The Politics of Canon: Discourses of Inclusion and Exclusion in Literature

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to discuss the dynamics of canon formation in literature that explores the ways in which the politics plays a vital role in its formation. The paper then introduces the topic on the politics of canon in certain literary texts that bring into focus some of the key problems in the making of literary canons, such as the continuing opposition between the aesthetic criteria and the politicized criteria. In a parallel development, the discourse on the literary canon has shifted its focus from the process of inclusion to the process of exclusion. This shift corresponds to the construction of the so-called counter-canon, and to attempts to restore the authority of the canon that has been considered to be in a state of crisis since such a canon can break with the explicit and implicit rules of canon formation. If the revision or restoration of a canon is politically motivated, the canon formation becomes too obvious, considering the list of authors prescribed in school and university syllabi against the background of the canon debate. Such a process combines the specific questions of inclusion and exclusion in the works of literature discussing the theoretical aspects of the notion of canon.

KEYWORDS: Literary canon; canon-formation; politics of canon; canon debate; inclusion and exclusion

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of cultural studies today has accompanied an expansion of the literary canon. For instance, any literary text that is widely taught and studied in schools and universities, including the texts by women and other groups considered to be marginal. Such works in literature are often taken as representing the experience of the people in question and raise questions about representations in the mainstream culture.

Historically, since the 1960s, there has continuously been a political debate over the representation of certain groups in the canon. In the United States, for instance, the books mainly written by the "white men" (Lauter, 2001, "Literary" p. 25) have been considered as the canon that does not represent the culture of mainstream groups. Allan Bloom has strongly disagreed about this in his *The Closing of the American Mind* that was published in 1987. His book has contributed to reexamine the role of popular culture within the area of the study of America and has "reinvigorated the debate over the importance of so-called 'classic' American cultural works to modern audiences, and by extension to modern American popular culture" (Lansford, 2001, p. 370). In this way, the critics who disagree with the existence of canons realize that canons really "serve the social and political, and indeed the spiritual, concerns and aims of the wealthier classes of each generation of Western society" (Bloom, 1994, p. 33). Thus, it proves the fact that certain works and their artistic merits should be

considered as valuable and canonical. Such works are also important for pedagogical implications and the development of the study of canon.

However, Harold Bloom in his *The Western Canon: The Books and School of Ages* that was published in 1994 has strongly favored the canon even though the existence of canon has been a controversial issue in the academic circle. His book has especially taken into the worldwide readership to debate the curriculum in English. As the critic James S. Baumlin (2000) argues, the book's major reviewers provide a critical inquiry about the canon formation, but they put down "crucial aspects insufficiently explained or unexplored" (p. 23). In this way, the canon supporters argue that the critics who do not believe in the canon do so because they have interest in the politics. They also maintain that the merits as represented by the canonical works are not about the politics, but they are about the aesthetic paradigm. Similarly, John Guillory (1995) observes that such critics discover "the supposed objectivity of value judgments a political agenda: the exclusion of many groups of people from representation in the literary canon" (p. 233). According to him, any attempt to stop the canon formation out the political interests is unrelated. For instance, such debate raises the question of authority on the formation of canon: who should decide the canonical works?

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

The term 'canon' is now used in schools and universities to mean "the choice of books" (Bloom, 1994, p. 15) by certain course designers as well as readers. These books should be taught in schools and universities and sustained over a certain period of time. For Samuel Johnson (1992), a century is "the term commonly fixed as a test of literary merit" (p. 132). The term was first used in the fourth century to signify a list of texts or authors, in particular, the books of the Bible. In this sense, a canon means a selection of certain books or authors that are considered more important than others, thus, considering certain books as established criteria of literature.

