed off as the significant past.In this sense and to achieve ethical stability and resolution, we need aneducationor‘re-education’ that radically transforms academic traditions. I understand the necessity of ‘re-education’ as a mission that projects autonomous academic identity that infuses a reconstruction of alternative realities and inscribe new origins and historical trajectories to provide a rich medium for literature and human artistic heritages those of their own and those of others.