

**Fanon's One Big Idea: Ireland and Postcolonial Studies**

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## Thesis Abstract

### **Fanon's One Big Idea: Ireland and Postcolonial Studies.**

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Postcolonial theory has been, and remains, one of the dominant modes of literary and cultural criticism within the broader discourse of Irish Studies. This thesis will provide a summary theoretical interrogation of the development of a loosely federated structure of such critical discourse. Equally, I will trace the mutual theoretical exchanges between an international postcolonial methodology, canonically embodied in the work of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and the forms of postcolonial critique operative within Irish Studies.

In performing such an interrogation, I hope to illuminate the modalities in which postcolonial theory has assumed such an integral disciplinary location within contemporary Irish academia. Contemporary academic history is notable for the extensive proliferation of postcolonial methodologies in Irish cultural studies; my project is concerned with tracing this development and with providing a comprehensive and evaluative critique of the discipline of postcolonial studies in Ireland. To this end, I provide a proto-genealogy of contemporary critical interventions that have engaged with the contentious notion of Ireland as a postcolonial society.

I discuss both the theoretical particularities and the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial theory. I trace a line of development in Irish postcolonial criticism from the earlier interventions of Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd, C.L. Innes, Shaun Richards, and David Cairns to the more recent arguments of Kevin Whelan, David

Lloyd, Luke Gibbons, Colin Graham, Joe Cleary, Angela Bourke, Marjorie Howes  
and Gerry Smyth.

I evaluate postcolonial criticism as an academic discourse by cursorily  
applying the work of Pierre Bourdieu to recent academic interventions in Irish cultural  
theory. Specifically, I outline and engage with what I diagnose as recent metacritical  
interventions in Irish postcolonial studies, debates which concern issues such as  
subalternity, hybridity, liminality and gender.

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*Introduction: Postcolonial Beginnings*

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## Fanon's One Big Idea: Ireland and Postcolonial Studies

Gaelic is the conscience of our leaders,  
the memory of a mother-rape they will  
not face, the heap of bloody rags they see  
and scream at in their boardrooms of mock oak.  
They push us towards the world of total work,  
our politicians with their seedy minds and  
dubious labels, Communist or Capitalist, none wanting  
*freedom – only power*. All that reminds us  
that we are human and therefore not a herd  
must be concealed or killed or slowly left  
to die, or microfilmed to waste no space.  
For Gaelic is our final sign that  
we are human, therefore not a herd.

(Michael Hartnett, 'A Farewell to English', *A Farewell to English*, 83.)

The moral claims of imperialism were seldom questioned in the west. Imperialism and the global expansion of the western powers were represented in unambiguously positive terms as a major contributor to human civilization. (Frank Furedi, *The Ideology of the New Imperialism*, 44)

Curiosity is a principle that carries its pleasures as well as its pains along with it. The mind is urged by a perpetual stimulus; it seems as if it were continually approaching the end of its race; and, as the insatiable desire of satisfaction is its principle of conduct, so it promises itself in that satisfaction an unknown gratification, which seems as if it were capable of fully compensating any injuries that may be suffered in the career. (William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 122)





## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Postcolonial Beginnings**

There is a map of the city which shows the bridge that was never built.

A map which shows the bridge that collapsed; the streets that never existed.

Ireland's entry, Elbow Lane, Weigh-House Lane, Back Lane, Stone-Cutter's Entry-

Today's plan is already yesterday's- the streets that were there are gone.

And the shape of the jails cannot be shown for security reasons.

The linen backing is falling apart- the Fall's Road hangs by a thread.

When someone asks me where I live, I remember where I used to live.

Someone asks me for direction, and I think again. I turn into a side-street to try to throw off my shadow, and history is changed. (Ciaran Carson, 'Turn Again', *Belfast Confetti*, 11)

Every historical episode of imperial expansion elaborates its own distinctive ideological legitimation according to the specific forms of domination and surplus appropriation involved in its reproduction. (Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations*, 172)

## Mimesis and Postcolonialism

The critical pioneer of contemporary postcolonial studies, Edward W. Said, notes in his introduction to *Orientalism*, '[w]hat I learned and tried to present was that there was no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point: beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to *enable* what follows from them' (1978, 16). Thus, in a critical survey of postcolonial Irish studies, there is no *natural* starting point. Equally, when I trace the genealogical roots of theoretical postcolonial studies to Said's 1978 intervention, it is matter of contingent selection. There is no natural beginning, or for that matter consecrated *telos*, in the discourse of critical analysis; the contingency of critical interrogation is matched by the contingency of the selection of texts. My 'beginnings' are dictated by a conviction that Said's *Orientalism* provided, and provides, an extraordinary stimulus and precedent to more recent postcolonial Irish studies.

In asserting Said's precedence I am not diminishing the import of Atlantic historiography; *Subaltern Studies*; Marxism; Feminism or Postmodernism, but as Luke Gibbons recently remarked in discussing the legacy of Edmund Burke:

An exemplary text or event, to adapt Seamus Deane's formulation, is both a culminating moment in a process or series of events already under way, but is also a disruptive, originating moment in the subversion of that process, an omen of things to come. (2003, 5)<sup>1</sup>

Whereas Said's text enabled, indeed some would argue created, a lateral field of discursive resources in the form of postcolonial studies, it is my intention to elucidate the diffuse and often conflictual dynamics of a particular declension of postcolonial studies,

namely Irish postcolonial studies.<sup>2</sup> In isolating gestures of cultural or critical invention, then, we do not legitimate them as practices, but contrarily, we alert societies to the systems and mechanisms of invention that structure and bind their cultural, political, economic and philosophical texts and institutions. Invoking the German philologist and critic, Erich Auerbach, these systems of invention materialize in, depend upon and foster ‘the reader’s will to interpretive synthesis’ (549).

Auerbach begins his great work of literary history, *Mimesis*, with the premise that, ‘[t]o write history is so difficult that most historians are forced to make concessions to the *techniques* of legend [my emphasis]’ (20), and he ends with the conclusion that, ‘[h]e who represents the course of a human life, or a sequence of events extending over a prolonged period of time, and represents it from beginning to end, must prune and isolate *arbitrarily* [my emphasis]’ (548-549). What Auerbach achieves is the realization that the canon of Western literary representation is subtended by ‘the reader’s will to *interpretive synthesis* [my emphasis]’ (549). In averring to the techniques and arbitrariness of literary and historical representation, Auerbach, Said’s foremost critical influence, nourishes Said’s critical re-presentation of the Western literary canon within postcolonial studies. *Mimesis* emphatically dramatizes the ‘methods of interpreting human events in the literature of Europe’ (554), and Auerbach’s dialectic facilitates Said’s later interrogation of the accreted layers of geopolitical interest/concern in Western/Imperial literary, philosophical and historical representation. Accounting for his debt to Auerbach, Said reflects:

There was no discernible connection between Auerbach and Istanbul at all; his entire attitude while there seems to have been one of nostalgia for the West, which gave

him the spirit to sit down and write this great work of Western humanism, *Mimesis*...because I admire the effort nevertheless, [I tried] somehow to extend their work into areas that interests me...I'm not exactly answering them, but I'm extending their work into areas they avoid by adopting some of the modes of examination, their attention to texts, their *care*. (Viswanathan, 2004, 127)

Auerbach continues, '[w]e are constantly endeavouring to give meaning and order to our lives in the past, to our surroundings, the world in which we live' (49). He touches on two crucial issues in this exposition of historical representation: firstly, alerting us to the inherent temporal and spatial demands of representation; stressing that matters of representation structure the time of space and the space of time. Equally he acknowledges that every representation of the past is intimate with the needs of the present and the possibilities of the future. The consecration of orders and meanings through historical representation is subtended by the aspirations of history's authors. The issue at stake within Saidian colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory is what precisely is edited from this coordinated process of order and meaning, and the reasons that underlie such editing. Order and meaning are necessarily arbitrary, but this does not evacuate languages or symbols of material significance or specific identitarian import. Reading through Auerbach and subsequently Said, the ethical initiative of postcolonial studies is to be found in re-presenting, re-appropriating and re-distributing access to the modes of order and meaning within literary and historical representation.

The Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, offers the following summative remarks on Said's political project:

His concern is justice, not identity. He is more interested in emancipating the dispossessed than bending genders or floating signifiers. One of the major architects

of modern cultural thought comes across in this book [*Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*] as profoundly out of sympathy with its cerebral convolutions, which – as he shrewdly sees – are largely a symptom of political displacement and despair. (2004, 48)

While Eagleton's review comments betray his own suspicious attitude to current postcolonial theory, nevertheless, he captures the presiding ethical force of Said's literary critical project. Though Said may have, as Eagleton alludes, laid the foundations of an increasingly dense, if not problematic, critical-theoretical discourse, his own critical project was underwritten by a commitment to the ethical value of egalitarian humanist literature, art and scholarship. It is in this context that we can further divine Said's critical debt to Auerbach. Likewise this ethical investment provides a wedge with which to initiate a discussion of Irish postcolonial studies.

Much of the critical and historiographic engagements of postcolonial studies have been trained on the historical processes, impacts and legacies of European Enlightenment thinking; 'white mythology', as Derrida remarks (1971, 213). Equally Irish postcolonial studies, in particular many of the critics discussed below, have undertaken to prospect the margins or alternative times and spaces of the Enlightenment. Just as Said does not, indeed cannot, jettison the long humanist literary tradition, Irish postcolonial studies has not responded in a reductive, reactionary fashion. As I discuss, it is a question of expanding the temporal and spatial maps of modernity to embrace marginal or alternative modernities. In adopting such an approach, recession into opposition or essentialism is strategically, and necessarily, prevented; such positions merely retain an economy of exclusion and prejudicial edition. As Eagleton notes:

In fact, Said was all along a humanist of the old school, and declares this unfashionable allegiance without the slightest sense of embarrassment. If he fought for the extension of the literary canon to peoples and nations that it shunned, it was not, in his view, a canon to be derided callously...but he also saw his work as extending the work of the great European humanists, drawing upon their scrupulousness, rigour and erudition. (2004, 48)

Moreover, in Said's fealty to the value of a liberatory humanism, we can see his disapproval of an ethically contingent 'postmodern ritual of romanticising the Other' (Eagleton, 2004, 49). Again, Eagleton's terms may be excessively glib, yet they are suggestive of Said's trust in art's celebratory, and of the intellectual's liberatory capacities. Said's expansion of the literary canon within an ethical liberatory humanist framework rejects any notion of unqualified and/or exponential celebrations of hybridity or marginality. Linking his project to Irish postcolonial historiography is his *trust* in language's liberatory potential. Specifically, there are echoes of Said's ethical animus in Whelan's recent historiographic invocation:

The historian is ultimately a witness, who provides testimony: his ethical position depends on trust, trust in the word of another. This trust in testimony, in the expressive function of language, in the moral power of narrative, enables 'an ethics of discourse' (2003 e, 108)

## **Theoretical Approach**

Postcolonial theory has been, and remains, one of the dominant modes of literary and cultural criticism within the broader discourse of Irish Studies. This book will provide a summary theoretical interrogation of the development of a loosely federated structure of such critical discourse. Equally, I will trace the mutual theoretical exchanges between an international postcolonial methodology, canonically embodied in the work of

Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, and the forms of postcolonial critique operative within Irish Studies. In performing such an interrogation, I hope to illuminate the modalities in which postcolonial theory has assumed such an integral disciplinary location within contemporary Irish academia.<sup>3</sup> I evaluate postcolonial criticism as an academic discourse by cursorily applying the work of Pierre Bourdieu to recent academic interventions in Irish cultural theory. Contemporary academic history is notable for the extensive proliferation of postcolonial methodologies in Irish cultural studies; my project is concerned with tracing this development and with providing a comprehensive and evaluative critique of the discipline of postcolonial studies in Ireland. To this end, I provide a proto-genealogy of contemporary critical interventions that have engaged with the contentious notion of Ireland as a postcolonial society.<sup>4</sup> I discuss both the theoretical particularities and the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial theory. I trace a line of development in Irish postcolonial criticism from the earlier interventions of Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd, Shaun Richards, and David Cairns to the more recent arguments of Kevin Whelan, David Lloyd, Luke Gibbons, Colin Graham, Joe Cleary, Angela Bourke and Gerry Smyth.

My first chapter is designed as a summative contextualization of postcolonial studies as it has come to inform contemporary Irish literary and historiographic studies. I examine Deane's work as it concerns itself with ideas of nationalism, essentialism and 'origins', the politics of representation, language and narrative, and Northern Ireland as a colonial crisis. My discussion of Deane is cast in the light both of his own nationalist heritage and also of his involvement with The *Field Day* Theatre Company, affiliations that are central to a clear understanding of his subscription to a colonial/postcolonial

paradigm. I also offer a critique of Deane's semi-fictional work, *Reading in the Dark*, within which, I believe, we can trace many of his critical-political concerns.

My third chapter explores the political dimensions of Kiberd's criticism, and I engage with the numerous critiques of his writing that label it unreconstructed republican apologia, or less severely, as nationalist literary criticism. I argue that both Deane and Kiberd remain unable to move beyond considerations of Irish identity without reference to a concept of 'the nation' or to a form of Irish nationalism. Equally I examine Kiberd's selective engagement with post-colonial criticism itself; noting that while he does employ an overtly post-colonial paradigm, his work is deeply concentrated on the literary, and less so on comparative theoretical structures. Also in chapter three I treat of Gibbons' idea of 'national allegory' in a colonial context; his contention that Ireland is a First World country with a Third World memory; his argument that postcolonial theory must evolve with each new context, and his theory that comparative analyses, in the form of 'lateral mobility', are germane to a postcolonial analysis of Ireland and to the broader elucidation of an ethical postcolonial studies.

Lloyd is concerned with problematizing simplistic, often oppositional models of colonial/anti-colonial discourse. My fourth chapter, then, illuminates how Lloyd's work is focused on minority discourses or subaltern histories, the concept of cultural 'adulteration', on the repressive representational politics of state-led nationalisms and more recently on the theorization of colonial trauma and the possibility and forms of postcolonial recovery. Likewise, I consider Whelan's work, which illuminates the valence of 'radical memory', cultural remembrance and interrogates the politics of historical writing. Chapter five extends my concern with marginalized historical



constituencies, in that I outline and explore the theoretical relations between postcolonial studies, feminist criticism and women's history. Again, this chapter records the historiographic and theoretical recovery of subaltern narratives by historians such as Maria Luddy and Margaret Ward, critiques of cultural nationalism by literary critics such as C.L. Innes and Marjorie Howes and the postcolonial theorization of feminism and gender politics by theorists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Trinh Minh-Ha.

In engaging analytically with a sub-discipline of Irish, and international, cultural studies, it is not my intention to foster any degree of distance between myself as analyst and the parties and bodies of work that I diagnose within these ongoing debates. A cardinal fault of meta-readings of social, academic and cultural constituencies is that a 'gap' or hiatus develops between the 'meta-critic' and the object(s) of critique. In effect, what transpires is a falsely objective reading. Contrarily the dissertation is emphatically rooted/located within the current debates on Irish 'postcoloniality'. This discussion merely represents a novel perspective on the evolution, application and potential of postcolonial methodology within Irish cultural criticism. Bourdieu, argues, with characteristic protraction:

[the critic] can use the objectification of a world in which he participates at least by analogy...in order to reinforce the defence mechanisms of his bad faith, by accentuating the differences which particularize the species [*homo academicus gallicus*]; or, alternatively, he may use it to lay the foundations of a self-analysis, either by concentrating on the invariants of the genus *homo academicus*, or, better still, by educating himself with what he may discover about himself through the objectification, however harsh at first sight, of one of the positions of *homo academicus gallicus* which is homologous to his own position in his own field. (1996, xv)

My intervention, then, is designed to provoke further debate on varieties of postcolonial critique within the broader discourse of Irish Studies. But equally I hope that the dissertation contributes, *in parvo*, to the modes in which we conceive of academic disciplinarity; the politics of academic culture; the role and function of the academic within and beyond textual analysis, and following Bourdieu, to elucidate my own position within the sphere of postcolonial studies and Irish academia. The confines of the dissertation at hand sanction only an interrogation of the institutional matrix of a single, yet ascendant and provocative, academic discipline: postcolonial studies. As I shall develop at length, there have been an increasing number of interventions in the theoretical specificities of postcolonial taxonomy. As I discuss with respect to the work of Cleary, Graham, Smyth, Kirkland, and Connolly in chapters six and seven, respectively, ideas of nationalism, spatial politics and modernization together with debates on subalternity, hybridity and liminality are now prevalent within Irish postcolonial studies. However, a comprehensive and critical genealogy of the field as it has developed, and is developing, in Ireland has yet to emerge. Following Bourdieu's motivation in producing his masterly survey of the French academic field, *Homo Academicus*, my work corresponds with his intention:

to establish the social derivation not only of the categories of thought which it consciously or unconsciously deploys, such as those pairs of antithetical terms which so often inform the scientific construction of the social world, but also of the concepts which it uses, and which are often no more than commonsense notions introduced uncritically into scholarly discourse (1996, xii).

While postcolonial analyses are frequently assailed as literary fashion accessories, or as nationalist apologias or second-hand Marxism, a concerted and lateral critique of

the discipline has never materialized. In fact, there is a sense in which the ability to sanction the necessity of a self-conscious examination of postcolonial theory and/or of Ireland as even potentially postcolonial is to explicitly acknowledge its legitimacy as an academic/critical resource. This desire to marginalize postcolonial studies within Irish studies explains the attenuated and derisory interventions of many revisionist critics; if it is ignored or barbed occasionally it will deflate and disappear. The logic of my critical genealogy is not to surf a wave of academic modishness, of which postcolonial theory is the apparent contemporary embodiment, but rather, to return to Bourdieu, in order to furnish an ‘increase in epistemological vigilance’ (1996, xiii). Critical self-examination does not necessarily terminate in narcissistic self-lionization or in foundational destruction but can serve in a process of critical re-investment through which both the theoretical micro-details and critical macro-structures of intellectual analysis can be ameliorated. One of the most recurrent criticisms of postcolonial studies is its reliance on literary/textual material rather than on what is perceived as more concrete or quantifiable historical data. The legacy of such an internecine academic dispute is that there has rarely been constructive critical dialogue between literary critics and historians with respect to imperial histories, anti-colonial histories or postcolonial theory.

It would be manifestly reductive simply to allow Bourdieu’s theory and methodology to ‘travel’ to a study of Irish postcolonial studies without considering the fact that all tourists/visitors arrive with baggage. And rather than reduce the discussion to an exercise in the application of ‘rigid concepts’ (Lucas, 2001, 97), I conceive of Bourdieu’s relevance as one in which his work provides ‘thinking tools’ (Lucas, 2001, 97) through which an interdisciplinary but contextually alert critique may proceed.

Indeed the necessary caveat that subtends my limited employment of Bourdieuan theory underwrites my particular discussion of the diverse deployments of postcolonial theory within Irish literary and historical writing. In either case it can never be a matter of grafting theoretical resources developed in alternative contexts onto the corpus of Irish cultural criticism.

There is a concerted debate with respect to the legitimacy of Irish claims to postcolonial status; Ireland often seems akin to a pleading First World refugee, seeking asylum in a haven of Third World theory. The facts of Ireland's geographical location and of its relative economic prosperity are ritually garnered as preclusions to its status as definitively 'postcolonial'. The very idea of a *bona fide* postcolonial society, whatever that means, residing within the borders of a modernized continent is abhorrent and/or nonsensical to many revisionist critics. Thus in chapters eight and nine, respectively, I treat of international and specifically Irish critics of postcolonial studies. I will consider the interventions of such critics as Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad, Neil Lazarus, Benita Parry and Epifanio San Juan Jr. While in an Irish context I refer, primarily, to the work of R.F. Foster, Liam Kennedy, Francis Mulhern, Stephen Howe, and Edna Longley.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Ireland: ‘a supreme postcolonial instance’<sup>5</sup>**

The great civilized nations have spread themselves out so widely, and that with increasing rapidity during the last fifty years, as to have brought under their dominion or control nearly all the barbarous or semi-civilized races. Europe- that is to say the five or six races which we call the European branch of mankind-has annexed the rest of the earth, extinguishing some races, absorbing others, ruling others as subjects, and spreading over their native customs and beliefs a layer of European ideas which will sink deeper and deeper till the old native life dies out. (James Bryce, *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, 1) <sup>6</sup>

I am so grateful to Ireland, especially for its literary and cultural example. You have had many more years of imperialism than we have had, and you have produced a fabulous culture of resistance and an extraordinary spirit, which I desperately hope we [the Palestinian people] can measure up to by about 10%...There are three places that have meant a great deal to me; one is South Africa, another is Ireland, and the third is India. These places have meant a great deal to me culturally, not just because there was always a spirit of resistance, but because out of it, there is this huge cultural effort which I think is much more important than arms, and armed struggle. (Edward Said, 1999)<sup>7</sup>

**'a great deal of it must be invention'<sup>8</sup>**

The great English historian of the Russian Revolution, Edward Hallett Carr records the long-term influence of Ranke's enduring aphorism, '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*', seeing the sole purpose of the responsible historian was 'to simply show how it really was' (Carr, 1961, 8). Pretensions to scientificity or objectivity, then, subsume any degree of moral or ethical duty on the part of the historian; indeed the morality is in the attention to detail. Perhaps most characteristic of such positivist historiography is Lord Acton's report on the monumental *Cambridge Modern History*. He observes, 'we can dispose of conventional history, and show the point we have reached on the road from one to the other, now that all information is within reach, and every problem has become capable of solution' (Acton, 1907, 10-12). Most telling in Acton's report is his unwavering subscription to a teleological or developmental historical momentum. The road is the familiar conceit of Enlightenment progress, and equally linearity is the philosophical index of modernity and relative anachronism. Although explicitly referring to discourse on the Third World, Fouad Makki's recent argument is germane to the current discussion, he notes:

Modernisation implied a linear movement from one to the other, and this idea of a single line of historical progress comprised the deeper temporal framework for much social science writing about the Third World. Modernisation was also a relational process at the level of the world system, in which synchronic comparisons between different kinds of society were ordered diachronically to produce both a temporal and spatial scale of development in which the particular present of some societies was privileged as representing the future of others. (2004, 159-160)

Implanted within such a historiographical ideal is a flawed ethical economy; the dichotomous ethical framework of empire nourishes and is sustained by the linear horizon of 'the fullness of the knowledge which the nineteenth century is about to bequeath' (Acton, 1907, 10-12). The critical and ethical anima of postcolonial literary and historiographical studies emanate from the monolithic tendentiousness of such philosophical imprimatur. Latterly, however, the grave ethical, historical and philosophical certainties of Enlightenment thinking/rationality, of imperial mission and of modernization and modernity, have been fixed with the critical and ethical optics of postcolonial reading.

### **Theory and/or Practice**

Language is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is. Without that refusal, without that unceasing generation by the mind of 'counterworlds'-a generation which cannot be divorced from the grammar of counter-factual and optative forms-we would forever turn on the treadmill of the present. (George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 217-218)

In 1999 Robert Young published an editorial manifesto for the recently conceived postcolonial studies journal, *Interventions*. Young's intention as general editor of *Interventions* was, he declared, to position the journal in such a way that its 'guiding principle is to make academic work accountable and to foreground that accountability by forging links with lived politics of the social world' (1999, 29). Intellectual, academic and editorial responsibilities are paramount, and as such must begin to examine the very terms of reference and conceptual paradigms that are operative within current

postcolonial theory. The internal logic of this dissertation accords with Young's assessment and his stated intention of interrogating, '[t]he field of postcolonial studies [which] has already tended to become limited to the invocation of orthodoxies and the impasse of self-referential critiques of postcolonial theory and its theorists' (1999, 33-34). The critical genealogy proposed here adumbrates the employment of postcolonial methodology in an Irish context and illuminates Ireland's disputed status as a *bona fide* postcolonial society. My discussion encompasses recent, radical re-assessments of both the suitability and efficacy of postcolonial tropes within Irish Studies and outlines the academic processes and politics that have seen a profound proliferation of postcolonial methodology and terminology within Irish literary and historical studies. Finally I evaluate the extent to which Irish postcolonial studies has, or possibly can, 're-invoke the politics, political objectives and commitment through which, historically, postcolonial critique was originally generated' (Young, 1999, 33-34).

