THE POLITICS OF *MACBETH*: DISRUPTING 'FOUL PLAY' IN THE HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM THROUGH RHIZOMATIC BRICOLAGE & AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Shakespeare's *Macbeth* might be taught in ways that consider and disrupt unequal relations of power in the play itself, in curricula, and in society. Using rhizoanalysis, bricolage, and autoethnographic methodologies, this study critically examines the play itself, the Atlantic Canada English language arts curriculum guide for grades 10 -12, and the researcher's instructional experiences related to teaching the play. The work asks how the application of post structural, critical, and feminist theories to the teaching of *Macbeth* might work to disrupt normativity in the classroom and beyond, and considers how teachers of English language arts might cultivate educational praxis that transforms the literature classroom into an emancipatory site.

Table of Contents

Curriculum Vitae

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Cueing the Chorus

In Chapter One, I outline the study that I take up in efforts to make a meaningful contribution to literature related to teaching practice in secondary English language arts classrooms. Specifically, I look at my teaching of *Macbeth*, widely regarded as a cornerstone text among educators, students, and parents alike. In order to provide context for my work, I begin by problematizing conventional, teacher-centered, banking model (Freire, 1970) approaches to teaching classic texts, and follow these observations with a rationale that reveals the value of investigating reasons for, and responses to the educational dilemma I raise. I articulate my research questions and proceed by reflecting on the ways in which my situatedness as a researcher informs my work as well as how I approach this study from a theoretical standpoint. The final section will provide an overview of the chapters in the thesis, offering a cursory look at what is to come in the unfolding of this study.

Presenting the Problem

Because they are predicated on a subscription to teacher-centered, banking models of education (Freire, 1970), traditional approaches to teaching classic texts are problematic to the extent that they may encourage a fundamental misunderstanding of how to facilitate meaningful learning for students. It is my experience that, through alternative praxis that decenters teacher voice and works to cultivate a learner alliance

1

between student and educator, high school English Language Arts classrooms can become sites for emancipatory learning.

Giroux (2016) argues that "education must be viewed as an emancipatory project" (p. 357), an idea that has a framing influence on the work that I propose here. Within this frame, authentic meaning making is activated only when I first position myself in alignment with, and not in authority over, the processes of inquiry I hope to inspire (Giroux, 2016). I suggest this as a starting point because I have come to believe that education "must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire & Bergman Ramos, 2009, p. 163). In this way, the project I outline here explores how I might drive innovation as a result of my being a "critically reflective educator [who] seeks to analyse her implication in oppressive and inequitable power relationships with students and then uses her analysis to work against that oppression and inequity" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 7).

Certainly, a consciousness-raising experience is offered to learners by dispensing with the long held notion of the hierarchical relationship between teacher and students. In deconstructing this binary and co-constructing alternatives, I seek to examine the relations of power within Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and cultivate an awareness of how similarly unjust structures are at work in the world. My hope is to avoid what McLaren (1999) warns, that "mainstream educators often decapitate the social context from the self and then cauterize the dialectical movement between them" (p. 8). Here, McLaren provides basis for my movement across temporalities that has begun with the

consideration of myself, and the complicity I must acknowledge as I have participated in systems that marginalize and oppress. From this place of reflexivity, my consideration turns to the classroom and how I might view my students as partners in inquiry. Finally, I consider that it is alongside my students as allies in inquiry that we will look to our cultural milieu in order to expose the systems of privilege that threaten to keep minority populations in the margins of our society. I seek to disrupt hierarchical notions of the relationship between teacher and student, and additionally, between research subject and research object (Masny, 2016). This work will make possible a pedagogy for which Holloway (2009) advocates when she suggests that "to critique our discourse and society where oppression is normalized in all sorts of oblique forms is to give agency to the individual to resist" (p. 17). Helping to create the conditions out of which students can recognize their own agency is, after all, at the heart of emancipatory praxis seeing that agency is "an aspect of the autonomy they deserve by virtue of their personhood" (Goodman & Suheyla Eren, 2013, p. 124).

Complicating the classroom use of Shakespeare is the reality that, too often, in the 'doing' of the text, traditional instructional approaches have failed to problematize the systems of oppression at work within the plays. As a result, learners often engage with the literature in ways that reproduce conditions of inequity rather than challenge them, simply by virtue of the fact that in teacher-centered deliveries of instruction, and students are rewarded for regurgitating, rather than interrogating. In my work as a teacher, I, too, have been seduced by the power differential that is established by approaching text from a stance that presumes 'correct' answers. Unfortunately, this kind of approach to

literature gives way to praxis in which teachers find themselves 'doing' literature that

"has been canonized in anthologies or recognized through established literary awards in

part because they feel it will be safe from school or parental censure" (Holloway, 2009, p.

9). This 'safety' is a result of the reality that the study of canonical texts such as *Macbeth*

carries with it a cultural capital – what Shrofel and Cherland (1998) call a "prestigious

knowledge" (p. 231) – to the extent that engagement with the play is its own hegemonic

transmission. It is widely accepted in families, community schools, among teachers of

English language arts, and the academy at large, for instance, that knowledge of

Shakespeare offers group membership to those who move through this rite of passage,

demonstrating an overall investment in canonical texts that makes evident this culture's

woeful lack of capacity for confronting normativity.

Research Rationale

Failing to engage in the work of inclusivity is a violence against personhood in

much the same way as Stuckey (1991, as cited in Friedenberg, 1991) conceives of

approaches to literacy "that prevent freedom and limit opportunity" (p. 493). Similarly,

Freire (2009) goes so far as to say that "any situation in which some individuals prevent

others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence" (p.173). Shying from

the discussion of the ways in which systemic oppressions manifest in the educative

context, then, is no option at all, for as Holloway (2009) posits, "what we decide to *not*

say or *not* include in course curricula is just as important as what we do include" (p. 16).

It is no longer tenable, then, to talk around traumas, or to fret at the edges of the reality in

which we have been positioned. The time for challenging the stories we are telling

ourselves is now, and it is precisely because we see these same master narratives at work in the tragedy of *Macbeth* that it presents itself to us as a text for which there is both much utility, and much urgency.

In taking up this challenge, schools are ideally suited for critical reflection, reflexivity, and redress such as they are a microcosm of society. It is within the school society, then, that efforts to alleviate oppression can arise out of a reimagining of values that translate to behaviours with which we become more and more accustomed. These actions can only begin, of course, with what Deborah Britzman (1998) describes as an 'unlearning,' an idea Kumashiro (2000) elaborates on in a review of literature that seeks to topple hegemonic structures from within the classroom context. In this work, Kumashiro contends that in our work of unlearning, "we do not want to *be* (the same), we also do not want to *be better* (since any Utopian vision would simply be a different and foretold way to *be,* and thus, a different way to be stuck in a reified sameness); rather, we want to *constantly become,* we want difference, change, newness" (p. 46). In earlier discussion of the same work, Kumashiro suggests that we are not trying to move to a better place. Rather, we are just trying to move.

Moving into critically reflective spaces is the aim here, then, and in this work, I conceive of the English language arts classroom as particularly attuned for "modeling explicit political critique of literature, the school, and society" (Shrofel & Cherland, 1998, p. 236). In alignment with the Department of Education's newly adopted Global Competencies, the New Brunswick English language arts curriculum requires students at all levels to engage in skill based rather than content-based knowledge construction. And

topping the list of the competencies outlined in literature supporting the Competencies is

critical thinking and problem solving. Whereas this more recent document edges inquiry

into the spotlight, the English language arts curriculum has long mandated such a focus

for literacy instruction by virtue of its emphasis on stranded skills in speaking and

listening, reading and viewing, and writing and other forms of representing (EECD,

1998) The mindful literacy educator appreciates that the development of meaningful skill

in these strands does not come about by rote, but requires a commitment to critical

literacy the likes of which casts the ELA environment as a space that "critically engages

students through dialogue, listening, reading, writing, reflection, and action, and

represents the development of students' social identities and their awareness of social

inequalities in education and greater society" (Madden, 2015, p. 585).

Besides being compelled by longstanding curriculum directives as well as

emergent philosophies for educational practice that challenge educators to attend to

issues of social justice as they engage students in classic texts (Bender-Slack, 2010;

McArdle, 2017; Dyches, 2017), a look into the social mechanisms that reify privilege

shall be taken as reason enough to inhabit a Freirean pedagogy of hope (McLaren, 1988).

How else might I invite students to make sense of the messages our world is sending us

about women in politics, about the dispossessed seeking safety in our country, about

attending to the traumatic injuries our own government has inflicted, about the value of

personhood? The degree to which I observe these manifestations of transsystemic social

oppression is the degree to which I respond to the urging of Goodman and Suheyla

(2013) when they compel readers to consider that "what we need is the will of educators

6

to make agency development a priority" (p. 123). To some degree, this work "requires that educators be trusted and encouraged to be thinkers, to move beyond technical delivery of curriculum" (Whitty, personal communication, April 24, 2019) in order that entanglements be not just acknowledged but embedded in the creation of meaning. Notwithstanding the system in which I find myself, for this work to take hold in my practice, I must continually confront and challenge my will to truth. That is, as MacNaughton (2005) describes, I must commit to "seeking ways of knowing that reorientate, refocus and re-energize my efforts to transform asymmetrical power relations" (p. 74) both within myself, and within my world.

Positioning Myself in Relation to the Study

While an exploration of local context will emerge from this work, I begin here with a consideration of the ways in which I am constructing my own positionality, and how that understanding gives shape to the inquiry I propose. Significant to this reflection is that Critical Studies was not the concentration in which I began my Masters at UNB. My first course in the program,[1] however, was such a transformative consciousness-raising experience that I soon became aware that I had to follow this line of flight to some of the diverse directions I describe here. Awareness, then, took shape as I was challenged to admit that the privilege I enjoy has been bestowed on me as a result of a regime of truth that it is my work to disrupt. Of primary concern was the disruption of my self as I

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[1] The course, *Literacies and Power*, was taught by Dr. T. Jane McLean, an instructor who was also instrumental in my decision to take up this project.

began to recognize the complicity I must acknowledge as a white female settler who has

reinscribed heteropatriarchal violences against those in the margins of society—

especially through my work in educational systems. My thoughts turned to moments

when I had let narratives that reproduce colonial, gender, or other social inequities go

unchallenged as I interacted with colleagues, students, loved ones, and ultimately, even

myself. As the discussion and engagement with content developed over that semester, I

became increasingly convinced that continuing on in an uncritical approach to studying

Instructional Design would position me for a reproduction of the kind of thinking that

Clarke and Parsons (2013) believe "permeates Western society" [and] . . . "misses the

point by limiting and decomplexifying in ways that disallow openness to what could be"

(p. 38). Such a path, then, would not attune me to the possibilities that I seek.

When I say 'seek', above, I articulate it in present tense because what I have

discovered, and indeed, am discovering, is that recasting 'location' in more flexible terms

is helpful for an inquiry that "seeks surprises . . . [in order to] disrupt the familiar and the

obvious" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 133). Here, MacNaughton (drawing on Deleuze and

Guattari (1987)) speaks of rhizomatic inquiry, a methodology I look to apply to the

consideration of what it means to be situated, that is, that situatedness is not so much

about arriving at a 'where', but more about seeking out a 'where *else*'. In this way, I

endeavour to take up the kind of disruptive work that MacNaughton discusses even as I

bring into focus the shifting context from which I take up this work. This context is one

in which I recast 'location', not as place, but as process. The process is rhizomatic, to the

extent that "rhizomes spread in every direction and are contrasted to arborescent (tree-

like) hierarchical relations" (Leander & Wells Rowe, 2006, p. 435). When I approach my research location from the multi-perspectival context of 'becoming', then, I counter arborescent notions of the situated self, and conceive of self as laterally, rather than vertically, dendritic. Further, the rhizomatic nature of the transitory self interrupts rigidity, and allows for possibility.

Taking up rhizoanalysis as a means by which I conceive of my self continues to be a work that uproots my own tendencies toward epistemologies that locate knowledge in fixed terms. Historically, possibility has been a source of anxiety for me. Classifying, categorizing, compartmentalizing – all of these processes have been a source of comfort for me. But as I have engaged with methodological possibilities such as bricolage (Berry, 2004; McLean, 2008; Rogers, 2012), rhizoanalysis (Clarke & Parsons, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Leander & Wells Rowe, 2006), and autoethnography (Ellis, 1999; Prah, 2016), I have become attuned to myself to the extent that this reflexive process has supported my reimagining of who I am as a researcher. Certainly, when I began this process, I did not know that *I* was the research site. And while I have examined texts, read articles, mapped methodologies, and engaged in the discursive knowledge constructions that have arisen from those enterprises, I am struck by how I have responded to invitations to make peace with uncertainty and inhabit ambiguity. I have been the subject of rhizoanalysis, of bricolage, of autobiographical narrative. And in that meaning-making frame, I am not arborescent either – not fixed, situated, or separate from other creative possibilities. But I am becoming. There is a humility here, in being able to

inquire of myself – what *am* I becoming in the unfolding of this performance, this representation of my learning?

In support of this shifting 'becoming', I hope to bring my knowledges to the professional learning communities of which I am a part. It strikes me that if the bricoleur is as Berry (2004) suggests – "a carpenter who discovers new tools to build the structure of a house at the same time as incorporating traditional structures and tools she/he has used for years" (p. 104) – how much more expansive and inclusive a space could that house become if we were to draw from the tools of many, rather than of one? The space I speak of is, of course, an abstraction, but means to illustrate that the dwellings I seek to establish are, indeed, as transitory as we. Co-creating a critically-knowing community (MacNaughton, 2005), whether for students or for teachers, after all, is more about fashioning the space within one's self as one of safety, and carrying that embodied safety, wherever we 'become'.

Theoretical Framework and Methods

The most fitting way I can think to approach this work is through a theoretically entangled methodology. Primarily, I structure my project as an autoethnography, more specifically articulated as a reflective essay that will also incorporate elements of bricolage as well as rhizoanalysis. I see an exciting merging of these methodologies such as they are beautifully attuned to the work of dismantling hierarchy and that they center the "deterritorialization of neoliberal thought" (Strom & Martin, 2013, p. 219) as paramount for transformative teaching. Simply put, autoethnography narrates, rhizoanalysis navigates, and bricolage regenerates. This is the kind of ongoing creation of

effects I seek out for my practice, and is best described as "a milieu of perpetual transformation" (Strom & Martin, 2013, p. 226).

