

Ireland – a test case of Post-colonialism / Post colonialism

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Contextualisation

This review attempts to set the stage for post-colonial theorising, in the light of alternative representations of 'whiteness', on issues of gender, race and language within the discourse of equality. In this paper Ireland and the Irish provide a backdrop against which the nature and impact of colonialism on the colonised and the coloniser are explored. Many challenging questions emerge about the ideological basis of post colonial theory, not least when traditional paradigms of racism, as conveyed by the black / white dichotomy, are examined: Ireland presents a context, it is argued, where subjugation is of white on white. Linked to this is the language of the coloniser, a powerful hegemonic force which, in some situations, has been nurtured by the colonised and later developed into a text which is unique, producing a new literature which, it is asserted, truly invokes the 'post colonial'.

Abstract: *Post-colonialism – essentially a critique of colonialism, is characterised by a process of disengagement from the colonial epoch and has taken many forms. In this article a set of phenomena are examined that have become inscribed in the cultures of the colonised with a view to identifying alternative cultural origins and dispositions recovered in this post-colonial era. Ireland and the Irish provide the background context of this exploration into perspectives generated by the peripheral or post-colonial nations. Globalisation, too, has had a role to play in the increasing de-territorialisation of communities as a result of cross-frontier mobility, increased intra-community mobility and new communication technologies. A critical reflection on the process of disengagement leads the author to conclude that we must come to recognise new cultural forms which are accepting of a heterogeneous and inclusive society: one which is not characterised by difference.*

Introduction

Ireland through the lens of colonisation evokes some revealing perspectives of 'Irishness' as we position it in the light of some of the prevailing attitudes common both in Ireland and Britain in the 21st century. This will lead us to consider the extent to which Ireland might be considered 'post-colonial' following imperialist or neo-colonialist practices enacted through centuries of colonial rule. Ireland presents itself as a unique case in that we are dealing with knowledges constructed in the West, and essentially of the West, unlike the situations more typically discussed in relation to third world countries.

Among the topics relevant to the discourses established around post -colonialism are race, religion, language and gender all of which engender issues of difference and 'otherness.' Globalisation too, it can be argued, has had a role to play in the increasing de - territorialisation of communities as a result of cross -frontier mobility and increased intra - community mobility. New communication technologies have facilitated huge flows of information transnationally giving greater scope for interaction between diasporic and ancestral communities and less scope for fixing national and social identities to their points of origin.

Before reviewing the context of Ireland I would like to consider the genealogies of the term post colonialism / post-colonialism which abound in recent literature. I hope too to examine how they might provide a paradigm within which to test and situate the case of Ireland and 'Irishness' by way of examining current issues surrounding the debate on post-colonialism;

representations of 'whiteness' and issues of identity and gender. I will then consider the role of the English language as an overt marker of the transitional influence of colonialism and the implications for my professional practice in the field of English Language teaching.

The literature

Post-colonial / post colonial literature, however it is written in terms of hyphenation (and the significance of this is an important aspect of what follows), attempts to address the experience of marginalized societies through a studied engagement with experiences involving slavery, race, gender, migration or difference.

In general terms, Post-colonial theory is characterised as concerned with discourses about the nature and impact of colonialism on the colonised and the coloniser. It throws into relief the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of hegemonic societies not just on the basis of economic exploitation but various cultural resonances. These lead us to question how you define your identity in the face of the 'other'. Hall (1993) puts it rather succinctly when he writes:

'...who speaks and the subject who is spoken of are never identical, never exactly in the same place...' (pp 392-403)

Post- or Post colonialism?

The status and exact denotation of the term(s) post-colonialism / post colonialism has been the subject of a wide-ranging and, so far inconclusive, debate. Many writers have contested the connotations of 'post-colonialism' celebratory or otherwise, with much attention focused on the status and significance of the prefix. The status of the prefix is important, as it can suggest a certain ambiguity or ambivalence, and hence reflect different views of the field. The hyphenated version 'post-colonialism' to writers like Mishra and Hodge signals a chronology, a linear temporality specifically denoting a/the period after colonialism, although paradoxically it may also suggest a way forward (Mishra and Hodge, 1993). They believe that the unhyphenated version has lent itself more to a cultural analysis which posits the existence, or rather co-existence, of a dual relationship, the coloniser bound to the colonised 'other' through the process of colonisation, 'to a state of permanent bondage' to borrow from Fanon's version of 'post-colonialism' (Fanon, 1963).