The ancient Greeks used the term 'criticism' to signify the greatest works instead of using the term 'canon'. But now the term 'canon' like 'criticism' is a modern invention that dates from the eighteenth century. In Greek, the term signifies a 'rule or norm' that explains why the church used the word 'canon' for the books of the Bible. It was used to mean the church that had the legal authority in the scriptures. Such books were "inconsistent with the emergent orthodoxy of Christianity" (Guillory, 1995, p. 233). Thus, the canon was then decided by the church authorities. They had the sole power to make such a decision. In a similar way, when the social scientific texts and their authors become widely established as authoritative, it is worthwhile thinking of them in these terms. Most disciplines in the social sciences have their canons. For instance, Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes and Milton Friedman are considered the canons in economics, John B. Watson and Edward C. Tolman in psychology, and Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons in sociology (Guillory, 1995, p. 233). When these writers and their works are regarded as foundational in a particular discipline, the canonization process is said to be at work.

The canon of literary texts, on the other hand, as M. H. Abrams (1993) argues, emerges from "the gradual and unofficial consensus; is tacit rather than explicit, very loose-boundaried, and subject to changes in its inclusions; while the texts in the canon are open to, and constantly subjected to, diverse and often conflicting interpretations and evaluations" (p. 20). By the middle of the twentieth century, such a decision was to a large extent decided institutionally. Just as the church decided upon the Biblical canon, so schools and universities decide to participate in the discourse of literary works as having the canonical status. In sum, the term is used to signify a list of books chosen by certain authorities as M. H. Abrams (1993) has observed in his book like this:

> In recent decades the phrase 'literary canon' has thus come to designate – in world literature, or in European literature, but most frequently in a national

literature – those authors who, by a cumulative consensus of critics, scholars, and teachers, have come to be widely recognized as 'major,' and to have written works often hailed as literary classics. These canonical writers are the ones which, at a given time, are mostly kept in print, most frequently and fully discussed by literary critics and historians, and most likely to be included in anthologies and taught in college courses with titles such as 'World Masterpieces,' 'Major English Authors,' or 'Great American Writers.' (pp. 19-20)

It does not mean that there were no disagreements concerning the canon. Any of the disputes in which F. R. Leavis was involved during the 1930s and 1940s were essentially concerned with the canon.

Leavis published a book entitled *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*, which was published in 1948 and was a work of literary theory that focused on fiction. In this book, he has traced the canonical English novels through George Eliot, Henry James, Jane Austen, and Joseph Conrad. He purposely excluded major authors such as Laurence Sterne and Thomas Hardy. Leavis' view of the canon, for John Guillory (1995), was highly restrictive as Guillory argued: "Leavisites promoted the 'great tradition' of Shakespeare and Milton in order to improve the moral sensibilities of readers" (p. 246). Thus, these authors have shown their interest in morality and this morality determines the nature of their form in fiction. Like Leavis, Granville Hicks also published a similar type of book named *The Great Tradition: An Interpretation of American Literature since Civil War* in 1933. His book provides a systematic history of American literature from a Marxist perspective. The book established his reputation as an important literary critic. He outlined his critical principles as saying that

[...] a book should be judged by its ability to have that kind of effect [...] The critic [...] will insist on intensity: the author must be able to make the reader feel that he is participating in the lives described whether they are the lives of bourgeois or of proletarians [...] inasmuch as literature grows out of the author's entire personality, his identification with the proletariat should be as complete as possible. He should not merely believe in the cause of the proletariat; he should be, or should try to make himself, a member of the proletariat. (as cited in Ruland, 2001, p. 360)

Hicks' tradition is an adequate portrayal of life as it would lead the proletarian readers to recognize his role in the class struggle. Hence, no two prophets like Leavis and Hicks have established the great tradition and agree on the canon. Here, we understand that all agree on the canon that exists in the literary discourse.