Research Questions

Given my commitment to disruptive praxis that challenges unequal relations of power within and beyond texts, I take discursive aim at answering two questions that drive the critically reflective experience I hope to offer within my classroom space. First, I frame my research project by asking 1) how an educator might apply post structural, critical, and feminist theory to *Macbeth* in order to encourage transformative reflection. Secondly, I ask 2) how might the application of these theories to the teaching of *Macbeth* work to disrupt unequal relations of power in the classroom and beyond? It is with intention that I use the word 'beyond' as I believe that to apply parameters to the possibilities students may inhabit is to limit the essential and meaningful work of social justice.

Overview of the Work

As this work 'becomes', Chapter Two explores the literature related to critical engagement with text, the theoretical framing for the inquiry. In Chapter Three, I provide a discussion of the methodologies that inform my research, and guide the study. Chapters Four and Five outline my findings and consider the implications of those findings for secondary high school English language arts classrooms, as well as the learner-teachers that occupy them. I conclude by arguing that *Macbeth* is a text uniquely accommodating for emancipatory praxis that first, invites learners to deconstruct the unequal relations of

power within the text, and second, equips those learners with the critical skill requisite for

disrupting oppressions at work within the world.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: Setting the Stage

There is a great deal of research that addresses critical theory in education (Freire, 1982; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005; Tyson, 2006) as well as the ways in which educators have engaged in critical pedagogy in their classrooms (Cherry-McDaniel, 2016; Picower, 2009; Vavrus, 2008). Because critical pedagogy is a form of educational praxis (the interplay of theory and practice) that invites challenges to unequal relations of power, a key component of critical praxis is critical literacy instruction. Critical literacy, broadly understood as textual analysis that encourages resistant reading, can be used to deconstruct dominant discourses (see for example, Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps et al., 1998; Holloway, 2009; Kalogirou & Malafantis, 2012; McLean, 2008). Despite the breadth of literature on the topics of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy, secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers could benefit from further research that examines how classic texts could be used as points of entry to discussions of relations of power that arise from those texts (Berry, 2004). For the purpose of this literature review, I define "classic texts" as works that are viewed as traditional, are taken as authoritative, and have enjoyed longstanding pre-eminence in instructional materials nationwide, and even internationally. Such texts are considered exemplary works of what is considered high culture, and span from classical texts of antiquity to modern classics such as we find in the work of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Because these

traditional texts are explicitly taught in schools, and are privileged above non-dominant alternatives, their very use solidifies the canon.

How might classic texts act as a point of entry for discourse that deconstructs systemic oppressions that students will encounter within and beyond the ELA classroom space? To answer this question, I begin by considering the work of scholars (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Kincheloe, 2005; Tyson, 2006) who have established definitions of critical literacy. Having discussed these broader notions of critical literacy, I then examine how educators from various contexts have made attempts to enact definitions of critical literacy in their praxis. Within this discussion, I engage with the work of such scholars as Bender-Slack (2010), Dyches (2017), Simmons (2016), and Wolfe (2010), by examining the ways in which they seek to subvert normativity in the ELA classroom. From their work, I outline various understandings of how ELA spaces can be sites for critical pedagogy, and how the use of classic works of literature can disrupt dominant discourses relating to text itself, the classroom space, and the social structures that perpetuate power differentials. I conclude by addressing the need for further research that illustrates how learners can participate in a transformative learning experience that is achieved through critical praxis that mobilizes classic texts in the secondary ELA classroom.

Defining Critical Literacy

There is some variance among scholars when it comes to defining critical literacy but common ground is evident in the oft-cited Paulo Freire (Dyches, 2017; McLaren, 1988; Simmons, 2016; Spangler, 2009; Wolfe, 2010) who defines critical literacy as "an

14

effort to read the word and the world" (McLaren, 1988, p. 220). For example, in a work more than three decades old, McLaren (1988) notes that "Freire's work has become almost synonymous with the project of literacy" (p. 218). The body of literature examined here attests to Freire's abiding influence, as there are multiple references to his works and ideas through studies that bring us into recent and ongoing inquiry regarding critical literacy (see, for example, Bissonnette and Glazier (2016), Dyches (2017), McCardle (2017), and Simmons, (2016)). Freire advocates for critical literacy in the context of "problem-posing education" (p. 101) rather than traditionalist banking models of education where students are passive educational vessels to be filled by knowledgeable teachers. For Freire, hierarchy becomes the enemy of critical consciousness. In his preface to Freire and Macedo's (1987) authoritative volume on critical literacy, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World,* Giroux argues that in order for educators to welcome learners into mutually sustaining critically-knowing communities, there is a "need to develop as a central assumption of critical literacy the recognition that knowledge is not merely produced in the heads of experts, curriculum specialists, school administrators, and teachers" (p. 10). Freire clarifies that the dismantling of the teacher-student opposition is requisite to any critical literacy experience, and that critical literacy is concerned with "demystifying the artificial parameters imposed on people" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 35).

Drawing from a Freirean tradition, Lois Tyson (2006) presents a multi-perspectival understanding of text that allows for these "outgrowths of human experience" (p. 2) to manifest in non-print modalities that are no less 'text,' but

productions from which we might "learn something important about ourselves as a species" (p. 2). While Tyson focuses less on the emancipatory effect of critical literacy, her comprehensive guide to the theoretical possibilities of text is undergirded by the belief that critical theory provides the tools necessary for the interpretative enterprise that is at the heart of critical literacy instruction. Specifically, she argues that these tools "not only can show us our world and ourselves through new and valuable lenses but also can strengthen our ability to think logically, creatively, and with a good deal of insight" (p. 3).

Joe Kincheloe's (2005) work on the critical constructivist classroom weaves a thread through Tyson's, Freire's, and Giroux's understandings of critical literacy. In his book, *Critical Constructivism*, Kincheloe explains that the interpretive act "involves understanding how power inscribes the word and the world to shape the nature of how human beings make sense of it" (p. 20). Kincheloe's views about critical literacy reverberate through three major chords, the first of which finds its voice in the work of Freire, while the second and third resonate alongside Giroux and Tyson. First, Kincheloe's assertion that a critical approach seeks to uncover how "power inscribes the word and the world" (p. 20) reveals alignment with Freire's definition of critical literacy – an act of reading the word and the world. Doing so requires a learner to cultivate an awareness of the ways in which power is at work in both textual and social terrains. A second attunement is evident in that Kincheloe emphasizes the need to recognize how power shapes and preserves master narratives, and a commitment to deconstructing the power differentials that prevent agency in the classroom. As Giroux suggests, we must

16

begin by demythologizing the teacher-student binary if challenges to other oppressive

structures are to take shape in our practice. Finally, in Kincheloe, we hear strains of

Tyson's (2006) argument that critical readings of text "show us our world and ourselves"

(p. 3). Tyson's statement carries particular import for ELA teachers: in order to produce

the kind of resistant reading that characterizes critical literacy, those of us attending to

explicit critical literacy instruction must cultivate an authentic understanding of ourselves

and our world. What emerges from these readings on critical literacy, then, is that while

Kincheloe may conceive of critical literacy in different terms than his counterparts, his

stance places him in clear ideological proximity to Freire, Giroux, and Tyson. Taken

together, these thinkers bring into focus the definition of critical literacy that shapes

ongoing inquiry related to praxis that supports its aims.

   Some writers subscribe to a reading of the word that finds its end in learners'

ability to read a text from multiple vantage points (Margolis & Shapiro, 1987; Townsend

& Pace, 2005). Others engage with the notion of critical literacy by suggesting that its

chief objective is to move learners toward awareness of their own reading processes

(Kalogirou & Malafantis, 2012; Mellor & Patterson, 2000). Within this discussion, there

is noteworthy reliance on the work of literary theorists, Robert E. Probst, and his thoughts

on reader response approaches to literature, and Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of social

dialogue. Kalogirou and Malafantis (2012), for instance, understand reader response

theory in terms of the centrality of the reader's experience with text and they demonstrate

subscription to this approach to literature by suggesting a number of questions that

engage students personally with the literature they read. Kalogirou and Malafantis (2012)

also rely on Probst's dismissal of authorial intent stating that it gives way to the metacognitive component of critical literacy while also inviting students to "go far beyond [their] personal associations with texts and simple 'likes' and dislikes' of them" (p. 271).

Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and discourse, on the other hand, are offered as a movement outward from the centrality of the reader's experience of text, to an understanding that "literacy becomes the most empowering precisely when it becomes the most social and contextually interactive" (McLaren, 1988, p. 227). Bissonnette and Glazier (2016), Dyches (2017), Holloway (2009) Bender-Slack (2010), and Simmons (2016) are just a few of the voices in the research literature that go beyond this emphasis on the metacognitive with an understanding that, while self-awareness is certainly part of critical literacy, as an end in itself, it precludes the truly emancipatory effect for which Freire, Giroux, and Kincheloe advocate. For instance, Dyches (2017), and Bissonnette and Glazier (2016) emphasize the ways ELA teachers can restory the hegemonic narratives of the canon while Holloway (2009) takes discursive aim at how teachers can generate discourse that subverts the normalizing influence of classic texts. In work that acknowledges the fear that teachers and students bring to their engagement with classics, Delane Bender-Slack (2010) suggests that teacher agency is requisite to any work of critical practice. Bender-Slack (2010) offers several implications from her study and highlights key components of critical praxis such as ongoing education for pre-service teachers, especially in the areas of discourse theory, as well as helping teacher candidates recognize the classroom as a political space. Simmons (2016), who situates her work as a

way to analyze various genres of text, examines the value of systemic functional linguistics to "transform learners' own consciousness of how authors, and they themselves, use language for specific social purposes" (p. 184).

Critical Literacy Praxis

The scholarship represented here moves readers toward critical literacy pedagogical practice by attending to critical literacy as a theory to inform teaching that exposes structural oppression and, to some extent, seeks to remedy this oppression. Within the literature, many authors maintain that the secondary ELA classroom affords opportune spaces for just such a work (Bender-Slack, 2010; Fecho, 1998; Holloway, 2009; Kalogirou & Malafantis, 2012; Simmons, 2016) while a more specific focus on the use of classic texts in those spaces is evident in Bissonnette and Glazier's argument for counterstorytelling (2016), Dyches' work on developing counter-curriculum (2017), Hong's examination of rape texts in classical literature (2013), and McCardle's (2017) discussion of structural racism in the British canon.

Critical Literacy in the English Language Arts Classroom

Fecho (1998) discusses critical literacy in the ELA classroom when he reasons that "students need to learn about language and to become critically aware of the role language plays in all our lives" (p. 76). By underscoring the importance of language itself, Fecho invites educators into the work of discourse analysis, a beginning place for deterritorializing discursive terrain that demarcates typical from marginal. His emphasis on language awareness is echoed in the work of Balinska-Ourdeva, Johnston, Mangat and McKeown (2014) who suggest that teachers are indispensable in developing students'

awareness of the politics of language, as well as Simmons (2016) who argues that an emphasis on systemic functional linguistics positions students for greater awareness of the rhetorical nature of language. The study conducted by Balinska-Ourdeva et al., for example, is in agreement with Fecho's stress on the structural features of language. Their work argues for "the need of providing students with the appropriate critical apparatus *before* they have been asked to engage personally with the text" (Balinska-Ourdeva et al., 2014, p. 345). This kind of personal engagement is what Kalogirou and Malafantis (2012) consider to be of utmost concern in literature classrooms, for in their work, text-to-self connections are viewed as "a deeper and more insightful reading [that] leads to . . . a metacognitional understanding of the reading process itself" (p. 267).

Decidedly reliant on Robert E. Probst's reader response approach to literature, Kalogirou and Malafantis offer a systematic framework from which they believe personal resonances with text will emerge. Simmons (2016) seeks to equip learners with the critical apparatus (See also Balinska-Ourdeva et al., 2014) and, alongside them, argues that close and critical reading of this nature is necessary for meaningful engagement with text. In her research, Simmons explores the reading process with explicit attention to systemic functional linguistics (SFL)—an approach to language that focuses on its function as a social semiotic system. The qualitative study is set within the parameters of a high school English class wherein Simmons examines the utility of SFL as an approach to discourse analysis as it pertains to fantasy, classic, and non-fiction texts. Simmons contends that SFL serves students by encouraging them to "connect meanings with

words, find patterns in language, and empower themselves by problematizing and discussing their findings" (p. 204).

Problematizing a text can seem a daunting task for teachers who negotiate the myriad pressures related to structuring meaningful discourse at the same time as satisfying administrative, district, and curricular claims to instructional space. hooks (1994) addresses teachers' misgivings by calling attention to the reality that too often, teacher education programs do not prepare pre-service teachers to facilitate heated discussions or to navigate the useful interruptions and digressions that can arise from them. hooks argues that the unintended consequence of the "fear of losing control in the classroom often leads [teachers] to fall into conventional teaching patterns wherein power is used destructively" (p. 189).

Countering this fear, Bender-Slack (2010) discusses how teachers might take up a praxis that presupposes and leverages divergent thinking in ways that deconstruct power differentials at work within the classroom. In answer to anxieties related to classroom debate, she acknowledges the fear of triggering psychological distress, not to mention the legal ramifications of allowing for dialectic exchange. For her part, Bender-Slack argues in favour of hooks' (1994) opinion that transgressing boundaries is essential to any social justice project, and she contends that a necessary component of that project is the recognition that "the ideas of safety and social justice sharply contradict each other" (p. 193). She maintains that the failure to acknowledge this contradiction not only limits the teaching of social justice but also releases educators of responsibility. Interestingly, her

work also observes that those teacher-participants who allowed for dialogic divergence were among the few who demonstrated the most developed sense of individual agency.

Certainly, the development of teacher identity cultivates the sense of agency that characterizes the work of Holloway (2009) and her peers, Wolfe (2010), and Kalogirou and Malafantis (2012). In her exploration of engaging pre-service teachers in literary discussion that exposes individual and systemic prejudices, Holloway, a teacher educator, seeks to establish a rationale for "using literature to create a forum in which teacher candidates feel comfortable discussing difficult issues" (p. 4). Like Bender-Slack (2010), Holloway's study accounts for the lack of self-efficacy teachers often bring to the discursive arena but goes further by suggesting that conversations related to literature can provide the performative framework by which teachers can participate in the development of their proficiency. She proposes this approach for pre-service teachers of all disciplinary backgrounds but remarks that "even teachers who have English as their main content area often do not feel prepared to teach literature that is provocative and contemporary" (p. 8). While Holloway brings critical literacy into her teacher education praxis in order to help students strengthen the ability to facilitate discourse, Wolfe (2010) commissions her pre-service teachers to take up the work themselves as they enter into their field assignments. Wolfe argues that engaging in, and ultimately facilitating classroom discussion related to literature, contributes to agency development in teachers. Of one participant, Wolfe notes, "her identity as a teacher now includes the skills necessary to question power dynamics with students" (p. 382). Taken together, the research (Bender-Slack, 2010; Holloway, 2009; Wolfe, 2010) points to a significant need

for ELA teachers to build capacity for contention, a compelling outgrowth of meaningful

critical literacy instruction.