The relative utility of postcolonial studies has been a matter of some protracted and virulent dispute, largely derided by historians, in contrast to a much broader constituency of qualified acceptance within literary criticism. Perhaps it is apt, then, to enlist the favourable words of a historian, Dane Kennedy, who has issued an equivocal, but not prejudiced, assessment of postcolonial theory. Kennedy concludes:

It has reoriented and reinvigorated imperial studies, taking it in directions that the conventional historiography of the British Empire has hardly begun to consider. It has raised provocative, often fundamental questions about the epistemological structures of power and the cultural foundations of resistance, about the porous relationship between metropolitan and colonial societies, about the construction of



group identities in the context of state formation, even about the nature of historical evidence itself. (Kennedy, 1996, 356)

The reading strategies of postcolonial theory are trained on the ethics of identitarian power structures, specifically the disenfranchizing disparities of colonial subjugation. Equally, postcolonial theory as a battery of discursive resources, explicates the teleologies and ideologies of the postcolonial nation-state. While its genesis in Western academic constituencies was characteristic of a reductive textualization of inherently 'material' concerns, latterly, postcolonial theorization has evolved to a consideration of the contextual specifics of diverse socio-political communities.

### **Introducing Postcolonial Ireland!**

Literary theory is thus not innocent of political complicity by way of the framework or paradigm that informs it, together with its ethical and moral implications. (Epifanio San Juan Jr., *Articulations of Power in Ethnic and Racial Studies in the United States*, 39)

In the Monty Python film, *The Life of Brian* there is a scene in which an 'anti-imperial', Judean resistance cell furiously affirm their title as the 'People's Front of Judea' and emphatically not as the 'Judean People's Front' or the 'People's Popular Front of Judea.' Without wanting to reduce the gravity of current academic debates within Irish and postcolonial studies to such inane levels, the tenor and nature of certain aspects of contemporary cultural theory, specifically postcolonialism, seem to generate similar superficial and frankly circuitous dialogue. At bottom, there is a marked willingness within many critical analyses towards persistent deferral and disavowal; too often the

security of abstraction and conceptual circuitousness disabuses theory of its practical potential and relevance.

The impact of theory, or specifically the advent of an Irish franchise of postcolonial studies, has produced a contentious as well as progressive commerce of ideas and theoretical paradigms within the broader discourse of Irish Studies.<sup>9</sup> Despite the poststructuralist murkiness, paradigmatic vanity, and indulgent verbosity of some international postcolonial theory, I would contend that the resources of postcolonial literary theory and historiography provide signally enabling mechanisms for Irish cultural inquiry. These critics are emblematic of the most perceptive facets of Irish, and indeed international, postcolonial criticism, and are constituents of a lateral economy of ideas: what might be seen as a postcolonial cathexis within Irish studies.

Since the advent of poststructuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism, the integrity of narrative representation and the unified subject position have become increasingly precarious. However, the historian Gyan Prakash provides a moment of definitional clarity with respect to the project of contemporary postcolonial theory, as distinct from the pursuits of poststructuralist critical theory. He surmizes:

[postcolonial theory is] concerned not so much with decentering the individual as a founding subject, it has nevertheless forced a crisis in universalist ideologies and provoked a genuine confrontation of discrepant histories and cultures by taking a combative stance with respect to the legacies of the application of such parts of the 'Western tradition' as reason, progress, and history to non-European cultures. (1992, 378)

The discursive resources of postcolonial criticism, then, have both supplemented and pillaged this critical narrative incredulity. Postcolonial studies is manifestly concerned with foregrounding exigent historical and contemporary experiences and legacies of all forms of imperialism. By facilitating discussions of imperial and anti-imperial experience across borders and within a protracted historical continuum, theoretical readings strive to, indeed must, contribute to ethical readings of colonialism, neo-colonialism and postcolonialism.

A range of internal factors complicates readings of colonial occupation, in which all notions of language, ethnicity, faith, class, and gender were drastically affected, factors which expand and challenge the mandate of postcolonial studies. Indeed the depth and protraction of Ireland's colonial experience, together with the vanguard initiative of its anti-colonial agitation, are judged as both instrumental and informative of subsequent 'Third World' anti-colonial movements. Indeed, Ireland's 'mixed' (Kiberd, 1996 a, 5) position in relation to imperialism, its collusion and subjugation, can, in Kiberd's view 'complicate, extend and in some cases expose the limits of current models of postcoloniality' (1996 a, 5).

Irish literary and historical studies seem to offer propitious material with which to explicate the temporal and spatial differentials of imperialism, anti-colonialism and postcolonialism. Through a discursive imbrication of, and conversation between, previously antagonistic disciplines, the present dissertation will potentially yield novel perspectives on, and understandings of, both literary and historical readings of colonial history and postcolonial theorization. Given Ireland's historically ambiguous position *vis-*

*à-vis* British colonialism and the recrudescence of such a position in contemporary politics, I believe that there is an urgent need at the present time for a lateral, international survey of empire and of Ireland's relationship to imperialism.

One of, if not the, primary critical targets of postcolonial studies has been the concept of 'the nation.' Just as literary and historical narratives are adjudged Eurocentric, exclusionary and prescriptive, the nation as historical construct is diagnosed as a logical exclusionary narrative in itself. As we shall discuss, postcolonial studies operates on the assumption that cultural and political discourses are necessarily imbricated. The nation and its legitimating narratives work at all levels of social discourse in perpetuating its necessary fictions in order to maintain a form of operable community. As Lloyd argues:

The 'post' in postcolonialism refers not to the passing of colonialism but to the vantage point of critiques which are aimed at freeing up the processes of decolonization from the inhibiting effects of a nationalism invested in the state form. Such critiques make way for the reconstitution of *alternative narratives* which emerge in the history our present, with its multiple contemporaneous rhythms and intersections. (1999, 41)

Alterity, multiplicity and contemporaneity are the watchwords of a battery of theoretical strategies designed to vitiate the hegemonic stasis of the modern nation-state.

Many counter-arguments against the utility or validity of postcolonial theory accent its apparent seamless import-export economy of theoretical procedures; the borderless abstract geography that accommodates 'travelling theory'. Bill Ashcroft makes a salient point in arguing that '[t]he difficulty many people have with the apparent ambiguity of 'using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house', stems from an

extremely restricted perception of identity, (2000, 3). Or as Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze notes, there is a common misapprehension within postcolonial studies 'that all formerly colonized person's ought to have one view of the impact of colonialism' (1997, 285). The purpose of this dissertation, then, is to delineate the recent, and ongoing, Irish inflection of postcolonial theory. As Eze and Ashcroft rightly note, theoretical examinations of postcolonial societies cannot be conducted under the tenets of a universalist typology, but neither can theory fetishize the local in terms of political, cultural or historical 'exceptionalism'.

The work considered in this dissertation belongs to Ireland's protracted engagement with British colonialism, which also encompasses its variegated anti-colonial efforts and its incomplete process of decolonization. Many of the interventions exhibit traces of, and likewise interrogate, Ireland's liminal political and cultural location. The significance of Ireland's co-option into debates on colonial history and postcoloniality is, as Young notes:

The forms of revolutionary and cultural activism developed by the Irish against the entrenched self-interest of its rule by the British aristocracy and bourgeoisie meant that it remained the standard bearer for all anti-colonial movements in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries...[Ireland] provided a model for the most effective combination of tactics for all future anti-colonial struggle aside from those dependent entirely on military insurrection. (2001, 302)

Equally, the militant critical output of African anti-colonial writers and activists of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the later revisionist historians of Indian nationalism, have provided Irish postcolonial studies with theoretical resources with which to confront

anew Ireland's colonial history and postcolonial present and futures. In other words, and heeding Ashcroft and Eze, Irish postcolonial studies belongs to a protracted continuum of resistant engagement and to a historically constituted circulatory system of theoretical and ideational exchange.

## **Ireland and Postcolonial Studies**

Although the development of Irish postcolonial studies is frequently attributed to the work of literary and cultural critics, Cleary rightly points out that '[t]he work that appeared in the 1980s built on earlier scholarship and intersected with other intellectual currents' (2003 a, 17). Specifically, the historiographical initiatives and research of David Beers-Quinn and Nicholas Canny positioned Ireland's colonial history within what became known as 'Atlantic History'.<sup>10</sup> As Canny recently commented, historians of the Atlantic world:

seek to establish whether the Atlantic Ocean, like the Mediterranean, as imagined by Fernand Braudel...had served more to bring together people of vastly different cultures than to separate them...Atlantic history is necessarily comparative history, with historians re-constituting the African slave-trade as it was pursued on the Atlantic by adventurers of various European backgrounds. (2003, 739)<sup>11</sup>

Equally, within Irish economic history the work of Raymond Crotty and Jim MacLaughlin drew on international theories of dependency.<sup>12</sup> Crotty's theory of dependent development, then, linked Irish economic performance to other postcolonial societies; such ideas of lateral exchange and comparability have since been extended to cultural, theoretical and ethical discourses, and retain a disputatious valence. These

historiographic and economic currents, together with the diverse international critical, and further historiographic, influences have contributed to the heterogeneity of Irish postcolonial studies (Cleary, 2003 a, 24).<sup>13</sup>

In a 2000 review of Walter Benjamin's *Selected Writings*, Kiberd provides a telling summative comment on Benjamin's philosophy of history, '[f]or Benjamin, too, tradition is the moment when a past molecule comes into collision with a present one, releasing a new and unprecedented form of energy into the future' (8). Within Benjamin's dialectic such an historical approach is emphatically not a recourse to nostalgic remembrance, and even though 'nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history' (Benjamin, 1992, 246), Benjamin does not canvass the inert accumulation or record of past events. The historical narratives of 'progress', then, are as ineffectual or disingenuous as the stasis of nostalgic recollection; in fact the two are inseparable. In his sixteenth thesis on the philosophy of history, Benjamin distinguishes between 'eternal' images [sic] of the past [my emphasis]' and 'experiences *with* the past [my emphasis]' (1992, 254). He demands that the historical materialist must be 'man enough to blast open the continuum of history' (1992, 254). As will become apparent Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' are explicitly and implicitly consistent theoretical reference points for many of the interventions within postcolonial Irish studies. The distance represented by 'images of the past' is not available to critics of Irish colonial history; instead postcolonial Irish studies has imagined, and is continually re-imagining, reading strategies that facilitate 'experiences with the past'.

Lloyd succinctly encapsulates the analytical *modus operandi* that will inform my dissertation when he concludes, 'the very division between politics and culture that is the hallmark of liberal ideology is conceptually bankrupt throughout the colonial world' (Lloyd 1997, 88). The mechanisms of political influence and the autonomy of cultural self-representation are intimately linked, and consequently the work of postcolonial projects is to split apart the apparent conjunction between the nation-state and its history in order to open up space for the recovery and the articulation of alternative narratives (Lloyd, 1999, 40). Eugene O'Brien stresses, 'the interpenetration of text and context, an interpenetration that [is]... synecdochic of a series of larger ones between colonized and colonizer as well as self and other' (2000, 57); such 'interpenetration' is characteristic of many of the following postcolonial critical readings. Irish postcolonial criticism, then, is incarnated as variant forms of cultural historicization as it strives to situate 'works of art as products of their age' (Kiberd, 1996 a, 4).

In the editorial of a recent, specially commissioned issue of the *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies: Ireland as Postcolonial*, Caitríona Moloney and Helen Thompson dispatched a manifesto for prospective interventions in Irish cultural studies, 'in order for Ireland to be considered part of the postcolonial paradigm, the paradigm itself must change. And conversely, Irish studies must do away with its isolationism...in order to see itself relationally with other cultures and nations' (2000, 4). I have chosen this particular editorial clarion-call to initiate my discussion, not because it heralds any revolutionary theoretical strategy or seismic methodological innovation, but rather because it pithily, and at times unwittingly, alludes to and simultaneously



embodies what has, is and needs to be addressed within the broader discourse of Irish postcolonial studies. The overriding assumption of the editorial is that Ireland does indeed seek to be part of the *postcolonial paradigm*. The presumptions of the editors consequently elide two inherent problems of their manifesto. Firstly, there is an unequivocal aspiration to locate Ireland *successfully* within a nexus of postcolonial cultures. More troubling, however, is the inference of an undifferentiated postcolonial paradigm. The project of Irish postcolonial studies is emphatically not to formulate serviceable theoretical archetypes, typologies, or vocabularies; its usefulness is adumbrated clearly by Graham and Kirkland in their own editorial introduction to *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity*:

a cultural theory informed by postcolonial criticism... locates moments of transience, instability and inauthenticity; a process designed not so much to buttress the existence of a new state but rather to question the frame in which the ideas of the state are articulated. (Graham and Kirkland, 1999, 4)

The words of Gibbons resonate in Moloney and Thompson's demand for an alteration to the so-called 'postcolonial paradigm'. The underlying editorial conviction asserts that both Ireland and postcolonialism must engage in a process of critical symbiosis, in which specific Irish discourses neither dictate the terms of postcolonial critique nor allow any brand of postcolonial typology to theoretically essentialize Irish cultural and political discourses. Equally Irish cultural studies must eschew any form of critical 'isolationism' and must remain receptive to the mutually enriching exchange of ideas with alternative cultures and nations. Clearly such a prescription is designed to transcend the unenlightened simplicities of criticism that perpetuates Irish

'exceptionalism.' The editorial echoes, and harmonizes with, the tenets of Kiberd's critical oeuvre, specifically:

Because the Irish were the first modern people to decolonise in the twentieth century, it [seems] useful to make comparisons with other, subsequent movements...[i]f Ireland once inspired many leaders of the 'developing' world, today the country has much to learn from them. (Kiberd, 1996 a, 5)

While the editorial issues a variety of critical injunctions, and also summarily embodies both the best and the worst aspects/features of postcolonial criticism, I believe that the proto-genealogy offered below will advertize the fact that many of these discursive issues have been broached, and frequently addressed by contemporary Irish cultural critics

Moloney and Thompson proceed to posit the question: 'what is at stake for both Irish and postcolonial studies?' (2000, 3-4), and they conclude that recent debate within and surrounding Ireland's 'putative postcolonial condition' (Lloyd, 1993, 158) is related to matters of 'intellectual territory' (Moloney and Thompson, 2000, 3-4). By deploying an overtly spatial metaphor, the editors imply a linkage between the power structures of imperialism and the politics of disciplinary autonomy within the academy. Thus, not only do postcolonial scholars diagnose the imbrication of political and cultural practices within colonial discourse, but perforce must contend with the vicissitudes of political chicanery within their own academic disciplines. As we shall see, postcolonial critics are profoundly sensitive to the politics of cultural representation and access to political participation within colonial, decolonizing, and postcolonial societies. Equally, my later discussion will furnish Irish postcolonial studies with a disciplinary self-image. My initial engagement with the specifics of postcolonial theorization will therefore be supplemented

and contextualized by an interrogation of the macro-structures of postcolonial studies as an academic discipline.

The diversity and contradictions that abound within the field of post-colonial theory, on a global scale, are symptomatic of a fraught and multifarious legacy and they highlight the magnitude and the profundity of the ravages inflicted on colonized nations under the imperial occupation. Bart Moore-Gilbert asserts:

such has been the elasticity of the concept *postcolonial* that in recent years some commentators have begun to express anxiety that there may be a danger of it imploding as an analytic concept with any real cutting edge. (1997, 11)

The continued interrogation of imperialism is regarded as anachronistic by some critics and is seen as a retrograde step in any process of 'recovery', as Diana Brydon surmizes 'deconstructing imperialism keeps us within imperialism's orbit' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, 20). Post-colonial theory has begun, in recent times, to veer away from the strict oppositional models that were characteristic of Said's early theorization, specifically in *Orientalism*, and has adopted a more complex and often dense analytical methodology, particularly in the work of Bhabha and that of Spivak. Thus any investigation of the value and relevance of post-colonial theorization on a global scale or within a specific context, in this case Ireland, must be wary of attempts at generalization or efforts to create tendentious master-narratives, as Eagleton admonishes, '[t]o wish class or nation away, to seek to live in sheer irreducible difference now... is to play straight into the hands of the oppressor' (1990, 23-24).

Gibbons contends that, 'a culture has not found its own voice until it has expressed itself in a body of critical as well as creative work' (1996, xi); thus Ireland can be read as being part of a contemporary process of 're-presentation' under the rubric of post-colonial critical theory. The satisfactory expression of an individual or communal consciousness cannot be achieved solely through the medium of art and requires a further act of criticism. The debate surrounding the widespread acceptance of Ireland's position as a postcolonial society, however, is as contentious as the debate within postcolonial discourse itself.

Liam O'Dowd, however, is sceptical about the wholesale employment of post-colonial theory; he warns, 'colonialism is *not* some magic key which unlocks the secrets of Irish society' (1988, 19). Ireland's colonial heritage cannot become a type of cultural or national scapegoat to which our past, present and future failures are attributable. He does acknowledge, 'the de-colonizing thesis advanced by Kiberd, Deane and others seems to hold the most explicit promise of incorporating questions of material development and identity within one frame', recognizing the necessity for refocusing Irish cultural and social examination, with Ireland's colonial history as the locus of inquiry (O'Dowd, 1988, 17). He advocates engagement with 'the colonial dimensions of Irish life, and underlines the exigency of refocusing Irish cultural and social examination, with Ireland's colonial history as the locus of inquiry' (1988, 18).

## **Narration and its Alternatives**

For many years in post-independence Ireland there was an effort on the part of our intellectual elite, both political and clerical to '*purify* Irish identity while leaving unchallenged the basic economic and class relationships of society' (O'Dowd, 1988, 12). The immediate reaction of Ireland on achieving independence was not to confront the legacy of our colonial occupation but to perpetuate the structures previously imposed. The 'colonial dimensions' that persist in Irish society are a legacy of this 'purification' process, the retention of oppositional politics and sectarianism; the formulation of State Catholicism and the continued subscription to the myths of traditional nationalism still resonate in Ireland and the demands they have made on our society have yet to be conclusively resolved.

Gibbons reminds us that 'Irish society did not have to await the twentieth century to undergo the shock of modernity: disintegration and fragmentation were already a part of its history...Irish culture experienced modernity before its time' (1996, 6). Ireland experienced the discontinuity that is the trademark of every colonized society; the fractious nature of the Irish condition is the tradition of the colonized. Thus the effort of the post-colonial critic in Ireland is to theorize this sense of discontinuity and to achieve some sense of a national and localized narrative without resorting to exclusionary ends. It is neither the task nor the prerogative of the post-colonial critic to (re)-establish a monolithic discourse simply for the sake of ordaining a tradition or of locating a tendentious continuity. The discontinuity itself is the legitimate focus of theorization and interrogation; the fractured colonial self is the history that we must confront. The post-

colonial critic must be entirely aware of the dialectical and contrapuntal dynamics of Irish society, the sectarian divide, manifest in religious and political cleavage is a long-term and at present irresolvable legacy of our colonial heritage.

Prakash relates the urgency of post-orientalist or post-foundational histories<sup>14</sup>, specifically in relation to Indian colonial historiography; the sentiments expressed below, however, are equivalent to the project of Irish postcolonial studies as evidenced in the work of Deane, Lloyd, and Gibbons. Prakash suggests:

Rather, in highlighting the shifting constructions of India, my intention is to suggest that instability, contestation, and change were inherent in historiography's performance as a political discourse even as it narrativized India's history in terms of such unitary themes as the achievement of nationhood, the rise of capitalism, and the transition from 'tradition' to 'modernity.' (Prakash, 1992, 354)

As Prakash justifiably recognizes, such an inflection of Indian historiography overlaps with the differentiating and centrifugal impulses of poststructuralist critical theory. Notably, Irish postcolonial criticism is characterized by a marked reliance and mobilization of both Spivak's and Bhabha's poststructuralist interrogation of the colonial subject-position; the defiance and insidious durability of essences and universals have fallen under the critical/interrogative optic of Irish postcolonial critique.

In canvassing the project of the *Subaltern Studies* collective, Prakash argues that 'Subaltern Studies plunged into this historiographical contest over the *representation* of the culture and politics of the people [my emphasis]' (1994, 1477). It is this contestation of representational autonomy/proprietorship that forms the germ of Irish postcolonial studies. As I shall delineate, particularly in the criticism of Deane, Lloyd, Gibbons, and

Kiberd, it is access to and control of representational means that legitimate/foster/underwrite all forms of political power. Significantly both Lloyd and Deane express, almost verbatim, the critical sentiments of Prakash's subalternist assertion. Deane argues, '[i]t is obvious that the ease or difficulty encountered by a community in verbally representing itself has an effect on the ease or difficulty it has in being politically represented' (1997 a, 150); while in an earlier edition Lloyd contends, '[a]ccess to representation is accordingly as much a question of aesthetics as of power or numbers, and not to be represented often as intrinsically a function of formal as of material causes' (1993, 6).

In an otherwise disparaging article, the historian and long-time critic of postcolonial studies, Arif Dirlik summarizes the manifesto of such Subaltern or 'postfoundational' history; he notes, '[h]ence local interactions take priority over global structures in the shaping of these relationships, which implies that they are better comprehended historically in their heterogeneity than structurally in their fixity' (Dirlik, 1994, 336). The transfer or appropriation of revolutionary ideas is not a matter of unproblematic permeation from centre to periphery. However this very disjunction between Ireland's relative First World 'location' and its recent and protracted colonial history is alternatively posited as evidential of an enabling postcolonial hybridity or ambivalence; proximity to the metropole is deigned problematically empowering by a constituency of Irish postcolonial critics. These 'materialist' disqualifiers remain inured against the insipid cultural resonances of the Irish colonial experience. As Lloyd and

Gibbons have demonstrated in their most recent work, colonial trauma and postcolonial recovery/nostalgia are irreducible to the logic of economic statistics.

The self-evident racial contiguity between colonizer and colonized in an Irish context proves another problematic element of Irish colonial history, complicating received ideas regarding the interface of racial hierarchies within the colony. Gibbons has outlined the deeply unsettling effect of Ireland's 'whiteness' on colonial writers and travellers in the nineteenth century. Similarly revisionist critics argue that Ireland was always part of the metropole, that it could never be genuinely considered an outlying colony as it and its people played an active role in the administration and expansion of the British imperial mission.<sup>15</sup> Thus readings of such a prolonged colonial occupation, in which all notions of language, ethnicity, faith, class, and gender were drastically affected, are complicated by a range of internal factors, factors which I feel expand and challenge the mandate of postcolonial studies; readings of Irish culture through postcolonial paradigms re-calibrate categorizations such as colonial, postcolonial, and Irishness. Indeed the depth and protraction of Ireland's colonial experience together with the vanguard initiative of its anti-colonial agitation are judged as both instrumental and informative of subsequent 'Third World' anti-colonial movements.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Seamus Deane, Field Day and Postcolonialism

What such linear models of social change overlook is that tradition itself may often have a transformative impact, particularly if it activates muted voices from the historical past, or from marginalized sections of the community. (Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, 4)

Liberation in the arts, however, even by itself, remains a reflection, a craving for, or restatement of identity, a rejection of social categorization, leading, in most instances, to a recovery of and a revindication of some past (not necessarily one's own), or origin...Once we concede that, we understand also that artistic renaissance is never an isolated event wherever the practicing artists are linked by a sense of identification, be it of race, religion, sense of origin, or social ideology. Style, in such circumstances, becomes a critical statement of intent, even in its groping, inchoate stages, a manifesto and shared instrument of self-liberation. (Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness*, 130)

## The Deane of Irish Postcolonial Studies

Reflecting on the impact of *Orientalism* in 1994, Said wrote:

My aim, as I said earlier, was not so much to dissipate difference itself-for who can deny the constitutive role of national as well as cultural differences in the relations between human beings-but to challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things. (1994, [1978], 350)

It is apparent that Said's 'aim' has become the *modus operandi* for postcolonial Irish studies. As I will discuss with respect to Deane's criticism below, differences are not bleached under the theoretical optic of postcolonial reading. What is affected though is 'a re-appropriation of the historical experience of colonialism, revitalized and transformed into a new aesthetic of sharing and often transcendent re-formulation' (1994, [1978], 351). Deane's critiques are trained on the politics of representation within a manifestly colonial Irish history. They aim to re-present the multifarious historical and literary narratives that have arisen within, and/or sought to represent, Ireland. It is not a question of oppositional confrontation or the ordination of new theoretical or historical orthodoxies, but as Said argues 'of rethinking and re-formulating' (1994, [1978], 351).

In a 1993 interview with Dympna Callaghan, Deane reflected that:

most of what I have been doing with *Field Day*, and occasionally in Ulster, has been to argue against an essentialist version of Irish nationalism. To say this is not to deny the need that people have to construct an historical identity, or the viability of essentialist arguments as political strategies. (1993, 40)<sup>16</sup>

Prefiguring the work of Lloyd, Gibbons and Whelan, Deane inveighs against attenuated, facile manifestations and legitimations of Irish nationalism. Indeed such ‘an essentialist version’ entraps itself within an imitative dialectic; in Deane’s reading formalized nationalist expression merely became an inverted, and vacant, copy of its British counterpart. Explicit within Deane’s advocacy of viable ‘essentialist arguments’ is Spivak’s notion of ‘strategic essentialism’. In other words a critical approach that accents the ideas of strategy and deconstruction in its interrogations of debilitating essentialisms; but equally that unmask the political mis-use of essences in colonial contexts.<sup>17</sup> While denying the transhistorical rigidity of political and cultural identities, Deane divines a legitimate currency in the use of such strategic identitarian politics. As we will discuss with respect to Kiberd’s work, it is not a matter of empirical facticity that is the sole legitimating criteria; essentialist notions of identity manifest in myth, folklore or oral culture retained a singular valence in conceptions of communal and national identity.