The scholarly debate on the process of canon formation is a recent practice. In the beginning, the process appeared in ancient schools as a social function of learning to read and write. In practice, a selection of any book meant to have a different taste of reading and writing. A literary historian Ernst Robert Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* published in 1991 was the first book to describe the process of canon formation and give it a name. In antiquity, he claimed, "the concept of a model author was oriented upon a grammatical criterion, the criterion of correct speech" (as cited in Guillory, 1995, p. 235). Thus, from the beginning, the process of preservation was governed by the institutional project of disseminating not only literacy but also the grammatical speech. Later it worked as a means to see the process as political that attracted the attention of a new generation of literary scholars.

Since its inception, in contrast, the canonical discourse has also been seen from different perspectives such as feminist, Marxist and non-western perspectives. It began in the early 1970s. Sheila Delany's *Counter-Tradition: A Reader in the Literature of Dissent and Alternatives*, an anthology published in 1971, was the first attempt to set up an alternative or

anti-canon. In this anthology, she has selected some of the radical political documents from the prophet Amos to R. D. Laing that offered an alternative idea and style. Her description was the first attack on the established culture called as the canon. In recent years, many agree that a selection of books in the canonical process is as Guillory (1995) conventionally called the "classics" (p. 233). But these classic texts that form a canon have been critiqued by many other literary scholars.

Now, many new studies have been conducted in this area of study that have brought many marginalized works and their authors to the fore. This can be proved by observing the statement of Harold Bloom (1994) as he argued, "Great styles are sufficient for canonicity because they possess the power of contamination, and contamination is the pragmatic test for canon formation" (p. 523). Yet these works are less than one might expect. However, if the marginalized groups produce good works of literature that include the works of canonical authors, then the case could have been different (Guillory, 1995, p. 234). It means that the process of canon formation is always a controversial issue even though some critics consider the case for individual authors. Among the entire list of great Western or European authors, a few women writers, non-white writers, and writers of lower-class origin have been on the canon list.

In fact, the elites have the opportunity to receive education as this group is considered a socially and culturally homogeneous group. They share experiences that are formed by their common values that come out through the works of literature. In fact, the social consequence of such education was inequality. Its expansion was slow within "a hierarchical literary system" (Baumlin, 2000, p. 34). Thus, the works by Native Americans, African Americans, and the works by other marginalized groups can be canonized but they are within a limited scope. In this connection, James A. Baumlin (2000) claims that "Bloom would have it" (p. 34). Here, Baumlin means to say that it divided society into two groups: one as the illiterate lower-class and another as the literate upper-class. Both groups were reflected in their respective works of literature. This trend again enforced the fact that created an alternative culture.

In this way, the literary culture has taken its course within its own inner circle of society that constantly gave a counter-culture. The works of literature have been thought to be a prerequisite to power. For instance, women and minorities are excluded from power as they are deprived of receiving an education. Thus, on the basis of their education, the authors are listed in the canonical hierarchy that mirrored the exclusions of the school. So there is not a woman or any other minority among them. In this sense, the history of the process of canon formation is "a rigorous process of exclusion, then one ought to find many works through history which were actively suppressed, actively exclude from the canon" (Guillory, 1995, p. 237). Accordingly, the process of canon formation and opposition to the established canon have been an emerging concern in the academia now whether the critics are deconstructionists, feminists, Marxists, or new-historicists.

THE PROCESS OF INCLUSION-EXCLUSION AS POLITICAL

In order to maintain standards of a thing, we need certain actions such as political actions. For instance, a canon is designed for elites of certain groups. In the case of the United States, it is intended for the white middle-class males, as for Harold Bloom (1994), the great literature can be associated with "self-sufficiency in the face of the worthiest causes: feminism, African-American culturalism, and all other politically correct enterprises of our moment" (p. 28). Thus, standards in the choice of literature can be measured through the political design. If the canon formation is motivated by politics, then there must be the problem of inclusion and exclusion in literature. It is thus argued that the literary canon is "a social, and therefore a political, object, the result of a political process, like so much else in our world" (Scholes, 1992, p. 147). Here, Scholes means to say that the masterpieces that the

critics select for the canonization of the works are from the political motives. It is now clear that all selections of literature are arbitrarily and politically made.

