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Hybrid Canons, Hybrid Theories:
The Political Dialectic of Literary Theory and Canon Criticism

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présenté par:

Megan Raymond

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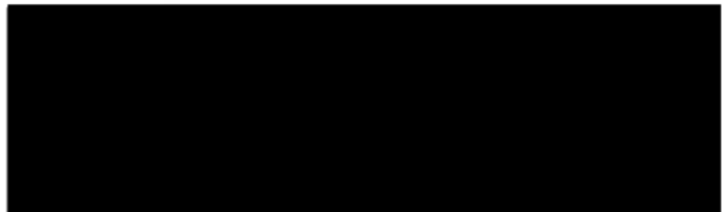

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I read canon debates of the 1980's and early 1990's as enacting the problems of representation and subjectivity raised by liberal pluralism, feminist theory and post-structuralism. Since the emergence of these theoretical methodologies, literary canons must continually redefine narrative structures that make subjects conform to canonical representations. Influenced by recent canon revisions (changes in curricula, syllabi, and anthologies, for example), literary theories and canon critiques have become progressively self-analytical, self-reflexive, and, thus, generally anxious about "selves." Institutional investments in literary canons are personal: canons have been believed to represent who we are and what we do as readers. To question canons is to challenge the assumptions of subjectivity and literary representation.

Chapter one juxtaposes Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (1994) and John Guillory's *Cultural Capital* (1993), exploring their positions on literary canons and political representation. Bloom's text invokes a language of death and destruction which I read as indicative of both canon and professional anxieties. Further examining these anxieties, I posit *Frankenstein* as a literary metaphor for rethinking canons as sutured, even monstrous, literary bodies. Counter-canons reclaim themselves as pieces taken from other bodies that now refuse to cohere into a singular narrative called "man" or "western literature." In chapter two, I apply Homi Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity to rethinking the dynamics of authority and identity embedded in literary canons. Hybridity argues that identifications of colonizer and colonized are dynamic and exchangeable such that one can exploit the language of the other. Chapter three examines prefaces to alternative and counter-canon literary anthologies, reading them as supporting and debunking narratives of canon formation. These hybridized narrative structures invest in discourses of literary history, tradition and genealogy in order to reconstruct literary subjectivities. Chapter four provides a

retrospective look at a selection of feminist literary criticism and theory anthologies. Questions of differences among various feminisms, political representations and theoretical affiliations surface in texts like Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) and Janet Todd's *Feminist Literary History* (1988). Ultimately, attempts to write a feminist literary history do not fully undermine canon forming practices, but rather reveal how literary canons function as powerful narratives for self-representation. Debates about how that self or selves should be represented and interpreted generate some of the crucial criticisms of and anxieties about literary canons.

Keywords: Literary canons, Harold Bloom, Hybridity, Anthologies, Feminist Literary Criticism

RÉSUMÉ DE SYNTHÈSE

Résumé de synthèse

Dans ce mémoire, j'interprète les débats sur les canons des années 80 et début 90 comme évoquant les problèmes de représentation et de subjectivité soulevés par le pluralisme libéral, les théories féministes et le poststructuralisme. Dans mon analyse des canons littéraires, j'adopte aussi quelques stratégies de lecture des théories féministes et du poststructuralisme. Influencées par des révisions récentes visant les canons (changements dans les curricula, syllabi, et anthologies, par exemple), les théories littéraires et les critiques de canons elles-mêmes sont progressivement devenues auto-analytiques, auto-réfléchies, et, ainsi, généralement anxieuses des "sujets". Les investissements institutionnels dans les canons littéraires sont personnels: les canons ont été perçus comme représentant ce que nous sommes et ce que nous faisons en tant que lectrices/eurs. De cette façon, les canons littéraires, après le poststructuralisme, le pluralisme libéral, et les théories féministes, doivent redéfinir continuellement les structures de narration canonique qui conforment les sujets aux types de représentation linguistique.

Le premier chapitre juxtapose *The Western Canon* (1994) de Harold Bloom et *Cultural Capital* (1993) de John Guillory en explorant leurs positions sur les canons littéraires et la représentation politique. Le texte de Bloom invoque un langage de mort et de destruction que j'interprète comme indication de ses propres anxiétés professionnelles. Ces anxiétés reflètent une inquiétude plus large à propos des divisions émergeant de l'intérieur du corpus collectif de la littérature. De plus, je suggère la pertinence de la figure

Frankenstein comme métaphore littéraire de réinterprétation des canons en tant que corps littéraires, suturés, rebelles, et monstruex. Les canons révisé (dits contre-canons) se proclament comme pièces prises d'autres corps qui refusent maintenant de s'intégrer en une seule narration appelée "homme" ou "littérature occidentale".

Le deuxième chapitre se base sur la conception de Frankenstein en tant que récit de généalogies troublées, histoires confuses et interprétations rebelles. Je suggère que la notion d'hybridité culturelle d'Homi Bhabha est une théorie appropriée pour repenser la dynamique de l'autorité et de l'identité. Ce concept affirme que les identifications colonisateur et colonisé sont liées si profondément que l'un peut exploiter le langage de l'autre. Repenser les canons comme hybrides littéraires déstabilise les narrations comme "le canon occidental", et dévoile les différences raciales, socio-économiques, et sexuelles inhérentes aux canons. Tout comme les anxiétés à propos des canons sont la cause et l'effet des critiques de canons, l'hybridité littéraire fonctionne comme partie du processus d'auto-identification et comme produit de celle-ci.

Le troisième chapitre étudie les préfaces d'anthologies littéraires alternatives et "contre-canoniques" comme supportant et démystifiant les récits de la formation des canons. Ces structures narratives hybrides investissent dans les discours canoniques de l'histoire et de la tradition littéraire dans le but de construire un sujet littéraire unique. Les anthologies alternatives chercent à définir à la fois un nouveau sujet-lectrice/eur et un

nouveau sujet de lecture. Ces anthologies tentent de résister aux catégories formelles et canoniques comme les identifications temporelles et géographiques. Elles explorent des particularités formelles alternatives d'auto-définition afin de résister aux pratiques canoniques tout en les exhibant.

Le quatrième chapitre jette un regard rétrospectif sur une sélection de critiques littéraires féministes et d'anthologies théoriques. Comme nous démontre le cas de Frankenstein et des préfaces d'anthologies littéraires, les tentatives d'articuler un sujet unifié tout en établissant la "différence" de ce même sujet peut contrecarrer la création d'une métanarration nécessaire à la constitution d'une tradition littéraire. Des questions de différences au sein de divers féminismes, la représentation politique et les affiliations théoriques font surface dans des texts comme *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) de Toril Moi et *Feminist Literary History* (1988) de Janet Todd. Finalement, les tentatives d'écrire une histoire littéraire féministe n'ébranlent pas complètement les pratiques de formation de canons, mais démontrent plutôt comment les canons littéraires fonctionnent en tant que puissantes narrations d'auto-définition. Les débats sur la représentation et l'intreprétation de ce sujet ou de ces sujets créent quelques-unes des critiques fondamentales et anxiétés à propos des canons littéraires.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Canons, if not accepted in all their irregular breadth, and if not seen in their organic solidarity with all kinds of literacy, are fearsome and unlovable creatures indeed.

-Virgil Nemoianu, "Literary Canons and Social Value Options," p. 244

In other words, the critique of the subject so crucial to postmodern theory necessarily affects the conception of canonizers and neglecters. In examining cultural scripts, critics are looking at who writes, who publishes, who reads, who interprets, who teaches, at particular times in particular places.

-Karen Lawrence, "Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Canons," p.5

Expanding on Lawrence's connection between critiques of the subject, modern literary theory and literary canons, I read the canon debates of the 1980's and 1990's as enacting the problems of representation and subjectivity raised by feminist theory, post-structuralism and liberal pluralism. Attempting to reveal the ways in which canonical metanarratives like "the western canon" erase differences and promote sameness, my reading strategy adopts gestures from post-structuralism in order to expose how sameness is contingent upon difference. The types of commonalties range from nationality to gender to sexual preference. Our dilemma as readers, critics and

writers of literary canons is to negotiate with an inevitable fall into linguistic representation. Thus, literary canons after post-structuralism, liberal pluralism and feminism must continually redefine the canonical narrative structures that demand subjects to conform to types of representation.

Recent theoretical debates about representation of the physical body offer a provocative framework for rethinking literary canon questions. Literary theories and canon critiques have become more self-analytical, self-reflexive and, generally, more anxious about "selves." These issues of selfhood or subjectivity are often figured by metaphors of the body. As the above citation from Nemoianou suggests, bodies that are non-unified, irregular in their breadth, or inorganic present frightening possibilities for literary canons--bodies of literature which are founded on solidarity, singularity and unity. As we will see, defensive reactions and anxieties about the loss of a literary canon frequently adopt a discourse of the unhealthy or contaminated physical body.

The body of canonical texts can also be read as representing a professional body, a political body, a cultural or national body, and/or a gendered body. Critics such as Harold Bloom and John Guillory explore the problems of reading literary canons as political representations. Bloom's book *The Western Canon* (1994) adopts a language of death and destruction to describe the state of literary canons. In Bloom's case, the fall of a literary canon is a professional anxiety. Institutional investments in literary canons are personal: canons have been believed to represent who we are and what we do

as readers. Bloom responds to changes in literary canons with an attack on contemporary critics and their politicized reading practices.

In *Cultural Capital* (1993), John Guillory argues that the literary canon debate is actually a problem within the discourse of liberal pluralism. Rhetorics of pluralism invite a whole host of representation issues. Instead of individual bodies, we have one big indeterminate mass of bodies, otherwise known as the popular and rhetorically powerful image of the American melting pot. As we will see in alternative and counter-canon literary anthologies, writers and readers struggle to distinguish themselves from this pluralist discourse and hope to regain their difference from other political bodies, be they defined by race, sexuality, gender or socio-economic class. Guillory observes an "incommensurability" of identifications which generate multiple differences among subjectivities and challenge forms of literary representations. Thus, pluralism falls short in its attempts to find a catch-all narrative, discourse or image for representation.

Political bodies that refuse to unite under a single narrative or slogan remark how united bodies are rooted in fundamental differences. Pluralism fails in trying to represent both the pieces and the whole. This incommensurability of identities presents a threatening situation in which the stories of the parts exceeds the meaning of the whole. A canonical body of texts becomes a collection of pieces of other literary bodies stitched together by a metanarrative like "western civilization." As the pieces of the canonical body come apart, the suturedness of a western canon is exposed. Mary

Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) provides a provocative metaphor for thinking of alternative canons as rebellious bodies. When the monster recognizes his difference from the other people around him, he seeks his own history or narrative, a quest that ultimately leads him to realize his lack thereof. Read alongside literary canon issues, *Frankenstein* shows the seams of difference and reveals the heterogeneity of "oneness." Whereas a traditional western canon denies its constructed nature, modern anthologies expose it and assert difference and fragmentation.

The name "Frankenstein" signifies both the creator and the created. Homi Bhabha characterizes this dynamic of exchange as hybridity. In post-colonial theories the colonizer and colonized are inextricably bound such that one can use the other's discourse. Bhabha's theory provides a powerful concept for rethinking subjectivity and for understanding the power relations of literary canons. Historically, the colonization process relied on language acquisition through reading English books. Thus, establishing a set of "colonization texts" became a part of forming literary canons. Although British imperialism was motivated by national identity, it often had to compromise the "Englishness" of this literary identity by translating texts into native peoples' languages. The identities of colonizer and colonized become blurred such that power relations are disrupted and hierarchy is inverted. Hybridity does not offer a complete dissolution of hierarchy but rather a constant exchange and interactions among identifications. Traditional canon supporters like Bloom find this exchange threatening and anxiety provoking

because one risks losing an authority that depends on a fixed and unique identity. England counteracted cultural hybridity by emphasizing English family genealogies and "pure" bloodlines. Similarly, traditional literary canons or defenders anxiously reassert a singular narrative with a clearly traceable tradition. As we will see in what follows, the concern with bloodlines and familial bonds is a variation on the discourse of contaminated bodies which pervades canon criticism and canon forming practices.

Establishing a literary tradition describes both the cause and the effect of canon formation. As hybrid forms of literary canons, alternative and counter-canon anthologies adopt similar discourses of history and genealogy. Through a close reading of a selection of literary and critical anthologies, I will examine how they both disrupt and adopt formal features of canonical narratives. Unlike "the western canon," these anthologies expose and exploit their fragmented and sutured status. The prefaces to anthologies articulate an anthology's difference from another text or from a larger literary tradition. Moreover, prefaces often co-opt and manipulate the rhetoric of liberal pluralism to distinguish themselves as subjects ignored by or outside of traditional literary representation. Anthologies work like Dr. Frankenstein: they reanimate "dead" works or recuperate lost texts, reassemble the pieces into a narrative of self-creation or self-emergence, and, finally, construct that narrative in such a way, that even as it fails at full representation, it provokes readers to reread and rewrite those literary histories. Reformulating subjectivities also demands revision of formal features of canons such as

temporal, national or geographic categorizations. I will argue that rethinking literary canons in terms issues of subjectivity will impinge upon conventional narrative structures, forcing these narratives to buckle, fold and reshape themselves in order to represent previously unrepresented subjects.

Beginning with seminal works like Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1985), feminist literary criticism places questions of subjectivity at the forefront of its canonizing practices. This privileging of subjectivity demonstrates the critical role feminist theory and literary criticism plays in rethinking literary canons. Gilbert and Gubar's text examines the crucial role writers like Mary Shelley and Virginia Woolf play in creating a feminist literary tradition. Both writers develop their position in literary history through rereading and reading against canonical authors like John Milton, for example. To establish a feminist literary tradition, anthologists and editors recognize the importance of having past, present and future readers. Yet, feminist literary criticism faces its own canonizing dilemmas: agreement on canonical feminist texts, definitions of feminist subjects, and various reading practices. Debates over French theory and Anglo- feminisms and questions of racial politics in American feminisms serve as two examples of conflicts about shared histories and common genealogies. Janet Todd in *Feminist Literary History* (1988) describes a Mafia mentality emerging in late 1980's American feminism. Her depiction of a family "gone bad" presents another variation on the discourse of contaminated and unhealthy bodies which also echoes Bhabha's concept of hybridity as disrupted family lineages.

Like the problems of "western civilization" metanarratives, feminist theory and criticism also faces rebellions and disruptions in a unifying feminist narrative: different subjects demand different representations. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that in order to escape these problems, subjectivity can only be defined as a lack of subjectivity. However, attending to these differences and attempting to imagine representation and subjectivity beyond conventional structures can be a frightening prospect. Here, Frankenstein, a subject who lacks a history or an identity, best metaphorizes the dilemmas of rethinking literary canons and reconceiving literary subjects.

Chapter One
Harold Bloom, Frankenstein, and The End of Western Literature: Theorizing Literary Canons in the 1990's

No longer required to sound authoritative and magisterial, the voice of the individual critic can be more distinctive and personal.

-Introduction, *Columbia Literary History of the United States,* p. xvii.

I find it absurd and regrettable that the current criticism of Shakespeare--'cultural materialist' (Neo-Marxist); 'New Historicist' (Foucault); 'Feminist'--has abandoned the quest to meet that challenge [that of universal performance and criticism].

-Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon,* p.3

It is 1994. Two events take place: three years after finishing my B.A, I enroll in my first semester of graduate studies in English.; almost a decade after the heated canon debates have subsided, Harold Bloom publishes *The Western Canon.* A reader may be tempted to ask the following questions: what is the connection between these two events?; and, why wait so long? The answer to the former question is that both moments share a belatedness which, as we will see, is endemic to literary canon discussions. The latter question is more difficult to answer, but Bloom and I share a sense of frustration with "something going on in literary studies" and react defensively to having to justify "the value of doing literature" to friends, a public, or a government. Although we have different opinions on the ability of literary theories to aid in this endeavour, we share an interest in literary canon debates. Canon critiques, though seemingly hackneyed and trite, provide an ideal forum for rethinking connections among critics, readers, and writers , and, literary, cultural, and political representations.

Canon defenders like Alan Bloom, Dinesh D'Souza, Harold Bloom and E.D. Hirsch argue that liberal education and humanities degrees need to be standardized and defined, be it through a cultural dictionary, a list of great books, or a set of moral values. Although canon debates have always focused on the contents of curricula, syllabi and anthologies, these prescriptive approaches to literary canons ignore some of the underlying problems of canons. Not only is it curious that some critics are more comfortable than others in prescribing a remedy but this lack of caution about prescription avoids the questions of subjectivity and representation. Certainly, who gets to speak for whom is a crucial question for literary canons as well as for political debates. Both feminist theory and post-structuralism present provocative and helpful approaches to considering the dilemmas of representation and subjectivity in relation to literary texts. Often these issues figure themselves in metaphors of unhealthy, contaminated and monstrous bodies. Because no single cohesive narrative can contain disparate literary texts, canons and anthologies can be read as sutured texts or as bodies of literature comprised of parts from other literary traditions. Discussed later in this chapter, the work of Barbara Johnson and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* also raise similar issues in relation to figuring bodies in terms of gendered and literary subjectivities.

Given that readers, critics and teachers intend to evaluate literary texts in terms of genres, periods, theories we also have to consider the value and definition of literature. When readers and critics set out to determine the boundaries of literature or even to establish English degree requirements, we

are inevitably drawn into the disputed territory of literary canons. I have left the term "literature" unqualified and unspecified, and I do not attempt to present a final word on what its definitions and values are. To refuse to define the term is not necessarily to avoid the specifics of literary canons altogether. Rather, I would read this inability to specify the contents of a literary canon as symptomatic of the very nature of the canon debate. Debaters of literary canons are neither a taciturn nor cohesive group, yet, there remains some agreement about canon forming practices: "All canons rest on exclusion; the voice they give to some can be heard only by virtue of the silence they impose on others. But it is not just silencing by exclusion; it is a silencing by inclusion as well: any voice we can hear is by that very fact purged of its uniqueness and alterity" (Attridge 226). As Derek Attridge suggests, literary canons and their admissions practices have been tacitly condoned in the name of a vague pragmatics, that is, canons are a simple pedagogical necessity. The texts included in a literary canon need to present a unified front. However, in what follows, I suggest that these unities of aesthetics, politics, gender, or sexualities have always been under question and that appeals to a pragmatics of pedagogy, do not in and of themselves offer a full justification. It is the content of teaching that is in question. Teaching an appreciation of literary aesthetics instead of cultural politics is not a viable justification for "doing literature" as a profession.

Hence, critics like D'Souza or Bloom strive to reclaim the prelapsarian days of teaching the canon of literature as pure love of literary language. So,

who is responsible for the fall? More importantly, are these rebellious readers considered to speak in a single voice, be it literary theorist or left wing liberal as Bloom or D'Souza would have us believe? Clearly, the debate over the contents of a "Great Works of Literature" still rages. My concern in this chapter is to consider why some readers and critics are more cautious about prescriptive canon critiques than others.

In beginning to write about literary canons, one must engage with a barrage of critics, readers, writers, educators, politicians and theologians. Although thinking about canon questions generates a great deal of anxiety about critical alliances and literary preferences, it has become clear to me that canon debates themselves are more self-referential. Canon critiques also focus on questions of subjectivity. While canon criticism takes place, a simultaneous practice of critiquing canon criticism emerges. Delving into discussions of literary canons, be they in the form of course syllabi, university curricula or literary anthologies, one discovers a language of anxious self reflection, that is, to think critically about canons is also to engage in a communal, professional self-scrutiny. Institutional investments in literary canons are personal; canons have been believed to represent who we are and what we do as readers. This self-claiming has never been more prevalent than in the 1980's and early 1990's with institutionalization of literary theories and the proliferation of literature anthologies. Certainly, we have always talked about literature and there have always been debates about what people should read. What the 1980's and early 1990's present us with, however, is a

very self-conscious way of talking about forming literary canons. The stakes for literary representation in academic institutions have never been higher.

These debates over literary representation have generated a certain timbre in canon criticism which I call a form of self-referential anxiety. Critics talk in an abstract way about "the Western Canon" or "the Literary Tradition" while in actuality the problem is one of self-definition. Yet, the problem is that there is not a single self to define, and, more importantly, the very act of agreement and definition raises more questions for readers and critics. Thus, canon anxieties are both the cause and the effect of literary canon debates.