Mobilizing Classic Literature for Critical Praxis

While Bender-Slack (2010), Fecho (1998), Holloway (2009), and Kalogirou and

Malafantis (2012) explore how critical literacy can be taught through the use of literary

texts, overall, these authors do not focus specifically on mobilizing classic texts for

critical praxis. Rather than viewing any type of literature as a gateway for critical literacy

instruction, many researchers staunchly reject the canon in favour of non-dominant texts

that they believe have greater liberatory potential (see for example, Aston, 2017;

McLean, 2008; Ward & Connolly, 2010). In doctoral work that explores the

implementation of a compelling course – *Women, Media and Culture* – McLean (2008)

argues that teachers who are unaware of their complicity, and are constrained by a dearth

of selections within their schools' book rooms, unconsciously reproduce a hegemonic

status quo by engaging with the classics in their praxis. McLean reasons that "official

high school curriculum privileges high culture texts to prove that every school's mandate

is to lift students to the heights of cultural supremacy and discerning taste" (p. 29). By

virtue of the cultural capital involved in their study, McLean contests the use of classic

texts since classroom engagement with them is its own hegemonic transmission.

Presenting a similar aversion to the Eurocentrism, Euro-ancestry, and patriarchal values

that pervade the classics, Ward and Connolly (2008) submit, with striking tenacity, that

privileging "heritage" or classic texts is a practice that must be abandoned in order to

illuminate the limitations of literary traditions. Specifically, they take issue with a view

that "proposes culture and its textual artefacts as a natural set of given traits, conditions and lineages, as such a view closes down the interrogation of how official knowledge is normalised and reproduced into the legitimate currency in everyday social life" (p. 305). Even in a very recent work, Aston (2017) decries the "narrowing effects of the canon on students and suggest[s] that understanding Foucault's concept of resistance . . . may help one . . . decenter its normalizing processes in the classroom to produce a more dynamic curriculum" (p. 40). In what I see as a very thoughtful contribution to the debate, Aston, a prominent American researcher, acknowledges that abandoning classic texts carries with it an accompanying estrangement from a sense of one's past, of one's identity. Despite this, he remains resolute that continued engagement with the canon will only work to "perpetuate narratives that misrepresent the cultures of non-White people, and more broadly, misrepresent our society" (p. 50). For these reasons, Aston suggests a departure from the works altogether.

Bissonnette and Glazier (2016) counter this view by outlining an approach that invites "all voices, particularly those often silenced in the canon and classroom, into the conversation" (p. 685). In this comprehensive look at the practice of counterstorytelling, Bissonnette and Glazer examine the origins and benefits of the approach while providing models that engage exclusively with classic texts. Because the work of counterstory is to challenge a master narrative, and, in this case, one that specifically attends to issues of cultural diversity by decentering Whiteness, the practice is ideally suited for the analysis of works of the racialized British canon (Bissonnette & Glazier, 2016). From a similar stance, Todd McCardle (2017) addresses structural racism evident throughout literary

classics in his look at instructional approaches to teaching Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In general terms, McCardle's essay "challenge[s] the idea that 'outdated' works have no place in today's classroom by revealing how teachers can foster critical literacy stances using classic literature" (p. 98). His framing of the discussion, however, sets up his work as a response to the paucity of modern texts available to the secondary ELA teacher. Despite this incongruence, the essay offers an emphasis on critical literacy as well as a pedagogy informed by critical race theory. On this point, McCardle places an imperative on educators to "take the mandated curriculum and make it culturally relevant for all students" (p. 102). Overall, McCardle's piece is more theoretical than practical, offering no concrete suggestions for instructional design that mobilizes the culturally relevant praxis for which he advocates.

Dyches (2017) contends that the process of making texts culturally relevant is accomplished in part by providing marginalized learners with an entry point into and against English literature, literature that Dyches argues is not just Eurocentric but "Euro-*exclusive*" (p. 309). In her ethnographic case study, Dyches makes account of one teacher's (Sam) attempts to make the classics relevant for his marginalized students based on his recognition that in most works of classic literature, essentialist perspectives of non-dominant cultures prevail. As a participant-observer, Dyches brings considerable insight to the obstructions Sam faced as he delivered a counter-curriculum to his students, not the least of which was scarcity of resources (time and texts). An additional hurdle is made evident when Sam revealed that his "fear over punitive measures impacted both his ability and willingness to engage in certain aspects of culturally responsive pedagogies

both in and outside of his classroom" (p. 312). Sam's experience mirrors my own. Interestingly, this study applauds Sam's multimodal, culturally responsive praxis as he engages his students with classic works of literature at the same time as it reveals his deep conviction that curriculum should dispense with the British canon. Despite this stance, the research study illuminates how Sam was able to design instruction that enabled his students to interact with classic texts using such strategies as multimodality and restorying, as well as by working with and against the sociocultural privileges that existed within his classroom. This latter approach gave rise to discussion in which Sam himself "modeled sociocultural vulnerability" (p. 311) in order to draw his students into authentic experiences with text and community.

The twin touchpoints of text and community are similarly valued by Shrofel and Cherland (1998) whose Neomarxist orientation drives their inquiry into how to best teach the classic Shakespearean text, *Macbeth*. In their reflective piece, for example, they advocate for the kind of rigorous critique of the play that generates discussions about power, and ask: "how better to do this than through the study of literature, and in dialogue with each other?" (p. 235). Here, their dual emphasis on verse and voice frame their theorizing related to future attempts at "doing" *Macbeth,* and, although brief, their suggestions for advancing on deficit models of race, gender, and ability through study of the play are clear and applicable. In particular, they focus on pedagogy that "model[s] explicit political critique of literature" (p. 236) that centers dialogue, a reimagined grading procedure, and workshop formats "that ask students to cooperate rather than compete" (p. 236). Offering this guidance as an outgrowth of their reflection on a

26

disappointing teaching experience, Shrofel and Cherland demonstrate the kind of reflexivity and egalitarianism that is requisite to critical pedagogical practice.

Whereas reflexivity is at the heart of metacognition, Mellor and Patterson (2000) enact critical pedagogy by inviting students into reflexive stances, and coaching them through analysis of the readings they produce as they relate to Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Like Dyches (2017), Mellor and Patterson observe that classic texts have generated essentialist readings of marginalized populations, and counter their reinscription with the methods of reader response theory. Specifically, students are asked to interrogate their own constructions of meaning from the play, and are encouraged to consider that their reading construction is a text itself, and one that is not exempt from the scrutiny directed toward conventional understandings of text. Using *Hamlet* as its pivot, the work points to a number of possible readings of the text, accompanied by questioning strategies that could help students consider alternative readings. Although this work has a narrow focus and highly specific suggestions for instructional design, I locate Mellor and Patterson's research within the parameters of critical pedagogy in part because of their emphasis on metacognition, but also because of their desire for students to "make visible the gaps and silences of texts and readings, [and to] challenge other, especially dominant, readings" (p. 510).

Situating Myself Within the Literature

Taken together, these teacher-researchers make an enterprise of challenging text, readings of text, and readers of text, and while some condemn the classics (Aston, 2017; McLean, 2008; Ward & Connolly, 2016), others work to acquit them (Holloway, 2009;

Hong, 2013; Kalogirou & Malafantis, 2012; Margolis & Shapiro, 1987; McCardle, 2017), and still others laud their liberatory potential (Bender-Slack, 2010; Bissonnette & Glazier, 2016; Dyches, 2017). Overall, however, the research favours critical engagement with text as an instrument of critical pedagogy (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps et al., 1998; Fecho, 1998; McLaren, 1987; McLean, 2008; Simmons, 2016). In order to situate myself within the range of views outlined here, I return to a discussion of what complicates the classroom use of the ELA canon. Quite simply, it is the reality that, too often, in the "doing" of the text, traditional instructional approaches fail to problematize the systems of oppression at work within classics. Admittedly, in my own practice, I have insisted that learners engage with the literature in ways that have done more to reproduce conditions of inequity than challenge them. Granted, I have done this unwittingly, but by virtue of the fact that I have rewarded my students for regurgitating, rather than interrogating. Further, the fact that ELA teachers often 'do' literature that "has been canonized in anthologies or recognized through established literary awards in part because they feel it will be safe from school or parental censure" (Holloway, 2009, p. 9), points to the near universal acceptance of the paternalistic determination of texts crucial to our personal and social 'success'.

There is a cultural capital involved in the study of canonical works insomuch as their study becomes a marker of a person's competence and social mobility in a stratified society. This makes engagement with classic texts its own hegemonic transmission. Because this is the case, I find myself subscribing to the two major emphases within the range that I've outlined here: centering student voice, and interrogating hegemonic

narratives. In terms of my own classroom approach, I situate myself along the intersecting axis of voice and interrogation. I believe, for instance, that in order for students to take up a truly questioning stance, they must be convinced of the safety to do so. They cannot be convinced of this if their curiosities are silenced, either by myself as their teacher, or by their peers. So, in speaking back to Ward and Connolly's (2008), McLean's (2008), and Aston's (2017) shared position that the classics have no place in critical literacy spaces because they are steeped in racism, religious persecution, misogyny, and all manner of other social ills, I counter with my perspective that it is precisely because of these contentious issues that the literary canon warrants being soundly disrupted in classroom spaces. Further, whereas reading holds such transformative potential, and that the engagement with fiction affords safer spaces for self -revealment, I would submit that teachers of literature are uniquely accountable in this work.

Conclusion

This careful consideration of the body of literature related to critical literacy, praxis, and pedagogy reveals a need for more explicit connections between critical praxis and the use of classic texts that locate works of the canon as uniquely accommodating points of entry to a transformative learning experience. In my project, I address this by problematizing traditional approaches to teaching classic texts and discussing alternative praxis that can better position secondary ELA students for meaningful learning. Specifically, my research seeks to examine how I might apply critical theory to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in order to encourage learners to consider and disrupt unequal

relations of power at work within the play. Further, it asks how the application of post

structural, critical, and feminist reflection might work to disrupt normativity and overturn

oppressions at work within learners' experiences of self and of the world beyond the

classroom. I understand post structural reflection as a recognition that "language is

connected intimately with the politics of knowledge and that those politics are evident in

the language we use" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 4).

CHAPTER THREE:

Methodology: Rehearsing the Scene

Traditional approaches to teaching classic texts are often problematic because they are predicated on a subscription to teacher-centered, banking models of education (Freire, 1970). Because this approach casts educators as 'knower' and students as unknowing until rescued from ignorance by their teachers, a fundamental misunderstanding of how to facilitate meaningful learning for students arises from this view of students as passive receptacles of information. Through alternative praxis that decenters teacher voice and works to cultivate alliances between students and educators, however, high school English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms can become sites for emancipatory learning. This chapter examines methodological approaches that center reflexivity in order to investigate how teacher-learners might establish these emancipatory learning sites. Specifically, the methodological approach I outline here focuses on: rhizoanalysis, which emphasizes the diversity of data sources, bricolage, which focuses on data assemblage, and autoethnography, a personal, reflective narrative that sets my work with the data into a reflexive frame.

To begin the discussion, I draw on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), to define rhizoanalysis, scholars Kincheloe and Berry (2004) to explicate bricolage, and researcher-storyteller Carolyn Ellis (1999) to make explicit the essential features of autoethnography. I seek to understand the work of scholars who apply rhizoanalysis (i.e. Clark and Parsons (2013), Hagood (2009), and Leander and Wells-Rowe (2006)),

bricolage (e.g. Kincheloe and Berry; 2004, McLean, 2008; Rogers 2012), and auto-

rthnography (e.g. Prah, 2016; Reed-Danahay, 2009; Ticozzi, 2016) specifically related to

instruction in a secondary classroom. As this discussion unfolds, I locate myself within

the literature, draw attention to the elements of each approach that I seek to apply to my

work, and offer specific examples of how I derive the study's findings. Following this, I

flesh out the character of my methodological stance by providing a rationale for the

approaches I've chosen, and how they allow for applications within the educative

contexts that I wish to reterritorialize.

Defining Rhizoanalysis

Rhizoanalysis, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain, draws from the nature of

the rhizome itself for explicit characterization but descriptions tend to begin with what

rhizoanalysis is not; that is, it is "absolutely different from roots and radicles" (p. 6) and

"very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (p. 7). Counter

to tree-like and stratified methods of arriving at conclusions, rhizoanalytic research

emphasizes possibility, multiplicity, and connection, such as it seeks a data assemblage

that manifests as an "increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes

in nature as it expands it connections" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). Given that

Deleuze and Guattari claim that to "attain the multiple, one must have a method that

effectively constructs it" (p. 21), I seek to apply rhizomatic inquiry to my work in the

English Language Arts (ELA) classroom in order to render it a performative sphere

wherein hierarchical structure is rejected, even as I enact research. Instead, I take up the

living rhizome as it "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains,

organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (p. 7).

Rhizomatic Function – Defining and Locating Text

In applying this description of rhizomatic logic to research methodology, MacNaughton (2005) advises that researchers generate and/or locate texts, interrogate those texts, and then juxtapose those texts against others that may seem irrelevant or even counterintuitive to the meaning-making frame. For clarity, I consider that locating a text is a function distinct from generating a text and therefore, address these in separate discussions, beginning with the former. Given that I understand 'text' as any vehicle for communicating meaning, I seek to consider a multiplicity of texts as they present themselves as data sources and data-generating possibilities within this research, and do so recognizing the import of my understanding of text as I take up all three of the methodologies I outline here. Further, as multiplicity is one of the six principles of rhizoanalysis (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), it is fitting that as I explore what texts I might locate within this study, I apply the concept of multiplicity to my understanding of text itself. In doing so, I include, but do not limit myself to the consideration of print, visual, acoustic, relational, and gestural transmissions of meaning for they represent the lines of flight Deleuze and Guattari (1987) claim as a defining characteristic of rhizomatic inquiry.

In the work of rhizome researchers, emphasis on the multiplicity of text is pronounced (Hagood, 2009; Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Leander & Wells Rowe, 2006; MacNaughton, 2005; Masny, 2016). Leander and Sheehy (2004) shed light on the

multimodal nature of text when, in their introduction to a volume devoted to the

exploration of rhizoanalysis in literacy research and practice, they repeatedly refer to text

in plural terms. Leander and Sheehy's (2004) introductory piece does not elaborate on

this plurality with explicit examples, but a study by Leander and Wells Rowe (2006) goes

a step further by observing that, regrettably, "we have reduced the process of

signification (or semiotics) to language and literature" (p. 435). To counter this reductive

understanding, they suggest that rhizome researchers might push against those

representational modes of thinking that focus on foundations or 'roots' by

reterritorializing notions of text. To this end, they propose that rhizomatic methodology

invites researchers to shift our focus from stable texts that can be read, to an awareness of

the multimodal nature of text, as well as an understanding that text is a "constantly

moving configuration that is ripe with potential for divergent movements" (p. 435).