Many critics believe that selections of works are made on the political basis. They propose that each human action is an expression of political ideologies. In this sense, it revolves around the circle of literature in which selections are made and the classics exist by virtue of "a canonical tradition through which it gains recognition" (How, 2007, p. 18). It means that everything cannot go outside this circle and all judgments of literature are made on this ground. For instance, Shakespeare remained central in the western literary canon and in the English literature courses. Similarly, Herbert Grierson and T.S. Eliot introduced John Donne as a famous poet, but Donne is considered a canon in the western literature because the New Critics found him suited to their examples (Scholes, 1992, p. 147). In short, as Scholes notes that scholars select their canon on the basis of "pure literary merit" (p. 147). In this way, the canon and curriculum are complementary to each other.

In a similar way, in American literature, a discourse on the American literary canon is based on race and gender. For instance, the American literary canon existed in the 1960s with the works produced by men. It was dominated by the white men, especially by the upper-class white men. The school and university courses consisted of their works that focused on history, politics, and international relations. As such, the African Americans considered themselves as marginalized and their literature as the non-canonical works. They raised the issues related to the crisis of identity within the American society. They also raised the issue of the white/black hierarchy in the mainstream discourse. Thus, the presence of African Americans is not considered as part of the mainstream American literature.

In the canonical discourse, there arise questions about the exclusion of certain works: why are previously neglected works included in the canon? Is it on the basis of their literary excellence or cultural representativeness? But "'literary excellence' has never determined what is studied" (Culler, 1995, p. 50). According to Culler, it is a political correctness that is on the basis of the desire to represent every minority, not on the basis of purely literary criteria. As the century draws to a close, there was no dominant theory of criticism or agreement on a canonical literary tradition (Ruland, 2001, p. 27). Ruland says that the process of canonization is constantly changing. When there is a revision in the canon, new works of literature enter into the discourse of literary canon, trying to oppose further changes in the canon.

In principle, a literary canon is more or less arbitrary selection of works of literature. The process of canonization is a unique way of selecting the works of literature as new works are considered as masterpieces. When there is a change, it represents other cultures and classes as M.H. Abrams (1993) argues that the scholars insist on "the indispensability of a continuing scrutiny of and dialogue with the diverse and long-lasting works of intellect and imagination that have shaped Western civilization and constitute much of Western culture" (p. 22). Abrams means to say that a selection of works of literature is based on a distinction between literary and non-literary criteria. The process is a way to distinguish better from worse rather than being selected for reading. Thus, the problem of canonicity is political and is the problem of selecting worthy materials, creating further controversy over the selection process.

Many feminist critics, as experienced by women, have noted that the vast majority of canonical authors are men and that before the eighteenth century one finds almost no canonical women authors. The first edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* is one example of exclusion that did not include any works by women. After two decades of research, however, only a few women authors have been recovered from that obscurity for inclusion in the later editions. A reason for not including the works by women was that only men were taught to write, depriving women of educating and involving in creation.

Jeremy Hawthorn (2000) remarked that the feminist critics have attempted to formulate a rivalry canon when he notes, "For when FEMINIST critics started to construct a rival canon or canons, not always as a replacement for the 'official' canon but also as an *alternative* to it, then this struck at the claim to universality that lay behind the idea of a single canon" (p. 35). Therefore, if there were canons as such, no canon existed in the traditional sense. Increasingly, the arguments of feminist critics, or of those interested in the literature of African Americans or ethnic minorities, were directed towards the establishment of alternative tradition or canon.

In short, like other formations of cultural authority, the canon is a discourse of dispute of political nature, featuring struggles among diverse groups. In this way, the canonical authorities propose, support, and oppose certain works of literature to be the canon. One of the examples of this kind is the inclusion of literatures by African Americans and other minority literatures in the American canon. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, the previously ignored works of literature by minority groups were considered to be worthy of inclusion in the American canon. Among others, African American literature can be considered the most successful minority literatures because it has entered the mainstream canon through inclusion in school and university syllabi and has been considered an established canon.