This opening chapter explores how Harold Bloom and John Guillory unconsciously or self-consciously engage with the conflicts between literary canons and political representation. Bloom's book, *The Western Canon,* presents some interesting issues for considering the role of literary theory in canon debates. Bloom's book seems belated in its engagement with the curriculum revisions of the 1980's. So, one asks, why Bloom's book now? He does not seem particularly interested in rethinking humanities core curricula or the proliferation of alternative canons, as manifested in counter-canon anthologies--the material that fueled a great deal of canon questioning and criticism. There is a strange sense of a delayed reaction with Bloom's book, a sense of belatedness that, as Bill Readings remarks in his book *Introducing Lyotard* (1991), is endemic to literary canons. Readings writes: "Canon, that is, marks the irrepresentability of origin, condemns our readings to an irrevocable, unbridgeable belatedness. The canon should not stand as a

concept of value but as the figure for the encounter of all readings with an immemorial past, an encounter that may give reading itself the status of an event, an experiment" (139). Certainly, Bloom waxes nostalgic for an "immemorial past" when academics "used to" read texts solely for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation, a practice which he now sees as defunct in a field overrun by literary theory and cultural politics. In contrast to Readings' suggestion to think beyond canons as embodying value, Bloom advocates embracing a past of literary canons when the search for value motivated reading of canonical literature. But, Bloom is angry and rueful because he can never get back to that time. He entitles his opening chapter "An Elegy for the Canon"; however, he continues on to assert that his book will not mourn the loss of the canon but rather attempt to preserve it. We find his frustrated sense of belatedness motivating a vehement and vitriolic attack against the present, a moment in which "the School of Resentment" rules the literary air waves. The "School of Resentment," according to Bloom, is comprised of a heinous group of "neo-feminists, pseudo-marxists, and francophile reductionists" (99).

While it is tempting to return fire at Bloom or, at least, be amused by his unabashed name-calling, his rhetorical strategy raises some interesting questions about the nature of canon debates. Acting as an advocate for something called "The Western Canon," Bloom shifts the debate about great books into the political arena. Here he is more embroiled in theoretical issues than may be first imagined, because he recognizes a crucial development in

literary canon debates, that is, exploring connections between types of readers and types of reading practices. Practicing his own form of reductionism, Bloom confidently asserts these "types," then conflates a type of reader with a type of reading practice. For example, he argues: "Lear, image of paternal authority, is not a favorite of Feminist critics, who easily categorize him as the archetype of patriarchal coercion" (66). Bloom first decides that the title "feminist" needs to be capitalized, creating the image of a unified and organized body of women who have registered with some imaginary, theoretical name-validating bureau. Then, relying on one to one correspondences, he reaches a simple conclusion: feminists read for patriarchal oppression, therefore, all feminist critics would dislike Lear. Surprisingly, personal taste emerges as the hinge pin of Bloom's argument. Liking or not liking a character becomes the predominant factor informing decisions about literary texts. So, while Bloom is willing to stake his whole book on an ideal of aesthetic value and appreciation of great literature, he also admits that those tastes must conform to personal standards or, more significantly, personal politics. According to Bloom's formulations, Marxists would not enjoy a book about Capitalists, Irish Protestants would prefer not to read a book about or by Irish Catholics. However, we can conclude that Bloom's argument does assume that some aesthetic judgments can be motivated by politics.

The point at which Bloom's argument collapses in on itself is where the argument of John Guillory 's *Cultural Capital* (1993) begins. Guillory

argues that, in current canon debates, decisions about aesthetics have resulting political consequences; namely, that choosing texts to be included in syllabi, curricula, or literary anthologies depends on decisions about the representations of people (5). This situation affecting canon questions, Guillory reads as a direct effect of the politics of liberal pluralism. The result, Guillory argues, is that texts become transparent. Where in Bloom's argument, canonical texts epitomize a culture's highest aesthetic achievements, Guillory observes that under the politics of liberal pluralism, canonical texts serve as representatives for various political bodies, be they African-Americans, women, or the working class. The mistake that Bloom makes, however, is to read these various identifications as mutually exclusive. The feminist who reads *King Lear* will only look for instances of patriarchal oppression, and, thus, questions of race, class, or sexuality, would be negligible to her. Such is not the case, however, which suggests that a hybrid of reading strategies informed by many theoretical approaches, will yield various results and will present a variety of demands on literary texts. Thus, as Guillory suggests, an "incommensurability" of identifications such as class and gender that frustrates attempts to provide "quick fixes" to representation issues (11): what works for one marginalized group will not work for another. In attending to all the possible identifications among texts, readers and cultures, a figure like "the western canon" faces an overproduction of meaning, which is evidenced by a proliferation of alternative anthologies which will be discussed in the third chapter.

Quite simply, a narrative of western civilization cannot explain or hold together all the disparities among literary texts. Guillory uses an amusing example from E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*. He observes:

> Nothing can be more alienating (in the full range of Marxian senses) than to read through Hirsch's list, from which I excerpt the following sequence for comment: Agamemnon, aggression, Agnew (Spiro), agnosticism, agreement (grammar), agribusiness, air pollution, air quality index, Akron, Ohio. From Agamemnon to Akron, Ohio is, to be sure, quite a stretch; it is Western Culture on the rack. Nothing *makes sense* of the sequence, least of all its origin in the house of Atreus. (his italics 36)

Hirsch's *Dictionary for Cultural Literacy* is of a different genre from Bloom's *Western Canon*, yet, both texts attempt to perform the same cultural repair work; namely, we have all read the same books in the same way (with an eye toward western civilization) and have achieved a collective and shared body of knowledge. We will see a similar investment in uniform narratives in the third chapter on anthology prefaces. But, as Guillory's humorous commentary suggests, these lists or collections of texts are painfully or frustratingly incongruous in relation to one another.

Bloom's response to diversity is to preach simplicity. Like his appeal to aesthetic value, Bloom's description of the western canon is deceptively simple and extraordinarily confusing. He writes, "William Shakespeare is the Western Canon" (75), and then, fifteen pages later writes, "Shakespeare is

everyone and no one" (90). Using simple substitution, we can deduce the following: "The Western Canon is everyone and no one." How can Bloom allow these illogical or contradictory statements to be present in his argument? Moreover, he has invested heavily in assigning the western canon knowable and concrete examples, especially when he concludes with a list of "to be read" books. Certainly, he does not believe this list simultaneously represents everything and nothing. Despite his attempts to fix the western canon into a determinate, finite set of books, Bloom has generated only a possibility, not a certainty.

Depending on the reader, however, it could mean nothing or everything. To his chagrin, Bloom's book ends up supporting one of Guillory's crucial points: the literary canon is a fiction (30). Guillory argues that "the canon is never other than an imaginary list; it never appears as a complete and uncontested list in any particular time and place, not even in the form of the omnibus anthology, which remains a selection from a larger list which does not itself appear anywhere in the anthology's table of contents" (30). Consequently, no one particular group has access to "the master list," because there isn't one to discover. However, some feign access to it or argue that others have access to it and deny them access to it.

Bloom himself imagines a group of readers who have schooled themselves in his version of canonical literature, and, as a result, this group has a type of common identity, much like Bloom's vision of a "School of Resentment." They share critical approaches, and interests in the same texts,

writers, and politics. At the very least, they agree on a body of knowledge. Canon debates have attached crucial qualifiers to ideas like "shared," "literature," and, most importantly, "identity." Constant revision of this shared, western canon identity, however, compromises what Bloom would consider the canon's core identity: "Pragmatically, the 'expansion of the Canon' has meant the destruction of the Canon, since what is being taught includes by no means the best writers who happen to be women, African, Hispanic, or Asian, but rather the writers who offer little but the resentment they have developed as part of their sense of identity" (7). In Bloom's opinion, these writers are not the best at their craft but rather the most angry. This anger, according to Bloom, entitles them to admittance to "the canon" which forces the canon to change its definition. Bloom, however, in addition to ignoring the cultural, economic, and social conditions that make writers resentful, also assumes that these resenters "want in," despite the fact that the "western civilization" metanarrative is the cause of their resentment.

Thus, imagining different canons also invites a rethinking of communities. As a result of current theorizations and readings of class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, there has been a proliferation of highly specified literary anthologies. For example, texts such as the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (*NALW*) (1985), *Chloe Plus Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Literature From the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (1994), or *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women* (1994), suggest a desire to

increase visibility for previously marginalized or suppressed subjects and their histories. A tone of caution pervades the prefaces of these texts with respect to their own canon forming discourses. My contention is that critical self-awareness of prescriptive practices reveals the effects of different forces both inside and outside literary institutions.

While many literary theories have influenced how we read literature (for example, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, queer theory) feminist theory and post-structuralism and their resistance to "institutional domestication" have also raised questions about representation and interpretation of literary canons. One critic observes their influence on literary practices: "[t]he two major critical challenges to the established canon of literature--indeed, to the idea of a canon--have come from feminists and (other) 'cultural critics'" (Reizbaum 165). The time period from the early 1980's to the present is worth critical attention for canon debates because it marks what has been considered the advent of modern literary theory in literature departments, more specifically, the popularization of reading literary theory alongside literature. The cause for concern among critics like Harold Bloom or Dinesh D'Souza is that students have chosen to learn theory instead of literature. The result, they would argue, is a devaluation of literary canons and knowledge of world literatures within English departments. More often than not, literary theorists are portrayed as foreigners invading English departments and debunking tradition with their abstract continental philosophies against which the "School of Resentment," to borrow Bloom's phrase, protests. The works of

French theorists such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Luce Irigaray, to name a few, has gained substantial currency in literary communities. However, to believe that questioning the position and value of literature did not exist before the 1980's would be naïve and short-sighted. The history of literary criticism in the form of debates engaged by Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, and F.R. Leavis offers an extended historical perspective that, although currently outside the scope of this thesis, demonstrates the longevity of canon discussions. As we saw with Bloom, theorizing literature seems to many antithetical to a practice of simply reading literature. On the other hand, Gerald Graff's observation about critical practice is worth recalling:

> By this definition, whereby 'theory' denotes any examination of the assumptions underlying practice, theory encompasses Aristotle, Sidney, Johnson, Arnold, Trilling, Wilson, and Leavis as much as Umberto Eco, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida. In other words, we have always had theory, and with it a certain jargon that sets itself at a reflexive distance from common-sense practice. (22)

The jargon, a language for interpreting literature, has always already been there and it is not historically bound to 1980's post-structuralism or feminisms. The jargon of the latter is definitely different, but it functions similarly in making critical judgments about literary practices.

What I see as the result of feminist and post-structuralist literary theories is a heightened awareness of the political implications of representation in literary canons and the reading of those canons. To what

extent is anti-canon rhetoric undermining the concept of literary canons? My understanding of the political effects of canon formation is also influenced by the work of post-colonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Literary theories like Spivak's and Bhabha's have been criticized for subscribing to imperialist paradigms like western literature or continental philosophy.[1] Their work highlights the difficulties of performing critical analyses of race, sexuality, nationality and class identifications while still challenging our understandings of cultural and literary representations.[2] The issues raised by post-colonial criticisms aid my project of analyzing early theoretical critiques of literary canons because they present the following: one, further complications to a previously naturalized category of universal subjectivity and, two, rigorous attention to how to speak about subjectivities that are constructed by multiple identifications of race, class, sexuality and gender. More specific to literary canons, how and in what theoretical

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[1]Critics like Barbara Christian observe "For I feel that the new emphasis on literary critical theory is as hegemonic as the world it attacks. I see the language it creates as one which mystifies rather than clarifies our condition, making it possible for a few people who know that particular language to control the critical scene--that language surfaced, interestingly enough, just when the literature of peoples of color, of black women, of Latin Americans, of Africans began to move to 'the center'" (41).It is clear that the theory she wants to reprimand is actually deconstruction, and, in a broad sense, feminist theory, though she launches into a heavy critique of French feminism's "monolithism" (45). Christian's complaint is that theory erases localized subjectivities. Here, I agree with Christian's desire to create spaces for new subjectivities that have yet to be articulated. While only literature offers this opportunity to Christian, I would venture to say that she would agree that people be allowed to speak for themselves in their own languages, and, thus, I offer her words in return as a reminder that literary theories like literary canons can offer to readers another set of languages and voices: "for my language is very much based on what I read and how it affects me, that is, on the surprise that comes from reading something that compels you to read differently" (Christian 48).

discourses do readers speak about both specific and general reading practices? If literary canons had come to represent a generalized reading experience, what transpires when those readers' experiences are particularized? We have come to anticipate biases behind a western canon: "its genius was said to be its universal character, its ability to speak to the modern condition" (Hollinger 88). With the concept of universality deconstructed and our condition post-modernized, are there new, alternative ways to construct readers and writers outside of literary canons? As I argue in chapter three, the narrative of canonizing carries too much cultural and literary power to be dismissed completely; however, alternative anthologies seek to disrupt categories which a metanarrative like "the western civilization" mistakenly naturalizes or essentializes.

These changes, however, have not been welcomed by guardians of western canons. Bloom's book, for example, is filled with powerful images of destruction and chaos brought on by "anti-canonizers." Altering a literary canon or expanding its boundaries becomes a very personal project, because it affects the definition of professional, literary studies. Concomitant with this language of destruction are metaphors of unhealthy bodies. One can think about the canon as a figure for nationalism, for patriarchal order, western civilization, or hegemonic capitalistic ideology. In light of these proliferating

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[2] Interesting explorations of these issues can be found in the following recent cultural studies texts: *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, edited by Andrew Parker et. al., and *Imperial Leather* by Anne McClintock.

metaphors of domination, a desire for recapturing control over one's self emerges. In addition to rethinking reading bodies of literature, feminist and post-structuralist theories have worked on rereading representations of physical bodies as well. The quote from Virgil Nemoianu's essay entitled, "Literary Canons and Social Value Options," reads the process of canon formation as constructing bodies of literature. In his essay Nemoianu employs an extended metaphor of a literary canon as a physical body:

> What is incontestable is the slow and continuous and multidirectional movement inside the canonical body. Outside pressures. . . are frequent and continuous, but their weight and decisiveness is questionable. . . Those who establish the communication between the internal organs of canonicity and external pressures are not chiefly scholars, but new writers and works, that is the producers of aesthetic events. They are the ones who both collect outside influences (political, social, religious, etc.) and process them or adapt them into the kind of patterns of sensibility and imagery, value and cognition. . . (224).

What kind of "canonical body" is Nemoianu thinking of here? It is made of pieces of literature, different genres, different historical periods, critical and literary work, authors and scholars, men and women, Marxist sympathizers, feminist readers, and the list of body parts or organ donors can go on. The opening quote argues that the canonical body is a fearsome and unlovable one, which points to one of the most famous feared and unloved monsters of literature, Frankenstein. Not only was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

part of a canonically "othered" genre, the gothic, but, her text challenges ideas of authorship and literary sources. Shelley drew from a vast range of texts, from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Darwin's *Origin of Species* to Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. Moreover, Shelley's prefaces and introductions have been combed over by literary scholars in order to determine the role of her husband in the text's production, and to read her feelings about authorship, and her relations with other Romantic poets. My concern here is not to engage in the debate of whether Shelley's text is considered canonical, but, rather to propose Frankenstein (both the novel and the monster) as a provocative metaphor for examining the process of canon formation.

Prompted by Nemoianu's allusion, my reading of literary canons as Frankensteinian monsters presents the issues of authorship and representation which are at stake for canon critics, feminist critics and post-structuralist critics alike. The disturbing and slightly grotesque image of a literary canon as a body created from bodies pieced together from dead authors (and living ones) introduces the possibility that canon forming discourses are not about the final product, a singular unified body of work, but rather, about the disjointed process of their own becoming. As Maggie Kilgour observes: "*Frankenstein* is a central metaphor of the gothic genre as it thematises, and ultimately demonises, its own creation" (196). Much in the same way that *Frankenstein* gothicizes its own creation, its literary genre and

the literary tradition to which it belongs, the discourses of canons recognize and disguise their fragmentedness with overarching narratives.[3]

While it may seem that Nemoianu's construction of literary canons as Frankenstein's monsters is an isolated reference, I would like to introduce another essay that reveals similar confrontations between literary institutions and literary monsters. Barbara Johnson's essay, "My Monster/My Self" argues for the ways in which female authorship challenges the institution of parenthood in both a literal and literary sense (144). She reads the anxieties of authorship as generated by two events: women beginning to write novels and the changing models for parenting. Johnson's reading of *Frankenstein* is not particularly extensive or historical. Her interest lies in viewing Shelley's work as transgressive of literary norms. The traditional role of the parent or the author of a text is radically questioned and gothically depicted in Shelley's "hideous progeny." According to Johnson, Shelley's text is an autobiography that enacts the failure to write autobiography: "*Frankenstein* can be read as the story of autobiography as the attempt to neutralize the monstrosity of autobiography. Simultaneously a revelation and a cover-up, autobiography would appear to constitute itself as in some way a repression of autobiography" (146). To attempt to make a text, be it a gothic novel, a human hybrid or a literary canon in one's own image is to create monsters.

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[3] Similarly, Bloom's coinage of "The School of Resentment" is his own fictitious creation, his Frankenstein's monster that terrorizes his world of literature. "The School of Resentment" does not exist, readers do not identify themselves as its students; yet, for Bloom, it embodies all that is wrong with literary studies today.

Failing to write the self as a coherent narrative or a unified body, or moreover, suppressing the incoherencies in favor of totalities results in a writing based upon its own "unwriting." Johnson's reading of *Frankenstein* suggests the impossibility of a literary canon trying to represent or to write its self. The question is what is the self or the subject of a literary canon? As the tremendous amount of canon criticism and debate suggests, this question cannot have a single answer. According to Harold Bloom and Matthew Arnold, literature in the literary canon figures as western culture. Or, as critics such as John Guillory have pointed out, a literary canon comes to represent something called western civilization, which is different from western culture (39-55). Or, for feminist readers like Gilbert and Gubar and Kate Millett, a literary canon represents a patriarchal hegemony. A canon, as manifested in the production of literary anthologies, is a Frankenstein's monster, a collection of selves and ideologies stitched together by creator(s) who work to create a representative text. However, if that image is not cohesive from the outset and the belief in a unified subjectivity deconstructed, then the product, a literary canon, can only be a mere reflection of its fragmented structure, a sutured text.

The image of the suture also evokes the stitched together nature of a literary or theoretical text. Johnson remarks upon Dinnerstein's description of the creative process: "My book is roughly sutured, says Dinnerstein, and it is threatening" (149). My suspicion is that Johnson can also include her text in the sutured category and could also consider her text a possible threat.

Johnson's own text crosses many different disciplinary boundaries; she uses French literature (Mallarmé), American Literature (Poe), literary theory (Paul de Man), African American women writers (Zora Neale Hurston), current events (abortion), Romantic poets (Wordsworth). What would be the threat of Johnson's text? For 1987, she is working with controversial discourses of the time, feminist theory and deconstruction. But, her position within those theoretical movements is more convoluted; she is a woman at Yale, a traditional "old boys" school, and she is studying French theory at an English institution. Through the cross-disciplinarity of her critical approach, Johnson demonstrates how multiple identifications frustrate a single narrative or definition of her position as a critic.

The citation from *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (*CLHUS*) (1988) which opens this chapter highlights the personal role of the critic. Exempted from having to speak in an "authoritative and magisterial voice" which would assume access to universal truths, Johnson calls herself a "white deconstructor" (172) in order to delineate aspects of her subjectivity as a reader marked by race, gender and a type of reading. While Johnson aligns herself with a delegitimized position in relation to the Yale literary academy, she only vaguely gestures toward the possible ways in which her position is legitimately delegitimized by a larger literary community. She wants to mark her difference from the white, male structuralists, yet does not consider that their deficiencies become her points of identification. Similarly, if a literary canon is upheld as a model for reading and writing practices, then those who

de-authorize the model and create alternative and deformed canons also be read as supporting the original model. As we will see in chapter four, Lillian Robinson discusses this dynamic in relation to alternative feminist canons.

Believing literary theory has left literary canons in its wake, Bloom's talk of death and destruction of the western canon suggests that the time of our doom is at hand. Or, more importantly, the instruments of destruction have fallen into the wrong hands: namely, those writers driven by resentment now have access to the same canonizing narratives and structures (anthologies, for example), and can create an endless number of counter-canons, thereby, propelling "the western canon" into relativism. Whereas Frankenstein offers a literary metaphor for the construction of a body of canonical literature as a sutured text whose pieces are collected from various genres, authors, time periods, and cultures, Homi Bhabha's theory of linguistic and cultural hybridity uses a similar trope but with an emphasis on the reclamation and readaptation of a colonizer's imposed language.