In respect of describing to whom the term 'post-colonial' relates, Hall (1996) acknowledges that a number of views exist. There are those who would not regard white settler colonies as covered by this term, reserving it for non-western colonised societies and those who would deny it to the colonising societies of the metropolis, seeing it as only relevant to the colonised peripheries. The term, however, according to Hall (*ibid*), may help us characterise the uneven transition globally from the colonial phase to the post independent or post-colonial moment.

McClintock, in her article, *The Angel of Progress* (1993), echoes some of the issues described above when she argues that post-colonialism has been embarked upon unevenly suggesting the prefix 'post' belies the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of former imperial powers. Although she recognises the stages that mark the linear temporalities / development from pre-, to colonial, to post-colonial, she notes that we are confronted with yet another paradox in that 'post-colonial studies' was meant to be the very vehicle by which linearity would be dismantled.

Post-colonial theory is essentially based around the binaries of metropolis (or centre) – periphery, and self – other, which draw attention to the dialectical relationships and the various paradigms within which post-colonial literature is framed. McClintock considers that

power and time form the main axes: to exclude one from the other may be to desensitise the evolving discourse. She regards the axis of time, rather than power, unhelpful when distinguishing between those who benefited and those who were casualties of colonialism. She considers the degree to which many former colonies such as Argentina, Hong Kong or Zimbabwe can be regarded as post-colonial and makes the point that the process of decolonisation has taken place largely unevenly so that the nation states, which have emerged, have fallen into one of the two categories mentioned above. She makes use of the example of the Old Commonwealth countries, which appear to resemble more the metropolitan mode than a post-colonial mode, since they are bound up with global, capitalist, relations, noting, moreover, that other countries like East Timor may be 'post-colonial' with respect to their European masters but not so in the shadow of their colonising neighbours. Further disaffection with the concept of post-colonialism is given expression when McClintock (1993), says the landscape is now re-oriented around a new binary opposition of colonial / post-colonial and '...the single rubric of European time...' evidence of our reluctance to stop seeing the world as '...a singular and ahistorical abstraction...' (McClintock, 1993).

For Quayson (2000), the focus is on the process of postcolonialising, in the proactive sense '...of coming into being...' such that post-colonial phenomena are emergent. The discourse and ideology of colonialism cannot be ignored. They are integral elements of the postcolonial situation and hence, essential, when attempting to formulate a mode of discourse that is not rooted in the West; that is inclusive, and not mediated by power as a means of challenging the West. In his book, Quayson (*ibid*), attempts to address the contribution of academic post-colonial studies to the real experience of post-colonialism in the world today. He borrows the expression, when he says he tries to 'look awry' (*ibid*, p 6) at the complex expression, or discourse, that post-colonialism engenders and the interrelationships that are apparent between that discourse and the material, social, and economic factors, within which the discourse is framed. A key issue here is the degree of active engagement with contradictions in the real world; some of which are evident in McClintock's (1993) analyses of gender issues (which I shall consider later), and the discourse which keeps us at arm's length through its production of texts and images.

Said (1978) is credited with having produced the seminal work on how imperialist ideology was generated during the years of colonialism in his influential book, 'Orientalism'. The importance of Said's critique cannot be underestimated; Said showed that 'orientalism', as both a phenomenon and a discourse, or set of discourses, was based on perceptions of ontological and epistemological distinction. This distinction was between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident' and, by virtue of its production, has become a reality of that which it describes. The power and hegemony of the West, over the Orient, was legitimated by the view, overtly expressed by many, but also implicit in the writings of Orientalists who purported to be indifferent to political concerns, that 'Orientals' were incapable of ruling themselves. If we consider examples of literature such as 'The Arabian Nights' or 'The Perfumed Garden', which have been adapted, and adopted, in translation, for western audiences, we become aware of the 'sensualisation' of the Orient. This arises through the depiction of Orientals, in such texts, as childlike and submissive; not just as a result of Western hegemony, but for having chosen to submit themselves to being made 'oriental'.

More recently, the work of Bhabha (1994), seems to be devoted to deconstructing the nature of colonial authority and the inherent contradictions within its authoritarian discourse. For him the term 'post' signifies neither a new horizon nor an exit from the past; post-coloniality is

'... a salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations within the new world order and the multinational division of labour.' (1994, p 6)

He believes that grand narratives of capitalism and class cannot, in themselves, provide a foundational frame for representative modes of cultural identification. He elaborates the view that concepts of homogenous national cultures, in the process of redefinition, are making way for a more transnational sense - the basis for the hybridity of imagined communities. He further calls for the need to think beyond our subjectivities to focus on the processes that evolve in the expression of cultural differences, creating an in-between space that can initiate new signs of identity, new spaces for collaboration and contestation, on the road to redefining society itself.