Hagood (2009) suggests that tracing these divergences might assist us in reterritorializing

definitions of text so that they include, but are not limited to "music, video, databases,

newspapers, books, ICTs, photographs, social networking sites, maps, movies, the

Internet, [and] text messaging" (2009, p. 40). With this awareness of the plurality of text,

I consider that MacNaughton's (2005) suggestion to generate and/or locate, interrogate,

and juxtapose texts must be enacted in the context of decentering conventional modalities

of text since, as Hagood (2009) points out, "a litany of multimodal texts grows on a

rhizome of language arts" (p. 40).

　　This rhizomatic function makes possible what Leander and Sheehy (2004)

conceive of as an encompassing reach into the spatial, where they argue that, alongside

34

multimodal experiences of print, visual, relational, acoustic, and gestural texts, both physical and cognitive spaces can also be read as texts from which ruptures and connections can be mapped. In discussion of the spatial, they seek to bring context to the fore, and "work to recover the interpretive loss experienced when a context of literacy practice is considered to be background to the situated practices happening within it" (p. 3). Acknowledging spatial affect in my research involves the consideration of spatial texts both material and immaterial. Of these texts, I might inquire: what signifiers find expression in the physical space that is generated and evolves through the literacy experiences I seek to facilitate? How does text emerge from the cognitive spaces that find embodiment in those present for these literacy experiences? Even as I seek answers to these questions, I join Masny (2016) in her movement away from interpreting data, and toward the palpation of data, for she articulates that to "palpate data and construct questions from data might open up avenues for discussion, from a multiplicity of, to the problem of how data function and what data produce in becoming" (p. 667). This allowance for plurality as well as potentiality is found within Hagood's (2009) work as well, and suggests that an 'ever-becoming' definition of text, one that is not fixed or arboreal, can move researchers into spaces where we are able to shed light on novel findings that compel further inquiry.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that further inquiry finds expression in the rhizome itself, for they assert that "there is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome" (p. 11). Thus, the inquiry does not find an end but is taken up by subsequent researchers, just as

my curiosities have led me to the rhizome I explore. So, as I attune myself to the plurality of text, and include Leander and Sheehy's (2004) positioning of spatial affect as text, I do so recognizing that, as my research rhizome grows, new text forms might emerge from my experience, and the rhizome, alive to possibility, may well rupture and resume its tangential nomadism. Therefore, in a look back to MacNaughton's (2005) suggestion that rhizome researchers might begin by generating and/or locating texts, I propose that the kinds of texts I might locate from my research are characterized by both plurality and potentiality.

Rhizomatic Function – Generating Text

Just as it is essential for me to be open to possibility as I locate text, generating text requires a similar openness. Although MacNaughton (2005) offers just one example of a text an educator could generate (an interview with a child), I consider multiple examples from three relational categories – teacher-student, student-student, and student-self. In keeping with earlier emphases on plurality and potentiality, the examples I submit here arise out of having engaged with the research related to the multimodal nature of text, as well as from my experience in the secondary ELA classroom. As such, these examples are meant to clarify the kinds of texts I wish to generate rather than to narrow possibilities for text production. Specifically, I envision texts that facilitate discourse between teachers and students, students and students, and students and self. Generating text between teachers and students might take the form of interviews, conferences, or the physical arrangement of the learning environment. I might generate text between students as I invite them to peer review, edit, and revise, or as I engage them in Socratic seminar

where teacher voice is decentered and students are invited to moderate their own inquiry. Generating texts that engage students in discourse with self can take the form of graphic organizers, journal prompts, or other metacognitive activities that encourage students to reflect on self, the impact of self on constructing meaning, and the possibilities for enlarging fields of meaning. In the metacognition, students acknowledge the identity positions from which they approach text, and can be invited to explore how their meaning-making system might influence their responses to, as well as their productions of text.

Rhizomatic Function – Interrogating Text

In a nod to Barthes (1986), Honan (2007) affirms that "research must constitute a critique" (p. 532). The texts I bring to the research assemblage, therefore, having been defined, located, and/or generated, will provide points of entry to interrogation whereby I ask "questions that push issues of equity to the fore and locate [my] own understandings of the text at present" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 131) Whether my texts are alphabetic, visual, acoustic, relational, gestural, or spatial, an inquiry ought to work to unearth how power is distributed within the text, and how those texts privilege some voices over others. Masny (2016) characterizes this process as a palpation of data that invites divergent potentialities. These divergences stem from the interrogative act, and serve as expressions of deterritorialization. Enacting research that deterritorializes requires me to cultivate what Clark and Parsons (2013) describe as an enlarging awareness of "'all' those being researched and 'all' the information being gathered (. . .) [so that we might] problematize the status quo by asking hard questions about what is happening that deflate

educational hegemonies" (p. 40). In this way, I critique the regimes of truth at work in the

research assemblage, and that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) claim are at the heart of

inequity. In a description of the interrogative act that focuses on its benefits rather than its

tendency to elicit offense, Clark and Parsons (2013) speak of the beauty of critique when

they suggest that, in the educative context, critique "seeks to enhance educational

flourishing by working against systems that can resort, if allowed, to power brokerage"

(p. 42). In this educative context, there is a danger of restratification, or arborescent

thinking, when we fail to engage fully in interrogating texts that uphold the regimes of

truth that rely on the existence of an Other to subsist.

Rhizomatic Function – Juxtaposing Text

Juxtaposing texts within the research assemblage becomes particularly exciting

when rhizome researchers fully embrace nomadism. MacNaughton (2005) conceives of

nomadism as a breaking and crossing of borders that limit us to the texts to which we

would normally refer (and defer) within a particular discursive frame. Masny (2016)

argues in favour of this process when she reminds us that within the rhizome, researchers

are not bound by the texts they generate, but are encouraged to fully embrace the reality

that "when thinking happens, it produces questions, concept creation, and new directions

for thought" (p. 43). These new directions are meant to lead us outside fixed meaning-

making frames that will tend to "resemble that which was before rather than re-envision

something new" (Clark & Parsons, 2013, p. 40). In their work on mapping literacy

spaces, Leander and Wells Rowe (2006) echo this emphasis on the novel, claiming that,

in ways other methodologies do not, rhizoanalysis "pushes us to emphasize the

unexpected – the surprises produced in multimodal and multispatial relationships" (p. 435). The element of surprise is one that arises out of MacNaughton's (2005) work as well, for she describes the juxtaposition of text as a process that frees researchers to traipse through the textual wilderness, seeking out constructions of meaning that can then be placed "in the middle of [their] own texts [in order to] see what they 'do' to each other that surprises [them]" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 133). In my work, I intend to seek out surprises and locate texts by reaching beyond the prescriptive borders of the classroom, the curriculum document, and other discourses to which I am expected and inclined to refer. Placing these texts in the 'middle' of others within the rhizome will shed light on how they speak to each other and how I might give voice to those messages. In doing so, I hope to join Honan (2007), who speaks of her own surprises when she tells of beginning her research with a view of her texts as a tapestry that she might carefully unpick. As a result of moving through the rhizomatic process, however, she "began to think of these discursive systems as plateaus, in that they are particular assemblages of meaning that inform others and each other and only make sense when read within and against each other" (p. 536).

<div align="center">**Defining Bricolage**</div>

In his book, *The Savage Mind*, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968) describes that bricolage is a generative process taken up by crafts-people, and from which artifacts emerge. He explains that these crafts-people, or *bricoleurs*, construct their artifacts from the means and the materials at hand, but positions the notion of bricolage within an anthropological context by drawing our attention to the ways culture is constructed

through bricolage, as well as how culture is itself an assemblage that is eclectic and multiple. Drawing from Lévi-Strauss's reflection on bricolage, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) move the term into educational discourse by giving it explicit attention in their volume on qualitative research. In their discussion, Denzin and Lincoln enlarge our understanding of bricolage by emphasizing the plurality the approach invites. To illustrate this plurality, Denzin and Lincoln cast the researcher as "a maker of quilts" (p. 4), whose work results in "a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 4). Kincheloe and Berry's (2004) work with bricolage in educational research is ongoing, and Kincheloe speaks of Denzin and Lincoln's commentary about bricolage as a compelling invitation to foreground the methodology and "push it to the next conceptual level" (p. ix). He argues that as the bricolage takes shape, the bricoleur must "understand that researchers' interaction with the objects of their inquiries is always complicated, mercurial, unpredictable and, of course, complex" (p. 3). This complexity does not carry with it the idea that bricolage has no structure, however, and Berry (2004) tackles this misconception by clarifying that bricolage does indeed have structure that "works inwardly, playfully, complexly, and rigorously" (p. 103). She suggests that instead of feeling overwhelmed by the lack of linearity and explicit directions, beginning bricoleurs ought to embrace the plurality of "perspectives, readings, structures, processes, discourses, theories, methods, genres and so forth. The permutations and combinations are unlimited but not impossible to engage" (p. 107).

That bricolage is attuned to complexity is one reason for its particular utility in the context of education. Matt Rogers' (2012) view of bricolage is instructive in this regard for he suggests that bricolage can be "considered a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry" (p. 1). For Wibberley (2012), the critical nature of bricolage research is what compelled him to make account of his growing acceptance of the approach. Because he shares from a personal platform, I find Wibberley's insights compelling, particularly as he reveals his initial skepticism of bricolage as a legitimate research methodology. He tells of how PhD students under his supervision were "increasingly looking beyond the more standard traditions of quantitative and qualitative study design" (p. 1) and makes account of "getting to grips" (p. 1) with bricolage, ultimately taking the view proposed by Green (2018) who argues that "adhering stringently to one research paradigm limits adaptability by dictating the evolution of the study as opposed to allowing data to point to pathways for exploration" (para. 2).

Bricolage in Educational Research

In work that focuses on bricolage in educational research, Guatam and Lowery (2017) articulate the merits of critical pedagogical bricolage as an approach to teaching and learning that provides opportunity for reflection in both the academic and educative spaces we occupy. As I consider the discipline of reflection, Green (2018) reminds me that the purposeful commingling of my researcher and educator selves requires a commensurate capacity for reflection. Educational research, after all, is "indeed sensitive, complex, and often messy" (Green, 2018, para. 3). Mahlomaholo (2014) suggests that bricolage addresses this messiness when he explains the approach is a "multi-layered and multi-

perspective research approach, conducted by . . . researchers in collaboration with participants who emerge from the research process as co-researchers" (p. 1). As she examines the efficacy of bricolage in her doctoral study, McLean (2008) makes a similar case for the participant/student co-researcher in her work, and underscores the need for dissolving hierarchy in research as it limits data generating possibilities and meaningful findings.

Defining Autoethnography

As the research assemblage becomes, I would be wise to consider that once unimagined knowledges of my self are becoming along with it, holding space within the assemblage at the same time as being shaped by it. In order to negotiate the seeming contradiction of having influence on, but also being influenced by the research act, I take up autoethnography wherein "dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self consciousness are featured, [and] are dialectically revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts, and language" (Ellis, 1999, p. 673). In this way, autoethnography is an approach that is complementary to bricolage as is evident in Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) suggestion that "the methodological bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection" (p. 6). Ellis (1999) warns that autoethnography demands a commitment to self-questioning that can be extremely difficult to enter into, let alone sustain. Reed-Danahay (2009) echoes this sentiment when she clarifies that autoethnography is a form of writing that "depends on an ethnographer's capacities for observation and sensibilities of empathy, reflexivity, and critique" (p. 43). Although her definition of autoethnography limits the

approach to alphabetic texts, I find her characterization of autoethnography instructive, and suggest that the rigorous reflexivity of which she speaks is both requisite and reward.

Like bricolage, the origins of the term autoethnography have anthropological roots, having been introduced by David Hayano in 1979. Wolcott (2004) explains that, as Hayano used the term, autoethnography "simply described conducting research as a true insider" (p. 98). Because reflexive and introspective accounts resist refutation, the insider narrative wields peculiar power in any arena, research or otherwise. For this reason, as I take up a critical personal narrative, I do so recognizing that I do not simply spin a yarn; rather, I thread a tapestry, a texture, a text, which is at once, being made, at the same time as it is unmaking the imprints of inequity on the social fabric of our time.

Autoethnography in Educational Research

In an exploratory piece that seeks to foreground autoethnography as a transformative research paradigm, Qutoshi (2015) suggests that the reflexivity at the core of the approach mobilizes its potential for reforming "inequitable situations, unproductive practices, inhuman beliefs, rigid notions and canonical ways of doing things" (p. 162). Lea Ticozzi (2016) employs just such an approach in her work with English language learners in a New York City international high school. In a courageously vulnerable critique of her own practice, Ticozzi tells of how embodiment through the techniques of drama provided a means by which the experience of immigration could be normalized for adolescent students. Ticozzi's use of critical personal narrative demonstrates its utility in the sphere of continued teacher training for she situates her account as both reflective as well as instructive. Although an autoethnography in its own right, Ticozzi could have

gone further by pointing out that in their embodiments, her students were, themselves, engaging in autoethnography as they allowed their bodies to gesture toward their truths. In a work that attends to this irony, Valerie-Lee Chapman (2004) offers suggestions accompanied by detailed explanations for the use of autoethnographic approaches in the classroom, all mobilized by critical personal narrative. It is this kind of internal and external structural congruence that I seek in my work and to which Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) attend in their work toward "fitting the methodology with the research" (p. 17).

Toward a Rationale for Autoethnographic "Rhizolage"

To offer rationale that considers rhizoanalysis, bricolage, and autoethnography in discussions distinct from each other would be to contravene my commitment to the congruence I describe above. For this reason, I revisit my earlier account outlining the process by which I have arrived at a reflexive approach to my work. From my first experiences with study in this program, I have been confronted with my own will to truth, and have been challenged to abandon the ways I have conceived of knowledge, research, researcher, researched, and have even recast myself within the research site alongside the data sources I consider in my emerging work of bricolage. As I negotiate these peripheral and interior experiences of my research, I am compelled toward a rhizomatic bricolage that begins with a focus on two key elements of bricolage: multiplicity (as it relates to the plurality of the assemblage) and possibility (as it relates to what constitutes the assemblage). As I consider the multiple, I recognize that the first part of the rhizoanalytic process (locating/generating texts) could certainly be instructive as I take up my role as

bricoleur. For in bricolage, my texts or "data fragments" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 122) are indeed multiple, and become apparent as I work to situate canonical text within a discourse that disrupts societal and personal oppressions. As in McLean's (2008) work with bricolage, these texts could take the shape of student and teacher journals, class discussions, materials I've developed and/or could develop, and transcriptions of teacher-learner and/or learner-learner conferences. Along with McLean's research, I join Kathleen Berry (2004) in her discussion of the bricoleur as one who "generates knowledge that is used for social action that transforms grand narratives and discourses" (p. 106).