## **Language and Power**

In the 1990 ‘Introduction’ to *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, Deane summarizes the critical and artistic manoeuvres of *Field Day*’s theatrical wing:

In the theater, the central preoccupation has been with a particular experience of what we may call translation. By this I mean the adaptations, readjustments, and reorientations that are required of individuals and groups who have undergone a traumatic cultural and political crisis so fundamental that they must forge for themselves a new speech, a new history or life-story that would give it some rational or coherent form. (14)

Just as Cairns and Richards relate Foucault's reading of language as an exercise of hegemonic discourse, Deane's analysis identifies the political fabric of linguistic assertion and exchange. Referring to Foucault, Cairns and Richards argue that '[o]ur point of reference...should not be language and signs but war and battle' (1988, 16). The transparent interpretive cast of language, then, is compromised by its complicity with, indeed necessity to, differential power relations. Deane makes a related point in a more recent essay; he links language to the experiences of authority, displacement and loss. Language is not solely a medium of exchange, or a benign cultural indice, but as Deane asserts, '[e]nglish is not merely the language of a country or an empire or of an invading culture; it is the language of a condition-modernity. It is in relation to modernity...that Irish linguistic behaviour is best examined' (2003, 113).

Deane's critical analyses are centred on the notion that language is a primary site of colonial oppression and, by extension, of anti-colonial resistance. His interventions are targeted at dismantling the constricting binary oppositions that prevail within the colonial society, oppositions that are enabled and facilitated by the debasement of language. In Deane's view the coincidence of the real and the phantasmal are the true hallmarks of a colonized society. His dialectic is founded on the belief that colonial oppression is asserted through and by language. Language itself becomes the means and the site of colonial tension, oppression, subversion, and suspicion. Language and action are imbued with inherent political import, and oppositional idioms mutate into stereotype and essences. Deane's *oeuvre* is characterized by a desire to deconstruct these disabling idioms and to supplant them with a mindset and a methodology that will enable 'an

escape from traditional pieties' which are perceived as 'restrictive and binding' (1984, 81). Deane's project of post-colonial recovery is similarly beholden to this conception of language as culturally, and implicitly politically, enabling. In George Steiner's terms, the absence of language, specifically modes of cultural and political representation, renders the subject aphasic; the subject remains 'forever on the treadmill of the present' (1975, 217-218). Thus possible futures are constructed in and through language, and it is also the means by which the present is altered.

The most enduring project with which Deane is affiliated is *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. In the same interview Deane argues that the anthology articulates necessary questions about the nature of Irish identity, Irish writing and the relationship between the two. The anthology asks 'what kind of identity formation attaches to certain kinds of writing and how are these identities recruited for certain purposes' (1993, 41). Deane, then, explodes the tenuous demarcation of politics and culture; following Said's reading of Orientalist cultural politics, Deane's reading of Irish colonial history locates the ideological grounding and mobilization of cultural discourses, including literature, philosophy and historiography. Indeed Deane's summative remarks regarding the anthology recall his earlier pamphlet, 'Civilians and Barbarians', in which he concludes:

Political languages fade more slowly than literary languages but when they do, they herald a deep structural alteration in the attitudes which sustain a crisis. Of all the blighting distinctions which govern our responses and limit our imaginations at the moment, none is more potent than this four hundred year-old distinction between barbarians and civilians. (1985 a, 42)

In articulating such re-readings or representations of such previously ‘recruited’ texts, Deane invokes a Saidian methodology, which was earlier manifest in his political reading of Ireland and Britain in terms of barbarism and civility. If we recall the Marxist epigram at the beginning of Said’s *Orientalism*: ‘[t]hey cannot represent themselves, they must be represented’; Deane’s interrogation of the relationship between literature, politics and political philosophy in terms of Irish colonial history is pursued with such a conclusion in mind.

Ruminating on the hunger strikes of 1980-81, Deane writes:

The point of the crisis was passed without anyone seeming to know why the explosion did not come. Perhaps the truth is that both sides had played out their self-appointed roles to such a literal end, that there was nothing left but a sense of exhaustion. (1985 a, 42)

The identitarian binaries of a sectarianized society, then, frame the dramatic action of the political stage. In such debilitating circumstances language is purged of its revolutionary possibilities, it becomes a dematerialized and redundant vehicle in the perpetuation of staid essentialisms.<sup>18</sup> The durability of debilitating political idioms is galvanized by structures of communal feeling and of sectarianized social memory. Deane’s interrogation of such a dichotomous colonial *milieu*, as we have noted, evidences clear Saidian origins; the roots and the mechanisms of division/oppression remain matters of representational hegemony and exclusion. The key issue for Deane is the necessity to re-imagine routes out of such deleterious and hoary theatre.

In his framework, however, it seems that the origins of such mutually retrograde exchange rest with British colonialism. While a drama of action/reaction had developed

between a static, essentialist nationalism and its oppressive colonial antagonist, the historical onus of responsibility rests with the insidious, sectarian rhetoric of conquest, expounded by and since John Davies, Edmund Spenser and Thomas Carlyle (Deane, 1985 a, 33-35). The task undertaken by *Field Day*, then, was concretizing such alternative routes through the re-presentation of a variety of representations of Ireland and Irishness.

Reflecting on the composition of Irish writing in the nineteenth century, Deane writes:

So, it is possible to characterize Irish writing from the Act of Union to the Irish Revival as having the standard characteristics of a minority or of a colonial literature-disempowered by the canonical forms of the colonizer's discourse, reempowered by the experimental search for alternatives to it, marginally rewritten as a new centrality or as the common plight of decentredness, deterritorialization and even reterritorialization of the major language, the claim to modernity of experience as against experiences of modernization, the epistemological privileges that accompany all of these. (1994, 138-139)

Besides offering a protracted genealogy of cultural representation in which the differentials of colonizer/centre/modernity and colonized/periphery/tradition became increasingly politically necessary, Deane offers a typology of colonial literature. In effect, he adumbrates a modular formula that is reminiscent of both Said's and Fanon's schematic readings of colonization and, in Fanon's case, of anti-colonial resistance. Certainly there is an explicit danger of an ahistorical universalism in Deane's schema; as I will argue at length, attaching 'standard characteristics' to experiences of colonialism is a tendentious strategy. Equally, Deane seems to assert an identifiable 'narrative' of anti-

colonial representation; while his reading may legitimately resonate in Irish writing, just as Fredric Jameson was correctly censured by Aijaz Ahmad for his universalist typology of 'national allegory'<sup>19</sup>, Deane's assertion of a modular formula of colonial and anti-colonial cultural representation of conquered space seems questionable.

### **The (Spatial) Politics of (Spatial) Representation**

Space is both physical and mental. It can seem like a vast absence or a presence that crushes or consoles, intimidates or inspires. Space can be a liberating cliff-top full of warm memories or a dark, cold room that can almost freeze a heart with fears familiar yet inexplicable...Space is the horror of foul congestion and the thrill of limitless possibility. (Brendan Kennelly, 'Foreword', vii)

The extent to which the accumulation of knowledge and the representation of difference were integral elements of diverse imperial projects is illustrated in Said's cataloguing of '[t]he official intellectual genealogy of Orientalism' (1994, [1978], 99). Said writes, '[i]t would also include the diffusive capacity of learned societies...imaginative and travel literature...major geographical surveys done all through the Orient...trading societies...translation funds, the implantation in the Orient of schools, missions, consular offices, factories' (1994, [1978], 99-100). Said reveals a vertiginous network of federated initiatives, which were delegated the tasks or 'missions' of accumulation and the policing of imperial interests. Indeed Said's catalogue bears a distinct resemblance to the development of Ireland's 'masked modernity', as it became exposed to, and represented by and for, the modernizing forces of British imperialism: a process, that as Deane discusses below, became part of the politics of Irish cultural space.



While Ireland as a ‘contained’ geographical, cultural, political and economic ‘other’ had been a consistent theme of Irish-British colonial exchange, Deane argues:

After 1800, travel literature had a more specific purpose than before – namely, to make Ireland recognizably a part of the United Kingdom, to represent it as a part of the larger system, or to represent it in such a way that its refusal to be so could be explained, if not excused. (1994, 118)

The political integration demanded in the wake of the Act of Union was to be serviced by adequate cultural representation. Space became a crucial corollary to the temporal axis of developmental historical narrative; civility and barbarism could now be gauged and represented in both temporal and spatial indices. As Gibbons asserts:

the four-stages theory of history promulgated by the French and Scottish Enlightenments...which introduced the ‘spatialization of time’, the equation of distance in time with distance in space, which was so amenable to colonial ideology. Boundaries and frontiers in space became the equivalent of stages and epochs in history. (2003 c, 57)<sup>20</sup>

The valorization of an Irish space or physical landscape to a system of hegemonic political and cultural representation creates a situation in which such landscape is made to ‘conform to a paradigm in terms of which it can successfully be represented as a specific place, indeed, but also as a *locus* for various forms of ideological investment’ (Deane, 1994, 119). Again, echoing Said’s reading of the West’s ‘creation’ of the East, a paradigmatic binarism of a romantic, unruly cultural landscape in Ireland emerges and is readily juxtaposed to the utilitarian functionalism of metropolitan England. As Whelan

notes, '[t]o travel in space would now be to travel in time: travel literature became one of the principal discursive forms of the Enlightenment' (Whelan, 2000, 186).

Deliberating the nature of travel writing, Holland and Huggan conclude that although it may prove 'entertaining', nevertheless it 'is hardly harmless and that behind its apparent innocuousness and its charmingly anecdotal observations lies a series of powerfully distorting myths about other (often "non-Western") cultures' (1998, 8). Similarly, and just as Deane does, Hooper refers to the upsurge in travel writing in and about Ireland<sup>21</sup>, in the post Act of Union era. He intersects with Holland and Huggan's ideological reading of such representation. He writes, '[t]hroughout the nineteenth century, discussions concerning national identity, security, and the future political relations between these islands permeate travellers' accounts, indicating that geographical distance was not the sole criteria for determining 'strangeness' (2002 b, 174). Interestingly, Hooper's idiom of 'strangeness' directly echoes Deane's conceptualization of Ireland's colonial relationship with Britain, as one that is imagined in terms of strangeness and boredom, or in rational parlance, barbarism and civility.

In effect the recalcitrant, ambiguous 'other', whether that 'other' is a physical space, a person, a community, a language, a legal custom or a medium of exchange, must be rendered 'knowable' within the epistemological frame of reference of the colonizer/metropolitan traveller. Or as Hooper argues elsewhere, '[k]nowledge of geographical regions, or of ethnographical groupings, or of climactic or topographical conditions, would be the new determinants in the nineteenth century race for empire' (2000, 217). Following Said, Foucault and Derrida, the physical objects of colonial space

are regulated, recorded and systemized for representational/textual consumption, as well as epistemological stability/anchorage. Writing about the H.M. Stanley archive in Belgium, which houses some of the archival records of Leopold II's imperial conquest of the Congo Free State, the historian Angus Mitchell records a similar epistemological enterprise, '[t]oday the H.M. Stanley archive at Tervuren holds an exceptional catalogue of papers: diaries, note-books, newspapers, correspondences, charts and photographs documenting the procession of explorers, missionaries, soldiers and administrators' (2004, 4).

Deane does not limit his survey to representation by and for British colonialism, but also traces the cultural representations of the Irish landscape by a diversity of Irish writers. Irish space, then, became both the object of writing and the benign impetus to such representation. In a sense it became the embodiment of the history of both the Irish nation and the Irish national character.<sup>22</sup> As Deane concludes:

In the new space, various attempts to represent Ireland were predicated on the shared belief that the country had never been adequately (or at all) represented before. The sense of an initiatory blankness, or emptiness, and the evolution of the techniques by which it could be filled is an abiding one in Irish writing. (1994, 120)

The spatial imagination of 'Ireland' is provoked by its representational absence; as Paul Carter skilfully traces in Australian colonial history, the conquered space is a wild and virginal canvass on which representational control must be exerted. He notes:

This metaphorical way of speaking is a pointer to the way spatial history must interpret its sources. It also indicates, concisely and poetically, the *cultural* place where spatial history begins: not in a particular year, not in a particular place, but *in*

*the act of naming*. For by the act of place-naming, space is transformed into a place, that is a space with a history. (1987, xxiv)

By interrogating the politics of the cultural representation of a spatialized Ireland, Deane effectively points to the ideological underpinnings of the ‘history’ of Irish space and place. While the idea of Ireland as a ‘romantic’ country was colonized by both anti-colonial nationalists and British imperial writers, for different ends, these representations had as much to do with the articulators of such ideas as they had to do with any desire for representational verisimilitude. The spatial representation of a dichotomous colonial relation enabled writers/historians to locate themselves within a broader continuum of spatial history.

What materializes is an Irish space that is calibrated to the representational demands of a series of political, cultural and economic constituencies. Ireland is written as a backward, lethargic and anachronistic country; it is portrayed as a necessary romantic and ‘feminine’ corollary to English utilitarianism; Ireland becomes a touristic space or object of metropolitan patronage and latterly it evolves into a ‘remnant of an ancient civilization that had survived in this vestigial form from ancient times’ (Deane, 1994, 125). Within this narrative of constantly re-imagined cultural space the specific demands may change over time, but the paradigm remains unequivocal: the colonial, stereotypical divisions of colonized/colonizer; west/east; tradition/modernity; Celtic/Anglo-Saxon; rural/urban and romance/utility persist.

Indeed just as Kiberd and Mathews espouse the alternative modernity of the revival period, Deane locates these cultural, political and economic groups as actively re-imagining Ireland as an ideological space. As mentioned above, the landscape became ‘a

*locus* for various forms of ideological investment' (Deane, 1994, 119); whether re-imagined by revivalist nationalists or British writers or politicians, Ireland was conceived of in terms of spatially, and temporally, located modernities and alternative modernities. The Celtic Society (1845); the Gaelic League (1893); the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884); the Abbey Theatre (1904); the Ordnance Survey (1830-1839) and the ten Land Acts of 1860-1903 are all evidential of a spatially imagined and ideologically invested 'Ireland'. Intersecting with Carter's spatial historiography, Deane concludes:

The naming or renaming of a place, the naming or renaming of a race, a region, a person, is, like all acts of primordial nomination, an act of possession...All the various names for Ireland and for the Irish connection with Great Britain are themselves indications of the uncertainty, the failure of self-possession, which has characterized the various relationships and conditions to which the names refer. (1990, 18)

There is an apparent deconstructive/poststructuralist aspect to Deane's, and Carter's, interrogation of the act of (place-) naming. Derrida contends that the interface of cultures, colonial or otherwise, always involves '[a] violence of the letter' (1976, 107). The incommensurability of the initial colonial encounter is framed within an experience of ambiguity; difference, then, is both emphasized and explained in terms 'of classification, and of the system of appellations' (Derrida, 1976, 107). Likewise, Derrida's deconstructive reading of language and meaning is underpinned by Foucault's exposition of the ideological function and classificatory mechanisms of knowledge.

Writing about the politics of colonial textual representation, and drawing on both Derrida and Foucault, David Spurr concludes, '[t]he very process by which one culture

subordinates another begins in the act of naming and leaving unnamed, of marking on an unknown territory the lines of division and uniformity, of boundary and continuity' (1993, 4). Again we note the emphatic designations of naming serving as structures of continuity, rationalization and containment. Equally, Spurr's comments suggest the broader discriminatory content of historical narrative; 'the act of naming and leaving unnamed' have their equivalents, as I discuss below, in the voiced and the silenced of historical and political representations.

Alternatively, Beiner endows local communities with an instructive agency in the navigation of their cultural geography. While the 'surveyed' or officially represented 'place name' may be the geographical *lingua franca*, Beiner argues:

a taxonomy of place-names reveals a category of 'commemorative names' relating to the relationship of a community in the ethnographic present with the historical past, and also traditions and rituals relating to sites. Therefore, commemoration expressed in relation to the vernacular landscape can be studied by mapping relevant place-names. (2000 b, 63)<sup>23</sup>

Beiner's point underscores the lived or performative exchanges between a community and its geo-cultural landscape, a form of un-systemized yet effective cultural resistance in an increasingly epistemologically violated context. And yet like any form of resistance, it does not exist autonomously apart from its antagonist/formalized 'other'. Beiner explores the dialogic relation between these alternative spheres of remembrance and officially sanctioned/instituted forms; he diagnoses a dialectic of memorial and commemorative negotiation (2000 b, 68). Language and representation, then, are central to Deane's critical matrix. He diagnoses the baleful binaries of colonialism as they are manifest in

dichotomous cultural representations, and his work resonates with the influence of Said, and indeed Fanon, as the domain of culture nourishes, and is nourished by, political discourse.

**‘the institution of boredom’<sup>24</sup>**

Past events get altered. History gets rewritten. Well, we’ve just found that this applies to the real world too...maybe the real history of the world is changing constantly? And why? Because history is a fiction. It’s a dream in the mind of humanity, forever striving...towards what? Towards perfection. (Ian Watson, *Chekhov’s Journey*, 174)

In an article entitled ‘The decline of nationalistic history in the west, 1900-1970’, Paul Kennedy argues that the practice of historians is concerned with the correction of myth. Denying the empirical accuracy and the social agency of myth and folklore, historians tend ‘to the study of textual materials’ (Farrell Moran, 1999, 167). Again we are confronted with several of the most pressing questions within current [Irish] postcolonial studies: text/performance; archive/orality; modernity/tradition; revisionism/postcolonialism and nationalism/postcolonialism. If empire degenerated into a textual parody of itself, then the disciplinary empiricism of history equally created an operational fetish of the textually based archive. Segueing, in many ways, with the necessities of imperial representations of ‘self and ‘other’, as well as the rational narratives of the post-Enlightenment period, so-called revisionist historiography in Ireland eschewed such mythical narratives and epistemological forms as irrational residues of an anachronistic culture. Folklore and myth do not depend on ‘truth’ for their

structural import and consequently embody the minatory potential of the irrational, or in Deane's term, 'the strange' (1997 a, 186).

Returning to the Enlightenment, Deane notes:

In the post-Enlightenment era, any system opposed to its regime of rationality, especially any counter-revolutionary system that appealed for its legitimation to forces or agencies that were not susceptible to rational analysis, was dismissed from consideration as a species of myth that was dependent for its survival on irrational procedures. (1997 a, 183)

The rational 'procedures' of Irish historiography are the latter-day inheritors of this Enlightenment philosophy. Through, what Conor McCarthy calls, 'the embalming gestures of institutional and metropolitan history' (2000, 219), a clear border is delineated between the spheres of proper historical practice and the irrational realm of mythology. In other words, the textual representation of the past, sourced with impeccable rational [ideological] precision in the archive, performs a prophylactic function; the past is afforded a stable valence and history becomes text. Drawing explicitly on Hayden White's meta-historiography<sup>25</sup>, Deane argues, [t]here is no such thing as an objective history, and there is no innocent history. All history and literature, as far as I understand them, are forms of mythology' (1992, 26).<sup>26</sup>

White further argues that we must view 'the historical record as being not a window through which the past 'as it really was' can be apprehended'; instead it is to be perceived as 'a wall that must be broken through if the "terror of history" is to be directly confronted' (1987, 81-82). The Rankean notion of 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' (Carr, 8) is usurped by the Benjaminian concept of 'seizing [sic] hold of memory as it flashes up at



a moment of danger' (1992, 247). In articulating the present absences of the past, Deane, and postcolonial historical readings at large, dissolve the teleological and textual sequestration of historical records. What crystallizes, then, is precisely this 'institution of boredom' (Deane, 1997 a, 181), or what Eagleton terms 'homogenous history'<sup>27</sup> (1981, 45), through which the nebulous, recondite and/or 'strange' are represented or elided on the basis of 'disciplinary consensus' (McCarthy, 2000, 100). Central to the equilibrium of such consensus is a firm eschewal of interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary reading or theorization. Critical theory, particularly in its 'postal' manifestations<sup>28</sup>, has had self-evident influences on Irish cultural and political criticism. But as Whelan argues, and as I shall outline below, Irish historians have been loath to engage in any self-reflexive theoretical negotiations. Deane concludes:

Any activity of interpretation that refuses to accept the autonomies so constituted is reified as 'theory', that fancy and fashionable discourse that applies the 'foreign' theories of Marx, or Gramsci, or Derrida to a native history that is unsusceptible to their charms because it, unlike them, is free from ideological investments-whether as literature or as history. (1997 a, 190)<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, the inherent narrativity of historical representation is quarantined from the reading strategies of the literary.<sup>30</sup>

From this posture of objectivity, then, a non-ideological and discrete alignment of literature, politics and history is construed, through which a *value free ethical narration* is articulated. The core issue for Deane, indeed for [Irish] postcolonial studies, is not the idea of narration *per se*. The theoretical negotiations of postcolonial studies are concerned with the ethics of representation and with the practical political, economic and

social ends to which these are put. As Linda Hutcheon notes, '[b]oth history and fiction are cultural sign systems, ideological constructions whose ideology includes their appearance of being autonomous and self-contained' (1988, 112). Deane's cultural criticism intersects with and avails of a diverse range of postcolonial, historiographical and philosophical theory, from Benjamin to Said to White. His conceptual framework is unwavering, however, as he maintains the centrality of Ireland's colonial relationship with Britain. This colonial relation is interrogated through the politics of representation, in the forms of literary fiction, travel writing, historical writing and political philosophy. Both the colonial framework and the continued development of the field of postcolonial Irish studies have, Cleary maintains, 'served to dis-locate Irish studies in ways that many find counterintuitive and disconcerting' (2003 a, 21). Just as White disputes the linear narrational possibilities of historical representation as facilities of ideological control, postcolonial Irish studies, as manifest in the work of Deane and others, regards such representations of closure, continuity and 'boredom' (Deane, 1997 a, 156) as disingenuous.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Beiner provides an adequate approximation, in the field of historiography, of the critical/ethical project of postcolonial Irish studies:

In the framework of 'living history' time operates on many different levels and is not necessarily limited to the standardized linear chronological time of 'scientific' history. Additionally, alternative criteria for assessing the importance of historical data is required, as folk histories constantly question the conventional selections of what is trivial and what is central. (2000 a, 170)

In what follows, then, the overriding preoccupation, and discursive *modus operandi* of these Irish postcolonial critics is the urge to divine, 'a means of accessing the creative

possibility of a future promised in the past; a radical backward look' (Richards, 1999, 108).

### **Reading in the Dark**

In referring to the ongoing troubles in Northern Ireland, O'Dowd argues 'it is misleading to see the conflict as a clash of abstract beliefs over religion, nationality, liberty or authority without reference to the articulators of these ideas' (O'Dowd, 1991, 169-70). My intention is to locate Seamus Deane within this discursive framework as one of O'Dowd's 'articulators of ideas.' I will provide a reading of both his cultural criticism and his semi-fictional work, *Reading in the Dark*, as intellectual engagements with the manifold crisis-sustaining myths of the Northern conflict. Essentially, matters of power are imbricated with the ambition and the opportunity to re-present memory on, and in, one's own terms. The conflictual dynamics of inter-communal, historical remembrance pervade Deane's critical oeuvre and suffuse the textual lineaments of *Reading in the Dark*. My reading of Deane's novel, then, is informed by the concept of 'the crisis of the signature', in that I detect a distinct symmetry between the thematic preoccupations and discursive methodology employed in both his literary/cultural criticism and *Reading in the Dark*.

Ideology is founded on the successful insinuation of naturalized habit on the citizen-subject, and it is visibly epitomized when memory, identity, and the structures of power/powerlessness become self-evident and proceed beyond doubt. In a colonial situation repression is designed as a means of de-personalization, whereby the self-

evident hegemony of the *arriviste* colonizer assumes a ‘natural’ aspect. In periods of decolonization, or in moments of anti-colonial expression, a form of directly oppositional discourse can emerge, that ostensibly crystallizes in a functional subjectivity for the colonized population. However, the perpetuation of oppositional discourses in imitative political and cultural representation delimits the potential for genuine liberation. Through the auspices of the *Field Day Theatre Company*, and his own cultural critiques, Deane has attempted to redress the constricted politics of both militant, traditional nationalism and latterly the empiricism of revisionist literary criticism and historiography. Specifically then, *Field Day*, and by association Deane, attended to issues ‘of communal identity, colonial interference, sectarianism, and racial stereotyping’ (Deane, 1990, 14).