Chapter Two
Homi Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity: Colonization, Genealogy, and Literary Canons

> When the words of the master become the site of hybridity--the warlike sign of the native--then we may not only read between the lines but even seek to change the often coercive reality that they so lucidly contain.
>
> --Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders", p. 162

It has become commonplace to quote Audre Lorde's famous dictum "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 99), when attempting to reconceptualize traditional paradigms like literary canons, patriarchal orders or imperialist agendas. Yet, we must question the extent to which any canonical practices can escape linguistic representations, which, by their very nature, demand a certain amount of conformity. Thus, one response to Lorde's assessment of power politics is to question the degrees to which the master is master of his tools. Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity makes it possible to conceive of using the master's tools against the master's house by demonstrating that the master's tools are contingent upon their location. Thus, hybridity offers a counter-language for disrupting identifications within hierarchical power relations such that the identities of master and slave, colonizer and colonized are no longer static and homogeneous but rather dynamic and heterogeneous. This exchangeability of identities has profound effects on structures of national, familial, cultural and literary histories.

What I have pursued thus far is the way in which canon forming discourses both adopt and undermine the traditional canon concepts of

inherent value and universal representations. In terms of rethinking theoretical frameworks for canon formations, I will define the term "hybridity" as borrowed from current post-colonial theories and consider its applicability to literary canons. While the term "hybridity" has gained currency in post-colonial debates, its applications for thinking about identities constructed by and for literary canons remain unexplored. Why bring hybridity into the canon question and what is to be gained from it? In answering these questions I will draw upon the work of Homi Bhabha and Robert Young whom I read as theorists of cultural hybridity.

Because the term "hybridity" stems from the work of current post-colonial thinkers, I want to advocate post-colonial criticism's relevance to discussions of a western literary canon. As I mentioned earlier, "western canon" supporters like Harold Bloom and E.D. Hirsch have read literary canons as a figure for western culture and civilization. To put our traditional concepts of culture under scrutiny is to raise suspicion about the representability of a national literary canon. Certainly, with recent economic globalization and multicultural debates, degrees of xenophobia are also at work in academic literary institutions. While national barriers fall across the globe, some still strive to rebuild them. Arguments for the connections between the rise of nation states and literary canons are vast and complicated (I am thinking here of F.R. Leavis and New Criticism imported from England): let it suffice to say that the definitions of bodies of literature find

themselves rooted in national identities and cultures.[4] If one could answer the question, "what is French literature?" then one would be venturing into attempting to define French culture. Conversely, deconstruction originates from French thinkers like Foucault, Barthes, Derrida and Irigaray, and deconstruction has been linked to dismantling the logos of language, literature and culture: "If one had to answer, therefore, the general question of what is deconstruction a deconstruction of, the answer would be, of the concept, the authority, and assumed primacy of, the category of 'the West'" (Young *White* 19). This bears evidence to the fact that critiques of literature are also critiques of national culture. [5]

Similarly, post-colonial theories have made readers and critics rethink relationships between dominant cultures and minor cultures. For example, the relevance and political implications of the term "third world" is hotly contested in anthropology. While this critical thinking extends into the realm of material politics and current events, the effect of post-colonial theory for literary canons is clear. The editors of the critical anthology, *The Empire*

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[4]Jane Gallop articulates the identity politics at work in constructions of nationalism and literary territories: "But beyond the literal nationalism of the national literatures, it might be that the fencing off of a field of literature always involves glorifying and strengthening the territory in a defensive relation to the outside, keeping out the foreign element. And beyond that, such nationalism, whether now literal or figurative (as in Lesbian Nation), involves a theoretical definition of the 'national' character which not only excludes foreigners but searches to purify the interior by expelling the alien within. . . a structure that is very tempting whenever one is establishing a canon and/or theorizing a nascent field" (30). Clearly, Gallop's reading of nationalist identities is heavily influenced by deconstruction and psychoanalysis, which means that her reading of nationalisms is not based on specific historical or political movements. Her approach borrows from metaphors of history or politics and analyzes the formation of nationalist subjects according to discursive practices and cultural behaviors.

Writes Back (1989), hoping to establish post-colonialism's basic principle, propose the following simple definition: "This book is concerned with writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain" (1). Since its publication that definition has been further articulated and complicated, but, the sentiment remains: post-coloniality found its beginnings in questioning the relations of Britain to its colonies. Colonizing powers have used literature as a form of language instruction and cultural indoctrination: "The study of English has always been a densely political and cultural phenomenon, a practice in which language and literature have both been called into the service of a profound and embracing nationalism" (Ashcroft et. al. 2-3). It is no surprise that Ashcroft and his co-authors follow this statement with a discussion of the rise of English and literary studies. Cultural indoctrination profoundly affects the formalization of teaching literature: thus, "the fixing of texts in historical time and the perpetual search for the determinants of a single, unified, and agreed meaning" performs the task of cultural indoctrination (Ashcroft et. al. 3). One can read their description clearly as a metaphor of establishing a literary canon. This is to say, the traditional reading of the concept of literary canons is an English and British one: "When we speak about 'the canon,' we mean a fixed pantheon to which all literature in *English* aspires" (Reizbaum, my italics, 170). Reizbaum's statement includes several terms which I would underline as markers for further

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[5]See Deborah Esch's article, "Deconstruction," for a summary of the promulgation of fear of deconstruction in American media.

investigation. The assumptions behind "we," "fixed," and "pantheon" are prime targets for post-colonial, feminist and post-structuralist critiques. However, the fact that these concepts have become naturalized in canon debates speaks to the potentially valuable criticisms literary theories like those mentioned can offer to canon debaters.

In the introduction to her book, *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century "British" Literary Canons* (1992), Karen Lawrence proposes using post-colonial readings to interrogate forms of imperialist politics embedded within literary canons:

> Perhaps it is more accurate to say that these essays explore the way literary canons disguise their own histories of violence, for the 'cover story' of canons, both within the academy and in Bennett and Balch, is that they transcend ideology. If tradition is regarded as a form of cultural imperialism, then these essays seek to decolonize the empire's literary territory. (2)

Lawrence's assessment draws interesting parallels between the political dynamics of literary canons, imperialism and the formation of nation-states. Moreover, her suggestion that powerful forces of suppression are at work, "disguising their own history of violence," in the creation of literary canons, anticipates the return of those other histories and stories. As one can see from the vast proliferation of specialized anthologies from the 1980's to the present, other cultural and literary narratives wish to be told. Decolonizing traditional canons highlights the ways in which literary canons actually are defined and

(de)legitimized by the exclusion of non-canonical texts. In the case of the prefaces to anthologies, editors position their text in opposition to another canon of texts in order to point out how other anthologies have neglected, consciously or not, to incorporate the works one is about to anthologize. The most visible example of this is the *NALW* which will be discussed in detail later. It has been the work of both feminist theory and post-structuralism to point out the ways in which cultural imperialism and its aim for a purely English literary tradition is impossible to achieve.

The narratives supporting the "western literary canon" believe in the validity of concepts like purity or unity. With the disappearance of universal, canonized metanarratives, these terms become heavily qualified in current canon debates. The operative force in creating canons is the suppression of other possible canons. Lawrence reads this dynamic as a process of colonization: "both canonical texts and canon-making criticism bear the traces of what they seek to repress" (11). Not only does this process apply to canon formation, but also to concepts of hybridity. In critiquing literary canons and considering the theoretical applications of hybridity and the effects of feminist theory and post-structuralism on literary canon issues, cultural and literary "hybridity" functions as both a process and as a product. This dynamic functions in the same way that canon critiques become both the cause and effect of canon anxieties. For example, the language we use to question literary canons also comprises the material of canonical narratives: the master's tools can be used to dismantle the master's house, as we will see in

close readings of alternative anthologies. While Bhabha has been critiqued for being too abstract and too willing to play by the colonizers' rules, that is, European continental philosophy, his approach is to dismantle those traditions from within these linguistic and cultural structures. Bhabha argues that hybridity offers a strategic resistance to absorption into dominant hegemonic ideologies or metanarratives like "western civilization."

In his foundational essay on hybridity, Bhabha sets out to write about the political effects of a recurring scene in nineteenth century English writing, what Bhabha calls "the sudden, fortuitous discovery of the English book" (144). The story that he analyzes is an encounter between an Indian catechist, who is teaching Christianity to the Indian natives and the Indian people who have a Bible which has been "Indianized" (to use Bhabha's term). The minister tries to tell the Indians that the Bible they have is not Christian. The Indians pose a series of questions to the minister. For example, they ask, if the Bible is European, why was it given to the Indians from God? Or, why is it in their language (the book had been translated into Hindi)? Ultimately, the minister is unable to answer their questions satisfactorily and fails his mission. Bhabha uses this story to develop the term hybridity as a challenge to what is represented as English colonial authority. Bhabha's fascination with the tale of the Indian catechist comes as no surprise considering that his theoretical concerns are based upon generating a resistance to colonial power relations from within those structures. Hence, by drawing upon psychoanalytic and post-structuralist reading strategies, Bhabha articulates a

counter-language, a hybridized subject that is already "unwriting" discourses of legitimization and identification. For both the catechist and the Indian natives, the disruption of identifications displaces the power relations to the point that hierarchy is inverted. The process of disidentification [6] is grounded in a recognition of a hybridized position, one that engages both invisible and visible forces. In the case of literary canons, especially a tradition of "great works," the practice of hybridity offers similar disruptions to categorizations of literature. For example, we will see revisions of generic and temporal organizations of texts in various counter-canon anthologies. Bhabha sees in the native challenge to the Bible a questioning of the book's authority and its ability to represent universal truths. The fact that the minister cannot defend the Bible against the natives' seemingly naïve inquiries suggests that the colonizer's identifications, which are based on literary representations, can also be undone by those representations: "Consequently, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha 150).

However, Bhabha's concern is not only to describe the ambivalence of colonial presence but also to explore the power colonized subjects wield in their status as radically different other. What Bhabha suggests also speaks to current changes in canon discussions; English is not a monolithic, unified category, and, English as an identification is actually contingent upon others: ". . . representation of colonial authority depends less on a universal symbol

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[6] The term, "disidentification," is from Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 4.

of English identity than on its productivity as a sign of difference" (150).[7] The valuable contribution of Bhabha's insight into the hybridity of colonial power relations is that both parties have access to discourses of hybridity. Bhabha's hybridity does not function solely as a third term in the equation, but rather, as a challenge to structuralist formulations: Murielle Rosello argues that "the idea of practising hybridity is an attempt at renouncing the 'add-on' strategy" (9). Moreover, the key to re-theorizing identifications in terms of hybridity is to disrupt binaristic identities like major/minor or east/west so as not to conceive of either side as homogeneous, fixed entities. Rather, these identifications are already infected by one another such that each has access to the other's language and identifications. Feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray have pursued similar strategies in deconstructions of gender. Bhabha, and I would venture to say Irigaray as well, challenges representations of authority, which ultimately brings me back to the issue of literary canons. Lawrence also warns against subscribing to totalizing representations of an other:

> It seems that both those who decry the recent 'opening' of the canon and those who advocate change in the established order simplify the

[7]Robert Young also observes similar applications for Bhabha's work: "This construction of English culture, the connections between representations of Englishness, including 'English Literature', and the forms of neocolonialism in contemporary Britain, all prompt urgent question about culture and nation. This is the significance of Bhabha's recent shift from analyses of colonial discourse to a consideration of the complex structures of cultural and national identity" (Young *White* 175). While Young's statement helps to answer the question of why Bhabha's theories are located in a canon debate, I do not completely agree with Young's suggestion that Bhabha's work has quit discourse analysis for broader critiques of cultures and nations. In the case of "Signs Taken for Wonders" which is ten years old, Bhabha's theories always come back to the practice of reading, for which he acknowledges his indebtedness to Sigmund Freud.

> idea of the 'they' who are either the gatekeepers or gatecrashers of the hall of fame. . . By what authority is the authority of the canon invested or withheld? (5).

The question here is who is speaking for whom? What feminist criticism brings to the canon debate is exactly what Lawrence's question asks: who has access to modes of representation? Who validates those representations? Does representation have inherent power relations? These issues are directly related to feminist and post-structuralist/deconstructionist theories propounded by critics such as Judith Butler, Barbara Johnson, and Jacques Derrida.

Hybridity as a practice of canon formation or a combination of theoretical and literary languages presents a way of thinking around categorical structures of power and authority:

> Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the "content" of an other culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference. (Bhabha 153)

Alternative canons like the *NALW*, which are motivated by recovery projects and political agendas including the increased visibility of women writers, offer a recognizable form of resistance, but, as final products (newly, constructed canons), they also remark an intrinsic presence of cultural, racial, sexual, and gender differences at work within traditional, western, literary

canons. Early feminist canon critiques make us think about the question of who is not visible in literary history, and deconstruction places under suspicion those structures of visibility and representation. Chapter four will explore the success and failures of the mutual application of both theories; in some cases, positions of ambiguity materialize into critical goals (demystification, in the case of deconstruction) or political agendas (liberation, in the case of some feminisms).

Insofar as alternative canons function as aberrations from and challenges to a cultural "norm", a white, male, western, English literature, hybridity marks "the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Bhabha 154). The terms deformation and displacement recall the figure of Frankenstein, a literary example of losing control of origins and authorship. Bhabha's argument draws upon the Hegelian master/slave dialectic here when he states: "the recognition of authority, however, requires a validation of its source" (155). Rewriting the master/slave dialectic from the perspective of the slave suggests that eventually it is no longer clear who occupies which position. Thus, hybridity does not promote a complete dissolution of hierarchy but a constant exchange and interaction of identifications. For a literary canon whose authority is based upon its singular and unique status, the conditions of its production, continual hybridized encounters with other cultures, overshadow its hegemonic status: "if the

appearance of the English book is read as a production of colonial hybridity, then it no longer simply commands authority. It gives rise to a series of *questions of authority*" (Bhabha, his italics, 155).

But, the sole function of hybridity cannot be to remind hegemonic cultures of their relative subjectivity, just as feminist literary traditions cannot be reduced to serving as a corrective to a patriarchal literary tradition, a role which would only serve to fix its identity as "woman as other." In *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), Irigaray's theories of woman as fluid, multiple, and unfixed suggest possibilities of not offering up to fixed binaristic representations (28). Similarly, Bhabha rejects thinking of hybridity as a fixed third term because it "has no such perspective of depth or truth to provide" (156). Reading for symptoms of literary and cultural hybridity "intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence" (Bhabha 157). This singular usage, however, neglects an aspect of hybridity which is that hybridity itself is a hybrid term. It will not offer up itself to easy definitions or comprehension: "the display of hybridity--its peculiar 'replication'--terrorizes authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery" (Bhabha, his italics, 157). In terms of colonial relationships, critical theories or literary canon, hybridity functions simultaneously as a process and a product--theorizing literary canons in terms of their hybrid literary traditions invites a continual rethinking of canons as having multiple origins.

If we are to consider hybridity as a process, then understanding its historical development is a crucial part of its theoretical applications. While Bhabha's work offers hybridity as a theoretical framework for analyzing cultural politics, Robert Young's analysis provide a necessary, historical framework for thinking about hybridity. Literary theories like deconstruction and post-structuralism have been criticized for their ahistoricism and their attempts to offer metadiscourses about the nature of literature, culture or identity. So it would be prudent to consider its historical relevance, and, then, reflect upon the connections of hybridity's own genealogy to issues of literary canons.

Robert Young's texts reveal a similar evolution in thought. His first book, *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West* (1990), concentrates on theories of hybridity ranging from Spivak and Bhabha to Fredric Jameson. But, his second book, while still working with post-colonialism and post-structuralism, examines the historical development of "Englishness" through nineteenth century constructions of race and sexuality in anthropological, scientific, and literary discourses. This second text seems to be a direct response to charges of theory as ahistorical, or, to the problem of anachronism of critical methodologies. Here, I find Young's work useful in a different way from Bhabha's, because Young applies a theory of hybridity to a multidisciplinary model. Moreover, seeing hybridity in practice through application to historical moments poses interesting parallels to literary canon issues.

Young makes the following important point about trying to read manifestations of cultural hybridity: "There is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes. It shows that we are still locked into parts of the ideological network of a culture that we think and presume that we have surpassed" (*Colonial* 27). Basically, once we have seized it and fixed its identity or meaning, we have failed to understand it.[8] Hybridity's ambivalence about its own identity does not prevent Young from articulating the forms it takes in Victorian thinking: the areas of Young's argument relevant to rethinking literary canons concern the writing of literary histories and constructing narratives of identity.

Initially, Young approaches hybridity from the philological level in order to trace "the links between the racial and the linguistic" (*Colonial* 6). The result of an etymological breakdown demonstrates the hybrid roots of the word "hybrid"; its sources are from botany and biology (*Colonial* 6). The early nineteenth-century definition refers to the physiological process of cross-breeding different species. Hybrid species were considered less "pure" or contaminated beings. In the later nineteenth century, after the introduction of Darwinian thought, hybridity came to signify cultural as well as scientific

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[8]Needless to say the slippery nature of hybridity that Young detects and Bhabha theorizes is easily attributable to the influence of psychoanalysis. Young remarks the effect of psychoanalysis upon Bhabha's thinking: "in theoretical terms Bhabha's move was to add psychoanalysis to Said's Foucauldian analysis" and "Ambivalence is a key word for Bhabha, which he takes from psychoanalysis" (*Colonial* 161). Bhabha also acknowledges his debt to Freud, remarking his "valuable insight into the strategy of disavowal as the persistence of the narcissistic demand in the acknowledgment of difference" (157).

difference.[9] From its origins, hybridity has had cross-cultural and interdisciplinary applications. At the worst, it has been used as justification for racial discrimination[10] but, in current critical paradigms, as a way to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools. Here, one can see the allure of hybridity as a theoretical concept, because it seems to offer a revolution from within preexisting cultural or linguistic structures: ". . . hybridity has been deployed against the very culture that invented it" (Young *Colonial* 2). For literary canon critics like Gilbert and Gubar, the possibility of rewriting the traditional, white, male canon by re-appropriating exclusionary practices, that is, by accepting *only* women writers, presents a viable political challenge to patriarchal, literary institutions. My position on revisionary projects, which will be explored in the following chapters, is that alternative canons enact their own version of canon formation by investing in and revising in similar narrative strategies. This is a hybridized process of writing histories based upon exclusion, disavowal and elimination:

> [B]ecause each group tends to generate at the same time its exclusions and its inclusions, the temptation for excluded individuals and groups to demand inclusion is theoretically and practically self-defeating in the

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[9]Young also discusses the use of hybridity in Mikhail Bahktin's critical work: "For Bahktin, hybridity describes the process of the authorial unmasking of another's speech, through a language that is 'double-accented' and 'double-styled'" (*Colonial* 20). Interestingly, the editor of *The Dialogic Imagination* puts Bahktin's name in quotes to suggest that there is doubt as to Bahktin's authorial identity. It is rumored that "Bahktin" was actually a hybrid of different writers and several unspecified people contributed to his text. See *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. xxxvi.