Unlike Said and Bhabha, who offer a polemical perspective on post-colonialism, Hall (1996), chooses to see past this as she views post-colonialism as denoting a space in which to move forward. She argues for a different way of belonging when the Empire is no longer at the centre of our interpretation of history, or the identities borne out of the inequalities are associated with different races, religions or genders. She is looking essentially for a reshaping of our memory, to build a different future, which does not engender ideas of race, the symbolism of which, enunciates a difference between black and white. She would also like to envision a society that is not based on homogeneity but one which is inclusive and heterogeneous. The contribution she would like this field of studies to address is how post – colonialism might help us explore a new myth; to help us to look critically at our past, and our future, as well as to recognise a need for a post nationalist political concept of citizenship free from the biases of ethnocentric notions of political identity.

In summary, the term post-colonialism, is to some a monolithic term, while to others, it connotes a ‘...dizzying multiplicity of positionalities...’ (Hall, 1996); be they a reflection of the temporal linearity of historical events, or an ahistorical abstraction, it is evident that the theoretical substance, and the future of the term, will continue to be contested. Let us look now at some of the ways in which Ireland attempted to disengage itself from its colonial past and how this has impacted on the Irish and their historiographies.

The Irish situation: background

An independent nation for the past 80 years, Ireland shows little desire for regression or a return to its lost origins. Ireland emerged as an independent nation state in 1922. But, by virtue of the fact that this was sanctioned by a recognition of its 26 counties and borders by other nations (and its former coloniser), there exists some difficulty in perceiving it as being ‘post-colonial’. Although Ireland has undergone decolonisation, there are many reasons to believe that much of what has resulted from centuries of domination lives on in our shared ideologies of progress and development today. Apart from the inextricable link between the coloniser and the colonies, the latter are to a large extent epistemologically dependent on the former.

White but not supreme

The case of Ireland serves to bring some of the issues discussed above into a revealing focus; particularly in regard to notions of ‘whiteness’ - which traditionally connotes ideas of supremacy though, in the case of the Irish people, it had limited relevance in the last century. The dominant paradigm for understanding racism in Britain is the black / white dichotomy. Yet the Irish are white, and made in the same likeness as the British, and once both groups shared the same religion. The process of colonisation has meant that white identities in Britain have had conferred upon them an innate sense of superiority. This has occurred through the power they exercise over racialised ‘others’; the Irish, however, pose many challenging questions about the ideology and discourse which forms the basis of theories of post-colonialism posited in the literature (Hickman, 1995).

Systematic incursions into Ireland by more powerful, and militarily advanced neighbours occurred as early as the 12th century. These were carried out under the guise of providing defensive support to some of the warring clans involved and was later to become an integral part of the civilising mission of the British. A form of internal colonisation sowed the seeds of what was to follow later on a continental scale. Representations of the Irish recorded by Girauldus Cambrensis in 'A Topography of Ireland' in 1178, provides evidence of the civilization project which led to a subsequent scathing attack on the Irish, their religion and customs:

'...indeed a most filthy race, a race sunk in vice, a race more ignorant than all other nations of first principles of the faith.' (Cambrensis, quoted in Lebow, 1973, p 6)

Justification for the mission of saving the Irish, from themselves, was based on conceptions of barbarism, ignorance, paganism and inferiority. These representations of the uncivilised 'other' were early examples of racialisation and Ireland proved to be no exception. Belligerence in the form of uprisings and rebellions were understood as ignorance. This formed the basis of discourses of inferiorisation and dominated colonial history for many centuries (*ibid*). Discourses of 'otherness' were similarly applied to communities of the Orient at a later date.

'Whiteness' equated with a homogeneous way of life without boundaries and exclusions bears some deconstruction in the case of the Irish. It can be problematised, on the basis of religion, where the Protestant migrants to Britain were not subject to the discourses of racism or discrimination that Catholics were. The identities of the Irish were constructed as a result of the structural position into which they were placed helping to reinforce the old stereotype with each wave of migration and secondly, as a result of their pigmentation or religion (see Brah, Hickman and Mac an Ghaill, 1999 for a more in depth discussion).

The 19th century was marked by the process of class formation since the Irish were perceived to be working class, many of them rural peasants, who actually shifted identity to become part of an urban unskilled workforce.