Whereas the term bricolage refers to "crafts people who creatively use materials left over from other projects to construct new artifacts" (Rogers, 2012, p. 3), being rhizomatic carries with it the exciting challenge of being open to what is possible, seeking out new materials, ones that are beyond the researcher at starting, rather than ones that are "at hand" as Rogers describes. As I move through this variance between the two processes, though, I am left with the belief that those materials that are "left over from other projects" could indeed be the ones that we need to seek out. So while my aim is to include data sources such as my own reflections on classroom processes and student engagement as well as past, present, and future materials that have had or will have influence on my continued practice, what is "at hand" will certainly depend on my situatedness, one that is, after all, 'becoming'. If I am to situate my researcher self as nomadic, my nomadism offers me many possibilities for what materials might be "at hand". In this way, when Leander and Wells Rowe (2006) discuss affective intensity, it

seems that when these bodies/texts come into contact through the work of the bricoleur, knowledges that were once unimagined, can be ushered into the process of becoming by virtue of the affect texts/bodies/discourses have on one another.

That I am part of the assemblage created by these texts/bodies/discourses is what urges me toward autoethnographic narrative, and in doing so, I turn to Hagar Akua Prah (2016), who reiterates that in the analytic context, narrative exploration "personalizes the research [so that it becomes] an invitation to the reader to feel authentically, think critically, and act responsibly to contribute to more inclusive education" (p. 30). Beyond this, I take up autoethnography as an act of resistance against the structures that silence female voices in the academy and beyond (Burman, 2016). As she discusses in her work, self-representation has a particularly re-humanizing effect, one that seems appropriate for this project, as it has invited me to consider notions of the self, and of becoming. Diaz (2010) joins Burman insomuch as she encourages the feminist researcher to embrace the liminality of their position, the (dis)location that allows for the desirable blurring of research subject and object, and the data generating possibilities that might arise from this reflexive stance.

Certainly, narrative expression resonates with me in ways I am still (appropriately) discovering. At the heart of this discovering is my growing conviction that to inhabit the autoethnographic is to inhabit the vulnerable, the revelatory, and the electric spaces that challenge, change, and charge us for a continued embodiment of an ever-becoming self. In this way, I find myself in profound agreement with what Carolyn Ellis (1999) encourages researchers to consider as we take up our craft: "as long as you

realize it's a not a project you'll ever complete or "get right"; instead, you strive to get it contoured and nuanced in a meaningful way" (p. 675). As daunting as it may seem to employ a methodology that may never allow my work to reach a stopping point, I revisit the notion of becoming that I have applied to my self, to my students, and to my classroom, and I acknowledge that I must also allow for my work to become.

Data Gathering

As this research takes shape, I seek to understand how the teaching of *Macbeth* in a secondary English Language Arts classroom might act as an entry point for disrupting hegemonic values. For this study, I gathered data from a variety of sources. First, I engaged in a critical reading of *Macbeth*, making particular note of the ways in which the text reinforces heteropatriarchal values. Next, I explored New Brunswick's English Language Arts curriculum document for grades 9 – 12 for content related to teaching literary texts. I also considered the ways in which the document instructs teachers in their design of critical literacy experiences for students. Finally, I reflected on my own instructional design, how I have facilitated critical inquiry, and how I might cultivate an ever-becoming praxis that invites learners to reflect on and respond to the ways in which power imbalances are at work in text, in self, and in society.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began with a discussion of rhizoanalysis and drew on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to explicate rhizomatic inquiry, lines of flight, and the ever - becoming character of the research rhizome. Following this, I have turned to the work of Honan (2007), Masny (2016), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), and Clark and Parsons (2013)

47

for greater understanding of rhizoanalysis, and to Leander and Sheehy (2004), Leander and Wells Rowe (2006), and Hagood (2009) for examples of rhizomatic methodology applied specifically to ELA spaces. In discussion related to bricolage, I have explored the origins and function of the methodology by engaging with the work of Kincheloe and Berry (2004) and then looked to McLean (2008), Rogers (2012), Guatam and Lowery (2017), Green (2018), Wibberley (2012), and Mahlomaholo (2014) to flesh out the character of bricolage further. Next, I considered the work of Carolyn Ellis (1999) in a discussion of autoethnography and, in order to enlarge my understanding, I reflected on scholarship by Prah (2016), Reed-Danahay (2009), Chapman (2004), Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008), Qutoshi (2015), Ticozzi (2016) and Wolcott (2004). I end this chapter by providing a rationale my methodological approach followed by a description of my data gathering techniques. In the next chapter, I describe the project's findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings: Enacting the Research

In this chapter, I explore how the teaching of *Macbeth* in a secondary English Language Arts classroom might act as an entry point for disrupting the kind of hegemonic values that marginalize based on gender, class, and cultural affiliation. Specifically, I ask how I might encourage learners to engage in a critical reflection of *Macbeth* that exposes unequal relations of power at work within the text, particularly as they relate to social and gendered privilege the likes of which is evident in classism and heteropatriarchy. Secondly, I seek to understand how I might encourage learners to apply this critical skill in ways that disrupt normative ideologies such as White and male social dominance, and that are at work within their experiences of self, and of society. In this chapter, I outline 1) my critical reading of *Macbeth*, 2) my critical exploration of Atlantic Canada's English Language Arts curriculum guide, as well as 3) my autoethnographic reflections on my own instructional design and experiences that have assisted me in answering the questions I pose above.

A Critical Reading of *Macbeth*

I begin this section with a critical look at *Macbeth* in order that I might chart a course through the text that demonstrates how the action of the play, revealed through setting, conflict, characterization, and elements of the tragic trope, have assisted me in answering the research questions this project poses. Specifically, I engage with the language of the text, accounting for the ways in which the play presents oppressions related to gender and social class. I follow this discussion with a consideration of the

teaching implications that arise out of this close reading of *Macbeth*, reflecting on my role as an educator who seeks to disrupt the master narratives made manifest both within and beyond this particular classroom text.

Complicating the classroom use of Shakespeare is the reality that, too often, in the "doing" of the text, traditional instructional approaches have failed to problematize the systems of oppression at work within the plays. As a result, learners engage with the literature in ways that do more to reproduce conditions of inequity than challenge them, simply by virtue of the fact that students are rewarded for regurgitating, rather than interrogating. Further, the fact that teachers often 'do' literature that "has been canonized in anthologies or recognized through established literary awards in part because they feel it will be safe from school or parental censure" (Holloway, 2009, p. 9), points to the near universal acceptance of the paternalistic determination of texts paramount to our personal and social 'success'. In response to these dilemmas, I consider the action of the play from a vantage point that includes intersectional feminism (Berry, 2010) as well as the Marxist leanings of post structural reflection (MacNaughton, 2005). What follows then, is a consideration of how unequal relations of power are at work within the play as well as how these imbalances of power find expression through social, gendered, and patriarchal privilege.

Textual Considerations

That the play opens on a windy heath in the midst of a civil war in Scotland is our first indication that conflict will power much of the narrative. Add to this the presence of scheming witches who manipulate people for entertainment, and strife becomes even

more evident as a driving force of the play. Macbeth, the object of the witches'

supernatural sport, enjoys high ranking status within his king's command, and as he and

his companion and fellow general, Banquo, make their way back to King Duncan's camp,

they are met by a trio of witches who prophesy that Macbeth will be thane of Cawdor,

and king of Scotland. Consumed by ambition, and influenced by Lady Macbeth's

reproachful upbraidings, Macbeth acts on his desires and commits regicide to speed his

fate, casting him headlong into the tragic trope that ultimately ends in his demise.

It is clear, then, that locating *Macbeth* within a discussion of privilege, power, and

the social oppressions that result from them is no toilsome task, such as the play is rife

with conflict and accompanying toxicities. In taking up the conversation, though, I return

to the witches as an explanation for the introduction of conflict to the play. Certainly, the

witches' prophecies, conjurings, and equivocations are seductively inflammatory. A look

to the opening battle scene makes clear, however, that the action of the play is *born* out of

discord, as we see rebel generals and thanes taking up arms against their King, all, as far

as we can tell, without the interference of the witches. The weird sisters are, in fact, quite

detached from the situation as they discuss the "hurly-burly" (I.i.3), and determine that

their meeting with Macbeth will take place "when the battle's lost and won" (I.i.4). The

trochaic utterances of the entire first scene are marked by this decided aloofness from the

battle itself because, frankly, the "black and midnight hags" (IV.i.48) are not aligned with

humanity at all, be it the winning or losing side. A return to the impassioned human

conflict, however, makes evident a culture of unrest, as high-ranking Scots attempt to

topple a government believed to be oppressive. In this revolutionary act, even if those

contending for an improvement to their circumstances are fueled by ambition alone,

attempts to do so would nonetheless point to Marx's notion of class consciousness

resulting in civil strife (San Juan Jr., 2005). But in the aftermath of this strife, praise is

lavished on Macbeth, vanquisher of enemies, brandisher of steel; and at once, spectators

are invited into a culture of clash wherein contestations of the power differential are

soundly dismissed by way of evisceration and beheadings. Titles once worn by rebels are

swiftly reallocated to those considered trustworthy, and Macbeth is lauded as he "carves

out his passage" (I.ii.19) with the swing of his sword.

While a look to Macbeth's fierce defence of the regency in the opening scenes can

tend to complicate the ensuing encounter with the witches and its corollary assassination

plot, I turn to the trio that invites Macbeth into an awareness of his subject position in

ways that determine the path of the tragic trope. Here, the text is ripe for shaking: the

weird sisters plant the mythology of privilege within Macbeth's consciousness and while

he grows aware of his lack, he vacates the identity of a decorated war hero and feudal

lord/thane in his king's employ to the extent that he would consider regicide. It warrants

noting that Banquo, not to be dismissed, solicits his own prophecies from the witches,

and by contrast, the fate assigned to him eclipses the one bestowed upon Macbeth. In the

classroom, students might work at unpacking this incongruity, as well as consider that in

the case of Macbeth, the plurality of identity should figure prominently in an

interrogation of his murderous ambition. In the spirit of this interrogation, I might discuss

what Wright (1989) describes as a contradictory location; that is, Macbeth inhabits an

identity wherein he is "simultaneously dominator and dominated" (p. 7), a participant in, as well as a party to, the oppressive structures at work within his world.

It is precisely this participation in systems that oppress that works to anesthetize us to the harms inherent in the clamour for power. And although Johnson (2006) submits that people make privilege "happen through what they *do* or *don't do* in relation to others" (p.54, emphasis added), I would go further to make clear that what is *said* or *not said* in relation to others has peculiar rhetorical power in its own right. Despite its incomplete view of text, even the Atlantic Canada ELA curriculum guide (1998) grants that one of the primary ways that deficit constructions of identity, gender, and culture manifest is through language. Hegemonic transmissions, then, become reliant on insular experiences of society wherein word and deed, both recursively executed, activate and perpetuate the myth of supremacy. This is certainly the case for Macbeth, who, once the witches confer his dominance upon him, believes so strongly in his entitlement to the throne that he admits to yielding to "that horrid suggestion which doth unfix [his] hair and makes [his] seated heart knock at [his] ribs" (I.iii.135-6). The audience discovers, though, that by the time he has returned home to Inverness, he has withdrawn from supernatural solicitings, and announces to Lady Macbeth that he "will proceed no further in this business" (I.vii.31). Without the witches in his ear, Macbeth's lack no longer reverberates, because the mythology of his privilege is dependent upon a consciousness that has been, and remains, aware of difference.

In the spirit of this awareness, Macbeth, in an effort to persuade the murderers to kill Banquo, gives voice to a fiction of his own making – that Banquo is responsible for

53

the murderers' experience of being "so under fortune" (III.i.77). From the beginning of his exchange with the pair, Macbeth demonstrates his acquaintance with rhetorical power by drawing attention to the murderers' low social rank and recent financial ruin, as though he were familiar with how being acquainted with such might create the conditions for murder. He begins by asking if they have "considered of [his] speeches" (III.i.75), which we are to assume were planted and left to germinate in the hearers until this meeting. The murderers, in the interim, have become convinced that Banquo is to blame for their hapless state and they are effectively made conscious of that state, by all estimations, an undesirable one. That Macbeth appeals to the pairs' appetite for social mobility should not surprise us, though; it is a tactic, after all, to which he himself has fallen prey, but one that highlights the particular power that discourse exerts.

The disruption of utterance holds import for this discussion as well. There is a point at which Macbeth dismisses his wife from the planning and execution of his crimes, and when his killing spree has reached as far as his noble friend Banquo, Macbeth falters in his belief that fate is his champion. Without Lady Macbeth "pour[ing] [her] spirits in [his] ear" (I.v.26), Macbeth purposes that "[He] will tomorrow . . . to the weird sisters: more shall they speak" (III.iv.131- 133). Here, his reliance on pronouncement is clear. But what Macbeth does not anticipate is the sisters' hypnotic equivocation that reinscribes a cherished fiction at the same time as it underwrites the annihilation of the self that chooses to inhabit the narrative. Despite this, Macbeth remains steady on his path to self-destruction toward a demise that cannot be avoided.

Next, I return to the marital discord of earlier scenes as evidence that, having abandoned his initial plans to kill Duncan, Macbeth is compelled to take them up afresh subsequent to an exchange with his "dearest partner of greatness" (I.v.11). Lady Macbeth, in diction that is fodder for the "enduring discourse linking femininity, sexuality, and evil" (Rooks, 2009, p. 151), further complicates Macbeth's already contradictory identity location by situating gender oppression as a counterpoint to that of class. And while Macbeth moves to dismiss his wife's challenges of his courage, he is ultimately undone by her emasculatory tirade, so much so that the ensuing action of the play centers the inhabiting and performance of gender as paramount to its well-reasoned analysis. Berquist (2015) underscores the point by suggesting that Macbeth rejects the moral structure forbidding the murder of Duncan not because of his tragic flaw at all, but because of a "flawed understanding of manliness" (p. 110), the disrupting of which has considerable instructional merit.