Culture retains an exclusionary capacity within this discursive nexus and Deane has focussed on the exigent re-presentation of historical-cultural artefacts in a context that is ‘securely Irish’ (Deane, 1985 b, 52). Deane adumbrates the synchronicity of discourse and interpretation, and refutes the insidious sequestration of meaning in terms of *a priori* claims to power. Deane’s engagement with postcolonial theory is predicated on his rejection of a grossly imitative traditional nationalism as well as his eschewal of strictly anti-nationalist revisionism.<sup>32</sup> He attends to the intensely problematic task of narrative representation through a cultural critique that foregrounds narrative, memory, and language as the elusive loci of individual/communal identity. As Elmer Kennedy-Andrews notes:

Deane’s insistence on the colonial context of his entire cultural project invokes a colonial critical paradigm...he describes Irish history as ‘a long colonial concussion’ and one of the aspects of this ‘concussion’ which Deane emphasizes in *Reading in*

*the Dark* is the way colonial pressures and oppressions breed a culture of secrets and lies in both the political and personal spheres. (2003, 220)

Deane interrogates the insinuation of oppositional political ideologies on a colonized society in terms of both cultural formations and linguistic representation. The ability to represent or to 'take charge of interpretation' is emphatically a matter of linguistic control, as ideology inflicts erasure and censorship on 'illegitimate' political and cultural discourses (Rumens, 1997, 30). Both romantic nostalgia and empirical revisionism, then, bear the unmistakable traces of trammelled ideological discourses, despite their ostensible divergence (Gibbons, 2001, 139). Deane's cultural critiques and his memoir are symptomatic of a desire to appropriate control over the 'act of self-representation' as language becomes both a contested site and medium of self-representation in the colonized society (Harte, 2000, 156).

Cultural stereotypes and oppositional political formations have their genesis in linguistic expression and representation. Deane's criticism, therefore, is diagnostic of the modalities whereby culture is employed as a means of exclusion and force. The indices of hegemonic cultural formations are synonymous with the mechanisms of social and moral control, as evinced in the Derry of Deane's memoir. There are clear, well-defined borders: territorial, discursive, and moral, which are patrolled by the self-evidence of hegemonic certainty. These forms of control are manifest in discourses as diverse as didactic institutional structures or localized myths and haunting stories of popular memory. Across this spectrum of authority the intentions may diverge, but the essential means of assertion ensure the maintenance of an ossified socio-cultural division.

My approach to Deane's critical writing is informed by an understanding that the coincidence of the real and the phantasmal<sup>33</sup>, and the prevalence of stabilizing narratives in structuring reality, are underlying principles in his critical methodology. I would contend that Deane's work is focused on the deconstruction of debilitating cultural constructs, and on the re-examination of oppositional notions of communal identity. Deane's critical interventions, particularly in their *Field Day* incarnations, have been consistently assailed as nationalist in motive and intent by scholars such as Longley and Foster, as well as the novelist Colm Toibín. Their underlying contention is that Deane perceives Ireland's history as a continuous historical narrative, a narrative that is characterized by a series of conquests and omnipresent colonial oppression. Alternatively, these critics refuse to accept the notion of a cohesive historical narrative, as Foster asserts 'Irish historical interpretation has too often been cramped into a strict literary mode; the narrative drive has ruthlessly eroded awkward elisions' (Foster, 2001, 21). Irish postcolonial criticism, therefore, has developed amid much invective from both revisionist literary critics and historians. They have divined a peculiar textual bias operative in postcolonial readings of Irish history and politics.

As I have asserted above, Deane has been pre-eminent in the importation and application of postcolonial methodology to historical and contemporary Irish discourses. Deane's critical interventions can be located within this corpus, and they are implicated in the attempt to verbally represent Irish culture. His engagement is evident on both the critical plain and the creative plain, and is infused with a consciousness of the imbrication of political representation and verbal or cultural representation. The readings of both

historians and literary critics are therefore shaped by the discourses with which they engage and by the contexts within which they intervene. Fundamentally the point remains that intellectuals exercise a political function, they transmit standards of conceptual behaviour, supply information that is never ‘neutral’ in its uses, as they construct or modify categories of analysis and judgement.

Deane’s role as an Irish intellectual reflects the belief that politics is everywhere; there can be no escape into the realms of pure art and thought or, for that matter, into the realm of disinterested objectivity or transcendental theory (Said, 1994, 14). But equally a political consciousness does not permit a reversion or toleration of prescriptive ideology or fundamentalism. The intellectual is therefore enjoined to assume a pivotal role in the mediation and resolution of cultural and political division. *Reading in the Dark* and Deane’s criticism are manifestations of this representation. Deane’s work has transfused Irish politico-cultural discourse with a degree of urgency through his ethical interrogations of Irish nationalism, colonial history, and the persistence of tribal discord in Northern Ireland. Postcolonial theory is, of course, firmly situated as an ethical criticism: oppression, dispossession, and genocide demand a critical ethics.

It is to Deane’s credit that he has eschewed pure academic/intellectual neutrality; politics and culture are inextricably linked in the (post-) colonial contexts and a participatory intellectual voice is warranted if a conclusive explication of these ideological relations is to be realized. Culture is emphatically non-benign and modes of conceptual behaviour are never inert but are loaded with socio-political import. The

situated materialism of the best postcolonial analysis engages with the politics of the intimate and the local.

He demonstrates a will to transcend the empirical dispassion of liberal scholarship in an effort to re-present the ethics and the modalities of political and cultural discourses in a (post)-colonial society. Text and context are inseparable where ‘writing is a system that produces audiences as well as works of literature’ (Deane, 1991 a, xxi). Any effort to partition poetry and politics in the name of constituting ‘a non-ideological “poetic” discursive space’ is ultimately self-defeating (McCarthy, 2000, 204). There are no apolitical spaces, particularly in the compressed political and cultural space of a contested, colonial milieu, as all texts, indeed all languages, bear the watermarks of political engagement or of their political location. Both writers and readers are cognizant of the context within and around the text.

Just as Deane’s semi-fictional text can be read as both historical and historicized narrative representation, the claims to rationalism or qualitative objectivism by revisionist historians are equally dubious. Historians too frequently remain oblivious to the tropological modes of their own discourse, and historical representation is conceived of as a ‘real’ embodiment of fact rather than as a figuration of traceable tropological resources. Tony Bennett notes:

Similarly, the past, in so far as the historian is concerned with it, is never the past as such – not everything that may be said of it – but only the past as a product of the specific protocols of investigation which characterise the discipline of history in its concern to establish, classify and order the relations between events pertinent to the inquiry in hand. (1997, 223)



Consequently, by marrying Bennett's 'specific protocols of investigation' with White's delineation of the discursive tropes of historical narrativization, it is possible to ascertain the constructed nature of historical representation. The various genealogies of tropological forms and the 'received' notions of historical inquiry belie any sense of apolitical/objective scholarship; historical representation as cultural agent is inherently ideological.

At the conclusion of the penultimate chapter the narrator opines, 'how did I know that I had been told the truth' (1997 b, 206), it is a profoundly unsettling prospect to proceed in life on the basis of what ultimately materializes as falsified familial/communal cultural narratives. Indeed in a sectarian/colonial context, the very foundations of politico-cultural formations are all too frequently bathed in ambiguity or entrenched in oppositional homologies. Deane has been one of the most prominent literary and cultural critics in Ireland in the last thirty years and *Reading in the Dark* represents his first foray into strictly literary, prose writing. The novel is remarkable for both its enigmatic prose style and equally for its engagement with the elliptical ambiguities of sectarian society. In this mode of literary remembrance Deane the author/critic is re-creating the city of Derry; the contemporary city of Derry that lives and breathes north of the border is re-constituted equally in terms of Deane's imagination and his memory. While the text is, variously, an examination of the fecundity of narrative structures, the structural alterations precipitated by an incredulous mind, and the frailty of oppositional reactionary mentalities, it is noteworthy that Deane's text creates what can only be *his* Derry.

The purpose of this discussion is neither to subsume Deane's novel nor his critical *oeuvre* in terms of the other. I intend to pursue a definite correlation between the political intelligence that informs Deane's critical works and the politicized imagination that produced the semi-autobiographical fiction. The latter representation has clearly arrived at a later stage, though its gestation is traceable in various published extracts, but it should not be treated of as a mere function of Deane's broader critical or political preoccupations. Likewise, Deane's critical output is concerned with the manner in which language and discourses are both employed and shape modalities of differentiation and subjugation in colonial societies. Deane's politics are no great secret, and his nationalist heritage is clearly brought to bear on both the temper of his critical work and the thematic content of his semi-autobiographical work.

Deane's project is deeply implicated in this dialectic of memory constitution, and the machinations that underwrite this process. In his engagement with both critical and fictional representation, Deane is both inherent to, and critic of, the relation between the individual and ideology in the formation of cultural hegemony. The novel represents his personal faculties of imaginative remembrance, and also articulates a belief in the centrality of narrative structures in maintaining the integrity of communal consensus and identity. Deane illuminates the mechanics of colonial division through a portrait of the sectarian bisection of society within the novel. He demonstrates the manner in which:

the communities have become stereotyped into their own roles of the oppressor and victim to such an extent that the notion of Protestant or a Catholic sensibility is now assumed to be a fact of nature rather than a product of these very special and ferocious conditions. (Deane, 1985 b, 54)

My reading of Deane's novel is concerned with the notion of historical narrative and I will focus on three primary themes. Initially I will establish the ideological framework within which the boy resides as both Catholic school-pupil and as a citizen of a sectarian state. Secondly, I contend that through the boy's search for truth Deane deconstructs the static, ideological assumptions of what Paul Carter terms 'imperial' history, and that he is engaged in a spatial reconsideration of his familial/communal narrative. Finally, I will broach the novel in the light of Deane's assertion that 'where the real and the phantasmal coincide with one another, that's the mark of a colonised society' (Deane, 1998 a).<sup>34</sup> The compressed space and foreshortened temporalities of sectarian society precipitate recourse to quasi-religious and political acts of cultural invention and originary myths.

Deane has commented 'one must recognise that complexity is a luxury that perhaps you cannot afford in such an embattled situation' (1998 b).<sup>35</sup> The thin line between communal capitulation and any form of identitarian stability is buttressed by diverse strains of ideological discourses. Within the claustrophobic colonial context the urge to repeat usurps the ability to remember, as both nationalist and unionist commemorative practices no longer serve as unqualified celebratory occasions (Connerton, 1989, 25). Contrarily, as Gibbons diagnoses, the repetition of official or legitimate historical remembrance inters the past in controllable practices (Gibbons, 2001, 156). Deane's critical analyses probe the ossified strata of the competing ideological discourses of historically entrenched nationalism and unionism. Equally,

*Reading in the Dark* traces an adolescent dissatisfaction with atavistic habits of familial memory.<sup>36</sup> The narrator allows the past to:

escape the deadness imposed upon it...[as] it manifests itself as something new and unknown...ceasing [sic] to be the unfamiliar object of a dull memory...This experience is disturbing and painful, like a birth, for it deprives one of mastery over a world rendered comfortable by habit. (Buttigieg, 1987, 31)

Deane employs a disjointed and elusive narrative structure precisely to draw attention to the techniques of narrative representation; the narrative structure self-consciously draws attention to itself within the text. We are alerted to the semi-autobiographical content by the ostensibly disjointed, yet intimately woven, diary-like narrative. The dates at the beginning of each chapter suggest a narrative thread but their episodic, seemingly random, sequence problematizes any tacit assumption of an unbroken/integrated narrative progress. By deploying such a narrative framework, Deane actually accentuates the gravity of the events that are exposed within the novel. The structure amplifies the sense in which *these* are the decisive moments of revelation or obfuscation. Simultaneously however it re-emphasizes the obvious conclusion that the narrative is compromised by omissions and gaps; Deane's own story, inasmuch as it relates to his family, is fundamentally incomplete. Like all historical or personal narratives Deane's text is prone to the vagaries of narrative selectivity, elision and imaginative remembrance. *Reading in the Dark* is an act of remembrance and representation, and its political import is tangible by the presence of two Derrys within the narrative: the lived, recognizable city and the represented city mediated through Deane's imagination and memory.

The journal-like structure of Deane's narrative imbues it with a fragmentary or episodic texture and thereby disallows a unilinear reading of the text. The textual architecture of *Reading in the Dark* is, therefore, as significant as the overt thematic material; the manner in which we tell our stories is as signally important to the unfolding narrative as the represented events themselves. Whether one considers oral, theatrical or literary representation, the mode of representation itself frames and colours the content, and ultimately the reception, of the narrative. Deane does not extend his problematization of mono-directional narrative to the limits of postmodern ambiguity, as his approach firmly subscribes to the belief that some form of narrative recognition is necessary. The point concerning Deane's semi-fictional text is that it questions the convictions of fluid and seamless narrative through the employment 'of a structural principle based on the mind's capacity to synthesise disparate fragments to create a new reality' (Dunne, 1996, 378).

*Reading in the Dark* is constituted by the interaction of two narratives: that of contemporary author and subject, as well as the textually re-presented adolescent. Both narratives are clearly inextricable and the first-person narrator enhances the sense of a convincing and honest personal narrative. The employment of a ruminating, confessional style does, however, beg the question of to what extent do factual memory and imaginative remembrance embrace and/or remain extant to each other? Deane has admitted that the novel is 'semi-autobiographical' and it is worth speculating that intentionally or not the distance of both time and space militate against recollective

accuracy. This, then, is the central issue; memory is inherently capricious and is emphatically beholden to the vagaries of deliberate and unintentional forgetting.

Remembrance is bound to the revelation of self-image: past, present, and future; it is therefore equally a matter of vanity as it is of actual recollection. Memory serves the present in the form of conciliatory narratives, and performs as a means of empowerment in the face of an obliterating colonial regime. Equally, the construction of an historical horizon is fundamentally realized in the constitution of a narrative, a facility of interpretation that is a means of generating tradition yet that is not as readily amenable to the process of reflecting on the validity of tradition itself. Deane's protagonist seeks to transcend the putative certainties of imperial history by conducting a reflection on the means of producing the tradition he nominally resides within. The familiar totems and legitimizing processes of this localized nationalist society are unsatisfactory, and fail to satiate his appetite for self-constitution.

The character Crazy Joe succinctly encapsulates the central theme of Deane's novel, and perhaps outlines the function of every diligent historian and cultural critic when he accuses the protagonist of 'always running around like a dog, sniffing at the arse of every secret, a dirty habit' (1997 b, 189). Anterior to all putative historical narratives are processes of selection and prioritization, especially within the formation of official narratives. *Reading in the Dark*, and indeed Deane's strictly critical interventions, interrogate the structures and agendas that are inherent to the constitution of memory that, as Brian Graham argues, is at the service of the present (Graham, 1997, 194). The boy wishes to re-negotiate the terms of his communal and familial narrative, but not only

these terms; similarly he seeks to re-cast the accepted ‘facts’ of history as mediated through the local nationalist perspective by re-introducing variables that had previously been written out of this narrative. In his capacity as ‘archaeologist’ of involuntary memory, the narrator unsettles the contours of habitual narrative and concomitantly disturbs the lives of those around him (Gibbons, 2001, 155).

The novel illuminates the ideological stricture of hegemonic discourses, in particular, the Catholic Church and the State apparatus [the official sites of authority], but equally the subversive, tribal nationalist conscience. The Church and the State, although at odds on religious grounds, endeavour to interpellate the individual into legitimate systems of control through stringent and consistent indoctrination. Harte notes, ‘in paradigmatic fashion, the hegemonic process of ideological state control is maintained with the consent and complicity of co-opted members of the minority Catholic population’ (Harte, 2000, 152). Indeed the teacher of religious knowledge explicitly affirms, ‘I shall thereby do the state some service and the Church even more. Doctrine, dogma and decision-these you can live by’ (1997 b, 180). Both institutions are ideologically opposed to the militant republicanism that was an intimate part of the narrator’s family history. Thus we witness the ideological alternatives of obeisance, in the form of the Church and the State, or that of reactionary resistance, in the guise of militant republicanism.

We note the interpellative agendas of both the Church and the State apparatuses that are designed to achieve a pan-communal consensus and a rejection of internecine militancy. The systematic nature of this process is evident in both the overtly and

covertly ideological methods of inculcation. The priest ‘in British army uniform’ outlines a reductive, and deeply imperial, conception of historical development when he asserts ‘we become actors in a great drama, a story that ends in a world beyond our own’ (1997 b, 198). The boy is witness to a battle of ideologies, in which the individual is presumed passive, where abstraction is the unseen hand of historical progress, and ‘history was about trends, not about people’ (1997 b, 200). We also witness the subtle modes of training and indoctrination through the manner of teaching; learning by rote, whether it is *The Spiritual Exercises* or maths problems, is a means of disciplined, trammelled learning that *manufactures* individual subjectivity rather than encouraging it to flourish.

The oppositional cultural constructs of this sectarian society are inherent to the discourse of imperial history. This form of historical narrative is characterized as a defensive appeal to the logic of cause and effect that by its nature demonstrates the emergence of order from chaos (Carter, 1987, xvi). The bipolar acts of cultural invention are symptomatic of an innate insecurity, and therefore appeals are made to the legitimizing logic of manifest destiny. Within such a compressed society we note the manifestation of an entire system of indices that are consciously devised in order to legitimate a given culture and a given sense of historical order.

*Reading in the Dark* marks an intervention in the spatial history of a sectarianized Derry, as the boy is keen to elicit the intentions, motives and personal choices that are anterior to the prevailing communal and family narratives. He attempts to unearth the intangible motives of personal judgement that pre-exist the accepted structures of contemporary narrative. Deane identifies the search for origins and the delineation of



essentialisms and national character as evidence of the politicization of cultural formation. The requirements of naming and origins together with the need for representative historical sources of origin by competing cultures implicates both cultures in the composition of imperial history (Carter, 1987, xvi-xvii).

While Carter's tableau is the geographical and cultural colonization of Australia, I believe that the underlying logic of his thesis is applicable to Deane's project as a post-colonial critic. The idiom of imperial history is synonymous with that of stereotypes, essences, and sectarian political simplicities designed to facilitate division and unquestioning fealty. *Reading in the Dark* does not facilitate the expansive transcontinental reading pursued by Carter, but his delineation of the tropes of imperial and spatial history is instructive in the compressed space of a sectarian society. Space or landscapes are frequently garnered as symbols of a tradition or heritage, and thereby become entrenched within homologies of differentiation.

The bisection of the sectarian society accords with Carter's argument concerning the nature of imperial history; Deane's 'city of bonfires' reverberates with triumphal manifestations of remembrance. The narrator traces the bifurcated calendar:

they had the twelfth of August... then they had the burning of Lundy's effigy on the eighteenth of December. We had only the fifteenth of August bonfires; it was a church festival but we made it into a political one as well to answer the fires of the twelfth. (1997 b, 33)

It is a litany of dates, events and personality, all of which are constitutive of a specific historical interpretation. They are the props of imperial history and are readily employed as cultural totems in the bi-polar appropriation of meaning from the same historical

events. The culture of division and suspicion demands that the battle-lines of the past delimit the borders of political opposition in the present.

Deane notes 'the brutal exploitation of events by both sides [that] demonstrates over and over again the endlessness of the battle for supremacy of one kind of discourse; one set of political attitudes over another' (Deane, 1985 a, 40). And it is a mentality that is recognized by the narrator of Deane's novel. The boy witnesses Rory Hannaway's accidental death, but subsequently the 'story' of the incident mutates in the service of sectarian discourse; he recalls, 'Danny Green told me in detail how young Hannaway had been run over by a police-car, which had not even stopped' (1997 b, 12). The 'facts' or the truth-elements are secondary to the interpretive, political function of the event. The boy's uneasiness at the thought of the policeman vomiting at the scene is indicative of a burgeoning incredulity at the purported certainties of the sectarian divide, as he feels 'the vertigo again on hearing this and, with it pity for the man. But this seemed wrong; everyone hated the police, told us to stay away from them, that they were a bad lot' (1997 b, 11).

The narrator is surrounded by 'lived stories' and the text is concerned with his effort to establish or disestablish the 'plausibility' (Sinfield, 1989, 24-25) of received narratives and modes of explanation. The narrator traces a process of coming to consciousness, in which he is utterly dependent on received narratives. But as in all matters of identity-construction, interpretation intervenes to filter the 'plausible' from the 'implausible.' The cultivation of oppositional cultures, then, is premised on the recognizable, on the cult of the personality and event that can easily mobilize atavistic

emotions in simplified actions and enunciations of difference. The import of these manifestations is amplified by an intermingling of quasi-religious, natural, and political spatial and temporal indices. Tribal narratives develop from oral to print culture as the narrator relates his bedtime 'reading in the dark':

The novel was called *The Shan Van Vocht*, a phonetic rendering of an Irish phrase meaning The Poor Old Woman, a traditional name for Ireland. It was about the great rebellion of 1798, the source of almost half the songs we sang around the August bonfires on the Feast of the Assumption. (1997 b, 19)

These are occasions founded on cultural invention, occasions where there is an investment in legitimate 'webs of significance' with radical mobilizing abilities on the bisected stage of sectarian politics.

There is a sense within the community that the individual is subservient to the inexorable progress of History. The capacity of individuals to assert themselves proactively does not conform to the dynamic of imperial history, as the procession of history effaces the particular as it establishes event and personality as the principle tropes of historical record. As the boy speaks with his father about his grandfather and great-grandfather, he is told of their incapacity in the face of monumental historical events, we are told that 'the Famine ruined all that.' and subsequently that 'then the Great War ruined everything later again' (1997 b, 45). It is hardly coincidental that within nationalist discourse these events were firmly attributed to perfidious Albion. The imperial history that acquiesces with the demands of ideological hegemony precipitates individual passivity. Concurrently, it occasions an absence of self-reflection and becomes the legitimizing discourse of awful control.

The incomplete testimonies represent a personal analogue of Carter's spatial history, in which the logic of seamless narrative is subverted, and the boy is impelled on an investigative journey, a form of travelling within this 'small place' (1997 b, 211). This is symptomatic of the degenerative relations that persist between the opposing communities, as the boy becomes deaf to their words and alert to their noise (1997 b, 13). The fragmented narrative is equally relevant to the 'clear, plain silence' at the centre of the boy's family and it is the half-heard stories, 'the delicate matters, better not gone into' (1997 b, 111), and the loaded barbs, that initially engender the boy's curiosity. The ambiguity and the evocative nature of these glimpses precipitate his incredulity, his dissatisfaction with conventional explanations.

Early in the text the boy's class are relayed the story of Billy Mahon's murder by Brother Regan, and the tale proves a demonstrative instance of the susceptibility of narrative to posterior interpretation. The alleged murderer is the boy's maternal grandfather, thus the story impinges on his personal narrative. But equally it is an element of a broader nationalist heritage of reactionary rebelliousness, a moment of brazen defiance that has been communally embraced, and hence legitimized. But thirdly, the actual relaying of the story by Brother Regan is infused with an ideological objective: the lesson is designed as a mutated doctrinaire parable targeted at highlighting the dubious morality of militant republican resistance. Deane underlines the agency of these malleable narratives in the hands of competing meta-narratives, and he emphasizes the fact that an unequivocal commitment to a single version or more accurately interpretation is symptomatic of the function of ideology. The story is implicated in the genealogy of

nationalist folklore, and the boy proceeds to excavate this particular story and other elements in the anterior, legitimizing processes of reactionary identity.

Deane's text challenges received spatial discourses, showing that familiar places may possess alternative meanings or functions (Smyth, 2001, 158). The self-evident stability of these local spaces is destabilized through the narrator's fall into knowledge. The material and cultural certainties of these spatial formations are subverted by the boy's gradual dislocation from both family and community. The boy's edification is evinced in his evolution from acceptance of the atavistic, sectarian demarcation of place and geographical locations in Derry and its hinterland, to a realization of the inner contradictions of these discourses of delimitation. Graham argues that 'place therefore forms part of the individual and social practises which people continuously use to transform the natural world into cultural realms of meaning and lived experience' (Brian Graham, 1997, 4). Grianán Aileach is infused with primary significance in this system of meaning and experience. Grianán is initially portrayed as a liminal and indistinct 'space' that is pervaded by a preternatural aura and legacy, but it is subsequently revealed as a site of execution, thereby becoming a pivotal location within the unfolding narrative. It is a site wherein the real and the phantasmal coincide, specifically it is a site of mythical/political authority, it is an eerie playground of echoes and groans, and also the site of Eddie's execution. Indeed, it is only as the narrative evolves that the full extent of the tragedy associated with the passage beneath the walls of Grianán gradually emerges (Smyth, 2001, 146).