Ware (1996), believes that racial domination is a system that constructs everyone within it; but where a society is habituated to dominant ideologies of white supremacy it is difficult to see it as other than 'normal'. The case of the colonised Irish proves, however, that whiteness is not just a matter for concern for black people who had their own construction of white people: it was also something which impinged on the lives of the Irish until the late 20th century. Signs in shop windows in the 1950s which read 'No blacks, no dogs, no Irish need apply' were commonplace and amply demonstrate the level of discrimination against the Irish (personal communication).

The availability of cheap Irish labour may well have served to lower employment conditions at that time. The Irish, despite their whiteness, shared the same status as black people suggesting their biological attributes had rendered them invisible in the light of racist discourses.

Hall (1996), wonders if 'whiteness' can ever be purged of its association with racial domination and reconstructed in such a way that it is devoid of its hegemonic connotations. The Irish situation may throw some light on how such a reconstruction may evolve. It may well have effected a distinction between the idea of being 'white', as a racial type, and a way of thinking and acting, but as long as it was in the hands of the under classes there remained no channel through which to foster a rejection of whiteness.

Issues of Identity

McClintock writes (1993):

'...the world's multitudinous cultures are marked, not positively by what distinguishes them, but by a subordinate retrospective relation to linear, European time...' (pp 291- 303)

She claims that to see the world as 'an ahistorical abstraction' is not a concept that post-colonialism evokes since the term 'post' suggests only a prepositional relation to a colonising epoch dominated by Europe. Essentially, for McClintock it elaborates the argument that if post - colonial theory is based around the temporal axis, it clouds the analyses of alternative times and histories. Moreover, if the business of post-colonial theory is to be useful in holding empire accountable, when analysing the recordings of history, in all their political, economic, cultural and historical implications, traditional writing of history must take account of those of the peripheries.

To take Ireland as an example we note that prior to the 16th century the English, like the Irish, were Catholic but with the advent of the Reformation the supremacy of 'the English Protestant' became the new hegemonising force. The national identity of the Irish was now also infused with a religious identity and the Irish Catholic became the newly constituted 'other', in the face of conformity to Protestantism, both in Britain and Europe. Depictions of the Irish during the Anglo Norman invasion of the 12th and 13th centuries as barbaric, uncivilised and idle, laid the foundations of a stereotype that has troubled many who have come to Britain to this day; despite their presence having been motivated by professional reasons. Perceptions of the Irish, recorded in 'The 1836 Inquiry', viewed poverty as a product of character and, as a moral, rather than economic, issue: the Commissioners, in their report, concluded that:

'Irish emigration into Britain is an example of a less civilised population, spreading themselves, as a kind of substratum, beneath, a more civilised community...' (see Hickman, 1995)

Correlations between the Irish working class, disease and poverty, crime and political rebellion, ensured that they were the object of government attention. The view that it was a case of the Irish against the English is, however, an oversimplification of the situation since the subtleties of Irish nationality prove far more complex. Freedom for Ireland was won, notably, through the intervention of figures like Charles Stuart Parnell, James Stephens and John Mitchell, sons of Protestants, and Presbyterians, born in Ireland and educated in England. (Kee, 1980). Religion proved no obstacle in the face of oppression as a number of the settled colonisers, like those before them in the 12th century, identified with the cause of the Irish and their struggle for independence. Ireland, unlike other colonies, had developed a form of internal colonisation from the start. As a result of the histories moulding our perceptions this caused both the Irish and the British to remain locked in the identities which are inextricably linked to those histories.

The histories of the Irish settler in Britain bear little resemblance to those of the Irish in Ireland or even to those who have returned, in a reversal of trends, to Ireland, or indeed to the Irish in British-occupied Northern Ireland. To interpret their histories along a binary axis of the colonised and coloniser would almost certainly endorse one of Fanon's greatest insights - that the damaged psyche of the colonized people mirrors the desires of the coloniser, which serves to reinforce the need for interpretations to include the various histories and imbalances of power (Bhabha, 1993). To date a form of internal colonisation still persists in Britain, in relation to Ireland, given that the citizens of Northern Ireland are not numbered among, or considered to be, an ethnic minority in Britain. Northern Ireland has not effectively

been decolonised in the way the part of Ireland outside of the six counties has; and local ethnic rivalries between nationalist Catholics and the Loyalist, and Unionist Population of the Protestant / Presbyterian, persuasion will ensure the continuity of neo-colonialist practices in Northern Ireland for some time to come.