[10]See Young, *Colonial Desire*, pp 12-13, 64-6, 175-8.

long run since the hope to eradicate (the structure of) exclusion does not take into account the differential logic of the system. (Rosello 9)

Following Rosello's critique, I see hybridity as a challenge to the logic of the system of literary canons in its mandate to refuse categorical identifications as imposed by pre-determined, systemic formulations. The creation of a unified subject in relation to certain cultural, national or family histories stems from what Young reads as an outcome of Darwinism: "On the other hand, as Darwin was to point out, the crucial question was also how species was itself defined. In Darwin's version, in *The Origin of Species* (1859), degrees of hybridity meant that species could no longer be regarded as absolutely distinct" (*Colonial* 11). Distinguishing a "self" from others forms a key part of discourses of canon formation. In general, canon debates focus on a hyper-specification of its subject. Qualifications of race, class, gender, sexuality, profession etc. must be elaborated carefully in order not to make assumptions about readers. Thinking about identity need not be a list that ends with a "nervous etc." (to borrow a phrase from Judith Butler) and might be considered from the perspective of hybridity: "They [the practices of hybridity] can suggest a vision of hybridity which would not be a version of identity" (Rosello 6). The loss of exclusive status or singular identities has proved effective for certain schools of feminism, in particular French readers like Luce Irigaray who highlight the critical potential of multiplicity. Moreover, the point is that hybridity reveals the impossibility of pure genealogies, a important reminder to canon debaters like Harold Bloom who support a

canon based on an identifiable and nameable literary tradition.[11]

Historical instances of racial hybridity as fears of physiological contamination, when applied to questions of literary canons, suggest that theoretical movements and literary canons are concerned with preserving lineage. Reacting to disintegrating disciplines, we find: "The need for organic metaphors of identity or society implies a counter-sense of fragmentation and dispersion" (Young *Colonial* 4), a phenomenon endemic to literary canons which both Guillory and Bloom observe. Young's reference to organicism echoes Nemoianu's statement about accepting canons as organic wholes and also recalls *Frankenstein's* challenge to a unity of both the physical body and the literary text.[12] Tracing genealogies and positioning subjects are part of canonizing discourses; gaining access to legitimacy, authority or cultural capital requires articulating who the "we" is.. Unlike Lawrence Buell who

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[11]For example, Bloom's book ends with a set of appendices of books that every English literature student should read and to "garner the rewards that only canonical literature affords" (528). We can read his retort to hybridized disciplines like Cultural Studies. It is interesting to consider that Bloom casts Cultural Studies as public enemy number one in the humanities, though both Bloom and his nemesis analyze and recuperate the idea of culture. The only difference is that Bloom upholds the figure of the western literary canon as representative of culture. Bill Readings concludes his chapter on Cultural Studies with the following observation: "Cultural Studies arises as a quasi-discipline once culture ceases to be the animating principle of the University and becomes instead one object of study among others" (118). In reading this along side Bloom's canon anxieties, one could suspect that once culture no longer "animates" the western literary canon, then Bloom's idea of a unified canon faces the frightening potential of contingency, relativism and impermanence.

[12]Moreover, a combination of my reading of *Frankenstein* as a challenge to literary canons and Johnson's reading of *Frankenstein* as a crisis of parenting sheds a curious light on Bloom's position in the canon debate; would it be possible to cast him as paternal authority on the western canon? To say that Bloom reveals an anxiety of influence with traditional literary studies or reveaks too much influence from nontraditional literary studies may be to take this metaphor too far.

sees these justificatory practices as impeding canonizing projects ("Hybrid Genre" 217), I interpret the above citation as an intervention of "minority" literatures into traditional canon forming practices: descriptions of editorial practices, legitimization through extensive research, and writing the majority of entries establishes the text's history, its origins and "parents." Rewriting and deforming patriarchal literary genealogies highlights the work of early feminist critiques but, also, marks a need to recognize gender biases in literary histories.

Reading literary history symptomatically and paying attention to the material conditions of localized subjects demands balancing different aspects of hybridity, a combination of Young's and Bhabha's ideas, while avoiding essentializing hybridity into an abstracted form of pluralism. This requires testing cases of critical applications of hybridity which fall short. Here, I am interested in examining some of the assumptions about hybridity in Lawrence Buell's essay, "Literary History as Hybrid Genre." At the risk of setting up a straw man, I hope to achieve through reading his misreading of hybridity a clearer understanding of how it can serve as a critique of traditional western literary canons.

Although Buell's essay deals specifically with the debate on American literary history anthologies, his progress and failures offer us a point of departure and entrance into applications of hybridity as a theory and practice. Buell reproaches constructions of literary anthologies such as the *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (*CLHUS*) for demonstrating an

"intermittent consciousness of being conceived in the age of theory" (217). His observation does not seem to offer a particularly strong critique, but, he suggests that the presence of theory impedes progress in writing literary history. He further suggests that theoretical thinking generates a wariness among Americanists to acknowledge fully and engage the challenges of writing history. This confusion disables them from doing their job: "we may be expected to show sturdy resistance yet at the same time unusual vulnerability to the proposition that history can never be more authoritative than story" ("Hybrid Genre" 217). Buell's analysis suggests that American literary historians symptomatically enact the dilemma of writing their history: while writing literary history, they simultaneously deny the writing or construction of it. This is similar to the practice of creating a western literary canon by erasing their fragmented natures or by appealing to transcendental ideals like aesthetic value. Buell, however, does not view these contradictory forces of writing and unwriting a subject as an impasse, but rather as a challenge to reconceive literary history as a hybridized form. Buell believes a critic should recognize "how one's discourse is perforce bricked together from different historical strata-to recognize, that is, that one's discourse is inevitably a hybrid of biography, text, and larger historical forces understood as different but interacting domains and thus never to be seamlessly interwoven" (226). The process of reading will somehow unite these various, stratified discourses under a more organized and coherent

force, that is, a comprehensive, pluralist representation of history.[13] His prescription for literary history tries to eliminate the risk of contamination or confusion with other histories or discourses.

It is possible to re-read Buell's article with the idea of literary canons and follow his argument to its conclusion. Critics and readers can continue to engage in disparate interpretations as long as we all agree on a "methodological core" (Buell 218). Ultimately, the approach he seems to advocate is a form of consensual chaos. Quite simply, if we agree to disagree, we actually accept consensus disguised as dissensus.[14] My understanding of Bhabha's concept of hybridity is that it is more resistant to stability, fixity, or unity. Buell's argument, moreover, conflates hybridity with plurality. It is more threatening to say the sum of the parts are greater than rather than equal to the whole. In the instance of a literary text placed within a metanarrative of western civilization or literary canon, a narrative's meaning becomes entirely dependent upon the agreed upon narrative in which its is placed. Yet, as we saw with Guillory's critique of Hirsch, these grand, overarching narratives often raise rather than explain questions of continuity.

At this point, one might conclude that Buell did not realize the critical potential of the duo, literary history and hybrid genre. Rethinking hybridity

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[13] My concerns with plurality and canon debates will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

[14] See Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology in American Literary History," esp. pp. 631-633 and pp. 649-650.

denies the possibility of separating out the parts and prevents the schematization of literature, canons or theories. This categorization allows oppressive binaristic classifications of race and gender to remain uncontested. While it may seem imperialist to import the concept of hybridity into feminist criticism, post-structuralism or canon formation, my reading of these theoretical and critical movements presupposes a critical and literary hybridity that is "always already" there and has been erased in favor of pure, literary forms or an uncontaminated, literary genealogy. The effect of disrupting linear, contiguous formulations of a literary history, which is the project of institutionalizing literary canons, is a ruptured process of self-recognition. This self may be read as patriarchy, capitalism or nationalism, but, the crucial point of cultural hybridity is that it denies a pure dialogic exchange of identifications. For example, Frankenstein's monster reads *Paradise Lost* and does not see a self reflected back, but rather, he experiences the impossibility of achieving a cohesive self through a literary text. Similarly, hybridity disavows a simple two-way recognition and instead generates a dispersal of identifications: "it [hybridity] is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures, or the two scenes of the book in a dialectical play of 'recognition.' . . . colonial specularity, doubly inscribed, does not produce a mirror where the self apprehends itself; it is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid" (Bhabha 156). Prior to this realization Bhabha argues against understanding genealogy as "an issue of cultural relativism" (156). I read his concern as a desire to avoid theorizing

hybridity as a reformulation of pluralism. Hybridity disturbs the articulation of difference as a practice which would allow one to say, "us over here and them over there."[15] What pluralism fails to negotiate or adequately theorize, and what a practice of hybridity offers in its place, is the realization that "us" and "them" are not mutually exclusive categories. Rethinking literary canons as hybridized entities invites reading an interconnectedness between the narratives of self enacted in canonical and noncanonical literatures. Moreover, the failure or refusal of literary theories to delineate or define their respective selves is instructive; the difficulty of writing histories or literary genealogies while trying to keep those structures and narratives dynamic is the task of rereading literary canons as hybrids.

The underlying assumption of the above readings of hybridity and literary history is that it most directly applies to the content or the physical

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[15]For an interesting discussion of the relationship between relativism and rationality see S.P. Mohanty's article, "Us and Them: On the Philosophical Biases of Political Criticism." He writes: "Relativism appears less as an idea than as a practical and theoretical bias, and leads, I believe, to a certain amount of historical simplification and political naïveté" (1). I am tempted to agree with Mohanty's critique of relativism as an excuse for dismissing commonalties among peoples and cultures, however, I do not support his conclusion that "the call for respect for alternative canons can be made on the basis of a purely liberal respect for other literatures and experience, but that will not necessarily comprise a challenge to the dominant order to the very extent that alternative canons are seen simply as coexisting peacefully in a pluralistic academy" (25). The mistaken assumption here is that we bypass a critique of liberal practices while en route to a more pressing analysis of pluralism without considering the possibility that an uninterrogated practice of "liberal respect" could be complicitous with a hegemonic pluralistic ideology. The first chapter of John Guillory's *Cultural Capital* further explores and demonstrates "that a certain impasse in the debate about the canon follows from the fundamental assumptions of liberal pluralism itself" (3). Clearly, Mohanty's disapproval lies in the co-optation of philosophical relativism for justifying bland pluralistic practices within institutions like universities or corporations. For a culturally and geographically relevant example, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act passed in 1971 provides evidence for Mohanty's case. Neil Bissoondath also offers a scathing critique of marketing multiculturalism, see esp. pp. 37-44.

body of literary canons. The roles of readers and critics add another dimension to hybridity and the process of forming canons. Even to raise awareness of readers and literary critics presents a challenge to an intrinsic value of canonical texts. If a text's canonical status is contingent upon reading it as canonical, then its place in a canon must be relative to readers' interpretations. In her book, *Seductive Reasoning: Pluralism as the Problematic of Contemporary Literary Theory*, Ellen Rooney writes: "In a historical and critical sense, these scholars [Arnold, Hirsch, Booth] occupy the canonical texts and the canonical readings they seek to defend" (129). Rooney's analysis highlights the fact that the canonical texts do not embody canonical values absolutely, but rather, critics project those values into texts or even promote their readings as canonical. Thus, we do not have a canon that is a collection of texts, but a collection of readers whose interpretations have been canonized. Rooney sees critical movements as having the power to jeopardize the position of canonical readings. Her critique of pluralism is that it tries to co-opt post-structuralism and manipulate its theories to pluralism's benefit. While I share Rooney's concern over pluralism's hegemony, I question why Rooney feels the need to protect or recuperate post-structuralism. This speaks to a larger issue of politics after post-structuralism which I will address later in relation to feminist theory. However, an insurgence of new readers and readings often simply replaces older canonical practices with newer ones. In the case of literature, when the readers change, so do their canons. This can be said of feminist criticism's introduction into

the literary academy. David Hollinger's comments are helpful in summarizing: "The formation and criticism of the canon is preeminently a problem in *readership*" (his italics 78). Different readers and new readings, be they motivated by post-structuralism, pluralism or feminisms, change the effects of canon discourses as guardians of culture. Questioning the relevance of canons may only be a theoretical problem, but canonical narratives also define and position subjects in political and literary spheres. As we will see in anti-canonical or alternative anthologies, editors, readers and critics seek to reshape those narratives to perform different types of cultural work.

Chapter Three
Prefaces to Anthologies: Rethinking Literary Canons as Defining Subjectivity

> [T]he emergent literature of minorities which, refusing likewise the hegemonic narratives of identity, will dissolve the canonical form of Man back into the different bodies which he has sought to absorb.
> --David Lloyd, "Genet's Genealogy," p. 185

> The means to destroy canons, as Kermode indicates, are very much at hand, and the process is now quite advanced.
> --Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*, p. 4

Bloom expresses his anxieties about the western canon through an unusual bodily metaphor, though it is one we have come to expect after reading Frankenstein in relation to canons and examining the relevance of physical bodies and hybridity to canon issues. The "means" is a "quite advanced," cancerous disease destroying Bloom's vision of the western canon. While Bloom sees this physical destruction as the result of using canon expansion for political and social aims, I would read the debunking of a "western canon" as the result of the master's tools falling into the servants' hands, or rather, to use Bhabha's theory, a colonizer's language being adopted and revised by a colonized people.

The critical focus of this chapter will be on the ways in which prefaces of certain anthologies adopt anti-canonical rhetoric in attempting to map out alternative subject positions. My textual analysis of literary canons will base itself upon symptomatic readings of prefaces to literature anthologies which adopt discourses of genealogy, history and progress: all of which participate in canon forming practices. Having a history, that is, having a past, present, and future, is crucial to attaining subjecthood. As we saw with Frankenstein, lack of history denies the monster his subjectivity and confounds representation.

Histories, literary or otherwise, will often have dark pasts or contaminated genealogies which frustrate attempts to maintain a pure tradition. Derrida argues this point in his critique of Foucault which I will examine later in this chapter. Alternative and counter-canon anthologies contend with the limits of "Nortonizing" but also surpass those narrative binds by experimenting with formal features. Ultimately, prefaces, like literary canons themselves, attempt to construct reading subjects as well as subjects of reading. While the dialogue between reader and text seems to be scripted in advance by what Bhabha would call "rules of recognition" ("Signs"156), often the reading experience is a series of misrecognitions, and the goal of the preface is to foreclose confusion or misidentifications.

There are, of course, other texts that perform the work of creating literary canons such as course syllabi, standardized tests or departmental curricula. While it would be interesting to read all these manifestations of canons, further analysis in these areas is outside the scope of this thesis. Literary anthologies also present an unique test case because they have a greater possibility of circulation in public spheres. One editor notes:

> [w]e often think of anthologies as merely a form of packaging, a convenience for academic usages or readers for pleasure--a gathering of many goodies in one basket--to dip into on a leisurely cruise. Yet, just as large and small magazines have influenced the quality of fiction over the decades, so have the kinds of collections to be found in

> anthologies. Those with a special bias have advertised new trends. (ed. Cassill 5)

Cassill observes how anthologies appeal to different types of readers and approaches to reading; one may read for enjoyment or for work. He also remarks that specialized anthologies have marketing appeal because they "sell" new theoretical and critical approaches. Bookstores, for example, designate specific sections for literary anthologies and these texts are available to a wider audience than a course syllabus or standardized test. Because book perusal may not proceed past the preface to a text, editors do not underestimate the importance of prefatory discursive strategies.

The prefaces to alternative anthologies adopt a discourse of self-construction. Often this new subject develops in distinction from one previously ignored by a traditional "western literary canon." When I set out to preview anthologies from the 1980's and 1990's, I determined to choose a random selection of anthologies. However, I found that women and ethnic minorities are major producers of alternative, counter-canon anthologies. This proliferation of anthologies by certain groups of people suggests that traditional canons were not adequately or equally representing writers from these specific backgrounds. Certainly, as both Guillory and Bloom observe, the rising interest in politics of representation in academic institutions contributes to this phenomena. Moreover, given the fact that "the western literary canon" is an easy target for critiques of representation, we are forced to recognize, as critics of literary canons do as well, that canons are powerful

sites of cultural capital in literary institutions. So, while one may want to argue for doing away with literary canons altogether, the fact of the matter is that canons capture a powerful narrative of self-definition and self-assertion that they embody "western civilization" or "western culture" attests to the force of canonical discourses.

If there were one common goal of these alternative anthologies, it would be to construct a self in their own terms, be it defined by certain gender, sexual preference or ethnicity. This desire for self-expression reveals itself in some unusual formal features in these anthologies. Editors seek to manipulate canonical features of anthologies: namely, organization of texts according to time period, nationality, or genre. This intervention into narrative structures reflects the influence of post-structuralist and postmodern theorists like Foucault and Lyotard. What I read in prefaces to anthologies is not a complete dismissal of canonical narratives, but a desire to reconfigure those narratives to represent other, previously ignored, subjects. Anthologies circulate in different spheres, have access to cultural capital and, therefore, are a desirable medium to manipulate.

Because literary canons offer a narrative self-definition to emerging literary subjects, alternative anthologies consciously adopt a language of self-definition. However, in light of current theoretical trends like feminism, post-colonialism and post-structuralism, discourses of subjectivity are much more conscious of how language constructs representations of self. For example, the plural pronoun "we" must be qualified and specified. As in the

introduction to *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*(1990), the editors explain the anthology's "self" as follows:

> In this context, 'we' means the three editors, who, besides editing, have had chief responsibility for the shape of the book and for balance and emphasis, and have researched and written the largest proportion of entries. In other contexts, we' includes all of those other devoted feminist scholars who, with us, have selected, researched, written, and checked. (Blain et. al. vii)

I read this anxious qualification of who "we" are as a result of critical and theoretical trends. Lawrence Buell concludes his ruminations on literary canons with a similar realization, "they [feminist scholars] can hope to make canonical thinking more self-conscious" ("Without Sexism" 114). But, it is exactly the status of that "self" of which one is supposed to be conscious that is in question, and, in the case of counter-canon anthologies, in the process of exposing. Buell's observation reveals one of the paradoxes with canon debates, that is, how can we be more conscious of a self when we do not know what that self might be? Or, if editors cannot fully explicate that self, that is, submit to canonical forms of representation, how can new anthologies disrupt traditional anthology structures?

Careful attention to the language of self-explanation is a new aspect of 1980's and 1990's anthologies. For example, the editors of *Chloe Plus Olivia* spend several pages defining their understanding of the identification "lesbian": "By dubbing such writers and characters 'lesbian,' I am employing

the word most familiar to our era to signal content about female same-sex emotional and physical relationships--though it is not a word other eras would have been likely to employ" (ix). These hyper-qualifications of self or subjectivity respond to challenges to traditional canonical rhetoric which professed to speak in universal terms about readers and writers, regardless of sexual preface, gender or race. As a result of feminist criticisms and post-structuralist critiques of universal subjects, that is, conceptions of a subject exempt from contingencies of subjectivities, canonical rhetoric has altered its view and this is visible in alternative anthologies. These anthologies are conceived as responses to those misconceptions of a universal, shared identity.

One of the identifications to surface in many alternative canons is ethnicity. Maria Hong, editor of *Growing Up Asian American* (1993), wants to recognize the differences in life and literary experiences for Asian Americans. She uses a simple formula to identify the subject of her anthology: the texts included "have all been written by authors identified as Asian American" (13), though she admits, "[i]t may seem superficial to gather together writers from such diverse backgrounds and to label them all as simply Asian American. However, the kinship among their stories is manifested not only by the recurrence of certain themes, but also by the sense of recognition many Asian American readers will experience when reading them" (14). Even though she sees the label as reductive and too simplistic, Hong intimates that readers will supply a metanarrative to join together disparate pieces of texts.

Moreover, by anthologizing these texts and joining them under a single identification, Hong has initiated the process of creating a continuous, canon-like narrative. While Asian American is different from other Americans and needs to be recognized in a separate literary canon, the differences within Asian American are contained within the frame of the experience of "Asian American." Difference cannot continue ad infinitum, because in order to speak or gain currency in literary institutions, anthologies and their assembled pieces must come into some form of representation.

Certainly while self-consciousness keeps the practice of literary representation under continual examination, other anthologies challenge narrative form as well. Reconfiguring the positioning of authors in geographic or temporal moments is of primary concern to editors. *Breaking Free: A Cross-Cultural Anthology* (1995) adopts an unusual approach to organizing literary texts. The table of contents is a grid with three columns. Each column has a separate title: "Roots/Origins of Author"; "Current or Last Residence of Author"; "Primary Setting of Story/Poem" (v). This anthology emphasizes the importance of geographical place on the literary piece. The plural of "roots" and "origins" frustrates any simple or single connections between an author's nationality and her writing. Also, there is a disjunction between place of birth (presumably "origin") and "roots," a place where a writer has felt most at home. The listing of current residence further exaggerates the disjunction between home and place of origin or roots. Finally, a reader may try to reconcile the disjunction (often a third, different

location from an author's origins and residence) of the literary piece's setting. For example, some entries have the same location under all three columns, Ontario listed under all three, or, each entry is different, listing the United States/Alberta as roots/origin, Norway as current residence, and setting as Japan (vi). The latter entry disrupts any simple definitions or naturalized categories of home or place. Because this anthology organizes its texts roughly according to a vague notion of geography, we find a radical break from traditional linear narratives of chronological time or from connections between author's nationality (geographical place) and literary text.

Breaking away from conventional periodization, anthologies can also organize texts by concepts. *In Search of Color Everywhere* (1994) "presents some of the best poems written by African Americans in a fresh thematic arrangement. The book is divided into seven sections: Freedom; Celebration of Blackness; Love Poems; Family Gatherings; Healing Poems; Rituals; Music, Dance & Sports; and American Journal" (5). These "fresh arrangements" reveal interesting assumptions about seemingly naturalized categories like time or place, that is, they actually function as concepts within which are embedded implicit narratives of structure. Thus, anthologies attempt to disrupt canonical structures of literary history by adopting new conceptual frameworks, like "family gatherings," and explore how texts organize or do not organize themselves around specific themes.