THE CANON-ANTI-CANON DEBATE

In the canonical discourse, there are some scholars who go against the literary canon, creating an anti-canon. Some examples of this debate are the critical works written by the scholars like Allan Bloom and Jane Tompkins. Therefore, behind any literary canon, as Hugh Kenner (1984) has observed, lies an intricate and controversial "narrative" (p. 373), which calls for associations and oppositions among works of literature, inviting a decisive action. In fact, both sides in the debate offer a sort of dogmatic positions that reject each other's views. Both of them agree on the choice of books that must be emerged out of two opposites (Hogan, 1992, pp. 183-184). However, such oppositions may be on the basis of false and misleading claims. Like Hogan, Gerald Graff (1990) is of the opinion that such dilemma has created a tension by "teaching the conflicts," which provides the structure and relevance of the curriculum (p. 51). Here, Graff observes that the idea offers an educational discord in the academic circle

Seen in this way, those who teach literature courses in the university must understand and adapt to the canon-anti-canon debate as Baumlin (2000) has termed it as "canon warfare" (p. 32). Apart from this, they must not also take sides on canonicity in the classroom because such act may hamper the role of the students in shaping the pedagogy. The teachers must play neutral roles in the classroom so that the students can participate in the debate in a fair way. So it is clear that the canon debate must be framed pedagogically, not theoretically. In addition, the teachers must spend more time on their courses rather than anything else. They should also be familiar with the debate over their roles as scholars, not as critics while engaging in the pedagogical practice. If they take sides on the debate, it would turn out to be false and misleading claims. In fact, they should be dialectic in their teaching while engaging their students in the canon debate. Here, the role of the teachers is to invite their students in the discussion of literary canon based on the free choice and open debate.

In the academia, it is often assumed that many students use common frame of reference while sharing their experience with their peers, which is considered untenable (Levin, 1981, p. 360). It indicates that students interact with each other through the texts, creating their individual positions. In this act, they follow the syllabus that helps them understand the importance of difference rather than avoiding variations of opinions. This is a way to conduct classes on the canon debate so that the students will be able to generate a productive understanding of the courses that make them understand the role of differences

between the students. In this way, the students enjoy more to choose from and become more critical.

Such choices, which are mentioned above, allow many teachers to practice their personal likes and dislikes into the larger contexts (Hogan, 1992, p. 189). According to Hogan, there must be an open debate over the canonical issues. Thus, the critics who do not want change claim that there must be certain universal values to consider the greatness of a literary text, but the critics who want change consider the opposite. However, all teachers must have their own choices. In this regard, Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1983) observes that passing judgments on a text's value is "radically contingent" (p. 15) and which should not be undermined at any cost. It does not mean that the teachers should not make judgments on a text's value and stop their students participate in the debate. In short, both teachers and students should make a free choice about whether they want to participate or not.

In this way, the choices made by the students can avoid misconceptions about the pedagogical function of literary texts. They can also contribute to make their personal value judgments on the reading list of the texts. This also helps them to make their unbiased judgments on the selection of books. So it is necessary that the selection of books should be impartial. In this connection, Allan Bloom's 1987 book *The Closing of the American Mind* discusses the conflicting views that exist together with each debate. In this book, he has dejectedly acknowledged the fact that what the feminists consider the works of today as "offensive" (pp. 65-66). She also proposes that the value judgments of great works of art can be made unbiased if a text is approached through its "objective beauty" (p. 380), which is possible when questions are asked about its value. Many students often think that each piece of literature should express its good and bad aspects. In doing so, they will be able to identify their personal engagement in the selection of texts. They will also be confident that the teachers and scholars make the canonical list of books impartially. In this way, the canon-anti-canon debate can get along the academy.