Gender issues

Gender reflects the legacy of hegemonic colonial relations. In the case of Ireland it has been observed that representations of power persist in the case of the male as 'his/story' has continued to dictate and dominate.

In her article Spivak's (1993) subaltern silence generalises from the lack of Indian women's voices for the impossibility of subaltern agency on several counts. This obtains, Spivak argues because their voices are twice removed from speech in colonial discourse thereby alerting us to the difficulties with adducing any pure location. Ireland, similarly, has heard little of the voice of its daughters except as a part of its mythology and one which is romanticised through its poets. Its patriarchal society has long endured and suppressed the female population to a degree that they are complicit in a passive projection of Irishness (Balzano, 1996). Personal experience of growing up in Ireland evokes memories of the superior status of men, particularly in the family, where the female members took second place and became the reconstituted 'other'. Men were seen to be responsible for the decision-making and women's opinions were only rarely sought. In Ireland another aspect of an internal form of colonisation surfaced, that is to say, the colonisation of women or feminisation, however, this was not restricted to colonised communities but symbolic of the oppressed, needing to oppress, in their turn.

The process of colonisation is very often mirrored by the status of women in decolonised countries and it pervaded other areas of social and economic life also. The Catholic church, itself a male dominated institution, were co-conspirators in the enactment of colonial practices and have emerged as one of the chief perpetrators of women's confinement, and suppression, in the light of recent debates on abortion and divorce. Both church and state colluded in the making of laws which were overtly oppressive to women though it was often the very women who suffered the woes of patriarchal power that perpetuated the situation. Nevertheless, Irish women have found a voice through poetry and literature, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, for example writes in her mother tongue challenging the myths and assumptions of patriarchal power; seeing the concept of a national identity and the silence of women as fundamental to its construction, (Bolzano, 1996). Eilis ni Dhuibhne, similarly, is numbered among the most outspoken of these writers as a result of her novel 'Bray House' (1990), which blamed Irish troubles on England, particularly, the situation in Northern Ireland, which has raged for over thirty years. Here we may draw comparisons with women in Africa who have used literature as their voice as we remember writers like Krogg (1998) and her contribution, 'Country of my Skull': an expose of the marginalisation of black women in South Africa through her involvement in the truth commission.

We cannot assume an equivalence of conditions between men and women in nationalist rhetoric will become a reality any more than it did during colonisation although it may bring with it its own construction of the nation's history. The inauguration of two female presidents in the past ten years, might suggest that Ireland is set to change, this however, has no precedence among colonial powers so it is time perhaps, to 'regender' a new reality of post – colonialism.

The role of language

‘The history of a language is often a story of possession and dispossession, territorial struggle and the establishment and imposition of a culture.’ (Paulin, 1983)

The history of Ireland was mirrored in the collision of the Irish and English languages. Linguistic imperialism can be seen in the many successive attempts to supplant the Irish language, the first of these was in the 12th century when the first Anglo-Norman Knights landed in Ireland. Their subsequent conversion to Irish culture came at a time when Celtic culture and the Irish language had the necessary power to withstand a linguistic invasion. (McCrum, Cran and McNeil, 1986) As a colonising tool, the deliberate process of the removal of the mother tongue, Gaelic, probably represents one of the most brutal and decisive acts by an Imperial power. The 18th century Penal laws forbade the use of Irish. As a result, the use of English, led to the creation of an English elite so that anyone wishing to advance their education, their economic, or political futures, could not do so by using their mother tongue. This language shift was further institutionalised with the introduction of the National School system, which established English as the required medium of instruction in schools. The final blow was dealt by the onset of the Famine in 1846 which killed off one in three of the population and provided an economic and pragmatic incentive to the Irish people to learn English.

The language shift noted above, ushered in some new challenges for the Irish; one in particular which they excelled at producing a new literature through the medium of English as we remember such luminaries as James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Oscar Wilde to mention but a few. They wrote in the language of the coloniser and developed a text which was unique, pushing back all the boundaries of literary convention; essentially a phenomena borne of the diasporic dialectic which matured during colonial conflict and ‘came into being’, to echo Quayson’s description. Modern texts like Joyce’s ‘Ulysess’ are considered to be among the first, post-modern, novels set at a time when Ireland was still under English rule but ones that truly invoked the post - colonial that had not yet come to pass if we take the chronological perspective into account. This highlights the fact that if we are only prepared to look at post – colonial theory along its linear and temporal axis, we will have missed the sensitising forces of a theory that has tried to create new myths around the recognition of the dual relationship, and co-existence, of the coloniser and the colonised ‘other’. In the context of Said’s ‘Orientalism’, where then does the ontological and epistemological distinction lie for those knowledges constructed in the West, and for the west that is Ireland, and not the Occident?