Similarly, anthologies like *Black Women's Blues* (1992) organize themselves according to "the time periods they [the texts] concern themselves

with, not the time in which they were written" (xiii). Here, we find a shift away from the emphasis on an author to an emphasis on the reclassification of literary texts. Instead of historical time periods, this anthology uses "three interrelated psychological cycles"--suspension, assimilation, and emergence (xiv)-- to narrate the experiences of African-American women writers. Other anthology editors use this thematic organization in hopes of collecting texts according to shared concerns rather than publishing dates. But a narrative of progression and personal development remains. Texts in the beginning of the anthology struggle with the terms of identity, be it ethnic, gender, or sexuality, and slowly evolve into a discourse of "coming into being." In a sense, the narrative trajectory of an anthology traces a development of a complete and self-actualized literary subject.

Determining time periods, languages, major authors, and genres contribute to a larger metanarrative for literary anthologies. However, I would consider these categories subdivisions of a larger project, that of creating a narrative of legitimization based upon traditions of history, a rhetoric of progress and discourses of self-emergence. Critical theories have developed canonical discourses of their own. One of the ubiquitous and powerful canon forming discourses is a literary and critical history that clearly defines the subject(s) of inquiry. Tracing a literary genealogy, editors set out to achieve this goal. Often, a preface to an anthology explains the internal history of its publication (meetings of editors, collecting of texts, choosing titles etc.) and also constructs the conditions of its external history (placement

and relation to other anthologies, literatures, or theories). As I argued in the preceding chapter for the relevance of genealogy to literature, I will argue here for applying the language of genealogies and history to rethinking the formation of literary canons. As we saw with Bhabha's theory of hybridity, an entire nation's self-definition can rest on these articulations of genealogy and history.

In seeking to construct literary genealogies, the prefaces to anthologies also make an implicit investment in narrative. The influence of a traditional western canon demonstrates the ability of a story to legitimate a text's existence or purpose. From the debates about the western canon, we have heard Bloom and Guillory discuss the ways in which canons inculcate certain literary values, standards and tastes under the guise of culture or civilization. The long-standing tradition of the canon attests to the power of narrative to acquire cultural capital. As we will see with many anthologies, a resistance to generating more metanarratives emerges, yet, almost all anthologies adopt the same narrative strategy of creating a literary history which performs a legitimating function.

Articulating these struggles with narratives of self suggests canon critics and editors negotiating with the influence of postmodernism and deconstruction on academic institutional practices. For example, the editors of *The Columbia Literary History of the United States* include the following disclaimer in their preface:

> In contrast to the 1948 volume, we have made no attempt to tell a "single, unified story" with a "coherent narrative" by making changes in the essays. . . .No longer is it possible, or desirable, to formulate an image of continuity when diversity of literary materials and a wide variety of critical voices are, in fact, the distinctive features of national literature. (xxi)

These prefatory comments echo Lyotard's definition of postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). Because metanarratives assume an authoritarian and legitimating voice, the editors of *CLHUS* hope to eschew reductive practices inherent in producing anthology or literary history narratives. The phrase "no longer is it possible, or desirable, to formulate an image of continuity" raises a curious question about agency: who is saying it is no longer possible or acceptable to use metanarratives? Not just literary theorists with backgrounds in Continental philosophy. The active agent is left unnamed, some absent referent buried underneath the "it" who is forcing editors, teachers, and critics like Bloom to be apologetic about or critical of their literary practices. Following Guillory's argument, I would propose that the unnamed agent would be associated with liberal pluralism: yet, as these editors recognize, no single person can speak for everyone; no one narrative can represent a literary history.

The frustration, however, is that the editors cannot escape these narrative structures entirely; they must "name names" and, as a result, canon forming begins. What *CLHUS* editors hope to do instead is maintain a

balance between "the strains and contradictions" and "the cohesive and stabilizing elements" (xxiii). Their aim is "to intersect the lines of tension between the centralizing and unifying forces of our society and those decentralizing powers of individual creative and critical imagination" (xxiii). Their proposal recognizes the impossibility of being outside narrative structures, yet it expresses an intention to contain these contradictory forces within a theoretically-informed narrative of literary history.

This desire to represent the opposing forces also reveals an awareness of deconstruction's influence on the practice of literary canon formation. Jacques Derrida's influential essay, "The Cogito and the History of Madness," provides a sustained critique of Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961). Derrida argues: "The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason, that which makes it not just another actual order or structure (a determined historical structure, one structure among other possible ones), is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it: and within its domain" (Cogito 36). Derrida's point about Foucault's error can be stated simply: Foucault cannot write a true history of madness because history is a rational process and madness is irrational. So, either Foucault writes an incomplete history, one that maintains reason and forces its subject, madness, to conform to it, or, he attempts to write madness which would require fully embracing irrationality and, therefore, not being a "true" history. Following Derrida's conclusion, we are forced to concede that

writing any history will be an impossible task because it will always lack something of its subject of inquiry, because that subject will be forced to conform to the terms of that history. For rethinking literary canons, the implications are clear: texts will lose their uniqueness or specificity when they are forced to comply with an overarching narrative like "the western canon" or "European culture." Recognizing this difficulty, the *CLHUS* editors try to sidestep the problem by offering a narrative of carefully poised oppositions, a harmony of conflicts and tensions. My critique of the *CLHUS* censures a new trend within post-deconstructive literary theory, that is, the essentializing or metanarrativizing of difference. Staging the conflicts forces them to conform to a narrative about staging conflicts. All of which is to say that the editors of alternative canons cannot break out of canonical metanarratives because they can neither avoid language nor elude politics.

For liberal pluralism, difference, be it literary, cultural, linguistic or racial, seems to provide a new, improved strategy for rethinking representation. As I mentioned in chapter one, Ellen Rooney observes a suspicious, pluralist co-optation of post-structuralist practices. She argues: "some of the pluralist polemics of recent years can be read as strategic interventions that attempt to assimilate post-structuralism to the pluralist paradigm" (41). Quite simply, difference and respect for difference echo slogans for America's melting pot culture, where all the pieces are separate but equal. Liberal pluralism, hoping to strengthen its position in academic institutions (as in Guillory's politics of representation discussion), could

absorb post-structuralist phrases without fundamentally changing its political agenda. Ultimately, liberal pluralism, in an opportunistic fashion, latched on to post-structuralism as it rose in popularity in American academic institutions in order to seem to move beyond "melting pot theories." The elisions between post-structuralism, itself often elided with literary theory in general, and liberal pluralist political agendas are never more prevalent than in Harold Bloom's critiques of contemporary universities.

However, liberal pluralism and post-structuralism have some irreconcilable differences. For example, Rooney notes "[p]luralists demand stability of meaning for a complex set of reasons, combining ideological, political and professional concerns" (129), whereas, post-structuralism wants to disrupt meanings or the notion of "meaning" and place ideas like "ideology" and "politics" in relation to language and discursive practices.

The narratives presented in anthology prefaces often set out to establish their difference from other anthologies, or, more generally, the difference of their readers and writers from a traditional canon. Rejecting the terms of liberal pluralism and reclaiming difference motivate anthologies like *In the Tradition: An Anthology of Young Black Writers* (1992). Editors, Kevin Powell and Ras Baraka, use a well-known image of American national pride, the melting pot, and turn it inside out: "We are children of the post-integration (nightmare!), post-Civil Rights era, abandoned to find our way in a pot bent on melting our culture into mainstream oblivion (non-cipher!)" (i). Revision of this powerful metaphor for American cultural superiority is

also an apt demonstration of how cultural hybridity dismantles naturalized categories like literature, culture and politics. Their goal for the anthology is to reject co-optation into a "mainstream" political agenda and define their own literature and politics.

A similar case is found in the preface to *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women* (1994): "it became clear to me that Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians should have our own book, apart from just a few of us representing all of us. . . apart from helping to promote diversity in white-dominated anthologies" (Ed. Lim-Hing i). This moment of conception is motivated by searching for a literary space different from other pre-established structures. Lim-Hing specifically rejects co-optation into a larger "diversified" canon. Her refusal acknowledges that placement in a more "conservative" anthology would require ignoring "issues specific to lesbians and bisexual women" (i). Here, Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians begin their literary history with a difference from difference, namely, a difference that is not equated with diversity.

This narrative of constructing an alternative canon begins with a conception of alternate space. The editors of *Plural Desires: Writing Bisexual Women's Realities* (1995) describe "a forum in which bisexual women could be ourselves without defending ourselves, a vehicle of self-expression and self-affirmation, of a space in which to listen to ourselves and each other" (ix). Their anthology would function as a community center where its readers can

find a shared audience: "[t]heir [various forms of writing] conversational, polyvocal qualities aptly characterize the sense of traveling-community-in-paper-form provided by an anthology" (xiii). This recuperation of anthologies as a form imagines a shared physical space, that is, an unexplored area in relation to other canons, as an integral part of their self definition. They want to move into the blind spot of traditional Norton anthologies.

This can sometimes lead to thinking of an alternative set of literary texts as supplements or complements to other anthologies. The preface to *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985) sees itself as "complementing and supplementing the standard Norton anthologies of English and American literature" (xxvii). The editors do not conceive of this anthology functioning autonomously but rather serving as a part of a larger literary tradition established by the Norton anthologies. The language of complementarity resurfaces throughout other anthology prefaces. The editor of *Chloe Plus Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Literature from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (1994) conceives of her anthology as creating other similar anthologies, thereby generating a larger alternative reading and critical community: "It is my hope that other scholars will soon compile anthologies, which could be read as *companions* to this volume, that trace the developments of literary representations of homosexual men and non-Western lesbians" (my italics xi). The goal is not isolation and singularity but generation and proliferation. This anthology's narrative imagines an expansion that interpolates a past and projects a future literary history.

Slightly different from the work of creating new communities is that of rediscovering older ones. Often anthologies will ground their history in recovery work, as in the case of the *NALW*: "our collection seeks to recover a long and often neglected literary history" (xxvii). Recovery work extends the genealogy of the anthology back beyond the immediate present. The lack of representation in current canons motivates a search for a previously unknown past. Catriona Kelly, editor of *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing* (1994), emphasizes how history structures her collection of Russian women's writing: she argues that "writing's historical traditions seemed not only desirable, but essential" (xi). That history serves as a structuring narrative of literary heritage as well. The language of literary genealogies and traditions is crucial because it provides an anthology with a *raison d'être*: In the *NALW*, Gilbert and Gubar wish "to celebrate the continuing tradition Woolf implicitly defined in *A Room of One's Own*" (xxiv) and "to recover the female literary inheritance that we have attempted to reconstitute" (xxxii). Thinking about literary texts in relation to histories and inheritance involves both memorializing a past and reconstituting that past in terms of present needs. So, for editors seeking to create a set of counter-canons and alternative anthologies, a need to represent a current "minor" or neglected tradition serves as justification for a past. It is these connections to a past that provide an anthology with an unassailable position.

In addition to this complementarity or recovery work that initially motivates an anthology's narrative, the editors also express a need for a

separate and distinct voice, one that is not currently being represented by other anthologies or canons. Perhaps, a more literal example of the importance of voice in literary canons is the anthology, *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African-American Women* (1995). This anthology's desire for recognition of voice is both literal and figural. The editor, Shirley Logan, collects speeches and "rhetorical responses of black women who spoke and wrote as preambles to action" (xi). Not only does Logan see a lack of "voice," meaning political representation, in traditional canons, but also she finds a generic failure: speeches and other vocal expressions are often left out of anthologies. Certainly, this exception supports Derrida's argument about the subordination of speech to the written word in western philosophical and literary traditions. Introducing race into this bias suggests a particularly vexed part of literary canons, that is, the potential for "double jeopardy." Both generic and racial biases have prevented representation of ethnic writers.[16] Logan concludes her preface with a statement of her intentions "to let the women speak. What they have to say transcends the constraints of the printed page" (xvi). Unfortunately, those voices will not be heard outside the "constraints of the printed page;" the simple mechanics of anthologies and literary canons is that they are written and printed forms of cultural capital. In order to circulate in a literary market, these women's voices will have to be expressed in written words.

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[16] See Arnold Krupat's "Literary 'Criticism': Native American 'Literature'" which explores the problems of representing oral literatures in traditional, western literary forms.

Voice clearly emerges as a potent form of representation because it does seem to provide direct access to a state of mind or specific intentions. Listening for "voice" in an anthology is misleading because voice can refer to a title, an audience or an editor's preferences. Because some narrative structure is in place, maintaining a chaotic polyphony of voices is impossible despite attempts to keep each voice singular and unique. The editors of *Feminisms* (1991) hope to achieve a dissonant effect: "There is no way to force these many voices into a unison performance, or even--in some cases--to make them harmonize" (xii). But, the voices of the various authors are organized in a linear structure; chapters follow chapters, and second and third entries follow the first one, and so on. Even though many readers will find a narrative structure to impose upon a text, anthology editors offer alternative reading practices which defy the hierarchies a text's physical structure could impose on interpretation. The editor of *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing* explains similar intentions: "I hope. . .that the book can with profit be read straight through as well as dipped into" (xxi). Editors like those of the anthology *Feminisms* intend, through variations in narrative structure and representations of diverse writers, to disrupt the process of canon formation: "While the canonization effect is probably to some degree unavoidable, we have tried our best to subvert it" (xiii). Narratives s of pluralism, diversity, or western civilization, fail to construct bodies of knowledge and readers.

Issues of voice raise questions of speaking positions. Prefaces discuss the various speakers in the anthology, ranging from editors to writers to

readers. The role of the reader plays a crucial part in forming literary canons.[17] For example, Harold Bloom views reading the western canon as an act of reclaiming, speaking to and thinking about the self: "Without Shakespeare, no canon, because without Shakespeare, no recognizable selves in us, whoever we are. We owe to Shakespeare not only our representation of cognition but much of our capacity for cognition" (40). Bloom has an idea who that "self" may be, but he masks it behind a scientific discourse of cognition and recognition as though true canon readers know who they really are.

But, what of the following case? In the preface to *Chloe Plus Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Literature*, editor Lillian Faderman describes her reading experience in terms similar to Bloom's:

> Almost as soon as I claimed that identity [lesbian], being already enamored of books, of course, I looked around for literary representations that would explain me to myself. . . I wanted 'real literature,' the kind I read in my English classes, to comment on the

[17]Frank Kermode in his essay on the institutionalization of interpretation and changes in reading practices observes: "the intrusion of new work into the canon usually involves some change in the common wisdom of the institution as to permissible hermeneutic procedures" (180). Kermode sees the evolution of critical readings a natural progression in revising literary canons. Thus, deconstructive readings are not as subversive as their practitioners think because deconstruction requires attaining a high degree of technical training in literature. The fault in Kermode's logic is that he sees the literary institution as a command center that oversees and condones all readings. However, evidence of widespread disagreement in the American media about literary theories and criticism undermines his argument that academic institutions constitute the community of readers and therefore can control interpretation.

> lifestyle I had just recently discovered with such enthusiasm, to reveal me to myself. (vii)

As a reader, Faderman expresses, like Bloom, a desire for self-discovery through literature, a motivational force that Bloom sees desperately lacking in the School of Resentment (25). But, when Faderman reads Shakespeare's comedies, she might find gender and sexuality issues more interesting than a man's quest for the right woman. I suspect, however, that this is not the kind of reader or subject Bloom believes that the western canon creates, despite the fact that Faderman performs the type of self-seeking reading Bloom advocates. Clearly, Bloom's critique of the School of Resentment then is more accurately aimed at a new generation of readers and readings, which are actually misreadings according to his argument. Faderman also hopes to appeal to a new group of readers and their interests in self-discovery and community building.

Often, a preface will envision its readers and their needs: "While aware of the extent to which personal taste has governed my selection, I have given priority to the needs of contemporary readers" (ed. Wu xxvii). Decisions made about who these readers are will structure the content and form of the anthology. Editor Gloria Norris writes in the preface to *The Seasons of Women: An Anthology* (1996): "[t]he baby boomers are turning fifty. Thus books on menopause, spiritual enrichment, and even dying are suddenly being brought out of dark corners of bookstores and thrust onto the best-seller racks" (xx). Norris presents a grim view of the anthology market. Those who

have had the cash will continue to buy books, so those books must change to appeal to their consumers' tastes or needs. The *Seasons* anthology is published by none other than W.W. Norton and Company, an infamous, "canon-producing," publisher. Their domination of the anthology industry has become so prevalent that a critic like Lillian Robinson uses a verb like "Nortonizing" to refer to canonizing collections of literary texts. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes the process of trying to form an African-American canon as both frustrating, contradictory, and necessary: "A well-marked anthology functions in the academy to create a tradition, as well as to define and preserve it. A *Norton* anthology opens up a literary tradition" (my italics 31-32). Gates' argument highlights the dilemmas of wanting establish an African-American literary tradition. Ultimately, he sees "Nortonizing" as a necessary evil because it provides validity, visibility and teachability to a previously denied literary tradition.

Norris' anthology organizes its narrative according to what she calls the seasons or cycles of a woman's life: When I was a Girl; Looking for Love; Finding Direction; Love, Marriage and in Between; Motherhood; Family and Friends; and The Fullness of Life. The *Seasons* anthology best demonstrates the way in which imagining the audience (the aging, female baby boomer) provides a narrative for an anthology's conception of its subject. This narrative is carefully orchestrated to designate "key" and universal moments in every woman's life and these moments lead to a culmination point, the development of a complete self. Furthermore, the *Seasons* anthology shows

how its preface encapsulates a larger narrative of progression toward a self-creation. Other anthologies use prefaces to define their subject, using language of self-definition, although other narratives of progress are not as transparent as in the *Seasons* anthology.

Telling the story of an anthology's inception also anticipates its reception. Editors use voice as a marker of difference from other groups of readers. Whereas Norris imagines her anthology as a communing with an aging baby-boomer, other anthologies speak against "others." For example, the preface to *Afro-American Women Writers 1746-1933* (1988) adopts a defensive position against the "attitudes of some white male literary historians of the past" (xxiii). Editor Ann Allen Shockley's tone is often one of shock, horror and frustration. Her goal for the anthology is to recuperate Afro-American women writers for their own sake and create their own literary sphere outside of "white judgmental criteria" (xiv). In her opinion, "others," that is, white or black men, have had access to "the canon" and have excluded black women. Her preface clearly draws a line between those who have and those who have not: "Supporting the white literary power structure have been the black male editors of anthologies, who as scholars, critics, and writers select those whom they think should or should not be recognized" (xv). Shockley's preface is unusual in that it continually targets the powerful role anthology editors play in determining literary canons. Her preface analyzes a long history of Afro-American literature anthologies, examining the prefaces to a series of anthologies similar to hers. For her, those

admissions criteria are based upon race and gender. Now with "the advent of black females as *editors* of anthologies" (my italics, xxi), Shockley argues "the canon" will see an increased visibility for Afro-American women writers.

Shockley uses all the terminology that Guillory and Bloom critique in their works on literary canons. Both Bloom and Guillory would disavow having any privileged access to "the literary canon." Bloom states outright that no one person has the authority to say what the western canon is (37), or, as Guillory argues, "the canon" is "an *imaginary* totality of works" (his italics 30). Yet, editors like Shockley read "the western literary canon" as truth, as a literal object to which only elite, white, male academics have access. It is from this position of disadvantage and lack that she begins to write her version of Afro-American women's writing. She begins with others' failures in order to imagine a present success for her recovery project: "Regardless of past inadequacies of the wielders of literary power, Afro-American women writers are now empowering themselves" (xxxvi), even if those "wielders of power" are not a unified group. Note, for example, the vast, critical differences between Bloom and Guillory, both members of the "white male academic elite." Shockley constructs them as one group in order to create a unified opposition in her collection. Despite "white academic's" disclaimers, they are a singular "they" and, for Shockley's purposes, both groups must be collectively defined before they can be attacked.