It turns out that Macbeth isn't the only one with a flawed understanding of masculinity, however, and students are often gleefully rapt as teachers, adept at reinscription, point out instance after instance of what is typically understood as gender reversal and incongruity. Banquo, often thought of as one of the most honourable in the play, comments on the witches' beards, clearly grappling with the sisters' defiance of gender normativity. Lady Macbeth, for her part, crowns masculinity as absolute power when she calls on spirits to unsex her, an invocation we can interpret as a wish to be masculine in the sense that Lady Macbeth understands masculinity. Her position is made clear when she petitions these supernatural forces to "come to [her] woman's breasts and

take [her] milk for gall" (I.v.47), and "to make thick [her] blood and stop up the access and passage to remorse" (I.v.43-44) that may prevent her from acting on the evil deeds she imagines to be necessary in order to see Macbeth take the crown. The specific reference to women's breasts as well as to blood can only be interpreted as Lady Macbeth's belief that the nourishing function of the breasts as well as that of the menstrual process will leave her without the kind of cruelty necessary for murder. That she follows this request with an appeal to be filled with cruelty is evidence of Lady Macbeth's enduring view of the kind of toxic masculinity that informs her exchanges with Macbeth throughout the play. Her petition, then, is to be divested of the femininity she associates with these two features of a person's anatomy, rendering visible the play's view of the "unsuitability of women for political power, [in that] her attempts to seize it can only be seen as monstrous" (Spivack, 2008, p. 79). While it is true that she couldn't be more invested in the belief that to be dominant is to be degenerate, the fact that she aligns degeneracy with masculinity cannot go unnoticed in the critical classroom. Neither can her accusations of Macbeth's being "unmann'd in folly" (III.iv.72) at the sight of Banquo's ghost, nor her blistering contempt voiced in the question that holds Macbeth hostage: "are you a man?" (III.iv.57).

Consider, lastly, that the ultimate undoing of Macbeth can only be performed by MacDuff, himself an embodiment of multiple identity locations, if not at least with respect to gender. In his entreaties for Scotland's well-being to Duncan's appointed successor, MacDuff paints a dismal nation telling of how "each new morn new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face, that it resounds as if it felt

with Scotland, and yell'd out like syllable of dolour" (IV.iii.5-9). Here, MacDuff departs from the play's assumption of the gender binary and depiction of "enforced gender and sexual dualism, labelling, and fixed categorization" (Elliott, 2016, p. 50), and does so by conflating the play's presumptions of male and female characteristics. By showing himself to be moved by the oppressions perpetrated by Macbeth's tyrannous rule, a behaviour the play has classified as feminine, we see how MacDuff performs an identity that is marked by duality in its own right. Shining light on this kind of non-normative manifestation of gender is precisely what Valocchi (2005) believes to be the aim of a queer and critical analysis. In the spirit of queering, we might note that in the same conversation with Malcolm, MacDuff lauds the King of England for extending similar compassion to those who have fallen victim to disease, going so far as to offer nurturance and, in some cases, cure. It is without a doubt that these androgynous representations of the biologically male carry peculiar import as we turn to MacDuff's reaction to learning that his wife and children have been murdered by order of the villainous Macbeth. Upon hearing, he interrupts Malcolm's instruction to "dispute it like a man" (IV.iii.220), and counters the kind of violent and vengeful masculinity expected of him by saying, "But I must also feel it as a man" (IV.iii.221), after which he occupies a space for grief and vulnerability.

Teaching Considerations

An examination of exchanges such as these should direct students to the misalignment of socially constructed femininity to females, and masculinity to males as profoundly problematic. A starting place might be for learners to consider that gender

oppression exists in collusion with dominance, the inextricability of one from the other, theoretically impossible. Valocchi (2005) simply states that the alignment noted here is ideological and hence, a source of power. But in efforts to de-weaponize such sharply defined reductive binaries, teachers must require students of Shakespeare to interrogate them, in moves *away* from reification, and *toward* a queering of spaces, cognitive and material. In this case, the English Language Arts classroom is where learners can be invited to "queer perspectives and challenge the dominant discourses of sexuality and gender" (Elliott, 2005, p. 50) that they encounter in text.

However the audience might perceive our tragic hero, there is no doubt that as spectators, we are flung headlong into a trope that invites us to "become" Macbeth. The tragic narrative, after all, manufactures catharsis, and few would refute that pathos is required in order to achieve this purification of emotional and spiritual angst. On this point, though, Berquist (2015) wholly invalidates *Macbeth*'s status as tragic drama by virtue of the fact that to "become" Macbeth would be "highly perverse" (p.115), seeing as the audience would be "rooting for injustice, and the pity would be a wicked form of self-pity" (p. 115).

The function of pathos in Shakespearean tragedy suggests, however, that we do, indeed, become Macbeth, precisely as he participates in his own "unbecoming." By reflecting on this "unbecoming," students of Shakespeare can be directed to focus on Macbeth's estrangement from himself as he makes decisions that pull him further and further from human morality. And within this discussion, it is right that there be space created for dialogue about how Macbeth has found himself to be both destroyer, and

58

destroyed, because such contrastive examinations work to illuminate the intersectional nature of privilege as well as how we can be both victim to, and complicit in those systems. This being the case, I consider that in the character of Macbeth, Shakespeare creates a mimetic resemblance of society itself that warrants an exploration of the conditions that make Macbeth's self-destruction possible since inquiry here might expose the ways in which hegemonic values turn some members of society against each other, and some against ourselves. A beginning may be to consider some of the clarities Melvin Seeman (1959) offers as he reframes Marx's theory of alienation in more theoretical terms. Briefly, this theory describes the tendency for people to become estranged from themselves as a result of their participation in a stratified social system. In the article, Seeman cites Glazer, who puts forward the notion that estrangement from the self might be best understood in contrastive terms, suggesting that unalienated persons engage in "'spontaneous acts of work and play which are their own reward'" (as cited in Seeman, 1959, p. 790). Macbeth, while not yet undivided from himself, enacts this phenomenon when, in response to Duncan's promises of compensation for military victories, he says, "the service and the loyalty I owe, in doing it, pays itself" (I.iv.22-23). What follows, after a killing spree of epic proportions, however, is the degeneration of a character we discover has become separate from himself due to the conflation of ambition and fiction in his consciousness. The transmutation is more than evident in an exchange between the royal couple when, after Lady Macbeth chastises her husband for his lack of decorum at the banquet they are hosting, he becomes the portrait of self-estrangement, saying to his wife, "You make me strange even to the disposition that I owe" (III.iv.111-112). This

dislocated self results in Macbeth's determination that life is meaningless, a sentiment

best observed when he explains that he considers existence as "a tale told by an idiot, full

of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (V.v.26-28). Seeman (1959) explains that this

nihilistic stance is a product of "high alienation" (p.786), and this particular variety of

meaninglessness refers to an individual's sense of understanding the events in which they

are engaged. The process renders a person effectively unable to act with insight because

they "cannot predict with confidence the consequences of acting on a given belief" (p.

786), a process that is wholly fulfilled in the character of Macbeth.

Whether the witches are responsible for activating this process by breathing the

fiction into Macbeth's consciousness becomes a lesser point to that of the fiction itself,

although a feminist reading directs me toward an inquiry of the alignment of (mostly)

feminine entities with such utter destruction. What becomes evident is that oppression

requires fiction commingled with a desire to embrace fiction. Banquo, having no such

desire, maintains his moral high ground despite being presented with statements

surpassing even those promises offered to Macbeth. And as he reflects on Macbeth's

newly conferred title, he admits that he fears his friend has "playd'st most foully for't"

(III.i.3). Here, Banquo embodies a counterstory that is worth noting for, in this last of his

soliloquies, he positions himself as part of the outgroup, taking up an antithetical

narrative "aimed to subvert the reality of the dominant group" (Berry, 2010, p. 25). If

teachers of literature are to initiate this kind of resistance to status quo constructions of

privilege, we must do more than Banquo, however, whose silence on the matter preserves

the master narrative. We must also engage in critical literary analysis, recognizing that

reading is, as Bloome (1993) suggests, "a social and cultural event, rather than simply an interaction between a reader and a text" (p. 109). For this reason, I choose to resist master narratives by looking deeper, first into curricula, as I discuss in the section that follows, and then, by interrogating my own teaching practices in the subsequent section.

A Critical Exploration of the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts* Curriculum Guide for Grades 10 -12

In this section, I explore the Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum for grades 10 – 12 (EECD, 1998), driven by a desire to understand how the guide contributes to my growing awareness of how I might assist learners in their own considerations and disruptions of text, both within and beyond the classroom. I begin by reflecting on the curriculum document's introductory content which outlines the core values from which the guide's suggestions for instructional design and delivery take shape. Next, I clarify my definitions of text and critical literacy as I engage with the document's views of both such as they emerge from the guide's section on the role of critical literacy in the ELA classroom.

A meaningful exploration of the ELA curriculum document begins with a consideration of the values that frame it, outlined in the document's prefatory notes. Here, the document identifies the guiding principles of its program design and components, which, taken together, settle into three common themes: inclusivity, diversity, and community (EECD, 1998, p. 177). Because the document's introductory content explicitly refers to instructional design and delivery that attends to gender

61

inclusivity, recognizing and valuing the diversity of students, establishing community, meeting the needs of, and engaging all students, as well as valuing social and cultural diversity, the potential for the document to speak back to the questions I pose for this project is more than evident. Whereas my first research question asks how I might encourage learners to consider and disrupt sexism, oppressive social hierarchies, and patriarchy within texts, I find, even in the curriculum document's context-setting materials, an alignment with my own instructional aims to the extent that by virtue of how it frames itself as a text, the document positions itself as a valuable tool for the kind of critical pedagogy that invites learners to challenge the regimes of truth Foucault discusses in his work (MacNaughton, 2004, p. 3). This finding is as welcome as it is surprising, given that a walk through the English Language Arts wing in my school would reveal a general lack of engagement in deconstructing and/or resisting oppressive ideologies in the classroom. To the contrary, what I have observed in these spaces is an instructional focus that centers mainly on the analysis of print text. Beyond this, the values outlined in this preliminary section such as meeting the needs of all students (p. 3), a gender inclusive curriculum (p. 4), social and cultural diversity (p. 5), engaging all students (p. 8), and establishing community (p. 10) presume a movement outward from textual to lived experience to the extent that the work educators do to "acknowledge the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, and culture shape particular ways of viewing and knowing the world" (p. 12) is predicated on the values the curriculum document understands as fundamental to its implementation. After all, if educators are to model the valuing of inclusivity, diversity, and community within their ELA classrooms, itself a

pedagogy of disruption, it follows that disruptive approaches to text would animate

learners' disruptions of unequal power relations at work within their world.

In addition to the ways in which the curriculum document foregrounds inclusivity,

diversity, and community as values that should guide instructional design and delivery (p.

2), its writers offer explicit discussion of the role of critical literacy in a section that

clarifies the term as well as outlines the ways in which critical literacy can be encouraged

and applied to a multiplicity of text forms. Specifically, the document suggests that

educators take up a view of critical literacy that is multifaceted. Critical literacy, then, is

to be considered as "an awareness of language as an integral part of social relations" (p.

177) as well as an interrogative exercise, a way of "investigating how forms of language

construct and are constructed" (p. 177) by all manner of external influences.

Curiously, this introductory portion of the segment suggests that in the work of

critical literacy, language is the object of our scrutiny, not text. A later reference to

language as a thing that is "constructed, used, and manipulated in powerful ways" (p.

177) fleshes out the document's position on language while remaining consistent with

this section's preliminary note on how critical literacy is a function of inspecting

language. Later in the section, however, we are met with additional commentary on the

notion of language, specifically that it is meant to be understood as a "powerful medium"

(p. 177), a means by which social awareness and cultural understanding are developed in

students. What is problematic here is that the writers of the document equivocate with

respect to their definition on language, first stating that it is the object of our scrutiny, and

that it is indeed, constructed. The statement that language is a powerful medium,

however, reduces language to a mechanism by which readers are influenced, not as an

object at all, but a vehicle by which objects are transported to the reader's experience.

The problem becomes more pronounced when, in its attempts at defining "text", the

document argues that "texts are crafted objects" (p. 177). It would seem that if ELA

curriculum writers define language as a construct, an object of scrutiny, language might

also be considered a "crafted object", making it a text form in its own right, according to

the document's own definitions of the two terms. It is problematic, then, that in this

section on the role of critical literacy in the ELA classroom, the document cites language

as the primary focus of a reader's examination at the same time as it does not position

language under the umbrella of text. And while this flaw could be overlooked as a hazard

of working with the subtleties of terminology, an egregious dichotomy between language

and text is made explicit when the document posits that evidence of unequal distributions

of power is "reflected in language and in texts" (p. 177). In light of the case I have made

for the multiplicity of text in earlier chapters of this work, I find the curriculum document

errs in its distillation of language from text, offering so incomplete a view of text that

ELA teachers seeking guidance from the document are impeded in their efforts toward

literacy, critical or otherwise.

This narrow conception of text further complicates a teacher's attempts at

fostering the kind of critical literacy presented in this section in so much as we observe an

enduring lack of clarity on the meaning of text in the document's later iterations. In

particular, this section of the guide suggests that students be given opportunity to "use

language to empower themselves and others" (p. 178) and that they should "critically

analyze and evaluate language" (p. 178). In earlier commentary, the guide clarifies language in disparate terms, and the first point above speaks to the understanding of language as a vehicle, a mode of transport by which a message is delivered. The second point, however, attends to the notion of language as construct, the message to be delivered. Here, the document suffers a logical failing of its own making as it advances an equivocal understanding of language that positions it as both means and matter.

Despite its narrow conception of text, the section on the role of critical literacy offers several clear responses to the ways in which students can be encouraged to examine and disrupt unequal relations of power at work within texts. Specifically, this two and a half page segment encourages teachers to provide opportunities for students to "examine the ways texts work to produce ideologies and identities" (p. 178) while also outlining ways in which teachers might invite students to consider how texts work to produce those ideologies and identities. Of note, is that this section on the role of critical literacy attends to the notion that ideologies and identities can be produced by way of text. Albeit a subtle omission, absent from this discussion is the mention of *re*production, that texts do more than simply produce ideology and identity; they also reify these ideologies and identities, each repetend reinforcing the next. Notwithstanding this oversight, the guide offers a valuable suggestion in proposing that learners explore ways "in which language and texts construct personal, social, and cultural identities" (p. 178) and to consider that those who craft text do so from locations that encompass elements of their personal, social, and cultural experience. That the curriculum points teachers to a consideration of positionality underscores its earlier emphasis on the value of inviting

students to appreciate that "meaning is constructed" (p. 177), and that meaning can be deconstructed, and then reconstructed differently. In this regard, the authors advocate for an understanding of text that calls on readers to adopt, resist, or adapt that text, an approach to text that should inform literacy instruction of any kind. In urging teachers to take situatedness into account, however, the guide claims that "speakers, writers, and producers of visual text are situated in particular contexts" (p. 178), thus revealing the document's persistently incomplete view of text by allowing for only vocal, print, and visual forms of text to the exclusion of spatial, relational, gestural, and acoustic text forms.