A CYCLE OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

The canon is discussed not only in terms of what is included, it is also discussed more importantly in terms of "what the canon excludes," so that the "changes in the canon look like parts of a larger cycle of inclusion and exclusion" (Golding, 1995, p. 283). So the canon discusses both the inclusion and exclusion of texts. In American curricula, for instance, the "masterworks of American literature" course can be taken as an example of this phenomenon. Henry James' *Daisy Miller* (1879) is in the anthology that is taught in schools and universities. Recently, however, accommodating Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents* necessitated the exclusion of James' text from the American literary syllabus. But the course anthology still consists of James' text. Such example can be discussed in the classroom. It means that Jacobs' work has replaced James' work in the course reading list, but still James is considered more canonized than Jacobs and thereby included in the American literature syllabi.

In the case of Jacobs' *Incidents*, there are historical factors that provide the book an instance of aesthetic greatness. Although the text was published in 1861, Jacobs' book has recently earned its aesthetic value because there was no such kind of books available until 1987. "A curriculum that includes this variety," as Paul Lauter (1991) notes, will "provide us with a more comprehensive view of cultural crosscurrents in the period leading up to the Civil War" (*Canons*, p. 110). According to Lauter, such historical evidence helps students to decide on their judgments on the selection of texts. It is only the present-day social, cultural, and political circumstances that allow students to compare the works by Jacobs and James. Thus, the inclusion of Jacobs within such pedagogical framework can provide the students a basis for raising questions about the canonicity of the works of literature.

Many critics think that the canon is always debatable. Even they do not consider such a debate problematic. Here, Allan Bloom (1987) observes that the canonical texts must cross the border such as "here and now" and stand on their own (pp. 64-65). The theorists, who need change, as suggested above, consider this case as lapses of the literary canon. But there should be a good relation between the canonical texts and the social contexts so that the students can understand the cycle of inclusion and exclusion. The pedagogical advantage of an energetic climate can be taken in which an unfamiliar work is received, taking advantages of the canon that go beyond other social institutions.

Morrison's *Beloved* is to illustrate this possibility. For instance, as Dwight A. McBride (2007) points out, "The idea of the collective experience of history and the telling of history is important for Morrison and bears further thought" (p. 170). The slavery in the United States and the injustices suffered by the African Americans are an integral part of American history and consciousness. But it took long time to include the works such as slave narratives, which was an example of exclusion. In this way, the history of African American was forgotten. So the students who read Morrison's *Beloved* for the first time rediscover the African American past. In other words, they are asked to reimagine a history that is considered to be dislocated and marginalized a long time ago.

However, Jacqueline Bacon's dialogical approach in the classroom places the canonical works of literature into an interaction with the non-canonical works of literature. Her approach argues that the students can ask questions about the construction of culture and the notion of race and ethnicity as it is seen in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* that reflects American slavery, enhancing the students' understanding (as cited in Baumlin, 2000, p. 511). But this raises a question of whether more culturally-based readings like the African folklore tradition, the African American jazz tradition, or the slave narrative tradition fit into such classrooms. In fact, the study of slave narratives and the system of slavery is pedagogically beneficial to the African American students. It will give them power to rethink about their past as their understanding of Morrison's text is all the more forceful and interesting.

In addition, the dilemma rests on a second false premise that the non-canonical works are uncivilized, whose ideality exists outside the canon. Here, Martha Cutter (1995) has propounded an approach, popularly known as the canon-anti-canon approach that deals with the interrelationship between canonical and non-canonical works in literature. It supports the dominant canonical works of the period and contrasts with the anti-canonical works, challenging the dominant canonical works (1995, p. 122). In this way, by giving importance to the anti-canonical works rather than the canonical works, Cutter's approach fails to measure the merits of literary and cultural traditions. As opposed, it is a myth of the fall until it is included in the canon. This is again in terms of a myth that all texts are free from interpretation. In doing so, through the competent and balanced teaching, it is possible to embrace many new kinds of literature, bringing them to the mainstream discourse.