Grianán is a marginal, almost ethereal location; as the narrator climbs uphill, the mist thickens and the fort disappears (1997 b, 50). The fort is a space wherein diverse temporalities intersect: we note its ancient history, its contemporary use as a playground, Eddie's execution and the entrapped customs-officer. It is *the* emblematic site wherein the real and the phantasmal intersect, a place where there are accretions of the dead-Druid spells, breathing warriors, and sighing women interceding in the 'real' world outside (Smyth, 2001, 146). The sense of danger evinced by the boy, and the insanity endured by the customs-officer suggests that it may be a 'dead' space yet it retains a chimerical power to affect the living (Smyth, 2001, 146). The acute compression of the sectarian society compels this coincidence of the real and the phantasmal, as we witness the presence of quasi-religious tales of possession, hauntings and insanity.

Equally, the field of the disappeared represents the silences and the tragedies of personal experience, but it also intimates a degree of hopeful resolution as it provides a spiritual home for the lost souls. The field is indicative of the pseudo-pagan rites that persisted within Irish Catholicism, and just as it harbours the palliative effects of myth, the field of the disappeared is a structural attempt to alleviate the silence of the unexplained and its attendant anxiety. In a similar manner to the fort at Grianán, it is site wherein the real and the phantasmal coincide, and where disparate temporalities and spatial distances are unified.

The boy's paternal uncle, Eddie, is implicit in the 'clear, plain silence' (1997 b, 5) on the stairwell, as he is central to the silences at the heart of the family. He is a figure who asserts his presence in the phantasmal shape of this 'silence', and he does so in the

most ambiguous space in the house ‘wherein the established dialectics of past and present, inside and outside come under pressure’ (Smyth, 2001, 157). The boy’s questioning is the means by which this pressure is exerted, and with the destabilization of the established dialectics a need arises for a new history or life-story that would give the boy some rational and coherent form (Deane, 1990, 14). The individual motives and the vagaries of personal choice that reside within the occluded verbal spaces of the boy’s family provide the basis for this ‘new life-story’. The boy seeks a more satisfactory form of resolution, a resolution that demands a fuller understanding of the truncated verbal documents of his family’s past.

Eddie’s presence is that of a lingering phantasm, as cursory mentions of his name punctuate both the early narrative and the boy’s consciousness. Despite the omnipresent myths and haunting stories, it is this real story that affects the most profound structural and emotional alterations within the boy’s world. The eerie presence of Eddie’s name coupled with the diffuse associations that it engenders is pivotal to the overall exposition of the narrative. Eddie is inassimilable within the dominant state discourse, but equally he is alien to the counter-hegemonic discourse of reactionary nationalism due to his perceived betrayal. His phantasmal or nomadic presence is accentuated by his inability to be represented or integrated within either of the ‘accepted’ narratives, and thus, Eddie’s is an occluded memory.

Eddie’s ‘long cry through empty space’ (1997 b, 43) provides the stimulus for the boy’s questioning of his family history. However the boy is confronted with ‘silence everywhere’ (Harte, 2000, 155) as Eddie is unrepresentable and there is no cultural space

in which Eddie's story can be told. Eddie is an element of the phantasmal that punctuates reality, as his fate is deeply inscribed in the family narrative and his continuing presence is implicit in the mother's injunction to the boy that he should 'let the past be the past' (1997 b, 42). As he recognizes that is impossible, Eddie's phantasmal presence is central to his excavation of the legitimate familial/communal narrative. Eddie's fate, which is characterized by betrayal, injustice and secrecy, undermines the stability of contemporary structures, in other words the broad family unit, and his phantasmal presence becomes a watchword of the boy's search. The boy is haunted by his uncle's fate and the legacy that it has inflicted on his parents; it is Eddie's name that not only booms in the narrator's ears but booms throughout the narrative (1997 b, 119).

Thus, Deane's text is not simply reducible to a stark documentary function; it is patently reductive to read the novel as a mere semi-fictional/factual recount of Deane's childhood and adolescence. Ironically it is the 'silences' that propel the narrative development, such as it is; the narrator is impelled deeper into investigation by the tremendous silences and by the absence of conclusive answers. As I have demonstrated, the literary tropes of first-person narrative and the journal-like structure problematize the novel's reception as personal documentary. Deane's text, then, is a significant event in its own right, as it engages with the ideology and identitarian politics of its own represented context (LaCapra, 1985, 38). The boy's protracted revelation relates to areas of experience that are recalcitrant to the steady certainty of traditional narratives. The coincidence of both real and phantasmal elements, including the phantom-like (non)-presence of Eddie constitutes 'indirect and figurative discourses' (Gibbons, 1996, 18).



The feelings of dislocation engendered by these indirect discourses are filtered through the first person narrative. It is through this ambiguity, then, and the potentially unreliable narration that Deane questions the tendentious certainty of received narratives.

### **Morning yet on *Field Day*<sup>37</sup>**

In a 1999 interview with Whelan, Said, as the epigraph at the beginning of chapter one illustrates, lauds Ireland's history of anti-colonial political and cultural resistance, in effect, corroborating Kiberd's contention that Ireland was at the vanguard of, indeed exemplary among, decolonizing nations. Asked to evaluate *Field Day's* contribution to Irish cultural history, Said replied:

Oh, it is enormous; Irish people do not sufficiently realize it. I see Field Day as a revisionist literary movement of the highest order. I associate it with similar groups in the Arab world, in India, subaltern studies, in the United States...Most of the other movements involve historical scholars, but these people are a combination of scholarship and creativity that is unparalleled in the world today...Global on a very high level. I do not know any other movement like it. (1999)

Thus *Field Day*, as a cultural force, is exemplary in its own right; it is a series of progressive, postcolonial events. And it is in this context that I believe understandings of the impact of the *Field Day Theatre Company* should be achieved. As I will demonstrate, criticism concerning the political temperament and/or animus of *Field Day* has been, and is, too frequently reduced to a worn currency of oppositional or strategic argumentation. The major issue of debate has been the imagination of an 'Ireland'; the spectre of nationalism and the *spatial* representation of the Irish nation reappears in the literary

critical and historiographic debates of the late twentieth century. Just as Deane, Carter and Hooper trace the politics of colonial representation and as Kiberd and Mathews delineate the 'self help' movements' imagination of a culturally and economically independent Ireland, *Field Day* became embroiled in similar critical debates concerning the postcolonial representation of Irish political and cultural history.

Relating the politics of translation, performance and the representation of the past, W.B. Worthen offers the following appraisal of *Field Day*'s critical and imaginative project:

Translation is a powerful instrument for resistant theaters like *Field Day*, not least in its ability to use performance to articulate a critique of how "translations" can help to form and maintain certain versions of agency, by imagining and producing the cultural categories of the past in new and striking ways. (1995, 35)

Transcending the purely textual, then, both the philosophical 'fifth province' of *Field Day*'s cultural imagination and its *physical* means of enunciation in theatrical performance were largely conceived of in spatial terms. The spatial conceptualization, or what Carter calls a way of thinking of history in metaphorical dimensions, is evident in Deane and Kearney's 1984 interview, in which the unifying image of the 'fifth province is approximated as 'an equivalent centre from which the four broken and fragmented pieces of contemporary Ireland might be seen in fact as coherent' (Deane and Kearney 1984).<sup>38</sup>

It is a dramatic and political image that, as Tom Paulin argues 'offers an invisible challenge to the nationalist image of the four green fields' (1984, 17). Significantly, we note the continued re-presentation of Irish space, but this time in terms of an equalizing,

almost liminal space of the imagination. The very idea of a ‘fifth province’ or ‘secret centre’ (Hederman, 1985), accents the constitutive spatial animus of the *Field Day* enterprise. Without drawing ahistorical analogies, we can trace the differential spatial representations of Ireland. As we discussed above, Deane traces such representation from the Act of Union to the Irish Literary revival, from Spenser to the hunger strikes of the early 1980s, and as I outline below, Kiberd and Mathews conceive of the revivalist, self-help initiatives as spatially re-imagining Ireland’s alternative modernities. Latterly, *Field Day* itself valorizes Irish cultural space in its imaginary realm of the ‘fifth province’.

For *Field Day*, and indeed for the shorter-lived journal *The Crane Bag*<sup>39</sup>, confronting cultural and political history was not exclusively a question of re-presenting the ‘what’ of historical narration. There was a complementary urgency to interrogate the ‘how’, the representational modalities through which colonial, and of course postcolonial, identities are forged. Expressing these combined aspirations, Kearney argues:

To say that while we must construct new social, political and economic models, we must also look at these particular stereotypes which very often condition our ways of looking at politics and economics. So we have to look at religion and the arts and psychology and education. (Deane and Kearney, 1984)

Significantly, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* extended the notion of spatio-temporal configuration, and equally it collates and re-presents the multifarious representational discourses that, as Deane says, ‘have achieved prominence as the official version of the true history, political and literary, of the island’s past and present’ (1991, xix).

The debate surrounding Ireland's 'putative postcolonial condition' (Lloyd, 1993, 155) has, to a large extent, been centred on the work of the *Field Day Theatre Company*. Deane has been intimately involved in the evolution and machinations of *Field Day* along with several other leading Irish artists and intellectuals, including Seamus Heaney; Brian Friel; Stephen Rea and Tom Paulin. As the *de facto* spokesperson for the *Field Day* conglomerate, Deane has effectively set the tone and trajectory of much Irish critical literary and historiographical debate in recent years. Through his initial pamphlet contribution to the *Field Day* series and subsequently through his general editorship of the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Deane has focussed the lens of Irish identitarian dialogue upon issues such as: origins, identity, the politics of memory-constitution, varieties of Irishness, colonialism, and national character; effectively the ideological functions of culture in a colonial context. Deane, and *Field Day*, nourish not only a re-reading of Irish literary paradigms, but also the qualitative nature of Irish historiographical writing in the light of Ireland's colonial heritage.

Recalling Benjamin, Whelan explains the nature and force of 'radical memory', he writes:

Radical memory seeks not for the past it had, but for the past it had not, the desired past; not an actual history but a possible history. It is anti-nostalgic, seeking to bring the past into the present, rather than leave it back there. It deploys the past to challenge the present, to release cultural energies stored in thwarted moments from the past. (2003 c, 21)

Whelan's 'radical memory' approximates to the cultural and political projects of *Field Day*, which were, and are, concerned with decoding the debilitating nostalgia of a

sectarian society in Northern Ireland, but also with re-presenting representations of Ireland's colonial history. Deane has identified the moment when 'the Republic surrendered the notion of identity altogether' and co-terminously 'the North began its internecine conflict' as the point at which *Field Day* locates itself (Deane, 1990, 13-14). The resurfacing of the issues of 'communal identity, colonial interference, sectarianism and racial stereotyping' warrants a lateral programme of analysis that is concentrated on the notions of 'place, identity and self-realization' (Deane, 1990, 14). Deane's project within *Field Day* is to initiate awareness in people of the pressing need for a re-evaluation of the traditions that have provided divisive sustenance up to this point. The fundamental issue is that of progression and replacement; Deane counsels a sundering of the bland dichotomies of the colonial legacy and the enunciation of enabling and inclusive attempts at identity construction. The basis of communal identity should not be dependent on the nature of its opposite and should not be subject to insularity and suffocation.

Just as Cleary links the urgency of postcolonial criticism to the political and social developments on the island in the 1970s and 1980s, Connolly, speaking on *Field Day*, notes:

The seeming unavailability of any answer to the protracted violence in the North propelled many critics into a search for new kinds of questions; and towards the discovery that, in cultural theory, the shibboleths of the Irish debate were being held up for analysis, read as strategically deployed terms and discussed as constructs rather than truths. (2001, 301)

The mediation and confrontation of acute political and historical circumstances in terms of poststructuralism and postcolonialism further demonstrates Deane's point that

language was at the core of Ireland's political and cultural crises. As he argues 'the crisis we are passing through is stylistic. That is to say, it is a crisis of language-the ways in which we write it and the ways in which we read it' (1985 b, 46). Theory, then, is manifest as a latter-day 'stylistic' intervention in the representation of Irish society. The revelation of the 'constructed' fabric of traditional or nostalgic truths through *Field Day*'s critical and artistic interventions is, then, underwritten by the work of Derrida, Foucault and Said. As Connolly further concludes, invoking Cleary, '[t]heoretically inspired or informed readings of Irish writers originating outside Ireland have not always been welcome' (2001, 307); the significance of these contributions, however, lies in their participation in 'a concerted effort to 'dislocate' Ireland' (2001, 307). As I argue at greater length below, the projects of Irish postcolonial studies are located within a broader nexus of conceptual and theoretical transaction, it is significant that *Field Day* was primarily responsible for opening Ireland critical borders to such ideational exchange.

Irish nationalism was, in Deane's view, as much a product of British colonialism as unionism, based as it was on the underpinnings of stereotype and essentialism. In critiquing, and ultimately rejecting this form of nationalist discourse, Deane not only allied himself with postcolonial criticism but also, as Michael Böss argues, indicates his broader intellectual project. This project constituted 'a radical reappraisal of the Enlightenment tradition and its philosophical, political and social implications-rationalism, liberalism and modernisation' (2002, 146). The philosophical 'fifth province', then, is imbricated in Deane's and *Field Day*'s discourse on Irish nationalism.

As it transcends the geographical confines of the island with its abstract and imaginary quality, the ‘fifth province’ is a potent site of alternative ‘philosophical, political and social implications’. Indeed, its abstracted or invented quality expresses Kiberd’s contention that futurology is a historical necessity of Irish society. But also, and contrary to Böss’s conclusion, it is not an attempt ‘to rewrite the past’ (2002, 147), rather the ‘fifth province’ is a imaginary location wherein *pasts* and *histories* can compete, negotiate and affiliate beyond the structures, and strictures, of attenuated versions of essence, nostalgia, tradition, rationalism and modernization.

Writing in 1996, John Wilson Foster diagnosed an explicit nationalist conviction within the operations and publications of *Field Day*. Confirming its radical co-option of international critical theory to Irish political and cultural debates, Wilson Foster offers a somewhat reductive conclusion that such theoretical internationalism nourishes ‘a stern, rather puritan republicanism’ (87). As I discuss in chapter nine, Wilson Foster’s admonition re-iterates the criticisms of many other critics of Irish postcolonial studies. He argues:

‘Tenured radicals’ in the advanced English-speaking university systems routinely seek to subvert ‘the canon’, ‘traditional western values’, the very idea of literature, the *idea* of the author, the idea of genius, liberal humanism and Christianity, all in the name of post-modernism; but in the name of post-colonialism and multiculturalism, they mount tediously routine attacks on colonialism and imperialism, finding not the United States but Britain the most convenient: this championship of the historical victim can easily in any given ethno-cultural situation become proxy nationalism. (1996, 86-87)

Wilson Foster's conclusion consummately reveals his own 'tenured' academic priorities; continuity, canonicity and the integrated text emerge as sacrosanct. Perhaps more alarming is his deflection of attacks on imperialism, surely the political and cultural disparities and excess of colonialism warrant critical interrogation. Further, and this seems to be the crux of revisionism's lacunae, what is the 'nationalism' to which Wilson Foster refers? As the discussions in subsequent chapters outline, nationalism is never a homogeneously transhistorical or transgeographical entity or process. Equally, as both Gibbons and Whelan argue below, critics such as Wilson Foster necessarily 'construct' their own version of traditional Irish nationalism, which is then conflated with, or collapsed into, the theoretical project of postcolonial theory; a tactic designed to deflate the possibilities and legitimacy of both nationalism and postcolonial theory.

*Field Day's* concern with constricted versions of Irish nationalism, and with the processes of cultural invention which have historically underwritten it, 'accorded with developments in post-colonial criticism', which have turned 'against nations and nationalism as repressive, ideological reproductions of the colonial regime' (Graham, 2001, 87). Deane's articulation of the failure of Irish nationalism, Graham argues, segues with Guha's and *Subaltern Studies'* critique of Indian state nationalism. In effect, both cite the imperial heritage of nationalism and latterly its failure to crystallize an adequate and heterogeneous postcolonial national identity as indices of its limitations. While Graham refers to 'the necessary denigration of the nation as a political ideology' (2001, 88), replacing discussions of future Irish nationalisms with what he calls 'a notion of Irish



culture which views the dialogic hybridity of ‘Irishness’ in empowered ways’ (2001, 98), he seems to recast the arguments of revisionist critics in a new idiom.

Postcolonial studies deconstructs the false imperatives of narrow-gauge nationalism, whether enshrined in state form or manifest in reactionary ethnic discourses. However, Graham’s alternative, that of denigration, seems unrealistic and as potentially exclusionary as the nationalism he ‘denigrates’. Graham’s argument suggests that ‘the nation’ as concept or process is entirely incompatible with ‘dialogic hybridity’, not only incompatible but, it seems, unwelcome. Alternatively, this dissertation would argue that Irish postcolonial analyses, effectively initiated by *Field Day* and continued in the work of Lloyd, Gibbons, Whelan, Kiberd, Bourke, among others, engage, and must continue to engage, in differentiated conversations with Ireland’s colonial and *national* histories, vocalizing and representing the ‘dialogic hybridity’ of their submerged political and cultural constituencies.

**‘a neo-Romantic, totalising vision’<sup>40</sup>**

In a recent essay entitled ‘The Global Cure? History, Therapy and the Celtic Tiger’, Gibbons writes on the relations between history and trauma. Referring to the modalities of therapeutic recovery, Gibbons notes, ‘[t]he therapeutic assumption here...lies in the belief that the telling of a story is sufficient by itself to dispel the ghosts of the past...But it by no means follows that all narrative structures provide such consoling fictions’ (2002 a, 97). Reading through Adorno on traumatic memory, he further concludes that ‘[it] is not about recovering or indeed banishing previous

experiences but rather “working through” them, and it is this protracted, often painful process which links the lost voices of the past ineluctably with the present’ (2002 a, 97).<sup>41</sup>

In the context of Ireland’s colonial history, Gibbons’ remarks on the narrative mediation of traumatic memory seem to have a peculiar relevance to *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*.<sup>42</sup> Critics such as Longley reacted in equivocal fashion, extolling the editors’ voluminous collection of rare material, but also chastizing the anthology for its ‘symptomatic yoking of ‘Irish Literature’ to Nationalism’ (Longley, 1994, 23). She views the anthology as the culmination of *Field Day*’s nationalist ambitions and has described it as ‘the key to all of its [Field Day’s] mythologies’ (1994, 22). Longley is particularly disdainful of Deane’s input and is wary of the General Introduction, as it ‘harbours its own polemical ambitions while pretending to philosophical relativism’ (1994, 26). Deane is perceived as infusing the *Field Day* project with his personal nationalist vision and political agenda. However Deane, in his capacity as general editor, explicitly advertized both its contingency and its inclusiveness, arguing that the anthology’s animus was to:

re-present texts in relation to one another and [demonstrate], sometimes in detail, sometimes by no more than a general indication, how that constantly changing interrelationship provides for us the nexus of values, assumptions and beliefs in which the idea of Ireland, Irish and writing are grounded. (1991, xx)

Deane enunciates the dialogic and fractious economies of historical, textual representation in and about Ireland. The ‘meta-narrative, which is...hospitable to all micro-narratives that, from time to time, have achieved prominence as the official versions of the true history, political and literary, of the island’s past and present’ (1991,

xix) is not the definitive embodiment of what Gibbons calls a ‘consoling fiction’. It is rather representative of Graham’s ‘dialogic hybridity’, as well as signifying, in its laterally inclusive textual form, a radical re-presentation of and engagement with Ireland’s pasts. Traditions and anthologies operate on the basis of self-evidence; in asserting their own authority they give the appearance of *natural* entities. As such they embody acts of cultural consolation, a consolation that is exclusionary, arbitrary and tendentious. As part of the *Field Day* project, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* is not impervious to the limitations of its form, for which it was rightly criticized, but in its stated intention of problematizing the consolations, and consolidations, of tradition, sectarianism and nostalgia it constituted a signal postcolonial event. In Gibbons’ terms it was not designed to banish or to foreground specific constituencies of Irish literary or political history, but contrarily its re-presentation of texts in dialogic form facilitates, possibly demands, what Gibbons calls a process of ‘working through’.

Said’s influence on Irish postcolonial studies is unquestionably evidenced in *Field Day*’s critical project; its presiding concerns are the debilitating modalities of political and cultural representation of Irish colonial history. Indeed *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* is a monumental testament to the Saidian undertow of Deane’s and *Field Day*’s critical trajectories. Necessarily, then, such a postcolonial representation of the history of Irish writing was viewed as an insidious political strategy. Tying Said’s political and cultural preoccupations to *Field Day*’s political project, Longley claims that their critical writings exude ‘a powerful sense of Palestinian dispossession’ (1990, 12). Extending her political-historical analogies, she further concludes, ‘Field Day’ s leading

directors-Seamus Deane, Seamus Heaney, Brian Friel and Tom Paulin – are literary kings over the water or over the border. Their locus is a visionary Derry awaiting Jacobite restoration’ (Watson, 1992, 402).

In these terms *Field Day* represented a political movement, which sought redress for the colonial usurpation of Irish history; exile and homelessness underwrite their nationalistic anthologizing, theatrical performance and broader critical engagement. Longley diagnoses an attenuated inflection of nationalism, which elides women’s history and agency, and whose own political agenda is foreclosed by the ever-absent restoration of the nation (1992, 119-121). In nominating volumes four and five of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, which were then in progress, as ‘The Mad Women in the Annex’ (1992, 119), Longley’s ostensibly facetious comment, nevertheless, retains a degree of accuracy. While the five volumes of the anthology now re-present well over a millennium of Irish writing by both men and women, the discrete separation of the volumes belies the material complexity and historical interaction of social, cultural and political representation. The problematics and potential resolutions of gender politics in colonial, nationalist and postcolonial representation will be discussed in greater depth in chapter five. As Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill concludes:

[t]he all-women fourth volume of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* may go some way to galvanizing and publishing hitherto overlooked energies, but it is no guarantee that women can at last take their rightful place, and well-deserved places, no matter what their achievements. (1996, 114)

Richards alludes to the pivotal, divisive issue concerning *Field Day*’s critical project. As a significant postcolonial event, *Field Day* embodied a form of cultural

politics, but contrary to Longley these were not of militant republican dispossession, or in Wilson Foster's terms 'reconstructed Catholic nationalism' (1996, 87). Richards concludes:

It is not that *Field Day* is a 'nationalist' movement in the sense of being hard-line republican, but there is a real political-cultural consequence of reading Ulster's situation as colonial, in that there is a desire for a non-sectarian republic...there is also a necessity of dealing with those whose sense of political/cultural-and religious-being is predicated upon the maintenance of the Act of Union. (1991, 142)

*Field Day's* task, and that confronting contemporary Irish postcolonial studies remains, was not the elision of these latter cultural communities (and their histories), but, firstly, the interrogation of the representational mechanisms that underwrote the Act of Union and English colonial authority, and secondly, the continual contestation of the homogenizing capacities of nationalist discourse. As I discuss below, these homogenizing capacities are under scrutiny in the postcolonial divination of subaltern and unrepresented national histories.

Re-iterating her suspicion of *Field Day's* adoption of international critical theory within a re-configured traditional nationalism, in 1984 Longley wrote that *Field Day* were 'martyrs to abstraction', and that their critical interface with Ireland's colonial history and Anglo-Irish relations was 'largely a matter of old whines in new bottles...more part of the problem than part of the solution' (20). While the kernel of Longley's argument was overly simplistic, she did allude to limitations that were repeatedly confronted by *Field Day*. In his 1986 edition, *The Battle of the Books*, W.J. McCormack catalogued some of the omissions from *Field Day's* pamphlet series.

McCormack noted the absence of such topics as, ‘the Irish language...the role of the Catholic Church...the whole question of social class...the population explosion in the South...nuclear energy, neutrality and US/British defence interests in Ireland’ (55). *Field Day*’s perceived concentration on the abstractions of representation, mediated through continental theory, occasioned the gaps in their critical agenda, as cited by McCormack. However, as is too often the case in Irish critical debates, Longley defaults to crass political sloganeering, issuing a ‘traditionalist’ caricature of *Field Day*. She explicitly overlooks what was essentially a Benjaminian, or dynamic, interaction with the past and with Irish literary and historical heritage. The political temperature of *Field Day*’s cultural milieu, in Longley’s view, facilitates the fermentation of an anachronistic nationalist politics.