Despite its flawed understanding of text, the section on the role of critical literacy in high school ELA classrooms includes several key tenets of critical theory, not the least of which is its attention to the notion that "power is not shared equally in society" (p. 177). Here, the guide suggests that a recognition of societal imbalances of power is requisite to a learner's ability to "critically analyze and evaluate language" (p. 178), the kind of critical analysis that educators should hope to foster and observe in their students. In this way, the writers shed light on how learning experiences might extend beyond examining unequal relations of power within classroom texts, directing our attention to a number of considerations essential for the development of critical literacy, and thereby responding to the second of two questions that shape my work. In particular, the guide offers a response to the ways in which I might encourage learners to apply their critical skill to resist and redress the imbalances of power at work within their experiences of self and of society by recommending that ELA teachers invite students to "examine the issues

of power, privilege, social justice, and equity both within the learning community and beyond" (p. 178). Additionally, critical literacy is described as a tool that "equips learners with the capacities and understanding which are preconditions for effective citizenship" (p. 177), and as means by which students might "critique society and effect positive change" (p. 177). Evident here is the focus on texts outside the classroom experience, societal texts to which learners can apply the critical skill they have developed through their engagement with classroom texts. This section also places emphasis on a learner's examination of self, particularly when it suggests that they be invited to "reflect on their identities to examine those which give them membership of a dominant group and those which make them feel disempowered" (p. 178). Of the dozen suggestions meant to support teachers as they cultivate agency in their students, however, the document submits only one that departs from passive responses to social oppression. That students ought to reflect, explore, and examine the ways in which texts marginalize and subjugate is a reasonable expectation but only in so much as it is requisite to action, the likes of which is glimpsed in the guide's emphasis on having students "use language to empower themselves and others" (p. 178). In its attention to both self and society, this suggestion is the section's most clear singular response to the dual nature of my inquiry, but as a discussion devoted to the role of critical literacy in the high school ELA classroom, this section of the curriculum document, while acknowledging the significance of and need for redress, is woefully bereft of the guidance necessary to invite learners into disruptive agency that extends beyond the classroom.

A Critical Autoethnographic Reflection on Instructional Experience

67

In an attempt to make explicit the findings that have arisen from my teaching experiences, I begin here self-reflexively in order to clarify what I have found as it relates to my understanding of the kind of educator best positioned for inviting students into critical reflection of text, of society, and of self. I begin with considerations related to my role as a teacher because my understanding of such shapes the work described in the questions I pose, and, as I have looked to facilitate the kind of disruptive discourse my research questions describe, I have done so as both practitioner and participant. I have found, then, that essential to any instructional design or delivery meant to encourage students to engage in critical analysis is the guidance of an educator who brings a number of key understandings to her work. Among these, an understanding of self is vital, as is an understanding of students, of the learning environment, and of text. As they relate to these four elements, the research findings I outline here have emerged from recursive action, that is, I have allowed literature, practice, and reflection to inform ongoing engagements with literature, to shape instructional delivery more attuned to the ideas presented in that literature, and to assist me in responding purposefully to the reflections that arise from this iterative process. In this way, the bricolage I present here is an autoethnographic account of what has taken shape by way of post structural reflection in so much as I have and continue to generate, interrogate, juxtapose, and reconstruct the ways I conceive of the learning environment, of the learner, of text, and, most notably, of my self.

I have found that the learning environment is no less a text than the ones I outline elsewhere in this discussion, the awareness of which has assisted me in widening the path

for students to navigate textual terrain with greater ease. Learners gather in small clusters, for instance, the desks arranged in formations that turn students toward each other in an effort to communicate that the knowledge and skills they bring to the learning environment are relevant and meaningful. Beyond this, I have found that because learners bring sets of knowledge and skill that are diverse and multifaceted, critical engagement with text is supported by a teacher who conceives of the learning environment in fluid terms wherein peers have opportunity to interact with the various paradigms represented in the room. Taken together, the conceptions of the learning environment as text, and of the student as both learned and learner have proven to be a powerful combination, one that has assisted me in mobilizing the kind of critical engagement with text that this project explores.

In broad terms, and as I have discussed in Chapter Two in greater detail, an expansive notion of text is an essential foundation from which to build the scaffolding necessary for students to respond critically to text. Subscription to a view of text that accounts for its inherent multiplicity, especially as it relates to teaching Shakespearean drama, offers opportunities for learners to consider the kinds of gestural, spatial, relational, acoustic, and visual messages that are revealed through blocking choices, set design, portrayal of character, vocal delivery, and visual effects that make up the experience of a work of drama. As I have directed their attention to the layeredness of the medium, encouraging students to allow for the plurality built into the genre, they have been invited to consider how the play, *Macbeth,* produces, reinforces, resists, or reconstructs the hegemonic values at the heart of systemic inequity. My experience has

69

convinced me that an approach that does not allow for drama, be it classic or contemporary, to be anything more than an experience of print text is a spectacular failure, an approach I admit to espousing before my reflections on research and teaching practice delivered me to the conclusion that drama, in so much as it is a layered and elaborative experience, is multitextual, and not reducible to words on a page.

Inasmuch as my findings alight on views of the learning environment, the learner, and text, an appreciation of my self as educator has emerged alongside these findings, such as they are undeniably attuned to the ways in which I might conceive of my role within the learning environment, as it is manifested in relationship to learners, and as it pertains to my facilitation of critical encounters with text. In response to how I might encourage critical reflection within and beyond the classroom, I have come to understand my role as that of critical pedagogue, one who takes a view of the classroom as is encouraged by MacNaughton (2005) – a critically knowing community wherein the teacher is cast as a partner in knowing, and, equally, as a partner in learning. Further, I have come to understand myself as an educator who submits herself to a recursive process by which praxis is informed by learner feedback, by literature concerned with pedagogy, and by purposeful reflection on teaching practice and practitioner, all of which are antecedent to considerations related to instructional design and delivery and that I discuss below.

Having outlined the understandings precursory to the kind of instructional decision-making that engages learners in critical analysis of text, I turn to a discussion wherein I convey findings related to specific learning experiences I have designed and implemented

in my preparatory and explicit teaching of *Macbeth*. First among these instructional endeavours is an introduction to literary theory, a learning experience I have designed in order to support students in their ability to recognize their own postures toward text, and the possibility that there may be more than one way to construct meaning from text. To begin this work in literary criticism, I invite students into an experience of reader-response theory, an approach that proposes that meaning does not exist within text as a construct to be mined. Rather, it is in the interaction of reader with text that meaning is constructed, and all manner of meaning, as such, is valid (Tyson, 2006, p.169). As I facilitate learning experiences that direct students toward reader-response considerations of text, I have contended with the effects of a long-standing new critical approach to text that has been taken up by many of my students' previous teachers, who, from what I observe, persist in this posture. Because new criticism views an "individual literary work in isolation from other literature and from other cultural productions" (Tyson, 2006, p. 136), however, the new critical approach limits the reaches of text at the same time as it limits the potential for meaningful disruption of oppressions that may be evident within it. Beyond this, I find that students coming from textual experiences wherein new criticism has lit their path as they've navigated the texts to which their teachers have directed them, espouse an unsettling belief that an exercise in interpreting text is one that culminates in the teacher unveiling meaning that students could not otherwise construct.

To disrupt this expectation, I invite learners to bring their powers of interpretation to bear on an abstract visual text by simply asking them to decide what it means. As they have grappled with this work, student responses have revealed a profound discomfort

with the construction of meaning to the extent that each time I have offered this learning experience, my students have asked me if I would give them a hint, further direction, or if I would inspect their first attempts in hopes that my feedback might alleviate their discomfort with the power I had asked them to wield. As products of the new critical stance many of their English teachers have adopted, my students have consistently demonstrated that they are uncomfortable with power when I have suggested they take aim at text with the knowledges they embody. Despite this, it is my experience that once student responses have populated the learning space, textual evidence has been used to support constructions of meaning, and even after I have validated thoughtful and well-reasoned interpretations that differ widely, students invariably look to me and ask some version of: "so, what's the right answer?" when it appears the discussion is coming to a close. That students are uncomfortable as agents of their own learning, then, is an undeniable finding of my work, as is the need to dispel notions of the educator as the keeper of knowledge and of the students as receptacles to be filled. I find, therefore, that learners can be invited to consider and disrupt unequal relations of power within and beyond the classroom only pursuant to the examination of their own access to power and the ways in which they have been denied power by way of an oppressive structure within which they are expected to demonstrate global competencies, critical literacy, and personal agency.

While an exploration of reader-response theory does its work to welcome movement toward student agency, I have followed it with introductions to Feminist and Marxist Criticism, designing learning experiences that encourage the consideration of

multiple points of view at the same time as they challenge students to examine gender and social oppressions at work within text. In the delivery of this instruction, students are invited to suppose that they have been given several pairs of glasses, glasses unnecessary for their work with reader-response theory such as the perspective a reader brings to text is their own, an embodied lens through which meaning comes into view. To envision perspectives outside of themselves, however, I support learners by directing their attention to some of the questions a Feminist or Marxist critique would pose and then invite students to pose those questions to fairy tale texts, chosen on the grounds that these texts are accessible in that learners are familiar with their narratives, and usually eager to engage with stories that have been part of their experience from childhood. As such, fairy tales are held by most of my students as sources of comfort, and whereas Elizabethan language doled out in iambic pentameter can be cause for unease, fairy tale text is decidedly less intimidating. As I have invited students to notice the unequal relations of power at work in the gender and social oppressions at which Feminist and Marxist Criticism take aim, it has become clear that such invitations must attend to designing instruction that remains within the student's window of tolerance as it relates to the decoding and analytic efforts that are required for the construction of meaning. In enthusiastic attempts at encouraging critical reflection, I have bypassed the application of theory to accessible text, and moved directly to an examination of how *Macbeth* might be viewed from these lenses. For next attempts, I scaffolded instruction with the use of fairy tale texts so that learners were required to develop only one skill at a time. Once in place,

73

this scaffolding proved to be remarkably effective in supporting the kind of high-level critical reflection involved in Marxist and Feminist critiques of *Macbeth*.

To extend students an invitation to critical work related to the close reading of *Macbeth*, then, is to attend to the anticipatory instruction that makes such a deconstruction possible. Among these learning experiences is the occasion for students to track the oppressions they observe in the text and confer with peers on their findings. As they have attended to this directive, I have found that of the responses to text that are possible – adopt, resist, or adapt – my students do not resist text instinctively but more often, tend to adopt text without holding it up to scrutiny. Once they have been invited to resist, presented with the possibility that a resistant response can issue a challenge to systemic abuses of power at work within text, learners have relished the opportunity to resist text as they bring their newfound critical awarenesses to bear on the handiwork of Shakespeare himself.

An additional learning experience presents students with a social identity wheel, a graphic organizer they were asked to complete in their preliminary work with Reader Response criticism, and that clarifies the impact of a reader's location on the ways that reader constructs meaning from text. In revisiting the social identity wheel, I ask students to consider the locations of major players in *Macbeth*, and invite reflection on how these characters may be "reading" the texts they encounter in the course of the play. This assignment, along with others that encourage critical and multiperspectival reflection, establishes the foundation from which discussions, both formal and informal, have consistently demonstrated increasing competence related to interpretive skill.

A culminating activity in the teaching of *Macbeth* is one in which I ask students to select a scene from the play wherein they observe gender, social, or other types of oppression. They are invited to deconstruct the scene, articulate the ways in which unequal relations of power are at work within the text, and tell how the imbalance of power informs the advancement of theme, development of character, and/or the action of the play. Once they have identified the elements of the text that they resist, they are prompted to adapt the text, to reconstruct it in ways that return power to the oppressed party. As I direct them in this endeavour, it has been helpful to invite them to consider the ways that they might bring otherwise undetected systemic abuses of power into view, to bring the wallpaper into the foreground, if you will. Students are urged to do this in a way that is consistent with the expansive notion of text I describe throughout this work. They do this by staging their reconstructed scenes, attending to the ways in which gestural, spatial, auditory, and visual texts work together to deliver a message to readers. In this way, it is helpful to scaffold embodied resistance, first applying critical response to classroom texts in order that students might bring this same resistance to bear on the texts they encounter beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I began by articulating the research questions that shape my work and then engaged in a critical reading of *Macbeth*, an exploration of the Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum document, and followed this with a self-reflexive consideration of the learning experiences I have designed and delivered in attempts to invite learners to recognize and disrupt unequal relations of power at work within

Macbeth as well as in the texts they encounter beyond the classroom. In the final chapter,

Discussions and Conclusions, I respond to the research questions I pose and locate my

findings within the literature I reviewed in Chapters Two and Three.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion: Calling the Curtain

In the discussion that follows, I re-articulate the research questions I have posed for this study and situate my findings and their implications within the literature I have consulted for this work. I consider the ways in which my research could be expanded upon. I conclude by discussing the limitations of this thesis and providing an overview of the project.

Situating my Findings Within the Literature

In seeking to encourage learners to consider and deconstruct asymmetrical relations of power made visible in the play, *Macbeth*, I engaged in critical explorations of the play itself, the English language arts curriculum guide for grades 10 to 12, as well as my own instructional practices in order to arrive at the findings I present here. Through these critical explorations, I found that, because it is rife with oppressions made visible in essentialist constructions of marginalized groups, the play, *Macbeth*, is ideally accommodating for analysis that invites students to consider and deconstruct the abuses of power at work within it. Secondly, I found that the English language arts curriculum guide offers a problematic definition of text that fails to recognize the multiplicity of text at the same time as it excludes language from its definition of text. Despite its incomplete and problematic definition of text, the guide, and the section on critical literacy in particular, remains a valuable tool to which educators can look for support in establishing the ELA classroom as a site for the kind of critical literacy requisite to meaningful

disruptions of text. Finally, reflecting critically on my instructional experiences has revealed that, because of a persistent view of teachers as knowledge providers and students as educational vessels to be filled, students are uncomfortable with the kind of power that invitations to deconstruct text would have them wield.