By way of providing a more topical and visible phenomenon of post-colonialism, the growth and gradual domination of English as a global language reflects a dialectic in the linguistic discourse. On the one hand, English has proved a very powerful and hegemonic force for the West and on the other, its rapid spread has provided a potential, unifying, force which can give a voice to third world communities allowing them to air their protests in the language of the first world. Issues of linguistic imperialism, as part and parcel of domination by the West, have been much debated by Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (1992), to name but two, both of whom offer conflicting views as to whether the continued global expansion of the language lends itself to the further dominance of Western ideologies or provides new possibilities for the local resistance of subaltern groups (Block and Cameron, 2002).

Nowhere is the effect of colonialism more deeply felt in societies than in their linguistic tradition. History is replete with examples of linguistic domination. It is the experience of millions in post-colonial communities to be subject to two linguistic traditions, namely, English and the vernacular. These communities are forced to question whether they should betray the importance of their vernacular language for the advantages that speaking English can offer. Support for English has grown in other ways, however, in the period since

decolonisation. Colonies, such as Sri Lanka have seen English rejected as the lingua franca, but a view exists which says that Sri Lanka may have deprived many of the opportunity of enriching their lives through communication with multicultural communities afforded by the use of English (Canaragajah, 1999). Moreover, while the Centre / Anglo American nations have long invoked the use of Standard English, through educational and language policies, vernacular Englishes have been gaining ground among speech communities. In the same way that Ireland negotiated the hegemony of English by developing Hiberno English many other, hybrid, forms are emerging among peripheral communities such as the Caribbean Creoles.

Many students today are choosing to learn through English, driven by powerful images of pop culture and western lifestyles, as portrayed by the media, at a time marked by a rise in transnational organisations and the predominance of English on the internet. This has culminated in a plurality which has begun to develop among the new nation states, or peripheries. Here language, as the traditional marker of national identity, is being challenged, as well as in the international arena, where language has become a marketable commodity (Heller, 2002). Economic power has shifted from national, to trans global, investment while technology has led to the development of new cultural forms and means of learning languages. But this has also been led by economic, and personal choices, rather than national language and education policies.

If we look at the spread of English, we find, conversely, that it has been instrumental in facilitating greater interaction between diasporic and ancestral communities. A work force which is bilingual, or multilingual, is an attractive investment when it comes to communication skills and the knowledge economy. In this context we realise that peripheral communities are now best placed to participate transnationally: the emergence of a community of people better skilled communicatively, or linguistically, to deal with current global trends has marketable value. On the other hand, the spread of hybrid Englishes may marginalize the most populous spoken languages, such as Spanish, Arabic, or Chinese.

In the field of English Language teaching itself, issues of methodology, which have always been hotly debated, are currently giving way to a greater focus on the acceptability of texts and materials, which have also originated in the West. John Gray challenges the messages delivered on the assembly line of published materials in the West as being, ‘...highly wrought cultural constructs’, (Block and Cameron, 2002, p 152) and vehicles of Western / Centre ideologies.

Perhaps, it is now incumbent on us to write, as Gray suggests, the global course book: this would include materials that would be truly in context for language learners everywhere and would, at the same time, link them with ‘the global’. It is also possible that a multiplicity of vernacular English varieties will develop and this in turn will challenge the pre-eminence of ‘literary’ English. At the same time, such developments could act to widen the gap between spoken and written forms, as in the case of Arabic among other languages. Language teachers may have to re-think both the methodology, and content, of what they currently teach as standardised English making way for new forms and mediums.

At a time when history appears to be contracting due to the accelerated pace of technology, one of the main instruments of change, the role of language occupies a new space – dominant but not dominating, a potential force for equality. Although we have come to recognise new cultural forms and dispositions, the process of disengagement from colonial practices must continue, if it is to liberate peripheral communities, not just politically, but psychologically as well.

I am reminded of a view of post-colonialism which Quayson (2000), rejected, ‘... the West’s re-colonizing of the thought patterns of others...’ (p 12).

Post-colonial theory in redressing the imbalances of colonialism does not necessarily involve the 'others' re-colonising the thought patterns of the West: rather, it is a matter of accepting a heterogeneous and inclusive society which is not built on difference.

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