Arguing at length, Longley elaborates the crucial disparity between both the historical perspectives and methodological approaches of Irish postcolonial critics, increasingly influenced by Benjamin, and those of New Critical scholars<sup>43</sup> and revisionist historians. In a reference to *Field Day*’s historical perspective, she writes:

[w]ithin the literary sphere it seeks to piece together a broken past, to go back behind all deforming colonization, to return to origins (550AD), and thus to ‘clarify’ Irish reality so that we can start again. In contrast revisionism seeks to break down a monolithic idea of the past, to go back behind the revolution’s ideology, to return to origins in 1922 and understand them more empirically. In my view the former project risks the dangerous fantasy that loss and breakdown can be retrieved. Rather than start a new literary and political clock, I think we should try to tell the time accurately. (1990, 13)

Longley's idiom betrays the claims to empiricism that are symptomatic of revisionist criticism; accuracy, it seems, evacuates fantasy of historical agency. What Longley fails to appreciate is that narratives constructed on the basis of apparent accuracy depend on their own myths, and in turn become myths themselves. Echoing the philosophical principles of the Scottish Enlightenment, Longley eschews *Field Day*'s reclamation of the shattered fragments of the past.<sup>44</sup> As Irish postcolonial studies and subaltern historiography report, it is difficult to tell the time if some of the digits on the clock face are missing or faded.

Concluding her 2001 essay, 'Theorising Ireland', Connolly writes:

As the subject of theory, postcolonial and otherwise, 'Ireland' must be understood as both the twenty-six-county nation-state and the six-county statelet, and furthermore, in terms of the connections and affiliations not reducible to these relatively new political creations. Postcolonial theory has to process the relation between these two units which share the same land mass, the actual or wished-for connections with other places... and the dreams of those who see the two units as one. That this dream has the power to assume the role of nightmare in some versions of the political imagination must also be acknowledged. (312).

To critics of *Field Day*, its critical and editorial enterprises, gilded as they were with postcolonial and poststructuralist theory, have signally failed to execute the project delineated by Connolly. Ironically, by failing to engage with any theoretical or historiographic self-reflection, these critics have equally failed to mediate the political and cultural affiliations and divisions cited by Connolly. Ultimately, in both theoretically and creatively re-reading Irish identities in terms of their *all-island* and *colonial* histories and representations, *Field Day* did at least initiate what Connolly later calls, '[t]he

search... for a critical idiom capable of comprehending and maybe even changing Irish culture' (2001, 312).



## CHAPTER THREE

### Unapproved Roads: Revival and Re-imagination

In this new political dispensation, it gradually became apparent that universal declarations of human rights extended with greater ease to individuals than to cultures: while all human beings were equal, some cultures were less equal than others, and their destruction was justified in the name of progress. (Luke Gibbons, 'The return of the native: The United Irishmen, culture and colonialism', 53)

Representations are a form of human economy, in a way, and necessary to life in society and, in a sense, between societies. So I don't think there is any way of getting away from them—they are as basic as language. What we must eliminate are systems of representation that carry with them the kind of authority which, to my mind, has been repressive because it does not permit or make room for interventions on the part of those represented. (Edward W. Said, 'In the Shadow of the West', *Power, Politics and Culture*, 41-42.)

## **Ireland's Masked Modernity**

Opening his seminal text on oral history, *The Voice of the Past*, the social historian Paul Thompson observes, '[a]ll history depends ultimately upon its social purpose...Where no history is readily at hand, it will be created' (1978, 1). Again Thompson alludes to the politics of historiographic figuration; his comments serve as a further alarm to the profound ethical and political responsibilities of historical narration. Dynamic forms of political and cultural histories can be, and are, powerful motive forces against colonial or neo-colonial oppression. But likewise postcolonial studies charts the repressive strategies of historical emplotment; it tracks the assiduous mechanics of narrative edition that is often characteristic of bourgeois anti-colonial nationalism, but which is equally apparent in consolidatory, and defensive, post-independence historical and social narration. These areas of postcolonial historical narration, then, are key concerns of both Kiberd and Gibbons.

Kiberd has been dubbed the 'figurehead of postcolonial Irish Studies' (Wheatley, 2001, 85) and his pre-eminence within the field has been employed, and deployed, as a vehicle for much politicized commentary. Speaking about Ireland's disputed postcolonial condition, Kiberd writes of a complex 'land which today belongs securely neither to the First nor the Third Worlds, but oscillates uneasily between' (1994, 108). Ireland's postcolonial position, then, mirrors its problematic status within the British imperial administration. It is perhaps this 'liminal' or unstable relation to imperialism and to its closest geographical neighbour that prompted the authors of the 1989 edition, *The Empire Writes Back*, to omit Ireland from its catalogue of colonial and postcolonial societies.<sup>45</sup> In

the opening pages of *Inventing Ireland*, Kiberd directly addresses this cursory treatment of Irish colonial history:

In restoring writers to the wider cultural context, I have been mindful of the ways in which some shapers of modern Africa, India and the emerging world looked at times to the Irish for guidance. Despite this a recent study of theory and practice in postcolonial literature, *The Empire Writes Back*, passes over the Irish case very swiftly. (1996 a, 4-5)

Kiberd's introductory comments express, almost verbatim, Said's remarks, at the beginning of chapter one, on Ireland's exemplary role within the broader decolonizing world.<sup>46</sup>

The fundamental theoretical locus of Irish postcolonial critique is the potent ideological capabilities of all cultural discourses. The intention of Kiberd's criticism, therefore, is to achieve equilibrium between the aesthetic and the political; to probe the points of intersection and to identify the latent, mutually beneficial elements of artistic creativity and socio-political enterprise. The cultural politics of narrative representation and historical remembrance are profoundly disputatious in a decolonizing and subsequently independent nation-state. Primary among Kiberd's critical targets is the crystallisation of a 'spurious national unity' (1996 a, 10) in the form of reactionary state apparatus'; and central to this, are his critiques of nationalism and conservative statism in terms of both colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory.

Perhaps the most accessible point from which to commence a discussion of Kiberd's brand of colonial discourse analysis is to invoke his relatively recent aspiration for a more tolerant and laterally inclusive postcolonial Ireland:

If the notion of ‘Ireland’ seemed to some to have become problematic, that was only because the seamless garment once wrapped like a green flag around Cathleen Ní Houlihan had given way to a quilt of many patches and colours, all distinct, yet all connected too. No one element should subordinate or assimilate the others: Irish or English, rural or urban, Gaelic or Anglo, each has its part in the pattern. (Kiberd, 1996 a, 653)

The idea of exploding tendentious unities or monochromatic cultural discourses is at the core of Kiberd’s own discursive interventions, and central to this matrix is the invocation of a distinctly comforting fabric of Irishness: the patchwork quilt.

In his capacity as director of the *Yeats Summer School* from 1985-87, Kiberd can claim a share of responsibility for the direct importation of postcolonial criticism into Irish cultural studies, and indeed Irish academia. By inviting the so-called ‘godfather’ of global postcolonial studies, Edward W. Said, to deliver what was to become a seminal/controversial paper on ‘Yeats and Decolonization’, Kiberd opened the door of Irish literary studies to the critical methodologies of postcolonialism. Postcolonial criticism had ‘travelled’ to Irish shores by the mid-eighties, yet still retains a profoundly contested valence, having never been unilaterally sanctioned within Irish academic or intellectual discourses. Kiberd exhibits an unequivocal commitment to a broadly comparative perspective; he embraces a theoretical vista that straddles diverse crucibles of anti-colonial struggle, and postcolonial re-constitution. Ireland’s status as the first English speaking postcolonial society is assumed; indeed it is a fundamental precept of Kiberd’s entire diagnosis that the Irish literary and cultural revival was exemplary to subsequent decolonizing nations. Ireland is, as Gerry Smyth rather sardonically quips, ‘first among non-equals’ (Smyth, 1993, 336).

Kiberd has been to forefront of post-colonial debate in Ireland and has produced a corpus of work that is firmly grounded in the tropes of international colonial discourse analysis. In fact he argues, '[t]he history of independent Ireland bears a remarkable similarity, therefore, to the phases charted by Frantz Fanon in his account of Third World people in *The Wretched of the Earth*' (Kiberd, 1994, 95). Kiberd's endeavours are driven by a commitment to the transformative and revolutionary potentialities of literature, and he is firmly indebted to the vanguard of post-colonial discourse: his theses are founded on these structures, and are dependent on the tropes pioneered by Fanon, and Ashis Nandy. The central issue for Kiberd is that the re-evaluation of Irish culture, especially literature, should only be done in relation to other colonized societies and not solely considered within the critical gaze of metropolitan Europe or America. Ireland is ripe for re-invention, but only through the formulation of a dialogic politico-cultural discourse. Kiberd's post-colonial theorization is characterized by a sense of cultural relativity, of the reconciliation of the universal with the local through the employment of internationally comparative narratives of de-colonization.

Kiberd's determinedly postcolonial criticism has been, and is, characterized by his analysis of literature in terms of its social context, but equally he deems literary criticism 'as the basis for engaging in a critical discourse about society' (Peillon, 2002, 45) and he has embraced a particular distillation of anti-colonial discourse. By invoking such a discursive *doxa*, Kiberd strives to execute a strategic political sidestep; Fanon, in particular, does not disavow the long-term legitimacy of nationalist postcolonial projects. His politico-philosophical teleologies register the limitations of intractable oppositional

or ‘mimic’ nationalisms, while never explicitly jettisoning the radical potential of the popular discourse of nationalism and its conceptual archetype: ‘the nation.’ By simultaneously delimiting the historical sweep of his theoretical vista and eschewing an interrogative analysis of more contemporary postcolonial theorists, Kiberd avoids a direct confrontation with his conceptual locus: ‘the nation.’

**‘a great moment of national imagining’<sup>47</sup>**

Joyce’s generation had the cultural self-belief to confront an empire. The current generation seems possessed of real economic acumen. If these forces can be combined in the reinvention of Ireland, they may come together as a constellation, releasing entirely new energies in culture but also in politics...the ‘unfinished business’ of the Irish renaissance may generate hybrid models of political identity which could in time offer basis for the resolution of other, seemingly intractable, conflict in identity in other parts of the world. (Kiberd, 1998 a)<sup>48</sup>

Kiberd diagnoses an ‘awesome cultural self-confidence’, in the stated intentions and mechanics of the Irish Literary renaissance, a self-confidence that germinated despite, and not because of, ‘a profound condition of economic hardship’ (1998 b).<sup>49</sup> This cultural dynamism was, however, subsumed in a defensive, post-independence state formation; the energies that enabled liberation were, to a large extent, curtailed and quarantined in a conservative, national idyll. Similarly, Mathews concludes, ‘the revival was characterized by a rich and complex ferment of political and cultural thinking and no small amount of liberational energy’ (2003, 148). The period was energized by the dynamics of possibility; there was a manifest urge to re-imagine or re-calibrate the axes

or vectors of ‘cultural meaning’ (Mathews, 2000, 14) from an imperial metropolitan centre to an alternative and innovative Irish centre. Mathews continues:

All of the movements examined here professed to operate outside the concerns of party politics, yet, in their joint concern to turn Ireland into a centre of both cultural *and* material innovation again, their activities were inherently political and played an important role in Irish decolonization. (2003, 34)

The legacy and influence of Fanon’s anti-colonial theorization is evident in both Kiberd’s and here in Mathews’ reconceptualization of the radical dynamism of both the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century in Ireland. The radical imbrication of politics and culture produces what Mathews terms a store of ‘liberational energy’, and the conjunction of political, cultural and economic self-help initiatives reminds us of Fanon’s enduring conclusion that, ‘[c]ulture is the expression of national consciousness...[and] national consciousness is the most elaborate form of culture’ (1967, 198-199).

This arousal of a national consciousness is not a deliberate adoption of the structures of modernization, but rather is conceived of as an ‘alternative modernity’ (Mathews, 2003, 2). An idea that is central to many of the interventions within postcolonial Irish studies. In stark contrast to the ‘bogus unity’ of post-independence Ireland, which was characterized by a fervent counter-revivalist *mentalité*, these national, political, economic and cultural mobilizations were envisaged as genuinely prosperous and innovative unities. These socio-political conglomerations diagnosed the exigency for ‘an alternative path to modernization-on Irish terms’ (Mathews, 2003, 28). What Kiberd

and Mathews trace, then, through Fanon, is the regeneration of a legitimate and proactive alternative national agency in Irish society.

Kiberd claims that the cultural revival ‘achieved nothing less than a renovation of Irish consciousness and a new understanding of politics, economics, philosophy, sport, language and culture in its widest sense’ (1995, 5-7). Complementing Kiberd’s reading, Mathews catalogues the machinations of the national self-help initiatives; a series of ostensibly discrete endeavours that were, in fact, mutually nourishing agents of Ireland’s alternative modernity. Both Kiberd and Mathews register, in an Irish context, an explicitly Fanonian interpretation of national consciousness and national culture. As Fanon argues, ‘[a] national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence’ (1967, 188). In crystallizing a national culture, Fanon espouses the radical employment of the past ‘with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope’ (1967, 187). Following Deane and Kiberd, and intersecting with Lloyd, Gibbons and Whelan, Mathews echoes Fanon in maintaining that the variegated initiatives that fomented a sense of national consciousness in Ireland embraced ‘the idea of tradition as a stimulus towards innovation and change rather than a barrier to it’ (Mathews, 2003, 2). Equally, it is this Fanonian idea of ‘an invitation to action’ that Kiberd finds so unique within the dynamics of the cultural revival, an ideal, as we will discuss, that he believes was jettisoned in post-Independence Ireland.



Although strikingly different to Fanon's theoretical anti-colonial writing in many ways<sup>50</sup>, the political philosophy of Amílcar Cabral re-asserts the instrumental role that culture must play in the liberation movements of colonized societies. While Fanon and Cabral differ in their conceptions of what constitutes 'culture', their writings have informed the so-called 'culturalist' elements of contemporary postcolonial studies. In concluding that 'it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture' (Williams and Chrisman, 56), Cabral registers the profound cultural *agon* that is symptomatic of the colonial context. Likewise, both Kiberd and Mathews operate within such a theoretical tradition; representing the confluenced self-help initiatives of Ireland's 'nationalist phase' as acts of culture within the longer-term project of Irish national liberation.

Summarizing Fanon's definition of national culture, David Macey writes, 'when deprived of the twin supports of the nation and the state, cultures perished and died: national liberation and the renaissance of the state were the preconditions for the very existence of a culture' (2000, 375). As I discuss in the next section, within Kiberd's dialectic, the cultural revival manifested the seeds of national liberation. The energies of such cultural renaissance, however, were not reciprocated or matched by a similarly dynamic rebirth of the state. As such, the counter-revivalist impulses of the 1920s and 1930s undermined these erstwhile cultural energies and 'one of the twin supports' was not available to the development/liberation of the national culture.

In dealing with the loss of the Irish language Kiberd produces an Irish inflection of Benjamin's theses on the philosophy of history. Kiberd comments, '[t]he astonishing

speed and stunning success with which the Irish jettisoned their native language has never been fully explained' (1995, 649). While the Irish language may have been lost to history to a large section of the population, it was not, Kiberd argues, lost to historical usefulness. Contrarily, he argues that contemporary native Irish speakers possess a cultural self-confidence that is not evident among their monoglot compatriots (Kiberd, 1999).<sup>51</sup> As English became the *de facto* medium of modernized social, political and economic procedure, the Irish language struggled to survive as a residual cultural medium.

As Ngugi w'a Thiongo'o outlines with respect to the linguistic politics of colonial Kenya, the colonized was linguistically bisected – the native idiom/patois was the vehicle of memory, communality and tradition, but the rational *lingua franca* of colonial process was English.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the colonized underwent a schizophrenic cultural trauma in which the native language operated under the designations of tradition, obsolescence or as Archbishop Richard Whateley<sup>53</sup>, a pioneer of political economy in Ireland, remarked, 'baby-talk'. English was and still is, the idiom of global economic, political, educational and cultural hegemony. Kiberd's point is that traditions that are understood as lost to history are, in fact, ready vehicles for cultural and political re-imagination. The characterization of native Irish speakers as a culturally secure constituency furnishes Kiberd's critical efforts with a mechanism through which crass, binary politico-cultural logics can, potentially, be transcended. In effect, he proposes a programme of constructive cultural dialogism. The cultural nourishes the resolution of entrenched political cleavage in Kiberd's schematic:

I suppose what I get around to arguing is that a knowledge of the Irish language might actually prevent some of the xenophobia and chauvinism, if you like, anti-Englishness, of which certain people in Ireland are sometimes accused. (Kiberd, 1999)

Repeating his invocation for mutual cooperation between economic and cultural constituencies, Kiberd cites, ‘the fact that many of the most successful business “achievers” in society have been enthusiastic “Gaeilgoir” has strengthened argument for a connection between cultural self-confidence and economic success’ (1995, 652). The accuracy of the statement is less important than the philosophical animus of Kiberd’s arguments: the past/tradition can be a valent element in the imagination of the future.<sup>54</sup> Or as the American sociologist, David Gross concludes in his critique of modernity:

The reappropriation of tradition is, in itself, no alternative to an immanent critique of modernity. It is only a means to broaden and deepen the methods of immanent critique by tapping into a wealth of material that normally lies outside its range...this material includes the nonsynchronous elements of discontinued tradition, as well as the surplus or excess meanings still present in continuous ones. Both kinds of difference are valuable because they provoke contradictions, challenge modern technologies of power and control, and provide access to alternative ways of thinking and being which we cannot afford to be without. (1992, 135)

Consequently ‘alternative ways of thinking’ or imaginative resistance cannot materialize merely in imitative linear counter-narratives. As Fanon warned, and as Said re-emphasized, conventional linear narrative is the modus operandi of teleologically based domination (Fanon, 1967, 148; Said, 1994, [1978], 330).

**‘the Irish paradise of files and paperclips’<sup>55</sup>**

Underlying Kiberd’s Fanonian inflection of Irish twentieth century Irish literature, in particular his highly influential work on John Millington Synge, is the conviction that the post-independence state did not answer the cultural, and therefore political, needs of a newly liberated nation. The state structure that crystallized in the 1921-22 period straitjacketed the critical and creative dynamism of the erstwhile literary renaissance. As Deane observes, ‘Ireland’s colonial history was both a history of emancipation from the monotonies of tyranny and, after the emancipatory movement, a restoration of the same monotonies under the name of freedom’ (1997 a, 168).

Accordingly, Fanon’s tri-partite modulation of the decolonizing dialectic was hamstrung by a ‘state apparatus [that] remained unmodified since British days and condemned many citizens (as it was designed to do) to live like an underground movement in their own country’ (Kiberd, 1998 a). Post-independence Ireland assumed a reactionary mentality; a newly liberated state, unsure of its security, and despite its *de facto* legitimacy, failed to imagine itself beyond the trammelled confines of a rigid appeal to stability and an atavistic traditionalism. The prairies/savannahs of liberation remained unseen as the nationalism of an insular state apparatus remained focussed on simple consolidation rather than evolution. Reading through Fanon, Kiberd concludes:

The paralysis that Fanon detected in certain newly-independent African States also gripped independent Ireland...History, under such a dispensation, ceased to be progressive, becoming instead an endless repetition of familiar crises, with no hope of resolution. (1996 a, 392-393)

For Kiberd, then, post-independence Ireland retains the aspect of a Joycean colonial capital in the thrall of a provincial and insecure paralysis. The periphery-dominated centre refused to sanction a transfusion of polyvocal diversity or politico-cultural imagination within the fledging nation-state. The stasis of a pastoral nationalism provided a buttress for the defensive conservatism of the emergent postcolonial state. In these terms, an idealized inflection of an ‘Irish nation’ was held as the intractable model on which to base the pursuant postcolonial social programme. In Whelan’s terms, independence lapsed into:

a state-endorsed project [which] promoted the retrieval of an authentic tradition, whose continuity differentiated the primordial nation from those who colonized it. The cultural nationalism of the independent state anxiously sought the pure, the original, the authentic, the traditional to recuperate a depleted wholeness. (2003, 3)

This insularity was reflected in the broad economic temper of DeValera’s state and equally in the ‘moral minesweepers’ of his Ireland: the Catholic Church. Kiberd’s critical logic, then, germinates in the fact that a decolonizing phase, wherein bilateral engagement between cultural and economic discourses has yet to actualize in Ireland. Indeed as Susan Cannon Harris argues, within anti-colonial nationalist movements we see the performance of the nation’s past in the presence of others, in other words, the occupying imperial/colonial authority (2003).<sup>56</sup> Post-Independence Ireland witnesses the persistence of habitual performance, a form of cultural and political performance that is divested of transformative potential. Just as all processes of change or cultural/political beginnings involve a sense of loss, the state-led nationalist project of post-independence Ireland sought to institute a form of consolidation without the risk of further loss.<sup>57</sup>

Kiberd's critique is a critical lamentation for the abandoned artistic electricity of the Irish Literary Revival. In particular, Kiberd re-imagines the explosive possibilities of the Irish Literary Revival and enlists the diverse, and diversifying, tropes of postcolonial methodology. The state structures that assumed governance in 1921-22 were informed by a defensive logic, in which such creative cultural dynamism was neutered. It is in this sense, then, that Kiberd's work is representative of the broader concerns of Irish postcolonial criticism, in attempting to re-present those 'minority groups who didn't form part of the main script [and were] edited out' (Kiberd, 1999).<sup>58</sup> In a recent interview, Kiberd re-iterated his critical credo, he asserted, 'politicians underestimate the power of culture as a force to overcome political difficulties' (Kiberd, 1998 b). Culture, primarily textual in nature, operates emphatically within the realm of the political, and is eminently potent in resolving the elisions and cleavage of political dispute or incompetence.

Nationalism has been, and is, one of the primary discursive targets of postcolonial criticism; it is seen variously as Enlightenment legacy; Eurocentric imposition; liberationist vehicle, or a mode of neo-colonial suppression of ethnic interests. The principle incarnation of nationalism that has been assailed by both revisionist and postcolonial critics is a form of 'narrow-gauge' or 'monotone' nationalism (Kiberd, 1998 b). Deane, Kiberd, Gibbons, and Lloyd have all exerted critical energy in exposing the insidious exclusionary motives and mechanics of traditional, 'state-led' nationalism. The form of nationalism that achieved hegemony in post-independence Ireland was underwritten by a tri-partite mandate: land, church, and nation. Irish postcolonial studies is concerned, firstly, with tracing the 'un-represented' discourses and cultural formations

that were, as Kiberd says, ‘edited out’ of official state nationalism and its narratives. Secondly, postcolonial critique aims at reconstituting the progressive/enabling potentialities of nationalism as a politico-cultural discourse, in the wake of its deconstruction, and curt dismissal, by both the project of modernization and that of its sentries: revisionist historiography. Returning to Hartnett’s ‘A Farewell to English’, such a critical diagnosis is well encapsulated in the lines:

So we queued up at the Castle  
in nineteen-twenty-two  
to make our Gaelic  
or our Irish dream come true.  
We could have had from that start  
made certain of our fate  
but we chose to learn the noble art  
of writing forms in triplicate.  
With big wide eyes  
and childish smiles  
quivering on our lips  
we entered the Irish paradise  
of files and paper-clips. (1978, 81)

The creation of a sense of Irishness solely along lines of what was ‘not-British’ resulted in an insularity that proved highly detrimental in post-independence Ireland. Kiberd accedes to the exigent reappraisal of Irish history in order ‘to replace the old morality tale of Holy Ireland versus Perfidious Albion with a less sentimental and simplified account’ (Kiberd, 1996 a, 642). He accepts the need to debunk the stereotyping and self-defeating narratives of traditional nationalism and he concedes that it is

necessary to replace the monochromatic mytho-historical narratives that contribute to contemporary sectarianism. Nevertheless ‘the more seductive writers’ who seek ‘to deride whatever nationalists extol’ have distorted this process, a process that is part of post-colonial progression (Kiberd, 1996 a, 642).

Kiberd views historical revisionism as being as insidious as colonialist hegemony; he refers to such scholarship as ‘a version of history without agency’ (Kiberd, 1996 a, 643). The content of Irish history is denied any form of dynamism or focal point; it is emptied of its specificities and is reduced to the predilections of personal agenda. Historical revisionism is governed by ‘the impersonal laws of history’, and Kiberd indicts its wilful denial of agency to the localized in both colonial and post-colonial history (Kiberd, 1996 a 643). The presence of narratives grounded in myth may not serve the purposes of accurate historical inquiry, but nevertheless the inaccuracy in empirical terms does not disqualify these narratives entirely. As Kiberd recognizes these traditional nationalist myths were widely subscribed to at a popular level, and even given their inaccuracy, this popularity does infuse them with a degree of historical agency and legitimizes them as ‘decisive agents of history’ (Kiberd, 1996 a, 646). He recognizes Ireland as ‘a crucible of modernity’ because it has acknowledged the ‘need to come to terms with nationalism’, but the vagueness of the phrase ‘come to terms with’ suggests an unclear programme of resolution (Kiberd, 1996 a, 645).