A crucial part of an anthology's narrative is a demonstration of a previous tradition's failure to recognize or address a group of writers. The

"past inadequacies" make way for present reparations: : as the editors of *In the Tradition* write: "[w]e are the what is of what was" (i). Prefaces to anthologies adopt this rhetoric of progress and repair in order to create a new, improved, version of literary history. As we saw with the *NALW*, these improvements can be conceived by editors as complements or supplements to previous canonical texts, or, in the case of Shockley's anthology, outright rejection of those canons. Alternative literary canons count on the incommensurability of identifications that Guillory observes in canon debates (9). The endless chain of qualifications, race, gender, class, sexual preference, etc. ensures that another version of literature and reading practices will need representation. Thus, the failure of the "tradition" or "the western canon" is indispensable for these new articulations of literary subjects. Angry and resentful tones inflect many prefaces, accusing "the tradition" of letting a group down, yet, it is this letting down that creates a space for building up. The guarantee of failure can be read as an expectation for revision and rewriting.

The narrative trajectory of prefaces simultaneously casts back into earlier texts, anthologies, and traditions while looking forward into the future of their anthology. Establishing a genealogy or history of texts proves a successful strategy for traditional, literary canons because literary histories show texts in relation to or in response to other texts. Even in a twentieth-century literary theory anthology, the editors must refer to a previous history before asserting their anthology's uniqueness: "let it be simply stated that the anthology covers only the twentieth century because there was no literary

theory before (if by literary theory one means a considered body of knowledge rather than isolated texts of theoretical import)" (Lambropoulos x). In any case, anthologies figure themselves in terms of having a relationship, positive or negative, to certain literary histories and to engage in debates with specific texts. Thus, a reader is presented with a way of reading: namely, reading books in dialogue with other books.

Prefaces discuss anthologists' methodologies with regard to selection process. Debates range from questions of excerpts or longer pieces, an author's well-known texts or more obscure pieces, and types of genres included, to modernized spelling and footnotes. One of the more interesting constraints upon selections is the physical size of the volume, as though the figurative, compressed space of a traditional western canon becomes literalized in the restricted, physical size of the anthology. For example, reproducing novels is impossible, yet, novels play a crucial role in the development of literary histories. These spatial issues prompt editors like Gilbert and Gubar to express their regrets and apologies to their readers. Keeping in mind that the editors of the *NALW* have just spent several pages explaining the continuity and cohesiveness of women's writing and their shared literary history, consider how the following preface closes with a series of disclaimers:

> Editors inevitably find themselves unable to keep up with the rapid evolution of new literary movements and traditions. In addition, permission problems sometimes lead to the exclusion of important texts, and space restrictions often require similar exclusions. Thus we

> regret that we have been unable to represent such increasingly self-aware movements as those currently being pioneered by Chicanas and Italian-American women. Similarly, we are sorry that we could not obtain permission to reprint works by the modernist poet/critic Laura (Riding) Jackson, and by the contemporary British playwright Caryl Churchill. Finally, however, we regret that even in this compendious volume, we have not had room to include texts by countless women writers whose achievements we much admire. (xxx)

The problems Gilbert and Gubar run up against are no different than space problems faced by all other anthology editors. The effects upon reception and literary canon formation are fascinating. Basically, their apologies read as an excuse for failure, that is, admitting to being unable to offer a complete representation of their subject. Yet, this failure, or lack of representation, will become a starting point for another anthology, as I argued earlier. Extenuating circumstances, or that Bloomian resignation to contingency, will always mitigate the reception of the anthology. Because an anthology must include a false endpoint, women's literary history becomes stagnant once it has been anthologized: by the time it is published, it is out of date. This means that it can never fully represent the history that continues during and after its writing. Consequently, literary history that is regarded as "continuous" is actually based upon discontinuity, its rupture from its immediate present. However, because works continue to be produced, as Gilbert and Gubar recognize they are, editors should avoid attempting completeness.

Gilbert and Gubar thus refuse to attempt such a feat: "Of course, no anthology can pretend to completeness" (xxx). The fact that this admission of lack comes into canon forming practices through a feminist literary text like the *NALW* is worth note and will be further examined in chapter four. Literary theorists like Derrida and Lyotard have debunked the belief in a fully representational language or narrative. The play of signifiers and linguistic slippages is an aspect of post-structuralist work which are indebted to the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud. What Freud's work offers to post-structuralism and what post-structuralism brings to a critique of canon formation is that, quite simply, "we don't say what we mean and we mean what we don't say." While this is a gross simplification of the vastly complicated and intricate structures of Freud's theories, the implication for literary canons is that what they represent also speaks to what they do not represent. Critical or healthily suspicious readers recognize that a complete canon is impossible. As we saw with Guillory and Bloom, canons are fictions, imaginary creations. New readers can imagine new possible collections of texts to call a literary canon.

In contrast, the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1993) editors confidently describe their text: "the anthology *fully* represents English poetry in its major writers, forms and genres" (my italics xxxvi). The word "fully" is immediately followed by a set of qualifiers, English versus other languages, poetry versus other genres, major versus minor writers, writers versus

authors.[18] This process undermines the "fullness" of the anthology; each adjective also points to what it is not. Because literary canons, genres, historical periods, and reading subjects are confined by and determined by language, any insistence upon total representation, as in the case of the *Norton Anthology*, conversely remarks upon its own anxiety and inability to achieve complete presence. Whereas the *NALW* willingly admits a narrative bound for failure, the editors of the *Norton Anthology* overcompensate by insisting on the anthology's fullness.

In the preface to the *Norton Anthology*, the editors also insist, almost defensively, upon the text's simultaneous singularity and plurality: "this anthology is designed for the indispensable courses that introduce students to the unparalleled excellence and variety of English literature" (xxxv). Recalling Bhabha and Young's analysis of the nationalist drive motivating hybridity and the ways in which similar "hybrid" anxieties resurface in literary canon debates, it is no surprise the editors emphasize the Englishness of traditional literature. However, I also want to emphasize the editor's insistence on the "excellence" of English literature. Bill Readings, in his book *The University in Ruins* (1996), offers an in-depth analysis of the exploitation of the term "excellence" in academic institutions. Readings finds in university

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[18]Though one could not categorically state that the editors of the *Norton Anthology* are qualifying their terms in response to Roland Barthes' work, it is still interesting to remark on the varied usage of author and writer in anthology writing. My contention, following Barthes' ideas, is that the death of the Author has had critical repercussions for literary canons, as we will see in relation to feminist literary criticism anthologies in chapter four.

publications and charters "the emergence of a discourse of 'excellence' in place of prior appeals to the idea of culture as the language in which the University seeks to explain itself to itself and to the world at large" (12). In light of Bloom's anger with the current trend toward self-justification and with the debunking of the equation of "western culture" with "the literary canon," it is remarkable that the editors of the *Norton* anthology have substituted "western cultural tradition" with a Bloomian gesture toward an aesthetics of "literary excellence." The *Norton* editors unwittingly prove Readings' point: if they can no longer appeal to culture, they will replace it with excellence instead. In the *Norton*, using "literary excellence" becomes just another way of talking about aesthetic standards and inherent literary value--the premise remains unquestioned. Certain literary standards can be met by some literatures and not others; and, as the vague modifiers of the previous sentence suggest, we are supposed to have a tacit, instinctual understanding of these standards. To specify or articulate these criteria would sacrifice the integrity of these criteria. In essence, a good reader should just know and canons help to teach these recognition skills.

Thus, anthology prefaces also include a crucial rhetorical strategy, that of inscribing the anthology's reception by a reader. For different anthologies, the type of reception varies, nonetheless, the aim is to continue transmitting the messages of these newly recognized writers. *With Pen and Voice* concludes with a simple imperative directed at the reader, "Listen" (xvi). We can assume the goal of this anthology is to make previously silenced voices

heard. But, what are readers listening for? As we have come to expect with anthologies attempting to disrupt standards of traditional literary canons, the aims can be of some political nature. Often this political agenda is encoded in a pedagogical project. It is exactly this mixture of pedagogy and politics that Bloom takes to task in his tirade against the School of Resentment, a group which he believes to have abandoned teaching aesthetics for the promotion of social programs. *The HBJ Anthology of Literature* (1993) seeks to incorporate all these agendas into its new, improved version of the English literary canon. The editors explain a three-fold aim for their anthology:

> [i]t presents significant and representative works from the increasingly widening canon of literature in English. Second, it provides strategies to assist readers in their appreciation of works of literature. Third, by introducing readers to the language of literature, both simple and complex, and by suggesting methods for articulating response, it provides opportunities to explore literature and to respond to language in its rich and varied forms.(1)

The pedagogical aims are clear, while the political aim is more subtle: readers are asked to participate in a language and literature and to recognize its inherent value. At the very most, the *HBJ* anthology hopes to continue the creation and expansion of literary canons. In a very Bloomian sentiment, the editors observe similar canonical phenomena: "[r]eading literature invites writing about it" (ii). Certainly, the more subtle political agenda here is a promotion of one's profession or discipline. For critics like Bloom and

cultural analysts like Guillory, however, this type of self marketing is a necessity in the academic industry, and, it is no surprise that rhetorics of self-definition and self-promotion emerge in a contemporary anthology.

Just as literary canons invite rereading they also invite rewriting. This means that these anthologies also seek to continue a history of their literature. Generational anxiety, perhaps represented only metaphorically, is literalized in one preface which refers to the physical book being passed down through time. An aim of *In Search of Color Everywhere* (1994) is to celebrate and promote more writing and also to imagine that "this book will become a family treasure, something to be given from one generation to the next" (5). The anthology functions as a family bible, a collection of writings to be recirculated, reread and reinterpreted.

Ultimately, the narrative of an anthology closes with imagining its future, "the we are of what was" and what will be, be it beyond the enforced end points of the chronology of the collection or beyond the scope of its imagined community and shared history. R. V. Cassill, editor of *The Norton Anthology of Contemporary Fiction* (1988), observes two motivations behind anthologies:

> To be sure anthologies are gathered from other initial forms of publication--from magazines most often, or sometimes from a book collection by a single author. The initial printing is often makeshift, ephemeral, or merely inadequate to reach the audience particular stories deserve. Every anthology is a reconsideration and a resifting,

> giving a degree of permanence to stories that might have blown away in the breeze without this second incarnation. (4)

The prefaces map out a narrative for anthologies that intend to propel texts into literary histories. Anthologies work like Dr. Frankenstein: they reanimate "dead" works or recuperate lost texts, reassemble the pieces into a narrative of self-creation or self-emergence, and, finally, construct that narrative in such a way that, by virtue of its failures, it provokes readers to reread and rewrite those literary histories. Thus, alternative canons and anthologies learn from traditional canonizing narratives that survival of literary texts depends on incorporating contingency and failure into their history. In a sense, a degree of permanence also necessitates change, which ultimately ensures continuation of writing and reading. In concluding this chapter, I would like to recall David Lloyd's vision of alternative canons as rebellious body parts. As alternative anthologies still strive to reclaim their bodies or selves from narratives of others, a retrospective look at the initial successes and eventual "failures" of feminist critical anthologies shows how rethinking gender difference in relation to "the canonical form of Man" questions representing subjectivity.

Chapter Four
Anthologies of Feminist Literary Criticism

Challenging the body of canonical man describes feminist criticism's attack on both gender and the nature of subjectivity in literary representations. Because subjectivity issues have always been prominent in feminist criticisms and theories, role of various feminisms in literary canon debates is critical. Carolyn Redl remarks upon the multifaceted role feminist critiques play in canon debates: "feminist literary criticism has itself become both a topic for reinterpretation and an integral aspect of the canon and of the literary theory generated by the canon" (193). Redl suggests that feminist literary criticism serves three functions: as a tool for critiquing canons, second, as a part of the object of inquiry, and, itself as a subject of further interpretation. This mirrors the phenomena we observed in chapter one: literary canon anxieties are both the cause and the effect of canon critiques. In addition, the dynamic by which one is inquirer, object of inquiry and constituted by and of the language of inquiry is an example of hybridity in critical discourse and practice.

In the previous chapter, we observed how alternative anthologies and counter-canons adopt aspects of canonical discourses, such as establishing a definable and knowable literary tradition, in order to represent their own unique literary identities. One conclusion I argued that we can draw from those examples is that successes are based on failures, and, here, with a selection of feminist criticism anthologies, we will observe a historical case study of similar "failed" progress. Beginning with Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) and *NALW* (1985), feminist criticisms quickly

faced their own subjectivity and representation dilemmas. In creating hybrid anthologies that co-opt and reject patriarchal canon forming practices, Gilbert and Gubar's texts also provoked criticisms from Lillian Robinson who found their texts too imitative of exclusionary Nortonizing practices. Moreover, as a variety of feminist anthologies appear, Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), and Janet Todd's *Feminist Literary History* (1988) explore definitions of feminist subjects, theoretical biases, and nationalistic interests. With Elaine Showalter's *New Feminist Criticism* (1985) and Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), issues of race and politics, intellectual theory and critical practice emerge. Theorizing a feminist literary tradition also figures its problems in metaphors of disjointed families, troubled genealogies and unhealthy bodies.

Earlier in this thesis, I introduced Bhabha's theory of hybridity and Shelley's *Frankenstein* as ways of rethinking canon formation. Thinking of literary canons as a practice of hybridity offers a methodology that seeks to demonstrate how texts simultaneously legitimize and delegitimize their own discourses. *Frankenstein,* as literary text and a metaphor for the body, explores the sutured and fragmented nature of physical or literary histories. This idea of genealogy combines issues of cultural, national and literary identities. With respect to a western literary canon, whose writings are founded upon the necessity of a clearly demarcated linear history, the imbrication of alternative canons or literary histories challenges the singularity or uniqueness of those original histories. Deferring discussion of its

shortcomings until later in this chapter,[19] I would like to examine the seminal work of Gilbert and Gubar and their attempts to create an alternative literary tradition. This text serves as a departure point for rethinking feminist literary subjects and demonstrates some of the problems in challenging pre-established structures of representation such as literary canons or literary histories. For the moment, however, I will consider the initial successes and failures of their text. Through acts of rereading, their text performs a critique of gender biases in canon formation. Bhabha's concept of hybridity promotes resistant reading, of reading from within a colonizing discourse against that discourse's own hegemonic status. Reflecting on canonized reading practices and their institutionalization is the critical contribution of feminist literary critics like Gilbert and Gubar.

The chapter from *The Madwoman in the Attic* relevant to this discussion is their interpretation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a "despairingly acquiescent 'misreading' of *Paradise Lost*" (Gilbert and Gubar 189). While Gilbert and Gubar argue that Shelley's text portrays Milton as a literary father figure, the strength of their argument lies in examining Shelley's critical reading of Milton. Gilbert and Gubar show how Shelley reads and writes in response to the canonized author:

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[19]See Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics*, pp. 61-69, and Janet Todd's *Feminist Literary History*, pp. 73-77.

> For it becomes increasingly clear as one reads *Frankenstein* with *Paradise Lost* in mind that because the novel's author is such an inveterate student of literature, families, and sexuality, and because she is using her novel as a *tool to help her make sense of her reading*, *Frankenstein* is ultimately a mock *Paradise Lost*. (Gilbert and Gubar, my emphasis, 230)

While it is suspect to assert that a noncanonical text has meaning only through the lens of a canonical one, the reverse can also be argued: *Paradise Lost* might not make sense without *Frankenstein*. The alternate readings of Milton's epic provide his text with a history and genealogy of readers necessary to maintain his text's canonical status. What I argue, however, and what Gilbert and Gubar overlook in their concern over father and daughter relationships, is that Shelley's writing is also a critical response to traditional readings of Milton. She is schooled in literature meaning that she has been taught how to read "properly," yet Milton's text does not make sense to her. Similarly in the novel, the monster uses reading to try to find an identity: "Reading, his main source of connection with others, only reinforces his exclusion from a literary community" (Kilgour 207). That model fails to provide a community of readers or readings that signify identification. Rather, these texts signify a disidentification. Like the monster, Shelley uses Milton's text as model for her self-awareness (Kilgour 207). Shelley writes *Frankenstein* as her rereading of a canonical text. In the case of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the issues of gender, subjectivity and authority have been

extensively charted and debated. Kilgour observes that *Paradise Lost* serves as a model for both the monster and Shelley (207); the monster discovers "reading, his main source of connection with others, only reinforces his exclusion from a literary community" (207). This same dilemma applies to Mary Shelley who, through her writing, seeks to define her community. Shelley's fictional text enacts revisions of these issues; but, it is through a text like *Frankenstein* that the absences in a canonical text like *Paradise Lost* begin to make sense to Shelley and to invite revision by readers' like herself whose subject positions are both neglected and misrepresented in canonical literary texts.

Another effect of Gilbert and Gubar's and Shelley's texts is the attention each pays to the interrelatedness of reading and writing literary history. *Frankenstein* engages with Romantic and Gothic literary histories. Similarly, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, and, later on, the *NALW*, seek to create a separate, feminist literary history in response to patriarchal conceptions of literary history. Not only does writing other histories and establishing alternative literary genealogies challenge the centrality of traditional literary paradigms, but they also address how to define subjects within or outside alternative histories. These issues raise possibilities of radically contingent identifications and subjectivities which I will discuss later in the chapter. But here, I want to consider reading *Frankenstein* as a challenge to founding literary canons upon history.

Gilbert and Gubar suggest that Frankenstein (the monster) presents a reader with the contingencies of history: "the monster's narrative is a philosophical meditation on what it means to be born without a 'soul' or a history" (*Madwoman* 235). While Gilbert and Gubar invest in finding parallels between Shelley's quest for literary identity and the monster's journey, we can expand our reading to suggest the difficulties of establishing an identity without having a "proper" history--an issue at stake for Shelley, *Frankenstein* and alternative literary anthologies. Their chapter on Shelley ends in an apocalyptic tone, suggesting that to deny an other's history is to destroy one's own: "For the annihilation of history may well be the final revenge of the monster who has been denied a true place in history. . ." (*Madwoman* 247). Their image of total destruction shares a vision similar to Bloom's fall of the western canon and to Lloyd's anticipation of the dissolution of "Canonical man."

Despite their attempts to the contrary, Gilbert and Gubar's own model of feminist literary history seem, like the women writers they recover, "to act out the male metaphors" (xii-iii) that they had tried to correct. The charges levied against Gilbert and Gubar's text range from their arbitrary choice of originary dates--the 19th century as the beginning of women's writing (p. xii); the privileging and homogenizing of women's literary experience--all women writers were writing through an anxiety of influence from dominant male authors (xii); or that authors, both male and female, can control the effects of representational language: "women themselves have the power to

create themselves as characters" (*Madwoman* 16). The annihilation of history they predict is premature because, ultimately, they subscribe to the same structures of literary history as a narrative of literary genealogies. To choose Shelley as an originator of feminist canon critiques, and then, to read her text as a comment on the annihilation of patriarchal structures of history contradicts their aim, which is to write a feminist literary history based upon those same, supposedly "annihilated," structures. Critics like Lillian Robinson argue that feminist critical revisions must come at a deeper structural level. In her opinion, the effect Gilbert and Gubar's text should achieve is a radical questioning of the value of literary canons.

Robinson's principal charge against early feminist canons is that they repeat the same exclusionary criteria as traditional canons, without examining the ideology of value at work in these criteria:

> Obviously, no challenge is presented to the particular notions of literary quality, timelessness, universality, and other qualities that constitute the rationale for canonicity. The underlying argument, rather, is that consistency, fidelity to those values, requires recognition of at least the few best and best-known women writers. Equally obviously, this approach does not call the notion of the canon itself into question. ("Treason" 574-575)

Robinson clearly has a political agenda in mind for feminist criticisms: feminist theories should overtly attack pre-existing, exclusionary, hierarchical structures. The recovery work performed by texts like *Madwoman* does not

generate these challenges, but rather, increases the overall "pool of potential applicants" (Robinson "Treason" 576) who are seeking admission to "the western literary canon." However, as we saw in chapter three with some alternative anthologies, counter-canons hope to remain just that, in opposition to "the canon." The writing of alternative literary histories, simply by their existence as something "other," challenges the centrality of a singular literary tradition and, thus, performs critical work. Demonstrating the contingency and hybridity of literary histories and literary traditions undermines "the canon as metanarrative" by presenting texts as one tradition among many others. While Robinson fears that this reading could be "populism without the politics of populism" ("Treason" 577), she seems more concerned with adequate representation in a liberal pluralist sense. In terms of literary identifications, the centrality of a literary canon becomes hybridized simply by the presence of alternative canons and critical readings of canonized texts.