What goes unchallenged in research related to the use of classic texts in classroom spaces is that, in the narratives that unfold in these works, abuses of power are plentiful. Consider the daughters of King Lear, who were willing to forsake their ailing father in their clamour for the crown, or the anti-Semitic miscarriage of justice Shylock of *The Merchant of Venice* had to endure when his pound of flesh was not forthcoming. In agreement with this view, I look to the classics, and *Macbeth* specifically, as particularly suited for disruptive discourse. In studies that make account of educators who grudgingly engage with the classics, Dyches (2017) and McArdle (2017) frame their research as responses to an objectionable curriculum or a dearth of selections of modern texts. In contrast, I work to vindicate *Macbeth*, not because of material or curricular constraints, but by virtue of their invitations to resistant readings. Bissonnette and Glazier's (2016) discussion of counterstorytelling is particularly helpful in efforts toward resistant reading of the works of the British literary canon, and because the works of Shakespeare are not included in the scope of their research, my focus on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* finds a unique place in the literature related to critical praxis in secondary ELA classrooms. Mellor and Patterson's (2000) emphasis on developing students' questioning strategies in relation to their reading of *Hamlet* resonates in my work as I move through similar and more fully outlined strategies for critical engagement with *Macbeth*. My work aligns

most fully with Shrofel and Cherland's (1998) research that includes several suggestions on how teachers might advance on deficit notions of race, class, and gender in *Macbeth*. Their attention to teacher reflexivity and fostering classroom dialogue through "explicit political critique" (p. 236) is necessary for the kind of text deconstruction for which I advocate.

Because of their challenge to the narrowing effects of classic texts, Ward and Connolly (2008), Aston (2017), and McLean (2008) oppose the use of canonical works in classroom spaces. Ward and Connolly (2008) submit that privileging "heritage" or classic texts is a practice that must be abandoned. Aston (2017) suggests that the use of the canon will perpetuate narratives that misrepresent non-dominant groups, and McLean (2008) argues that the teaching of high culture texts is its own hegemonic transmission. While there is indisputable value in contesting the privileging of heritage texts and the perpetuation of hegemonic master narratives that result from their use in the literature classroom, a departure from the texts is an inadequate response when engaging in the deconstruction of those dominant discourses can dismantle their normalizing influence in the educative context. It is not, therefore, the teaching of the works of the canon that reproduces essentialist constructions of marginalized groups. It is the *uncritical* teaching of classic texts that reinforces these structural oppressions, a practice that can be disrupted and remedied by a focus on critical theory in secondary teacher education programs. This, in response to the implication that teachers who engage with the works of the literary canon do so without being properly prepared to dismantle discourses that privilege dominant narratives that bestow unearned privilege.

Literature arising out of the British context (McArdle, 2017; Ward & Connolly, 2008) offers points of entry into and against canonical works as a response to mandated content, and, surprisingly, this same content requirement is not evident in the New Brunswick English language arts curriculum guide. Despite this, I concur with MacLean (2008) on the point that "official school curriculum privileges high culture texts" (p. 29) in so much as the guide makes specific reference to classics, Shakespeare appearing in more than a dozen places. While there is no unilateral directive, engagement with what is considered to be a classic work is encouraged by virtue of the myriad suggestions for teaching that feature works of the literary canon. A more compelling finding, however, is that the document foregrounds critical literacy in ways that do support teachers in their efforts to encourage students to consider and deconstruct the power differentials at work within classic texts. Arising out of the fact that the guide privileges high culture texts at the same time as it offers ways to critique those texts is the implication that those steering curriculum have an incomplete view of critical literacy, in so much as the document does not bring its own definition of critical literacy to bear on its suggestions for teaching. Teachers who look to the guide for direction, therefore, ought to subject the suggestions for teaching that feature and, therefore, privilege high culture texts to the kind of critique for which the guide advocates in its section devoted to critical literacy.

The English language arts curriculum guide devotes a two-page section to this subject of critical literacy but, within that section, offers incomplete and problematic definitions of text that preclude meaningful critical engagement. Expansive notions of text are necessary for the work of interrupting transmissions that marginalize because it is

those texts that we view as not texts at all that are often the texts most active in reproducing deficit constructions of race, class, gender, and ability. In this, I view texts as Tyson (2006) suggests, that is, as "outgrowths of human experience" (p. 2) that manifest in acoustic, gestural, spatial, relational, and visual forms that are conspicuously unaccounted for in curricular content. The guide, having been published more than two decades ago, makes a point of articulating that its theoretical framework and suggestions for teaching "reflect current research, theory and classroom practice" (p. 2). However, Freire's and Macedo's (1987) authoritative volume on how we might read the word and the world establishes its very title on the premise that the world is a text to be read, the elements that make up that world, texts in their own right. The implication here is that curriculum developers are ill prepared for the task of guiding ELA teachers in their critical engagements with text. For this reason, it may be appropriate that those selected for review and development of English language arts curricula be required to engage in the study of key scholars whose work has been to enlarge understandings of text. Alongside the works of Freire, add Tyson (2006), and Mellor and Patterson (2000) who suggest that students consider their own constructions of meaning as texts to be deconstructed. From the work cited here, I would also add Bender-Slack (2010) who offers a significant contribution by bringing into focus the relational text between teacher and student that, unaddressed, reproduces a hierarchy that impedes authentic learning.

This enduring subscription to the view that students are passive receptacles of knowledge to be filled by their profoundly more knowledgeable teachers manifests in the discomfort that is evident in students who have been invited to read resistantly. Bender-

Slack (2010), Giroux (2007), hooks (1994), and Wolfe (2010) counter this teacher - centered pedagogy in their work. Alongside these scholars, I submit that the demythologizing of the teacher-student binary is essential for meaningful learning, the likes of which we see in Dyches' (2017) account of teacher participants who model sociocultural vulnerability in attempts to invite students into discourse analysis and text reconstructions in the literature classroom. The courage to be vulnerable is at the heart of dismantling the hierarchy that persists in educative contexts, and recognizing that the classroom is a political space wherein power can be used destructively is as necessary as it challenging. Bender-Slack (2010) notes that those teachers with the most developed sense of agency were commensurably adept at navigating the dialogic divergence requisite to deconstructing unequal relations of power in text. That is, those teachers who are willing to dispense with their fear of losing control are better able to situate themselves within the framework of learner alliance, rather than be cast into the impossible role of "expert". The lack of teacher agency, then, is a clear implication of my work, one that might be explicitly addressed in teacher education programs and further supported by ongoing professional learning opportunities at provincial, district, and school levels, as well as through the work of the New Brunswick Teacher's Association's conference offerings or its annual High School Council Day, the latter being a platform I plan to seek out for May 2020.

A critical exploration of the high school ELA curriculum guide, alongside an examination of the play, *Macbeth*, and my autoethnographic reflections of instructional practice related to teaching the play, have assisted me in seeking to understand how I

82

might encourage learners to move outward from disruptions of the play's master narratives to disruptions of unequal relations of power at work within students' experiences of self and of society. Broadly, the curriculum document's section on critical literacy is surprisingly attentive to interrogation of self and of society as functions of critical literacy.

I find this surprising because in my 17 years of teaching English at the secondary level, I have witnessed very little implementation of the kind of disruptive praxis for which the curriculum document advocates, and have even been viewed as subversive and as "going rogue" by my colleagues when I have suggested design elements that invite students to deconstruct themselves and their world. In its emphasis on interrogations of self and of society, the guide aligns with literature related to inviting students into the metacognitive arena in ELA classrooms (Mellor & Patterson, 2000; Kalogirou & Malafantis, 2012). The research here points to becoming aware of how understandings of self position readers for constructions of meaning. Alongside Giroux (1987), Kincheloe (2005) takes this focus on the interrogation of self further by contending that such metacognitive awareness contributes to the development of student agency necessary for a true disruption of the teacher-student hierarchy. Additionally, Tyson's (2006) understanding that critical readings "show us our world and ourselves" (p. 3) reveals a similar link to the curriculum document's emphasis on interrogations of self and of society, an emphasis that implies that many teachers of secondary ELA are not equipping themselves with the content meant to guide them in their instructional delivery. For this reason, it might behoove instructors in teacher candidate programs to require engagement

with curricular materials to the extent that educators entering the profession are appropriately aware of such key emphases. On this point, hooks (1994), calls attention to the reality that, too often, teacher education programs do not prepare pre-service teachers to facilitate the kind of heated discussions that transgress boundaries, arguing that such transgressions are essential for any social justice project. McLaren's (1988) thoughts reveal a similar view when he describes critical literacy as "the most empowering precisely when it becomes the most social and contextually interactive" (p. 227). The curriculum guide falls short, then, in its lack of emphasis on moving from the deconstruction of self and of society to the implications those processes have on engagement with the world.

In answer to how I might encourage students to disrupt asymmetries of power in the world beyond the classroom, I have found that, from the play, *Macbeth*, we learn that what makes systems of oppression possible is a belief in the fictions on which they are predicated. The three witches breathe a fiction of Macbeth's dominance into his consciousness and, because the fiction is seated in Macbeth's will to truth at the same time as it is reinforced threefold, we see the fiction take root and become a structure through which Macbeth wields power in ways that enslave both others and himself. It is this kind of fiction that Aston (2017) contests when he argues for dispensing with the British canon on grounds that it misrepresents our society. On this point, MacNaughton (2005) draws attention to Foucault's position that we must "tackle our will to truth within the very regimes that govern us" (Foucault as cited in MacNaughton, 2005, p. 44), in this case a regime of truth that Macbeth helps to produce as he confesses yielding to that

"horrid suggestion which doth unfix [his] hair and makes [his] seated heart knock at [his] ribs" (I.iii.135-6). Freire and Macedo (1987) take a similar position when they suggest that any project of critical literacy is concerned with "demystifying the artificial parameters imposed on people" (p. 35). The implication is clear that confronting a will to truth is essential for disruptions of privilege that exist within students' experiences of self and of society. This kind of confrontation is precisely the aim of counterstorytelling as Bissonnette and Glazier (2016) conceive of its use in mobilizing classic texts for emancipatory education. Dyches (2017), Shrofel and Cherland (1998), Simmons (2016), and Fecho (1998) take similar stances as they suggest that advancing on deficit notions of race, class, gender, and ability through liberatory instructional praxis that asks students to problematize their constructions of meaning through discourse analysis is the most meaningful way to work with and against the sociocultural privileges that exist within and beyond the classroom.

Reflecting on my experience in the classroom has taught me that, essential to the work of encouraging learners to overturn oppressions at work within themselves and their society, is explicit scaffolding of agency development that positions students to contest unequal relations of power beyond the classroom. Toward this end, Freire and Macedo (1987), Giroux (in Freire & Macedo, 1987), and Kincheloe (2005) underscore the work of dismantling the teacher-student opposition. Taken together, they argue that it is incumbent upon educators to recognize how power shapes and preserves master narratives, and suggest that a commitment to deconstructing the power differentials that prevent agency in the classroom is necessary if challenges to other oppressive structures

are to take shape in our practice. Related to this development of agency, Kalogirou and

Malafantis (2012), Mellor and Patterson (2000), and Simmons (2016) propose that a

literature teacher's chief aim is to move learners toward an awareness of their own

reading processes in order to empower themselves by problematizing their constructions

of meaning, this being the kind of scaffolding required for movement outward to consider

text from multiple vantage points, as is discussed in Margolis and Shapiro (1987) and

Townsend and Pace (2005). The ability to inhabit a plurality of stances related to text

makes possible the counterstorytelling or "restorying" that Bissonnette and Glazier

(2016) and Dyches (2017) argue is key to disrupting systems of oppression beyond

classroom spaces. In this work of restorying, I consider this thesis as a contribution

alongside teacher-researchers Shrofel and Cherland (1998) and Holloway (2009) who

outline explicit strategies for critical engagement with classic texts, offering points of

entry into discourse that disrupts marginal understandings of self and society. Arising

from the finding that explicit scaffolding is essential to this work is the implication that,

upon reaching grades 11 and 12, learners have not been afforded sufficient opportunity

for the kind of agency development that prepares them for contesting asymmetrical

relations of power in their experiences of self and of society. Focusing on this may prove

helpful at all levels, from grades K – 12, and may result in greater success in the work of

dismantling oppressive structures in our world.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Areas of Further Study**</div>

Admittedly, the interpretation of the data I present here is subjective, and a

researcher who is differently located, and equipped with their distinct set of experiences,

may draw conclusions unlike the ones at which I have arrived. In addition, aside from my own voice as educator, and my observations of the instructional practices of teachers with whom I have worked, teacher voice is not included in this thesis. Further research that brings teacher voice into focus through ethnographic or autoethnographic methods would be helpful in establishing a clearer picture of what instructional practices related to mobilizing classic texts for critical praxis are being implemented in secondary ELA classrooms.

Notwithstanding this thesis's emphasis on the development of student agency and my own desire to expose the ways in which teacher centered instruction silences learners' knowledges and curiosities, students do not have a voice in this study. For this reason, a compelling outgrowth of this work might be to generate research questions that allow student participants to articulate their perspectives on how the teacher-student opposition has an impact on their learning, and in what ways they view the asymmetries of power at work within themselves, in text, and outside of classroom spaces.

Finally, this thesis is highly specific to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Although the findings outlined here can be useful in the teaching of similarly patriarchal, classist, and sexist classic texts, it may be more difficult to extrapolate these findings to the teaching of contemporary texts. Future research could explore how teachers of English language arts might challenge oppressions, both internal and external, through critical engagement with emerging and contemporary works.

Concluding Thoughts

I have sought to engage in this study using an entangled methodological approach that incorporates bricolage, rhizoanalysis, and autoethnography, and have done so through critical explorations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Atlantic Canada's high school English language arts curriculum guide, and my reflections on my instructional practice as it relates to the teaching of *Macbeth*.

Using rhizomatic bricolage and authoethnography, I have taken up two research questions that reflect my desire to use the power with which I have been privileged to overturn inequities that marginalize and oppress. In answer to the first question I pose, I found that the play, *Macbeth*, is particularly suited for critical analysis that invites students to consider and deconstruct the abuses of power at work within it, this being true alongside a curriculum guide that though offering a problematic definition of text, remains a valuable tool to which educators can look for support in establishing the ELA classroom as a site for the kind of critical literacy requisite to meaningful disruptions of text. In addition, because of a persistent view of teachers as knowledge providers and students as educational vessels to be filled, students are uncomfortable with the kind of power that invitations to deconstruct text would have them wield. In answer to the second question I pose, I found that what makes systems of oppression possible is a belief in the fictions on which they are predicated. From my experience in the classroom, I found that explicit scaffolding of agency development is necessary for students to take up the work of contestation. Finally, I found that the Atlantic Canada's English language arts curriculum document's section on critical literacy is surprisingly attentive to interrogation of self and of society as functions of critical literacy but falls short in its lack of emphasis

on moving from the deconstruction of self and of society to the implications those processes have on engagement with the world.

Although my tendency is to consider this project a negligible contribution to an overwhelming dilemma, I take Freire's (as cited in McLaren, 1988) answer to my self-doubt as empowerment: "there is no need to distinguish between modest or extravagant actions. Anything that can be done with competence, loyalty, clarity, perseverance, adding strength to the fight against the powers of non-love, selfishness, and evil is equally important" (p. 18). That I might make such a contribution is empowering indeed.

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