Kiberd inveighs against revisionist historiography, urging that revisionism offers little more than a latter-day rehearsal of ‘the old Manichean mentality’ (Kiberd, 1996 a, 642). While he acknowledges the worth of debunking the ‘truth’ elements of nationalist



myths, Kiberd rejects revisionism's denial of the historical agency of these self-same myths. Fundamentally Kiberd's, and Deane's, dispute stems from their belief in the textuality or 'literariness' of history. Revisionism, in Kiberd's view, rejects the theoretical insights and premises of postcolonial theory, and thereby sequesters itself within strict/monocular critical vistas. Kiberd's *oeuvre* is founded on a belief in the comparability of Irish cultural and political history, and he determinedly rejects default to any sense of its innate exceptionality, in terms of either nationalist or revisionist rhetoric (1996 a, 644). His employment of post-colonial theory is founded on the notion that international comparisons between former and neo-colonies can be forged, and can prove to be productive.

### **A national philosophy**

Kiberd's politics are both socialist and republican, which translates into a literary criticism that is culturally materialist in texture. At the kernel of his reading of Ireland's decolonizing and postcolonial literary representation is an unequivocal belief in the fact that 'literary texts are not bound by nationality' (Kiberd, 1996 a, 13). Consequently, in order for Irish society to regain access to the latent 'power-seizing' potency of art, Kiberd prescribes the establishment of laterally comparative and transgeographical postcolonial exchanges and equivalences. Artistic ingenuity and self-belief, supplemented by a radical investment in this creative ability by both historians and politicians, has the ability to furnish Irish society with 'better, more appropriate forms' (Kiberd, 1998 a). In other words, the so-called 'unfinished business' of the Irish literary revival can potentially

generate more variegated and dialogic forms of political and cultural identity in Ireland (Kiberd, 1998 a). Kiberd's work is primarily focused on the centrality of art, including literature, in forging a unified and recognizable national identity and consciousness, he affirms that we should 'look to artists for inspiration, and not just for ornament' (Kiberd, 1996 a, 652).

Such programmatic sentiments lead directly to Kiberd's most recent demand for an Irish 'national philosophy' (Kiberd, 2002).<sup>59</sup> The coupling of the words 'national' and 'philosophy' immediately summons images of a politically and culturally prejudicial programme; this particular notion has the capacity to engender a deserved wariness and dubiety. But it is exactly what Kiberd recently prescribed as the central discursive necessity in contemporary Ireland. Re-iterating his unrestrained admiration for the cultural self-confidence that occasioned the Irish literary revival, Kiberd suggests that if such cultural assurance could be married to the prevailing economic success in Ireland, then a more representative and genuinely *postcolonial* Irish identity would emerge. He asserts:

The cultural traditions of the Irish Renaissance were not only plural but hugely reconciling and they are still available to be tapped by persons of goodwill: whatever happens, culture will be the site and take of the debate, as politics wanes...The need is to reopen ourselves to the cultural philosophy of Hyde, Yeats, Hannah Skeffington and that whole revivalist generation, whose project is still incomplete. (2003, 84)<sup>60</sup>

He discerns the existence of a discursive hiatus between economic modalities and the creative impulses of the cultural sphere. As we have noted, Kiberd lauds the cultural fortitude of the literary renaissance as it evolved in the midst of deleterious economic

circumstances. His contemporary modulation is for a new cultural self-belief to emerge in order to complement the overwhelming sense of economic assurance that has manifested in Ireland during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ period. Again, Kiberd’s discourse is draped in the tropes of a distinctly materialist postcolonial analysis: culture is the active agent in the broader social context.

In canvassing such a radical imbrication of discourses, Kiberd’s work neatly intersects with Gibbons’ recent co-edited publication, *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*. The advent of an economically biased public sphere in Ireland has, according to the editors, circumscribed the potential for radical social thought in this country, and the logic of the collection is guided by a fundamental desire to re-infuse cultural discourse with a socially transformative aspect. In particular, both Gibbons and co-editor Michael Cronin, in their editorial and contributory essays, strive to redress the iniquities of both revisionism and modernization theory. The volume intervenes in the ongoing critique of Irish modernity, following in the wake of Gibbons’ previous publication, *Transformations in Irish Culture* and Conor McCarthy’s more recent *Modernisation, Crisis and Culture in Ireland 1969-1992*.

The edition marks a pugnacious intervention in the persistent dialectic between contemporary Irish political and cultural discourses; the tenor of the collection is symptomatic of postcolonialism’s left of centre political hue. Gibbons’ work on the nature of Irish modernization infuses the entire collection, and is the overriding reference point for the editorial argumentation. In their introduction, the editors affirm, ‘[i]n this way culture has the potential to be a site of resistance to the present social order and, in

its own right, a force subverting that order and inventing a new one' (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002, 16). The title of the book, together with both the tropes and conclusions included, are overt critical 'curtsies' to Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*. Gibbons and his fellow editors diagnose the convergence of culture and economic forces, a trend that has 'diminished [the] public sphere, and [silenced] an uncritical Academy' (2002, 17). However, given the emergent imbrication of culture and economy, the critical potential of cultural discourses has effectively increased. As culture is assimilated and wedded to economic forces and becomes a constituent of the market economy, a sense of destabilizing intimacy is amplified.

While I will provide a thorough exegesis of Gibbons' personal and co-editorial criticism below, I believe that Michel Peillon's essay, 'Culture and State in Ireland's New Economy', offers an instructive and complementary explication of the relations that obtain, and that can potentially materialize, between economic and cultural discourses. Indeed, Peillon provides a more systematic and sustained development of Kiberd's own prescription, and it is worthwhile to trace the intersections between the two theses. Peillon elaborates the general *geist* of Kiberd's 'national philosophy' based on the co-intervention of economic and cultural commentators and practitioners. Both Kiberd and Peillon pursue similar objectives in their desire to expose the 'negative' possibilities of cultural forces in relation to dominant economic and political discourses.

Peillon observes, invoking both Gibbons and Dillon, that until the recent Irish economic 'boom', 'Ireland was endowed with a modern economic and social structure while traditional values continued to dominate the cultural sphere' (2002, 40). Simply,

the individualist fragmentation of economic development was incompatible with the uniform, communally oriented cultural discourse of patriarchal Catholicism and the intractable biases of ‘narrow-gauge’ nationalism. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the State to mediate between these polarized social discourses. Significantly, however, despite the differentiation of ‘domains’, the radical critical potential of culture has never been activated against the dynamic urges of unequivocal modernization (Peillon, 2002, 42). Though the separation of discourses positively facilitated oppositional critique, the conservatism of the cultural sphere foreclosed any such radical projects.

Latterly, as we have noted, ‘the new relationship between the economy and culture renders the formulation of a critical discourse far more difficult but, by the same token, makes its impact on the economy potentially far more threatening’ (Peillon, 2002, 53). Culture itself has become a marketable commodity, and it is implicated in the machinations of economic progress at the levels of production and consumption: it is both produced as commodity, and ‘received’ or consumed as commodity. It is at this juncture that the re-presentation of heretofore peripheral, traditional cultural formations becomes a critical necessity. As the impetus of economic modernization proceeds with an enlisted and transmuted cultural sphere, the postcolonial criticism of Gibbons, Kiberd, Deane, and Lloyd becomes all the more relevant. Specifically, Kiberd’s demand for a ‘national philosophy’ that incorporates a constructive dialogue between creative artists, entrepreneurs, and the political class germinates in a desire to liberate the profoundly destabilizing variables within an otherwise ‘imploded’ economic and cultural nexus (Peillon, 2002, 51-53).

Kiberd's essay 'Anglo-Irish Attitudes', originally published in 1984, was republished in 1985 as part of a collection entitled, *Ireland's Field Day*.<sup>61</sup> This remarkable edition of pamphlets includes contributions from Deane, Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin and Richard Kearney, with an afterword by Denis Donoghue. It provides a multivalent, but by no means programmatic, sense of the formative stages of Irish postcolonial studies, garnering as it does, interventions from *Field Day*'s directorate and subsequent editors of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. My immediate concern is to point out the consanguinities between Deane's 'Civilians and Barbarians', discussed above, and Kiberd's essay. Both are emphatically indebted to Fanon, Said and Foucault; critiquing the insipid binary modalities that evolve and obtain within compressed, colonial space and time. Issues of authority, subversion, surveillance and representation are reduced to, as Kiberd terms it in an overtly Foucauldian idiom, 'the vice of compartmentalisation' (1984, 13).

Introducing *Orientalism*, Said asserts, '[i]n a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upperhand' (1994, [1978], 7). Likewise, Kiberd traces the reactions of British political and cultural elites in their efforts to maintain both epistemological and ontological superiority to the Irish. Confronted with unpalatable realities, the British intelligentsia of the nineteenth century came up with its notion of an antithesis between all things English and Irish. As we outlined above and as I will re-iterate in the next chapter, such antitheses ranged from the division of civility and barbarism, to the

oppositions of metropolitanism and pastoralism, refinement and emotion and pragmatism and idealism. The discourses of racial classification and the differentials of national characters again subtend such paradigms.

Said's conclusion, however, elides the possibility of cultural exchange or similarity; it is concrete in its elucidation of cultural difference. While Kiberd's critique diagnoses the deterministic and structured fabric of Irish/English colonial axis, in Saidian terms, he also locates, in the field of literary art, moments in which such binaries are destabilized or dissolved. Art, again, manifests for Kiberd as the vanguard of cultural and political re-negotiation. The identities of Irish and English nations were negotiated within the parameters of 'a gigantic laboratory' (Kiberd, 1984, 7). British colonial management of Ireland was partly founded and dependent on Ireland's laboratorial utility. The colony became the site of administrative, judicial, military and educational experimentation. Again Kiberd follows Said's Foucauldian readings, in which knowability defines controllability. Nevertheless, Kiberd locates moments of identitarian intersection in the literary work of Wilde, Shaw and Behan. In particular, Wilde inverts the experimental process, utilizing an aristocratic English milieu as a laboratory for his own negotiation of androgynous identity. Rather than perpetuate the antithetical 'Victorian cast of mind' (Kiberd, 1984, 7), these artistic/literary representations re-imagine Anglo-Irish relations in terms of synthesis; similarity instead of difference, dependence *in lieu* of independence and synchronicity replacing anachronicity. Colonialism remains the presiding debilitating agent in both Deane's and Kiberd's essays, and in this they follow Fanon. The degenerative discourses of colonialism impose difference in hierarchical and categorical

paradigms. For Kiberd, then, culture, and especially art, harbours the dynamic, liberatory potential through which such paradigms can be deconstructed and re-imagined.

Kiberd's critical oeuvre, as my bibliographic material demonstrates, is considerable and as such my engagement is a tentative step toward synthesizing and cataloguing the dominant, and recurrent, thematic concerns of this diverse body of cultural critique. Significantly, in fashioning an unequivocal deconstruction of Kiberd, Howe chooses his material strategically, so as to expose Kiberd's 'sharper political edge' and in order to underline Kiberd's 'in corrigibl[e] inconsistency' in his treatment of Irish nationalism (Howe, 2000, 121-25). Howe's premises are securely draped in the colours of revisionist critique and his intervention betrays one of the singular ironies of such 'objective' scholarship: while claiming tenure to 'objectivity' and 'dispassionate criticism', Howe is resolutely maintaining a discursive blind-spot to the potential input of cultural discourses in the context of the broader issues of political history. By rejecting cultural discourses, including literature, revisionist critique continues to delimit the efficacy of its own analysis. Pithy dismissals such as, '[o]nce again literature is in the vanguard, and in command' contribute very little to a potential critical cross-disciplinary debate (Howe, 2000, 125).

Specifically, then, Howe chastizes Kiberd for perpetuating a purely conceptual or discursive mode in dealing with Ireland's colonial relationship with Britain. Howe notes the Saidian and Fanonian influences within *Inventing Ireland*, but again diffidently declines to actually interact or engage productively with these theoretical crosscurrents.



As we have noted, Kiberd's critical foundations and ambitions remain tethered to an attenuated distillation of postcolonial theory and colonial discourse analysis. However, pursuant to such diagnoses I have offered specific routes of discussion or evolution within and beyond Kiberd's work. Most troubling perhaps is Howe's interdiction that Kiberd deliberately reneges on his own assertion of the intimacy of cultural and economic discourses. Again, Howe commits a conscious oversight in his stated design to dismantle and discredit Irish postcolonial criticism. Rather than engage with its tropes and methodologies in any illuminative or enabling capacity, Howe retreats to a reactionary, and frequently pedantic, position.

Kiberd's critiques recognize the necessary differentials of geographical contexts, but there is a sense in which his brand of cultural materialism fails to adequately register the disparities/complexities of temporal/historical distance. The processes of decolonization, like the varieties of colonialist experiences, are never homogenous and any attempt to divine a workable, universalist typology for either is self-defeating. If Kiberd engaged to a greater degree of depth with complex theoretical and cultural methodologies, which are legion in contemporary Irish postcolonial studies, then perhaps more 'patchwork' or variegated Irish postcolonialism might emerge. Kiberd, then, defaults to a modular theoretical frame, accenting the relevance of both Fanon and Said to the Irish colonial experience and postcolonial situation.

## Alternative Enlightenments

The recurrence of the dead past, bursting into the living present; the awareness of buried, unfinished business yet awaiting definitive settlement—all this has important antecedents....The theme reverberates with worried reservations as to the straightforwardness of time, with an uncanny sense that Irish history, the sheer weight and bloodiness and persistence of it, will trouble the present's course towards the future. (Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 222-223)

As Kiberd and Mathews outline, the fashioning of political and cultural alternatives, then, is not only a matter of anti-colonial resistance. In this section I will delineate how Gibbons quarries the 'unapproved roads' of Enlightenment thinking, which refracted through the radical republican project of the United Irishmen, furnishes Irish postcolonial studies with an alternative ethical coda.<sup>62</sup> In telescoping the United Irish accommodation of a radical subaltern and native cultural sphere within its international republican economy, Gibbons asserts the crucial dialogic relation between the local and the global in the ethical discourse of postcolonial studies. He notes:

In this juxtaposition of proximity and distance, familiarity and estrangement, it is possible to discern a version of the 'sympathetic sublime' that possesses the global reach of universalist theories of human rights, but without the calculus of abstraction, or the insensitivity to time and place, that characterized progress and universal reason in much mainstream Enlightenment thought. (2003 b, 13)<sup>63</sup>

Gibbons asserts that his theoretical methodology is one which avoids 'mutually exclusive abstractions', but rather 'considers...*cross-cutting* political projects' (1994, 29). The coincidence of political and cultural discourses is again apparent, and Gibbons'

project is focused on critiquing the interaction of issues such as class, gender, race and nationality. Gibbons' model, as delineated above, moves beyond Deane's limited conceptualization of the 'stages of recovery', and his work demonstrates a progression away from the prescribed narratives or paradigms of critical inquiry. Gibbons' theoretical interventions are characterized by an insistence on diversity and his work is founded on the notion that localized and particular social, political and cultural formations are interdependent and on the parallel notion that they cannot be subsumed within grand theoretical paradigms. As these projects 'cross-cut' we must examine the nature of their interaction, in other words, the degree to which any one may achieve dominance or be subordinated, and the extent to which they may complement or thwart each other. In this context, Gibbons' long-term project is subtended by a desire to inaugurate an effective and non-coercive critical ethics. As we shall discuss, this is not a universalist postcolonial ethics, but is more consonant with 'Burke's sympathetic sublime...[which involves] recasting what Benjamin has called 'the tradition of the oppressed' in terms of cross-cultural solidarity' (2003 c, 74).

Gibbons engages with the concepts of modernization and modernity, and he highlights the non-uniformity of modernization, in particular in the formerly colonized world, of which Ireland is a constituent. He accentuates the fact that economic necessity operates under different conditions in the underdeveloped periphery as opposed to the industrialized Euro-American economies. I will focus my discussion on the conceptualization of modernization and modernity in Ireland, and on the relationship between Irish modernization, colonialism and Ireland's 'putative postcolonial condition'

(Lloyd, 1993,155). Gibbons' work is part of a wider interrogation of the concepts of tradition, modernity, and nationalism in an Irish context, a debate that includes critics such as Eagleton and Lloyd.

Gibbons questions the uncritical application of universal postcolonial paradigms and, he maintains, that considering 'Ireland in a postcolonial frame is not a matter of including one more culture within existing debates' (1998, 27). The very structures of theoretical analysis require alteration in accordance with the specific political and cultural conditions involved. Theory must be differentially reformulated from the periphery, and not simply dispatched and packaged from Western academies. But equally, Irish postcolonial critics must be wary of reducing theoretical debates to simplistic rehearsals of Irish 'exceptionalism', and by allowing Ireland to dictate the terms of criticism entirely we will fail to critique the Irish nation-state and its relationship to a variety of nationalisms.

Gibbons broaches the issue of state-legitimized nationalism and he confronts the notion of 'approved' cultural formations, which constitute elements of what is termed 'official memory' (1996, 179). His theoretical interventions, then, are firmly located within the ongoing dialectic between critics who subscribe to the unconditional verity of modernity with their attendant processes of modernization, and those critics whose default to postcolonial theorization is founded on the dialectical belief that, 'tradition itself may often have a transformative impact, particularly if it activates muted voices from the historical past, or from marginalized sections of the community' (1996, 4). Gibbons forms part of a loosely connected cabal of cultural critics that advocates a form

of internally regenerative, but externally oriented, nationalist consciousness. As we have noted in the work of Deane, and Kiberd, nationalism can manifest itself as a homogenizing and regressive politico-cultural discourse, particularly in imitative anti-colonial forms.

Gibbons embraces cultural materialism in his dialectical relation to both modernization theory and revisionist historiography. Culture is no longer benign and ethereal; it is of course profoundly political and in the Irish context, the relation between political and cultural discourses acquires a particularly abrasive power. His critical project is targeted at preventing the deflection of creative energies into a rarefied aesthetic or 'imaginary' realm entirely removed from the exigencies of everyday life (Gibbons, 1996, 8). The cultural critic is charged with the task of recovering marginal or 'unrepresentable' politico-cultural formations and narratives that can serve to problematize the modernizing certitude of official discourse. Homogenized 'official knowledge' operates in an institutionalized and self-perpetuating manner and engenders a form of discursive certainty. Modernization theory and its advocates unequivocally celebrate the *telos* of progress with its effacement of the dead weights of recalcitrant traditional discourses. Consequently, Gibbons envisages a materialist contextualization of literary and historical texts that does not simply represent but is representative, that is not simply formative but formed within and by the material conditions of their provenance. He asserts:

the placing of texts in wider generic and historical settings releases their manifold interpretations, reminding us, in the process that there is no one way of mapping out

an experience, even if some ways are more appropriate in specific contexts than others. (Gibbons, 1996, 22)

Revisionist historiography, then, is identified with the progressive impulses and teleology of Irish economic modernization. In both preceding and dovetailing with the recent interventions of McCarthy and Cleary, Gibbons' critiques of revisionist methodology and politics are remarkably consistent, from his 1991 *Field Day* editorial, 'Challenging the Canon: Revisionism and Cultural Criticism' up to his most recent essays. He regards the undifferentiated historical nationalist 'tradition', dissected in revisionist polemics, as a self-perpetuating fiction. The foundations of revisionism's anti-nationalist rhetoric, then, are deemed fallacious, he notes:

In its determination to convert memory into history, not the least of the concessions made by *modern historical method* to romantic nostalgia is to construe tradition itself as an undifferentiated, organic body of experience, all the more to contrast it to the critical intervention of history [my emphasis]. (Gibbons, 2001, 139)

For Gibbons' 'modern historical method' we can read Deane's '[h]istorians of limited philosophical resource' (Deane, 1991, xxi), and equally identify Kiberd's 'more seductive writers among them [revisionist historians]' (Kiberd, 1996, 642). Just as Gibbons attributes a self-regarding fiction to revisionist historiography, the practitioners of 'modern historical method' indict postcolonial critics such as Gibbons, Deane, and Kiberd for their apparent idealization/sanitization/restoration of the Irish 'nation' to centre-stage of Irish cultural debate. Ultimately, then, both parties within this politico-cultural problematic, are charged with construing an identical form of Irish historical tradition in order to legitimate a contemporary political ideology.

## **Lateral Mobility**

In his 1996 essay ‘Unapproved Roads: Ireland and Postcolonial Identity’, Gibbons offers a tentative, and potentially subversive, theoretical alternative to the normative ‘vertical mobility from periphery to center’ (Gibbons, 1996, 180). Postcolonial theory has undeniably ‘travelled’, usually from a Western-sanctioned centre to peripheral contexts. By invoking the *Distant Relations* art exhibition<sup>64</sup>, Gibbons gestures to the possibility of ‘lateral mobility.’ Through this cultural exchange, he identifies the germ for a cross-periphery solidarity, in which postcolonial cultures can interact in mutually edifying cultural exchanges. Indeed, the pursuit of such ‘unapproved roads’ can be extended to include not just artistic exchange, but equally to encompass the formulation of radical theoretical innovation (Gibbons, 1996, 180). This earlier essay merely alludes to the prospect of ‘lateral mobility’ without actually developing a concerted or workable programme of discursive method.

However, Gibbons’ recent publication, ‘History, Therapy and the Celtic Tiger’,<sup>65</sup> goes some way towards crystallizing a definite theoretical trajectory for such a transgeographical project. Again, Gibbons prefaces his argument with a sustained critique of the modernizing objectives of revisionist historiography. He cites Heribert Adam, who notes, ‘[i]n their eagerness to prevent the gruesome past from haunting the future, well-meaning social engineers seek to create ‘a common history’ between hostile groups’ (2000, 95).<sup>66</sup> Irish postcolonial criticism has developed amid much invective from both

revisionist literary critics and historians. They have divined a peculiar textual bias operative in postcolonial readings of Irish history and politics.

Cleary recently pitted postcolonial theory as a suitable discursive opponent to the prevailing mode of modernization theory and it is a paradigm directly accommodated by Gibbons.<sup>67</sup> He contends, ‘the postcolonial turn in Irish criticism...represents an attempt to extend the horizons of the local to distant and often very different cultures, beyond the comforting cosmopolitanism of the West ‘ (2002, 104). Gibbons diagnoses the Irish colonial experience as that of acute trauma, echoing both Geraldine Moane<sup>68</sup> and David Lloyd, and he encourages a constructive trans-geographical engagement with memory and tradition as a means of forging ‘new solidarities in the present’ (2002, 105).<sup>69</sup> These ‘new solidarities’ extend from his previous comments on the exigency for laterally mobile postcolonial criticism. Ireland’s ‘Third World memory’ (Gibbons, 1997, 27) should therefore operate within a polyvocal discourse of egalitarian ‘historically grounded cosmopolitanism’ (2002, 100).<sup>70</sup> Indeed Gibbons is not alone in canvassing such a discursive trajectory, Florencia E. Mallon, a historian of Latin America forwards the idea:

of non-hierarchical cross-regional dialogue, where neither of the two cases is taken as the paradigm against which the other is pronounced inadequate...[such a dialogue] is not the application of a concept, part and parcel, without contextualization, to another area. Nor can it be framed in the assumption that one side of the exchange has little to learn from the other. (1994, 1493)

In calling for such ‘non-hierarchical cross-regional dialogue’, Mallon suggests a form of horizontal egalitarianism; a discourse that enlightens and processes experiences



of mutually endured marginalization. This critical framework is emphatically not a matter of divining/prospecting for cross-border correspondences or facile similarities, but allows the contextual specifics of previously colonized societies to work upon and through a store of politico-cultural theorization. It is through stimulating and nourishing such ‘unapproved’ conversation and by learning from the differential aggregates of this dialectic that postcolonial theory might evolve into a *bona fide* political praxis. Gibbons’ conception of postcolonial theory further overlaps with Mallon’s discursive visualization in the sense that he presses for a contextually sensitive form of critique. There is not, and cannot be, a universal template of postcolonial analysis, its provenance and its applications are simply too diffuse for such programmatic aspirations.