Here, reading Bhabha's concept of hybridity as a dynamic and interactive process is particularly effective for rethinking canons as more than links in a chain or as vessels for transcendental values. Bhabha argues:

> [I]t must be stressed, it is not simply the *content* of disavowed knowledges--be they forms of cultural Otherness or traditions of colonialist treachery--that return to be acknowledged as counterauthorities . . . What is irremediably estranging in the presence of the hybrid--in the revaluation of the symbol of national authority as

> the sign of colonial difference--is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation: they are not simply *there* to be seen or appropriated. (his italics 156)

Feminist literary canons can represent a sign of cultural and historical difference, a distinction even from populism or liberal pluralism. Like the monster whose lack of subjectivity and history exposes the inability of history to represent everyone (even subjects composed of pieces of corpses), feminist literary histories also remind readers that "the western literary canon" is marked by absence and neglected stories.[20] Robinson's assertion that theories of canons are not questioned along side the building of new ones is a valid one; yet, Gilbert and Gubar cannot delegitimize the discourses for which they hope to establish a new, viable, feminist literary tradition. To do so would require being outside the legitimizing discourses of literary canons and anthologies.

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[20]In support of Gilbert and Gubar's framework and methodology, Margaret Ezell reads this as a necessity for gaining currency in university forums: "In short, anthologies have suggested that one important agenda in establishing a historical canon is to establish commonality in female experience throughout history" (581-2). Although Ezell is supportive of *NALW*, she expresses concern for anachronistic readings. For example, for seventeenth century writers, literary reputations were not necessarily based upon the number of publications, which in the case today (588). Moreover, feminist readers tend to import their own understandings of history, which Ezell argues does not do justice to the texts. Her conclusion is that "we must ask ourselves if the formation of a canon of women's literature is still premature" (591) and, perhaps, by waiting, feminist critics will avoid falling into "a replica of the male tradition" (591). The response that comes to mind is a cliché: nothing ventured, nothing gained. Because feminist anthologies will not be able to present total representations of women's literary history, their history is more of the type Derrida reads in Foucault. More importantly, initial failures promote further rewriting and rereading.

The dilemma is similar for their edition of the *NALW*: the lack of critical awareness pervades the preface to the text: expressions like "exuberant variety yet strong continuity" (Gilbert and Gubar *NALW* xxvii) and statements like "we believe that, though conventional literary periodization does not suit women's literary history, women's history does have significant phases all its own" (Gilbert and Gubar *NALW* xxviii) suggest a desire to maintain a carefully poised identity of difference. Or, perhaps the stakes are too high to sacrifice gaining access to valued forms of cultural capital, for example, the *NALW* becoming a mandatory text for undergraduate literature courses. Various choices emerge: to be visible on the colonizer's terms, to co-opt those terms for one's own purposes, or to remain invisible. Yet, if one were to consider that Gilbert and Gubar are reading and co-opting the patriarchal discourse, like the way in which Shelley revises *Paradise Lost* in order to make sense of her literary subjectivity, then the *NALW* represents a hybrid encounter, the alternative canon writing itself through and contaminating the "conventional" one.

In her *Madwoman* critique, Robinson perceives herself as not trapped by linguistic representation, whereas Gilbert and Gubar are too trapped in pre-existing literary metaphors and historical structures. Similarly, in her critique of the *NALW*, Robinson argues that

> Gilbert and Gubar cannot fall back on the 'literary standards' argument in its purest form. . . It thereby not only opens the way to questions about *which* women are meant--entailing questions about race and

> class--but also about the word 'literature'--entailing questions about genre, style and 'standards.' I say the anthology raises such questions, but it also, by and large, ignores them. ("Is there Class" her italics 299).

Robinson criticizes Gilbert and Gubar for skirting the issues of canonicity. By interrogating only the criteria for canon admission and reading canons as cultural artifacts, they reinvigorate the belief in an inherent value in literary canons. Placed alongside the established literary tradition and in choosing to "complement" and supplement the standard Norton anthologies (Gilbert and Gubar *NALW* xxvii), the *NALW* has, henceforth, fallen victim to a predetermined representation as secondary to a dominant "male" tradition. Gilbert and Gubar's or Robinson's beliefs that by gaining literary control or critical self-awareness, feminisms can change their representations or practices are faulty. Allowances must be made for the possibility that agency has already been contaminated by discourses of authority.

Both Robinson's, and Gilbert and Gubar's, feminist projects and literary criticisms demonstrate the strength feminist readers and readings wield in questioning, either overtly or accidentally, literary conventions and traditions. One of the most critical influences of feminisms has been the introduction of a such issues such as ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Feminist recovery works like *The Madwoman in the Attic*, by excluding ethnic and minority women writers, raise new critical awareness of these previously neglected individuals. Moreover, the epistemological and ontological

difficulties of recovering women's writing offer an elaborate framework for promoting further feminist studies:

> My assumption is that the logic of feminist scholarship and criticism, because they invariably bring one social category, that of gender, into relation with traditional critical categories, necessarily entails rethinking the entire literary tradition in order to place centrally into it not only an entire excluded sex--which is an enormous enough task--but also excluded classes, races, national groups, sexual minorities, and ideological positions. (Robinson "Canon" 29)

Robinson's statement highlights the powerful influence feminist theories have across many academic disciplines; yet, she also suggests that feminisms have the ability to attend to all the issues of race, class, sexuality etc. Guillory's notion of an "incommensurability" of identifications reminds us that feminist theory cannot attend to or speak for all marginalized or oppressed groups. Moreover, a review of feminist criticism's "failures" demonstrates these difficulties in exploring new identifications which are both visible and contestable. Recognizing its own hybridized discourses, ones which cannot represent multiple oppressions or subjectivities, feminist theories reveal diverse and fragmented identities. For a literary canon attempting to define itself, wrestling with epistemological dilemmas from the outset can be read as a failure to be universally applicable or culturally relevant. Yet, failure to agree on feminist literary criticism's project more accurately reflects an

inability to decide about its subject(s), and this disagreement necessitates further study, as Robinson suggests.

Broadly speaking, feminisms effect the epistemological foundations of literary institutions, as Teresa de Lauretis observes:

> [i]t [critical studies] demanded consideration of whether and to what extent feminist studies have been 'Reconstituting Knowledge'; whether they have produced new forms and methods of knowledge; whether they have produced new knowledge, and thus reshaped at once the field and the object of knowledge, as well as the conditions of knowing. (3)

Moreover, feminist literary critics like Robinson and Gilbert and Gubar have argued against traditionally accepted universals, and, as a result of their work, have reassessed the foundations of "naturalized" categories of knowledge. A heightened awareness of subject positions, as we saw in the *Growing Up Asian* anthology for example, within certain feminist frameworks, defies an overarching discourse of women's writing anthologies. So, not only do feminist studies challenge the epistemological foundations of traditional disciplines, but, it also re-examines its own anthologizing practices.

Another relevant example of challenges facing the development of a feminist literary canon is the rise of black lesbian criticism and theories which have fought against exclusion from both male black canons and white

women's canons. [21] The position of "double jeopardy" motivates African American writers to create their own anthologies and to establish their own identities. Anne Shockley writes: "Despite Afro-American literature's enormous debt to these women writers, however, it is rarely acknowledged--only a handful of black women writers have been recognized or entered in *the canon*" (my italics xx). The confusion over exactly which canon she refers to further demonstrates how literary canons are relative to their readers or critics. Moreover, for some editors like Shockley, white feminists control feminist discourses and spaces: "We 'other' women insist on *decentering* the *privileged* position that liberal feminists have created for themselves" (Saldívar-Hull, my italics, 183). In both of the above statements the tendency is to read the center as a monolithic, fixed category, be it the western canon or white liberal feminists, in order to define one's subject in opposition to it.

The motivations and the underlying processes of building these oppositions requires serious interrogation. Derrida's deconstruction of binaries (self/other, West/East, center/margin) also suggests how power dynamics are encoded within these structures: "Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center. . . that the center had no natural site. . .in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse" ("Structure" 84). When facing an elimination of an origin, meaning becomes

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[21] The Combahee River Collective outlines the multiple oppressions experienced by women of color, and exposes the exclusions inherent in white American Feminism. See *This Bridge Called My Back*, (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983.) pp. 210-218.

determinable only in terms of difference. Center and margin are discursive constructions which can, at carefully chosen moments, as in an anthology preface for example, benefit one part of the binary. Shockley's vision of "the canon" can be perceived not as a central site of intrinsic value, but rather a tradition whose meaning is constructed in relation to the margin.

As feminist criticisms become relative with respect to each other, "the marginal clustered together with the noncanonical threatens to destabilize placement and place altogether" (Marcus 270). While I resist collapsing the concept of marginality with noncanonical literary texts, I do agree with Jane Marcus that a strategy of dislocation functions well for critiquing beliefs in canons as objects of literary, aesthetic values. The benefit is two-fold: it breaks down the structures of center/margin and, also, exposes the underlying assumptions at work in these oppositions. More significantly, canon formation undermines its own centrality and authority by simultaneously denying the existence of and acknowledging many different literary canons. This forced recognition recalls Bhabha's story of the catechist thwarted by the Indians' rereading of the Bible according to their cultural and literary context.

Feminist anthologies have also altered their mandates for representation, often recognizing the impossibility of fullness and completion. A founding literary anthology for ethnic women writers is *This Bridge Called My Back* which was published in 1981 and republished with a new foreword in 1983. A comparison between the two prefaces reveals an increased critical attention to differences among ethnic women writers.

Cherríe Moraga laments the changes in "the "movement in the foreword to the 1983 edition: "The *idea* of Third World feminism has proved to be much easier between the covers of a book than between real live women. There *are* many issues that divide us; . . .Still, the need for a broad-based U.S. women of color movement capable of spanning borders of nation and ethnicity has never been so strong" (her italics iii). On the other hand, the foreword to the 1981 edition has a celebratory and collective spirit: "How I cherish this collection of cables, esoesses, conjurations, and fusile missles. Its motive force. Its gather-us-in-ness. Its midwifery of mutually wise understandings. Its promise of autonomy and community" (Moraga and Anzaldúa vi). In this first edition, the preface focuses on unity, togetherness and community; yet, the second edition realizes its own errors in trying to read unities across ethnic differences. In these anthologies of women's writing, the tension pulls between two poles: the desire for unity and the recognition of differences. I read these dilemmas as both a process and product of hybridization in writing literary identities. The result of hybridization is the need to acknowledge one's indebtedness and similarity to an "other," although the process of hybridization forces one to remark continually upon one's difference from this other. The melancholic tone of Moraga's second edition preface suggests to me a discourse of literary identification which both recognizes and rejects difference. This tension surfaces in Bloom's voice which shifts between lament and resentment.

This movement toward self-definition in literary canons is a direct response to current theoretical trends of articulation of identities and subjectivities. The need to have a coherent self or subject that dominates or rules over the pieces recalls the power of the Frankenstein myth and the colonizer/colonized relationship. As in the case of *Frankenstein,* attempts to write a unified self through a literary anthology inevitably result in altered narrative structures, as we saw in manipulations of chronology and genre in chapter three. Writing a collective literary self, while crucial to canonization processes, can frustrate attempts to articulate differences among subjects. [22] Literary canons and anthologies provide metanarratives for articulating those selves in concurrent unified and fragmented structures, as I argued in an earlier chapter. The reverse of this construction holds true as well: readers would "find" themselves in literary canons. As we saw with Mary Shelley and in the preface to *Chloe Plus Olivia,* an unsuccessful search can start a new genre of writing and/or give birth to a new group of resisting readers.

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[22]Jane Gallop uses feminist critical anthologies as evidence of these hybridized encounters. I am borrowing from Gallop's analysis,which is best demonstrated by following observation:"If we take seriously the notion of feminist criticism as a collective movement, then critical anthologies, especially those which purport to represent the entirety of that movement, may be the best place to hear that collective subject. Since anthologies not only have many voices but are organized choruses, they are good places to witness the dynamics of collectivity. Contrary to idealized or romanticized portraits of collectivity, the hard work of collective action includes individuals' attempts to speak for the whole, conflicts between centralizing and marginal discourses within the group, and the opposed pressures of solidarity and responsiveness to minority opinions" (Gallop 8). Gallop states that her approach to these anthologies uses symptomatic readings derived from psychoanalysis and deconstruction (7), two theories also at work in Bhabha's, Butler's and Irigaray's theories.

The critique of the subject also applies to the critical developments in feminist theory itself. As readings of feminist literary criticism proliferated, so do the readers and, hence, the concept of generational feminisms. Initially, feminism was defined by readers like Millet, Friedan, Gilbert and Gubar who critique structures and metaphors of patriarchy in literature and society. But, as feminist readers open their literary canons to literary criticism, the texts being read change as well. One of the critical changes within the genealogy of American feminisms is the introduction of French literary theory. Similar to the cases with literary anthologies, differentiations between feminist subjects/readers along axes of race, class, sexual preference, etc. require elaboration and exploration. While offering critiques of the "canonical Man," feminist literary criticisms and theories introduce problematizations of a feminist subject as well. The narratives of alternative anthologies provide an opportunity for symptomatic readings of the tensions between literary subjects and theorizing subjectivity.[23]

Elaine Showalter, editor of *The New Feminist Criticism* (1985), sets out to establish a new set of terms for feminist critical practices that negotiate with French literary theories. In the preface to *New Feminist Criticism* she charts a history of feminist scholarship that begins with critiques of literary representations: "[i]n its earliest years, feminist criticism concentrated on

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[23] While Jane Gallop, in her book *Around 1981*, "deconstructs" terminologies used in these anthologies, my interest is in highlighting some of their investments in discourses of nationalism, genealogy, subjectivity and representation.

exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or textual harassment of women in classic and popular male literature, and the exclusion of women from literary history" (5). The moment in feminist criticism at which Showalter positions her text is the "crossroads" between "traditional (male) critical m odels" and the search for "a way of defining its subject that included all the different modes of critical and political commentary that feminism had produced"(12).

According to Jane Gallop's analysis, Showalter's vision for the anthology is divided: wanting to be "internationally all-inclusive" yet maintaining "an exclusive definition of feminist criticism" (37). This tension seems to stem from fear of infiltration by contradictory voices within feminist criticism. The impulse to control the representation of "new feminist criticism" suggests a desire to distance these essays from previous work and to pave the way for a new form of critical feminist practice, one that has not been influenced by other, continental, literary theories. Although Showalter does not explicitly state her desires to keep the project "American feminist" and includes French feminist theorist, Hélène Cixous, her preface reveals a resistance to difference. She writes in her introduction: "[a]lthough we are still far from agreement on a theoretical system (a prospect that many, in fact, would find horrifyingly reductive), all these essays are *unified by the faith* that feminist concerns can bring a new energy and vitality to literary studies" (my italics 4). Here faith and unity replace theory and divisiveness. Showalter

characterizes feminist literary studies as some strange vitamin pill to be administered to a waning and anemic discipline. Once again, a discourse of sick, unhealthy bodies emerges in questions of literary canons which we also saw with Bloom's image of a cancer ridden body or Lloyd's vision of dissolving canonical man.

Clearly, not all "feminist concerns" are to find a methodological core (to recall Buell's phrase) or see the choice as one between reading or protesting. African-American feminist critics like bell hooks see totalizing gestures of "academic" feminism as undermining the revolutionary potential of feminist movements. For example, Showalter entitles her introduction "The Feminist Critical Revolution" which reveals her interest in uniting literary criticism and political activism. Showalter's "critical revolution" seems like a response to the conflicts which [B]ell hooks best describes: "The exclusionary practices of women who dominate feminist discourse have made it practically impossible for new and varied theories to emerge. Feminism has its party line and women who feel a need for a different strategy, a different foundation, often find themselves ostracized and silenced" (9). [H]ooks' comments underscore the subjective and different definitions of a feminist "revolution." Showalter's anthology includes essays by Deborah McDowell and Barbara Smith who "represent" the sides of the African-American feminist debates. But the diversity of these arguments and issues are limited by space, a common anthology disclaimer, and, hence, only two pieces can be included. Similarly, recalling Derek Attridge's comment at

the opening of chapter one, all inclusion is a form of exclusion, because it demands that a range of voices be modulated in accordance with the anthology's metanarrative.

Showalter denies, however, any attempts to represent a feminist critical canon. Obviously, she is aware of the difficulties of the few speaking for the many and this critical awareness stems from the previous generation of feminist critiques of the traditional literary canon. She writes:

> Furthermore, the essays in this book are not pieces of a single large critical system, but rather represent a variety of positions and strategies engaged in a *vigorous internal debate.* Feminist criticism differs from other contemporary schools of critical theory in not deriving its literary principles from a single authority or from a body of sacred texts. (my italics 4)

The reference to the "internal debate" is curious since Showalter states that feminist criticism is not unified in its approach or its literary resources. However, her comment suggest that feminist criticism shares a physical space, an image also reminiscent of a material body, in which the internal debate continues. Clearly, there are external debates which do not encompass feminisms, nor can feminisms assume to speak definitively about various oppressions like race, class, sexuality etc. Here, Showalter seems to have an idea of what a shared feminist criticism would be, but she resists making generalizations about its critical practices or founding texts. Her fear may be that feminist criticism would become like any other "school of theory" by

falling into the trap of canonizing or institutionalizing its "self" by naming a "body of texts" or by having recourse to "a single authority." While she places coherent bodies of texts under suspicion, a genealogy of critical texts emerges in the collection of essays. By positioning her text in relation to Millet's or Ellman's early feminist works, Showalter amplifies voices which have spoken "authoritatively" on the subject of feminist criticism. More importantly, Showalter seems to want to avoid revealing any internal strife, because it would delegitimize any authority for feminist critical practices. This desire to present a unified front suggests that, despite internal disagreements, one must appeal to traditional structures of authority and legitimacy. For example, literary canons, despite how Bloom would have us read them, are debates about western, literary, aesthetic standards, and internal ideological conflicts.

Showalter attempts to pay a debt to a previous generation of feminist readers and texts. Her anthology creates a critical genealogy with earlier anthologies and feminist literary canons such that it legitimizes and validates earlier scholarship. This requires fixing a past and naming predominant themes of previous feminist criticism: "While feminist criticism neither must nor should be the exclusive province of women, it is important to understand that its history and expression were determined by issues of gender and sexual difference" (Showalter 4-5). To collapse feminism with gender issues eliminates the possibility that women speak about issues other than gender such as race, class or sexual preference: however, this does not

apply to most feminist critical practice. In addition to Showalter's critical anthology, other anthologies have exploited the expectation that feminism only speaks to one issue. For example, the opening line of *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (1972) is "[f]eminism is one of the basic movements for human liberty" (xiii). Or, in Chris Weedon's overview of relations between feminisms and literary theory, his introductory comments suggest that feminism has a simple mandate: "Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society" (1).

While Showalter's feminist criticism is unwilling to reconcile its differences with foreign theorists or aberrant "revolutionary" strategies, it must negotiate with and define its own critical genealogies: "Yet while feminist criticism was one of the daughters of the women's movement, its other parent was the old patriarchal institution of literary criticism and theory; and it has had to come to terms with the meaning of its mixed origins" (Showalter 7-8). The discourse of parentage, hybrid genealogy and (im)proper lineage emerges in Showalter's formulation of feminist criticisms' histories. This recalls Young's observations that discourses of hybridity challenge the concept of proper "Englishness." Once the bloodlines of families become contaminated by others, the "pure" genealogy is compromised and inextricable from a hybridized form. According to Showalter, feminist critics need to reflect upon and recognize their embeddedness within patriarchal literary traditions. This anxiety about the past effects the narratives of

anthologies. Gallop notes in Showalter's text a quest to break from history and to establish its own origin, originality, and "newness" (21-2).[24] The institutional emphasis on linear, continuous and singular narratives impinges upon Showalter's desires to write a controlled but diverse history of American feminist criticism. The hybridity of feminist criticisms' genealogy, as Showalter's anthology reveals, also suggests problems of creating literary histories based on binaristic relationships. Even though Showalter tries to read these various critical traditions as sharing a political cause, her attempt to gather forces requires that the specific issues of each movement be erased in favour of a larger project:

> Feminist, black, and post-structuralist critics, both male and female, have been drawing closer together, if only because in the atmosphere of the 1980's they represent *an avant-garde* that shares the same enemies: namely, those who urge a return to the 'basics' and the 'classics'--the old canon that blames new-fangled theories and rebellious minorities for what is called 'the crisis,' but what may well be the renaissance, in the humanities. (my italics 16)

Commonalties are found among even the most mercenary soldiers when all agree on who the enemy is. Proclaiming a mutual "avant-garde" spirit posits a shared narrative of innovation, progress and pioneerism. On the other

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[24]Jane Gallop's book *Around 1981* analyzes feminist critics' attempts to establish the "first date" between feminist criticism and literary theory. See Gallop's reading of Elaine Showalter's *New Feminist Criticism*, pp. 21-25.

hand, feminist critics like Moi and Todd reject the simple "old against the new" classifications and attempt to redraw nationalist boundaries between French and American literary theory.