In such a way, many teachers consider themselves as facilitators and bring the above mentioned dialogical approach into the classroom. The potential benefits, however, are worth the risks. In a similar way, Wayne C. Booth (1988) has argued that the canon controversy is productive in the sense that the scholars as well as teachers actively participate in the discourse and is also alive and free in its "endeavors" (p. 77). Here, Booth is in favor of the canonical discourse and such debate can create a new movement in the reading of literature. In this way, many students may find the discussion of canonicity interesting and relevant to what they need in their reading of literature courses.

The question of the canon has, however, concerned more than the "curriculum, textbooks, and criticism" (Lauter, 2001, "Literary" p. 27). Paul Lauter is trying to say that if the students in the Restoration or eighteenth-century literature course are not interested in the reading list, their interest may be created through the inclusion of canonical discourse of the

period. As indicated by him, such enthusiasm created by the teachers is more persuasive than a number of theoretical arguments provided by the critics and scholars.

However, the most significant area in which the question of canon has played a major role are curricula and textbooks. Curriculum and canon, or pedagogy and canon, are not equivalent, although they do reflect each other. The material choices about the course content made by teachers and by the choices of critics in part shape literary canons about what texts and authors to consider and select to make it "more broadly representative of diverse ethnic groups, classes, and interest" (Abrams, 1993, p. 21). In contrast, what seems legitimate or possible to use in academic courses depends in part on what is seen as canonical by conscious choices made by the individual teachers and critics. This practice would certainly reject the canonical status given by the official experts.

In addition, the textbooks strongly influence the curriculum because the educational canon is constantly "subject to deletions and additions" (Abrams, 1993, p. 21). In such a way, for instance, the change of canon in American literature is seen in the anthologies and curricula with the inclusion of the authors such as Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson, excluding other previously canonical writers.

Similarly, the literary works influenced by the formalist critical and ethnic movements emerged and institutionalized increasingly a narrow canon. One of such examples is *Twelve American Authors*, an anthology book, which was reflected in widely used texts of the time. Recently, the changes were also made in another ever-changing book *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. Interestingly, the book's first edition included one hundred and fifty authors in its first volume in 1990 and over one hundred and seventy in the second edition. These shifts, both in the number of writers covered and in the space devoted to each, indicate that the changing content of the American literary canon depends on the curricular focus. Thus, the controversy between pedagogy and literary canon changes over time and their relationship is fixed by the cultural and political shift of the age.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, there are growing political interests in the study of the literary canon, along with several attempts to explain them by reference to the minority writers. But these interests have not gone unchallenged. For instance, as Lois Tyson (1999) observes, "The literary canon has been used to maintain white cultural hegemony" (p. 382). There are still many critics who accept that the concept of a canon is more problematic than was previously assumed. They nonetheless insist that certain works are distinguished by quality and importance that much works still merit a central place in the field of literary education and critical discussion.

Over the last few decades, many scholars around the world including many teachers and curriculum designers have opted for multicultural literature and committed to its inclusion in school and university courses. "Despite the increased focus on multicultural education in America's high schools and the increased provision of college courses in African American experience, history, and literature," as Lois Tyson (1999) suggests, "educational efforts in these areas remain inadequate to the needs of students in a multicultural society such as ours" (p. 380). Although the inclusion of multicultural literature in the school and tertiary courses is the first step to achieve certain aims of canon formation in a multicultural country, it will bring drastic changes in the discourse of inclusion and exclusion in literature.

The role of teachers should help their students develop an admiration or respect for other cultures. The teachers should also help their students understand diverse cultures of many other social groups. Therefore, multicultural literature offers "opportunities to examine critically the society in which we live, and the values and assumptions that underlie conflicts, events, and behaviors" (Bishop, 1994, p. xvi). In this way, the problem of inclusion and

exclusion in literature is political rather than academic and can be resolved if the worldviews and values of diverse cultural groups that are depicted in the works of literature are considered in a proper way.

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