Toril Moi opens her text, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), by establishing a national and cultural division between two types of feminist literary theory: the Anglo-American and the French (xiii). Moi concludes her preface with the following disclaimers: "the terms 'Anglo-American' and 'French' must not be taken to represent purely national demarcations: they do not signal the critics' birthplace but the intellectual tradition within which they work" (xiv). Thus, according to Moi, feminist readers are a product of their reading. Moi reduces the experiences of her readers to their nationalities, be they French or English. As we saw with Mary Shelley, reading canonized texts does not necessarily produce canonical readers or readings. In fact, writers like Shelley read against canonized readings and confound identifications of readers simply based on their reading content or practices. Clearly, Moi, like Bloom, has a definition of a feminist reader lurking behind her ambiguous reference to intellectual traditions, that is, a feminist critic who reads French, continental philosophies. But, her formula for determining American and French feminist theorists is troubled by oversimplified definitions of nationality: it would be reductive to say theoretical affinities are determined by readers' nationalities. Consequently, new differentiations emerge with feminist critics who are Franco-American. They are born in America but read French theory. Moi's overly categorical distinctions reveal a desire to contain

the proliferation of feminist theories within the boundaries of her text and to offer a more specific definition of deconstruction. Although Moi sets out to write an objective, introductory text to feminist literary theory, her bias is clear: "Moi subtitles her volume *Feminist Literary Theory* and focuses on the debate about post-structuralism, siding with "theoretical" feminism, by which she means post-structuralist" (Gallop 4). Collapsing theory with deconstruction is a critical strategy for readers like Bloom or Christian who want to "just read literature as literature" and divorce theorizing reading from reading literature. Moi wants to discuss the status of the feminist subject in relation to theory and practice, but, as Gallop observes, Moi mistakenly reads these two processes as distinct instead of coterminous (136).

Moi's maneuver to establish the critical differences between feminist theory and practice gestures toward yet another division in feminisms' genealogy; here, feminist critical issues shift from literary representations in traditional canons to representations of feminist subjects. Moi's text marks this change in feminist literary theory with her rereading and debunking of Gilbert and Gubar's recuperation of canonical structures. Using post-structuralist theories, Moi critiques *The Madwoman in the Attic*: "for the patriarchal critic, the author is the source, origin and meaning of the text. If we are to undo this patriarchal practice of *authority*, we must take one further step and proclaim with Roland Barthes the death of the author" (her italics 63). Reminiscent of Showalter's closing sentiments about shared practices, Moi provides evidence for a critique of literary canons in which feminist

practices and post-structuralist theories would coalesce. The analytic strategies and critical goals are similar, but for some feminisms losing a feminist subject demands an impossible leap of faith. I will discuss these negotiations between feminisms and deconstruction later on in regard to Judith Butler's work.

Feminist critic Janet Todd does not share Moi's affinities for French literary theory. In *Feminist Literary History* (1988), Todd writes that supporting post-structuralist theory requires rejecting American feminist criticism: "[i]t has become fashionable to criticize, even mock, American socio-historical feminist criticism and to see it as naïve beside the enterprise of French deconstructive and psychoanalytical theory" (1). Under these two approaches, it seems that one could only choose one side or the other. However, this particular debate received a great deal of press and visibility in more conservative circles, because internal conflicts support a belief that feminism, having its goals, would become like any other hegemonic discourse. Todd is suspicious that "Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert have become wielders of immense academic power, forming a kind of *mafia* in feminist criticism" (my italics 3). Like Showalter's earlier suggestion that feminism should not hang out its dirty laundry for others to see, Todd uses the mafia as a metaphor for a family "gone bad." This metaphor also implies that Todd sees a few powerful speakers terrorizing other critics into silence. Yet, Todd quickly rejects this reading of a house of discontent by stating: "there seems little danger of an improper hegemony; authority of any sort was deeply and constantly questioned at the inception of feminist criticism

and is still being questioned at least by those writers within the socio-historical tradition" (3). Todd's appeal to a shared history of feminist criticism serves as her reminder to the new practitioners not to forget their roots, their family history, so to speak. This is the crux of Todd's argument: history will correct the flaws of French psychoanalysis which she reads as synonymous with all other forms of French theory. According to Todd, the primary mistake of French theory is its pretension to metadiscourses of subjectivity, in particular, feminist: "For it is, I believe, time to reverse the situation of dominance, to turn history onto psychoanalysis, to historicize its discourse, methods and aims and to contextualize its functioning in the history that it likes to allegorize and abstract" (6). The terms and binaries with which Todd frames the internal conflicts within feminism are curious. She wants to argue for historicization, but she cannot discern which French theory needs it most. If, however, Todd were to specify and detail her usage of "socio-historical criticism," its universal applicability to recovery projects would also be less universal and more particular.[25] While she demands that French theories

[25]Joan Scott explores the ways in which experience and history are inextricably bound, and, are in need of further theorization and clarification: "Given the ubiquity of the term [experience], it seems to me more useful to work with it, to analyze its operations and to redefine its meaning. This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction. Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* in need of interpretation" (37). Scott's interest in reading experience as a version of interpretation suggests how a similar reading practices are at work in constructions of history. I agree with Scott in viewing history and experience as a process of reading and therefore open to interpretation. In Todd's case, feminist critics have recuperated a great deal of women's writing from their rereadings of history, but the ends of that project do not necessarily justify or speak for the means.

qualify themselves, the category of history remains unchallenged. It is exactly the critical work of post-structuralism, deconstruction and/or psychoanalysis that Todd needs to engage to break away from the hegemonic, naturalized, structures of literary history.[26]

In her essay on the tension between feminist theory and post-structuralism, Joan Scott, like Moi, argues for a form of collaboration. In speaking about her own initial resistance to and discovery of post-structuralism, she notes that "I found a new way of analyzing constructions of meaning and relationships of power that call unitary, universal categories into question and historicize concepts otherwise treated as natural (such as man/woman) or absolute (such as equality or justice)" ("Deconstructing" 34). These categories have been invoked as criteria for determining acceptance of work into literary canons. Post-structuralist critiques and feminist critiques both call into question the epistemological and ontological foundations of naturalized categories such as history or truth and, thus, are helpful in rethinking criteria for establishing literary canons. In Todd's opinion, this critical work can be achieved through socio-historical criticism, which

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[26]In his essay, "Feminist Historiography and Post-Structuralism" R. Radhakrishnan explores the strengths and weakness of connecting these two theoretical approaches. Although he sees potential for breaking down traditional hegemonic structures, he is concerned about the implications for feminist subjectivity. He claims, however, that: "feminist historiography sets for itself the twin task of (a) of (sic) establishing, albeit contingently, its own "identity" even as it (b) offers battle to the algorithm of Identity-as-such. . . It is crucial that feminist critical practice not be identified within or hierarchically subsumed by post-structuralist thought" (191). Radhakrishnan's wariness confirms some of Todd's suspicions, however, he does not see anxiety over a coalitional status as reason to abandon a joint-venture between feminist criticisms and "French" theory.

preserves a feminist subject and simultaneously dismantles the concept of a universal, male subject. Hence, Todd uses her text "to take issue with those theoretical critics mainly influenced by psychoanalysis and deconstruction who, I believe, have put theory before literature and the idea of women before the experience of women" (14).

The loss of the subject to language (Lacan), and to discourses (Foucault) has prompted some feminists to dismiss post-structuralism completely. For example, Nancy Miller argues that the category of women, without the aid of post-structuralism, disrupts and dismantles assumptions behind universals, in particular, the recognition of experience as a valid source of "truth" or meaning, without needing a theoretical discourse to articulate this dynamic: "it is, after all, the Author, canonized, anthologized, and institutionalized, who excludes the less-known works of women and minority writers from the canon" (104). However, in attacking the canon for its bias toward male authors and demanding that women authors also be recognized, some feminist criticisms, as Moi reads in Gilbert and Gubar, simply reposition the greatest literary value in the author. Miller argues that the loss of the author in a post-structural analysis (i.e. Foucault's theory of 'transcendental anonymity') [27] is a critical blow to feminist political projects.

In the above examples, readers like Todd, Miller and, to some extent, Showalter, argue that "the feminist subject" has been lost to literary theory.

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[27] See Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" for a full explanation of the author-function as an "index of truth" of a text. See, Hazard Adams. *Critical Theory Since 1965*. pp. 138-148.

Although the "brand" of theory is open to debate, the rebuttal has often been to preserve a feminist subject even though its definition is elusive. Critical projects, following models like Gilbert and Gubar's and Todd's, range from recovering women's writing and creating a feminist literary history to validating women's experience. Moreover, in each of these recuperation projects, one term, "women," remains constant. Despite "internal" conflicts, one belief is that feminist criticisms can settle the woman issue on its own terms without yielding to post-structuralist, deconstructive or psychoanalytic discourses. The argument of many 1980's Anglo-American feminist anthologies is to establish a dichotomy between feminist subject and political practices--that is, literary theory becomes only an intellectual movement, as evidenced by the disparity between Showalter and hooks theories of feminist critical practice. The question remains as to whether the subject of feminism has been lost to literary theory or to feminism itself. If we recall the initial problems with Gilbert and Gubar and their "improper segregation" (Todd 3), and then, similar confusion about feminist literary subjects extends into later literary and critical anthologies. One can suppose that these debates are the result of questioning the nature of gendered subjectivity in general and are not just from external influences of French literary theories. Gerald Graff's observation that questions of practice do not overshadow discussions of theory reminds us that the two are intertwined: when we examine how we canonize certain texts, we also explore various discourses available for that self-examination. This idea has two key implications: feminist criticisms are

not outside their own theorizing and the outcome of "self-theorizing" will not necessarily yield a complete representation of a feminist subjectivity.

For thinking about the current status of feminist subjects and their relation to post-structuralist theory, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) presents several provocative observations. According to Butler, deferring critical practices until the "subject" question is answered will result in a stalemate within feminisms:

> Indeed, the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes. (4)

While seeming to advocate an "agreeing to disagree" policy and moving on, Butler takes her argument further to suggest that leaving behind the idea of a unified subject, feminist or other, will not preclude political practices. While challengers of this idea are numerous, for example, bell hooks, Janet Todd, Elaine Showalter to name a few, Butler builds upon instability to challenge conventional ideas of subjectivity. To develop a practice without first presuming a subject would not require subscribing to pre-established hegemonic structures of representation. Critics like Gilbert, Gubar, Robinson and hooks want to avoid this lack of subject definition and challenge feminisms' discourses of self-construction. A perfect example of

implementing Butler's idea and learning from the successes and failures of earlier feminist literary criticisms is the proliferation of feminist literary canons and anthologies, which refuse to conform to a single idea of a feminist subject. In the case of the Pacific Islander bisexual women anthology, its "subject" was defined by a series of marked differences from other women's writing anthologies and counter-canons. While an extensive string of qualifiers may seem insecure or even ludicrous to some, these demarcations raise a critical issue: how to negotiate forms of subject representation within discourses of sexuality, nationality, and class, and, maintain a degree of autonomy or agency. Butler responds to such lists of differentiations by considering them as a point of departure:

> The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed 'etc.' at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure is instructive. . . This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. (143)

The "embarrassed etc." may seem to be the final word on the original problem, "what is a feminist subject?" This feeling of exhaustion becomes a sense of frustration with the limits of representation. However, reclaiming this endpoint as a beginning, as Butler advocates, presents ways of rethinking representation, be it political or literary. To be alterable readers must realize

that structures or discourses of authority, legitimization and identification have been based upon the erasure of contingency and undecidability. By rereading feminisms' "failures" as knowledge of and resistance to those inadequate structures of representation, Butler promotes feminist subjectivities that are "defined" by a lack of definition.

Trying to create a feminist literary canon from this perspective is difficult, because it means that feminist theories have to change the terms of authority and legitimacy while simultaneously attempting to debunk these structures. Deconstructing and reconstructing bodies of literature, however, does not mean that feminist critics, like Robinson who wants readers to challenge canonicity, also want to eradicate canons completely. Instead, some critics hope for canonized literary representations and feminist subjectivities to be radically altered and permanently destabilized: "To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power" (Butler, "Contingent," 17). While overarching narratives like "the western literary canon" have lost currency in a market of specialized anthologies, it does not necessarily mean the foundations of canons have been eliminated. Rather, the proliferation of canons suggests that factions are always already present but are temporarily erased. As a result, increased promotion of particulars and contingencies becomes the *modus operandi* of current alternative literary and counter-canon anthologies.

Evidence of these theoretical issues are manifest in *Feminism Beside Itself* (1995), a collection of essays on the histories of feminisms. Editors Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman disavow any attempts by readers to view their anthology as representative of feminisms' history: "[i]t should be said, then, that while the essays in this collection all take account of feminism's history, they do not collectively constitute a history of feminism" (4). This disclaimer gestures toward a Butler-like critical framework. Despite desires to abandon or reconstruct forms of representation, feminist anthologies and literary canons still have to contend with readers who impose narratives on to collections of essays and texts. While editors include disclaimers, there is always the possibility of being misread or misinterpreted. These "errors" also create generations of criticisms that reread or revise historical feminist texts. As I argued in chapter one, rereading canonical texts also reassembles bodies of literary canons. These anxieties clearly pervade current practices of feminist theory as well: The editors created "the title *Feminism Beside Itself* to highlight how feminism had become increasingly anxious about itself" (2) and, more importantly, wonder "What did it mean that feminism had become so self-referential?" (Elam and Wiegman 2). My understanding is that dilemmas of self-referentiality focus on problems of representation. Because subjectivities still submit themselves to a degree of readability in spite of self-anxious discourses, as we saw with editor's disclaimers and qualifications in anthology prefaces, canonical narratives of literary traditions and genealogy demand a certain amount of conformity.

Resisting readers become a crucial part of defining a point of origin for counter-canon projects and alternative anthologies. Mary Shelley reads and rewrites *Paradise Lost* to appeal to issues current to her personal and literary context. The Indians adopt a Hindi version of the Bible as their own text. In *Chloe Plus Olivia,* the editor describes reading literature for a reflection of her self, but, being unable to find it, creates a new collection of texts. Altering narrative structures and qualifying definitions of subjectivity disrupt canonizing practices. We will see in the concluding comments how challenging canon formation must also attend to the activities of readers.

Conclusion
Rereading and Rewriting Literary Canons

Tagged with a patriarchal interpretation, canonical texts pass into the culture validated by what the Institution of Reading has understood.
-Adrienne Munich, "Notorious Signs, Feminist Criticism and Literary Tradition," p. 250

In anticipation of concluding this thesis, I would like to reflect briefly on Munich's observation about the power of reading, a force so potent that it deserves capital letters. The "Institution of Reading" creates an image of a foreboding and towering building that guards the gates between literature and culture. The reason I chose Munich's comment, however, is to acknowledge the critical and often understated role reading plays in the formation, criticism and revision of literary canons. If I were to suggest one common thread running through questions of monstrous bodies, subjectivity, gender, hybridity, representation and literary canons, it would be acts of rereading. The emergence of diverse theoretical methodologies changes our conceptions of literary representation and subjectivity in canonical narratives. Critical rereading of canonical texts may overturn or destabilize conventional structures, be they politics, literature or criticism. As I argued in chapter one, Guillory, Buell or Bloom's self-conscious reading practices focus attention on readers developing as subjects. For critics like Bloom this is a frightening prospect because reading subjects become writing subjects and thus generate new subjects of writing. For the same reason, writers like Mary Shelley and editors of alternative anthologies are able to exploit this interchangeability of positions as an ideal opportunity for intervening in canonical literary traditions.

For example, Ellen Rooney supports the powerful role readers play in the interpretation and development of literary canons. She argues that, in fact, readers shape canons more than canonical texts do. Thus, attempts to break free of traditional canons demand closer examinations of reading practices. Yet, there is a failure in the "reading to change canons" argument. Rooney writes: "If new readers drive the traditionalists out, the latter have only to become new readers in turn to find themselves reoccupying their old (if strangely unfamiliar) haunts" (132). This cyclical process recalls the cliché "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em," as though traditionalists can be reprogrammed to new ways of reading and then readmitted to the canon circle. But, Bloom is the exception to Rooney's rule; as we have seen, he refutes new ways of reading (termed "The School of Resentment"), adamantly argues for traditional readings and still commands an authoritative position in literary canon debates.

Canonical readings have been installed concurrently with ideas of aesthetic value and western culture which seem to build an impenetrable wall around canonical texts. Gerald Graff foregrounds this dilemma, promoting teaching literature and literary canon debates simultaneously: "It is this conflict [literature and ideology] that underlies the controversy over the canon and the great books, where what is at stake is not simply which books students should read, but how they should read them" (24). Teaching students how to read also demands that readers pay attention to how subjects want to be read. Certainly, canon debaters have political as well as pedagogical

concerns. In spite of attempts by liberal pluralism to subsume representation under difference, the powerful image of the American melting pot is not always revered as a symbol of representation but more often rejected as a sign of absorption. To these political and literary representation issues John Guillory ascribes an incommensurability of identifications. In terms of a post-liberal pluralism reading experience, the stories of the pieces will exceed the meaning of the whole. Readers discover ways in which metanarratives like "western civilization" and "European culture" do not represent all possible subjects but rather shape subjects to represent an aspect of an overarching metanarrative.

In light of current theoretical trends, or rather, by the very fleetingness of trends, it seems that we will never return to traditional readings for the same reason we will never return to that Bloomian pre-politicized past of literature. Trends change. New ways of reading make yesterday's new reading look like today's old traditional one. The contingency of literary history and of its readers, writers and critics, frustrates anthology editors who aspire to completeness but can never achieve it as we saw with Gilbert and Gubar's *NALW*. But, this failure of representation includes the possibility of revision, rereading and rewriting.

Resistant reading also practices reading to remember. Because readers remember "the literary canon" in different ways, a single unified canon cannot exist. As Guillory observes and Bloom unknowingly demonstrates, canons are imaginary totalities or fictions: they can represent everyone and

no one simultaneously. Literary canons or anthologies present texts in dialogue with one another. However, how readers interpret and participate in these discussions varies greatly. Writers such as Mary Shelley and Barbara Johnson disassemble and reassemble critical traditions in order to reclaim pieces of their authorial subjectivities that have been severed from or sutured onto another literary tradition. Their literary texts and critical practices are based on fragmentation and difference. Figured in metaphors of the body, literary canon criticism often adopts a discourse of disease and illness to depict this process of dissolution. Homi Bhabha and Robert Young's articulations of hybridity demonstrate how national, political, and cultural bodies have never been unified but rather are contaminated by their encounters with radically different others. Unlike plurality, hybridity maintains a difference from difference and serves as a continual reminder of the fluidity and exchangeability of identifications between colonizer and colonized, canonical and noncanonical.

This co-optation of discourse is best demonstrated by a selection of feminist literary critical texts. Feminist readers like Gilbert and Gubar borrow from the structures of patriarchal literary traditions to build a foundation for women's literary history. Although critics like Lillian Robinson and Toril Moi find this dependence on traditional structures debilitating to feminist projects, others find "Nortonizing" a necessary evil to gain visibility. The proliferation of feminist anthologies, disagreements about shared feminist histories, complications with defining a feminist subject and feelings of forced

compliance to feminist agendas (Recall, Janet Todd's Mafia metaphor and bell hooks' rejection of white academic feminism) demonstrate feminisms' own canon anxieties. With this inevitable failure at full representation in mind, Judith Butler theorizes a subjectivity without a subjectivity, that is, a subject who can lack a history or a narrative and still exist. Thus we return to Frankenstein as a metaphor for not only post-structuralist subjectivity but also as a lens for viewing literary canons as sutured texts. Alternative and counter-canon literary anthologies expose their suturedness by removing their literary texts from other traditions and transplanting them into their own canonical bodies of literature. As the pieces of canonical man dissolve into their distinct parts, the seams of unity or togetherness give way to fundamental differences.

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