Lateral mobility or new solidarities in the present do not constitute facile circuits of nostalgic/elegiac equivalence, rather they signal economies of moral indignation. Cross-periphery dialogue is not the ‘talking cure’ of puerile analogy wherein a correspondence on past oppression inures postcolonial societies to the exigencies of the present; the past should neither be a burden nor a shared space of alleviated pain. Notwithstanding, the past or communal memories retain a contemporary and future valence. Drawing on a range of historical, political and philosophical sources, Gibbons underscores the merit of such cross-cultural solidarity:

Nor is this account of cultural diversity limited by the solipsism of localism or relativism which led certain strands in romanticism to construe authenticity as isolation, a withdrawal from the outside world. As if infused by the radical sensibility of Burke’s sympathetic sublime, Sampson and Russell highlight the predicament of one culture by bringing it into contact with another. (2003 b, 228-229)

By drawing attention to the validity of ‘lateral mobility’ or as Mallon terms it ‘non-hierarchical dialogue’, Gibbons not only alerts us to the possibilities of cross-cultural exchange but also initiates an ethical drama.<sup>71</sup> Just as we have spoken of the cultural mutualities of horizontal vectors in postcolonial studies, there is also a discernible ethical dimension to such horizontal exchanges. Postcolonial critique is founded on an ethical explication of the dynamics of colonialism and of postcolonial societies. However, much of the ethical energy of postcolonial reading is expended on negotiating the moral relativity of what might be termed vertical vectors of centre-periphery: simply the ethical responsibilities of the internally differentiated categories of colonizer and colonized. Indeed Gibbons’ notion of international, cross-peripheral or horizontal critical/ethical solidarity is verbalized, albeit at a more localized level, by Guha in ‘The Prose of Counter-Insurgency’. Distilling Guha’s thesis, Chakrabarty notes:

In the domain of subaltern politics, on the other hand, mobilization for political intervention depended on horizontal affiliations such as “the traditional organization of kinship and territoriality or a class consciousness depending on the level of the consciousness of the people involved”.’ (Chakrabarty, 2000 b, 16; Guha, 1984, 3-5)

Inherent to such lateral mobilizations is a deep incredulity at, or suspicion of, vertical or hierarchical political relations.<sup>72</sup>

While such adjudication is a core element of postcolonial critique, the trajectory averred to by Gibbons opens up an alternative ethical vista. The mono-directional traffic of vertical ethics concedes discursive space to the shared ethical sufferance of previously colonized communities. Essentially, by endeavouring to apprehend/empathize with the ethical and cultural effects of alternative colonial experiences, one can refine and

illuminate one's own sense of postcolonial identity. Rather than perpetuate a discourse of exclusive centre/periphery dialogue, a reconstituted constellation of horizontal coordinates may prove more instructive. Not only is literary criticism political but also this very political character demands an ethics of critical language.

In his essay, 'Postcolonial Ireland',<sup>73</sup> Cleary evinces such a conscious, affiliative ethical economy. In an argument that is remarkably consonant with Gibbons' notion of 'lateral mobility', Cleary notes:

Many loyalist estates in Northern Ireland fly the Israeli and republican ones the Palestinian flag. The 'spectres of comparison', to use Benedict Anderson's phrase, that haunt the segregated working class districts of Northern Ireland suggest forms of social consciousness still highly disposed to map the northern situation in terms of other late colonial cartographies. (44-45)

Such cross-cultural affiliation is not only manifest in the flying of flags, but is evidenced in the long heritage of political murals in Northern Ireland. In particular nationalist murals are acutely conscious of 'the spectres of comparison', invoking historical, revolutionary figures such as Che Guevara and Nelson Mandela, together with imagistic allusions to Palestine, South Africa and Cuba.<sup>74</sup> Implicit in the resistant nationalist murals, then, is the idea of performative subversion; the murals are elemental within the cognitive maps of the everyday, and likewise are part of the brachiating political and cultural forms of communal and identitarian representation. The invocation of 'foreign' oppression and histories heightens the critical voltage of the local context. While not blandly corresponding context with context, these disparate forms of ethical conversation, whether in disciplinarity, theory, or popular culture, exercise what Gibbons calls 'the

sympathetic sublime' (2003 b, 237).<sup>75</sup> Behind the surface array of visual symbols, images, metaphors or allegories of the political murals, and of what Cleary briefly describes, I would suggest, lies 'the exercise of sympathy' (Gibbons, 2003, b, 237). The ethics of oppressed solidarity, as outlined by Gibbons through Burke, are evident in these political and cultural productions. They resonate in Gibbons' argument when he asserts:

The exercise of sympathy arising from the sublime is a complex, two-way process, made all the more difficult because it tries to establish solidarity in conditions that extend beyond the 'sameness' or common ground of our humanity...identification with the plight of others need not require stepping outside one's own culture, but may be intensified by our very sense of belonging – an intensity, moreover, that may have as much to do with pain as with more abstract, optimistic ideals of emancipation and justice. (2003 b, 237)

### **Reading Allegorically**

The concept of allegory as a cultural agent is a central feature of Gibbons' critiques, as allegory is conceived of as a means of alternative, somatic politico-cultural resistance. Allegory is differentiated from metaphor or symbol in that while they constitute 'erasures of difference', it is perceived as 'the trope of alternative solidarity' (Barry, 1996, 5). Gibbons contends that allegory 'is part of consciousness itself under certain conditions of colonial rule', as the literary trope becomes a form of transhistorical unifier, it asserts itself as an enabling cultural/psychic device of legitimization and politico-cultural assertion and expression (1996, 143).<sup>76</sup>

Gibbons' employment of the literary trope of allegory is justified on the grounds that it constitutes an 'indirect and figurative discourse' through which recalcitrant or

previously unrepresented areas of experience can be rehabilitated and become formative elements in a re-figured Irish identity (1996, 18). By engaging with the trope of allegory in terms of a cultural historicist methodology, Gibbons locates allegory within the politics of the un verbalized in which it becomes a figural practice that infiltrates everyday experience, giving rise to an ‘aesthetics of the actual’ (1996, 20). The certainty of identity is replaced by figural ambiguity as, to echo Deane, the real and the phantasmal coincide. There is instability of reference and contestation of meaning to the point where it may not be at all clear ‘where the figural ends and the literal begins’ (Gibbons, 1996, 20).

Octavio Paz, the Mexican Nobel Laureate, provides a serviceable definition of allegory, ‘Allegory, as its name indicates, is a discourse in which, by speaking of one thing, one also speaks of another. Analogy is the link’ (Paz, 1987, 130). He traces the historical genealogy of the trope of allegory, noting that, ‘the predominant mode adopted by poetic communication while Christianity was at its peak was allegory’ (Paz, 1987, 130). The nature, indeed the underlying function, of allegorical creation is to construct an analogical system of equivalences and likeness. Paz’s reference to the allegorical method of much of the poetry of high Christianity directly relates to the unifying impulse of the genre. While such religiously conscious allegorical composition/expression was sanctioned at an authoritative or legitimate *niveau*, Gibbons’ inflection of the allegorical within Irish cultural and political nationalism privileges the non-verbal or marginalized solidarities of a colonized society. Indeed the art historian, Fintan Cullen signals the adaptability of allegory in Irish history; he argues that

we are faced with the proof of the enduring adaptability of allegory. In the eighteenth century it satisfied a convenient aesthetic for the coloniser; in the mid-nineteenth century it was utilised by a distinctly radical voice; while in the 1920s, the cautiously conservative, fledging Irish state, through its newly formed Electricity Supply Board, inspired Keating to paint *Night's Candles* where allegory is orchestrated pictorially as an ongoing agent for unity. (1997, 174)

Gibbons' mobilization of allegory within a postcolonial theoretical paradigm emphatically politicizes an ostensibly artistic trope. Thus, the peculiarly oppressive colonial conditions that obtained in Ireland inflame cultural discourses with a rabid political import and intractable urgency. Allegory, then, enables Gibbons to trace 'the oblique and recondite' socio-cultural formations which have been categorically elided from officially sanctioned, nationalist narratives, both during the processes of anti-colonial resistance and in the post-Independence period (Gibbons, 1996, 16). The recalcitrant allegorical performances examined by Gibbons engender, as we have seen 'an aesthetics of the actual'; this subversive aesthetic derives less from a metaphorical abstraction of woman as nation but from a blurring of the lines between such figural representation and the material conditions of colonial oppression. The lived aesthetic of nationalist allegory, then, *embodies* an alternative politics of egalitarian representation. Indeed as we shall see below, Gibbons' discussion has particular relevance to debates on both gender and nationalism, and gender and colonialism. Allegory, as a subaltern and subversive performance of resistance, dissolves the metaphorical cohesion of both imperial and nationalist gendered discourses; Gibbons concludes:

[allegory] may not be at all to the detriment of feminist politics, or at least that project which calls for an entire transformation of the public sphere to allow women to participate in it as 'real woman'. (1996, 21)

By definition, narratives are as markedly exclusive as they are inclusive; the mechanics of selectivity and elision underwrite all narration at all levels, whether in terms of the individual, the local community, or the nation-state. This insuperable problematic is transfused with a caustic political temper within, and indeed because of, Irish postcolonial studies. As we have clearly delineated with respect to the work of Deane, Kiberd, and Lloyd, access to verbal representation is entirely synonymous with political representation; representative means are interchangeable with the means of representation.

### **Theory, Identity and Ethics**

One must have a good memory to be able to keep the promises one has given. One must have strong powers of imagination to be able to have pity. So closely is morality bound to the quality of the intellect. (Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the History of Moral Feelings', *Human, All Too Human*, 54)

These critical inquiries, which focus on concepts such as allegory, lateral mobility, solidarity, adulteration, and postcolonial melancholy survivals are not simply textual ruses or postmodern, theoretical sleights of hand, but constitute radical efforts to intervene in a modernizing teleology, a teleology that too frequently diminishes subaltern or peripheral politico-cultural constituencies. Theory is not a form of academic therapy, and what Gibbons canvasses is an attention to the rituals of anti-colonial cultural

representation in all its forms. Identity, then, is not ‘a conscious, psychic choice, but developed as and through a series of acts’, and equally through what might be termed ‘an apprenticeship of communal activities’ (Gibbons, 2002 b).<sup>77</sup>

The dawn of new postcolonial theoretical paradigms and their mobilization within Irish cultural studies debates has precipitated discussions with respect to the nature of integrating theory and context, as well as the discursive exchanges and/or power relations that are thereby established/inaugurated. Gibbons contends that considering Ireland within a postcolonial frame demands a recasting of theoretical paradigms themselves and not simply the yoking of another society and culture under a universalized theoretical rubric (1998, 27). In his conception, peripheral contexts and cultures should be afforded autonomy over the application of theoretical methodologies. Rather than perpetuate a Eurocentric dialogue that remains essentially self-referential, prescriptive, and patronizing, Gibbons urges that theory itself needs to be re-formulated from the periphery ‘and acquire hybrid forms, bringing the plurality of voices associated with the creative energies of postcolonial cultures to bear on criticism itself’ (1998, 27). Critical authority must be re-constituted in marginal postcolonial contexts rather than administered from the ivory towers of western academia.

There is a fundamental ethical undertow to Gibbons’ engagement with Ireland’s postcolonial relativity. In arriving at a sense of postcolonial ethics in the form of cross-cultural solidarity, Gibbons traverses a weighty corpus of Enlightenment ethico-philosophical argument. His exegesis navigates Kantian universalism, Scottish Enlightenment individualism and, most contemporary of all, Richard Rorty’s



hierarchical, and politically expedient, system of contingent ethics.<sup>78</sup> Gibbons' divination of a qualitatively representative postcolonial ethics signals an awareness of not only the arbitrary nature of postcolonial taxonomies, but more significantly, of the tendentious certainties of postcolonial judgments and/or theoretical analyses. In other words, by trawling a protracted historical continuum in search of an apposite ethical girding, Gibbons grounds postcolonial critique within an ethical dialogue of its own. He contends:

A recurring assumption of the Enlightenment, and of Rorty's postmodern reworking of western ethnocentrism, is that loyalty to one's own culture is inimical to any form of universalism, cultural diversity, or indeed, citizenship in its urbane, cosmopolitan sense...[b]ut what Rorty overlooks is that if one's cultural allegiance is formed, by contrast, in conditions of adversity, and the experience of opposition and pain, then this may engender a greater interdependence and concern for others. (Gibbons, 2000)

Remembrance, narrative and identity, then, co-exist in volatile relativity; postcolonial readings of Irish colonial history suggest the ethical freight of remembering and narrating the past. Drawing on the Greek myth of Philoctetes, and his endurance of physical suffering, Gibbons maps an alternative critical and aesthetic ethical code. Gibbons' ethical language endorses the idea of alternative articulation in the face of physical, political and cultural oppression. Aphasia or moribund nostalgia are not viable responses to the traumas of colonialism, as Gibbons notes:

By the same token, the reactivation of Philoctetes's capacity for trust and friendship in the light of Hercules's intervention derives not so much from a renunciation of his past suffering, and a recourse to atemporal standards of justice, but from his ability

to connect with an *alternative version of the past which points to the future*, transforming his own profound grievances into a renewed pursuit of a reformulated common good [my emphasis]. (2003 b, 64)

The ‘cross-cutting political projects’ (Gibbons, 1994, 29) of Gibbons’ critical engagement eschew any sense of ‘atemporal standard of justice’, but retain a commitment to the representation of ‘[t]he tradition of the oppressed [which] is charged with the disruptive force of sublime, deriving its energies from the fact that the originary violence of conquest has never been put to rest’ (2003 b, 233). In an explicitly Benjaminian idiom, Gibbons’ critical ethics cohere around both the enabling capacities of the past and the responsibilities of the present towards the deployment and representations of its pasts.

Postcolonial readings of Irish cultural and political history are inseparable but not dependent on the global experience of imperialism. This shared colonial heritage, while never identical or blandly analogous, is the genesis of postcolonial ethics. Rather than perpetuate a system that previously assumed a judgmental diagnostic posture vis-à-vis empire, imperialism, and colonialism, the very enunciation of postcolonial criticism must be interred within an ethical language. The idioms, paradigms, and practitioners of postcolonial reading neither persist outside ethical coda nor can they ascribe ethical judgment; the entire corpus of postcolonial studies must self-reflexively establish and interrogate the ethical freight of its own locations and politico-cultural agendas. A series of theoretical configurations rooted in the present cannot be imposed on postcolonial societies. As Gibbons’ underlying ethical animus suggests, postcolonial projects advance

in concatenated processes of negotiation between past and present and between differentiated geographical, economic, political and cultural locations.

In asserting the exigency of a peripherally based theorization in hybrid forms, Gibbons runs the risk of constructing a fetishized theory of marginality. The fact that theory emanates from the marginalized locations of colonial occupation/postcolonial society does not necessarily constitute a progressive stance. As I discuss in chapter six, with respect to both Gibbons and Lloyd, through the work of Graham and Kirkland, the celebration of innate hybridity or peripherality for their own sake is as insidious as an essentialist discourse. Postcolonial theory must evolve beyond its 'immaterial' jargonized forms.

### **Doing justice to the past**

Ireland's postcolonial condition is based on an absence of historical closure 'with the realisation that there is no possibility of undoing history, of removing all the accretions of colonial conquest' (Gibbons, 1996, 179). The very absence of narrative closure precipitates a cultural milieu that is both inclusive and heterogeneous. The postcolonial incompleteness of Irish culture means that there is little discursive space for the homogenizing discourses of teleological certainty. The finality or insularity envisaged by traditional nationalism or the inexorable progress heralded by modernization is inadequate/incompatible with the 'cross-cutting political projects' (Gibbons, 1996, 29) of a postcolonial Ireland. Responding to Mulhern's polemical review<sup>79</sup> of his editorial contribution to *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Gibbons writes:

Esponsing any form of national identity, on this reasoning, would seem to be monological and thus inimical to entering into cultural dialogue, as if polyphonic discourse and openness towards the other somehow requires the obliteration of one's own identity. (1994, 29)

In effect, Gibbons not only defends his editorial input, but also complicates the facile reduction of nationalism or national identity by Mulhern. Equally, Gibbons argument vis-à-vis national identity prefigures his later criticism on dialogic ethical discourse, or cross-peripheral solidarity, in particular his most recent work on the postcolonial ethical example of Burke and the United Irishmen. And it embraces Said's belief that:

Human history is a history of human labour, neither the exclusive property of one people, nor its absence in another. And what seems central to many other subalterns now is the capacity for cross-colony identification and renewed investigation into an occluded or suppressed past that can be restored differentially to recollection and scrutiny by many of the new cultural methods of analysis available universally. (2003, 180)

It is not sufficient to recollect, repeat or reject the past; the incumbent responsibility on contemporary postcolonial Irish studies is that of re-imagination and re-presentation. As Gibbons concludes in speaking about the traumatic legacies of the Great Famine, '[m]emory, then, is not just a matter of retention or recollection but of finding the narrative forms that will do justice to this troubled inheritance without sanitizing it, but also without succumbing to it' (1997, 269). Implicit in Gibbons' remark is a belief in the ethics of memorial representation. In other words, there cannot be an ideological sanitization of the past, but nor can we succumb to it in elegiac, static forms of nostalgic remembrance. Recalling Benjamin, and no doubt alluding to the Scottish Enlightenment

as well as latter-day revisionist historians, Gibbons ends by saying, '[t]here are those who insist that all these events are firmly behind us, but the cultural experience of catastrophe demonstrates, on the contrary, that the past is not over until its story has been told' (1997, 269).

## CHAPTER FOUR

**‘an unstoppable predilection for alternatives’<sup>80</sup>**

And it is as impossible to suppress those ebullitions of public indignation as to extinguish the flames at the crater of Mount Aetna or Vesuvius, which, if subdued for any time, like those furnaces of nature, will, create an inward burning in the bowels of the body politic, and end in an earthquake, such as Captain Right, White Boys, Hearts of Oak, John Doe, Caravats, Shanavests, Captain Rock, Terry Alt etc, and swallowing thousands of the human race in the chasm until brought to a level surface by the musket, sword, spear and gibbet. (James Connery, *The reformer or an infallible remedy to prevent pauperism and periodical returns of famine*, 54)

Retrieving this memory of the reclaimed land, which came back unbidden (it was just there again for no reason I can fathom), has helped to tip some substantial boulders into the tides of forgetfulness that surround and erode those childhood times...If we were able to fire our memories in to the impossibility of total recall, we'd have changed the shape of the psyche as surely as the reclamation project altered that patch of Donegal coastline. But, however much we may want to remember, forgetfulness seems very much part of the formula of who we are. (Chris Arthur, *Irish Willow*, 104.)

## **'history from below'**

Subaltern studies retails a reconfigured historiographic ethics, which partially intersects with the projects of English Marxist historiography or 'history from below', as pioneered by E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and Christopher Hill.<sup>81</sup> However, as Chakrabarty outlines, subaltern historiography is distinguished from the 'history from below' approach in three principal areas.<sup>82</sup> Chakrabarty identifies its:

Relative separation of the history of power from any universalist histories of capital, critique of the nation-form [and] interrogation of the relationship between power and knowledge (hence of the archive itself and of history as a form of knowledge). (2000 b, 15)

The work of the *Subaltern Studies* collective is informative of the critics that I discuss in this chapter. Naturally there are varying degrees of influence, but nonetheless the work of Lloyd and Whelan, and indeed in chapter five the work of Angela Bourke, broaches the domains and methodology of subaltern critique. In a specifically Irish context, Gibbons argues, against Mulhern:

an awareness that economic necessity does not operate in the same way in the undeveloped periphery (particularly under colonialism) as it does in the metropolitan heartlands. For this reason, there is no universal template for modernization or, for that matter, socialism, but rather they must engage dialogically with the precise cultural, historical and, dare one say, national conjunctures in which they find themselves. (1994, 30)

Gibbons' point summarizes both the relevance and necessity of contextualized subaltern readings of Irish political, economic and cultural history. Just as Guha and the subaltern studies collective interrogate 'the nature of political modernity in colonial India'

(Chakrabarty, 2000 b, 27), this chapter outlines the work of critics who engage with the elisions, residues and legacies of Ireland's differential participation in imperial modernity.

## The Chauri Chaura Express

The subaltern historian, and founding editor of *Subaltern Studies*, Shahid Amin ends his 1995 volume *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* with a final reflection on the narrational location of the Chauri Chaura peasant riot of 1922. He concludes:

And now, finally, even that irony has lost some of its poignancy. The train has in fact been extended. It now touches Chauri Chaura, but does not stop at the station. Another existing train, which once connected Gorakhpur and smaller towns en route to the high court city of Allahabad, has been rechristened the Chauri Chaura Express. The memorialization of Chauri Chaura is far from over: it is now a routine, everyday affair. (1995, 200)

Amin interrogates the official nationalist appropriation and structuration of anti-colonial historical events in India. While the murderous peasant riot of Chauri Chaura was initially represented and confronted as a deplorable *criminal* act, in excess of either Gandhian anti-colonialism or the civilizational norms of the British Raj, Amin's process of 'historical fieldwork' (1995, 2) is an effort to 'arrive at an enmeshed, intertwined and imbricated web of narratives from every source' (194). His concluding remarks on the Chauri Chaura Express indicate how that event has now become a *narrativized* element of India's legitimate struggle for independence. The local variables, the effect of temporal distance on remembrance and the identities of the rioters are bleached from the 'national'



demands on Chauri Chaura. Amin further elucidates on his historiographical methodology and in so doing effectively outlines the 'provincializing' reading animus of subaltern historiography. He writes:

While according primacy to local speech, I have refrained from simple ethno-reportage. I have sought instead to reproduce specific, personalized and often eccentric accounts and have ranged, arranged and rearranged these against authorized texts of historiography...This is my own historiographical way of shaping events and their recall and their context into a far from final or authoritative text, yet nonetheless one which strives towards a complexity hitherto absent. (1995, 195)

The routine memorialization of Chauri Chaura in terms of an express train's route becomes a resonant symbol of the task confronting and undertaken by all constituencies of subaltern historiography.

The historiographic strategy of subaltern studies is not concerned with the seamless logic of integrated narrative or anchored representation. As Amin argues, 'Historians have therefore learned to comb 'confessions' and 'testimonies' for their [peasants] evidence' (1995, 1). Subaltern practice records dissimulating narratives, narratives that problematize the structures of standard representational mechanisms and that expose and subvert the tropes or figurations of historiographical discourse. As is evident from the discussion of Gibbons, and as will be outlined below with respect to Lloyd and Whelan, historiography is gilded with strategic political agency. Equally both Lloyd and Gibbons divine the political and cultural excesses of Irish historical experience; both trace the bodily performance of subaltern cultural expression that is otherwise extant of authorized historical narrative. In Amin's words, Gibbons, Lloyd and Whelan interrogate 'the nationalist master narrative [that] induces a selective national

amnesia in relation to specified events which would fit awkwardly, even seriously inconvenience, the neatly woven pattern' (1995, 3).

Thompson argues:

While historians study the actors of history from a distance, their characterizations of their lives, views and actions will always be misdescriptions, projections of the historian's own experience and imagination: a scholarly form of fiction. Oral evidence, by transforming the 'objects' of study into 'subjects', makes for history, which is not just richer, more vivid and heart rending, but truer. (1978, 90)

This is exactly the historiographic procedure pursued by Amin in the reclamation of Chauri Chaura, and in particular the local rioters. The riot is reclaimed as an event, an event that was infused by a complex network of subjectivities, but that subsequently mutated into a serviceable metaphorical device of both anti-colonial nationalism and British law and order.<sup>83</sup> As is the necessary *modus operandi* of subaltern historiography, Amin relegates the significance of the historian; the messenger is less important than the message. Emphasizing the value of deprivileging the mediating authorial voice, Beiner juxtaposes oral tradition and academic history, '[i]n some ways, oral tradition may be regarded as more authentic than academic history, for it takes into account a multitude of voices from the past, thus minimising the centrality of the contemporary voice of the historian' (2001, 55). It is these problematic relations between memory and disciplinary history, counter-modernity and modernity, and textual narration and oral record that are central to the discussions of Lloyd and Whelan.

## Anomalous Theory

But it [the public house] is no less a recalcitrant space, the site of practices that by their very nature rather than by necessary intent are out of kilter with modern disciplinary projects. As a site which is irrevocably a product of modernity in its spatial and temporal demarcations and regulations...it is nonetheless a site which preserves and transforms according to its own spaces and rhythms long-standing popular practices that will not be incorporated by discipline. (Lloyd, 'Counterparts: *Dubliners*, masculinity and temperance nationalism', 138-139)

The epigraphic quotation from Lloyd's 'Counterparts: *Dubliners*, masculinity and temperance nationalism', encapsulates the energies of postcolonial Irish Studies. Lloyd explores the temporal and the spatial, modernity/counter-modernity<sup>84</sup> and the enactment of bodily performance. In effect, the confluence of modernity and popular practice within the confines, or expanses, of the public house creates a counter-modern space-time axis; in other words, the networks of oral and performative communality instantiate the somatic rituals of counter-modernity. As Lloyd notes, and herein he succinctly expresses his critical *modus operandi*, '[w]hat determines cultural difference is not its externality to modernity, nor the persistence of a premodern irrationality, but rather the mutually constitutive relation between the modern and the counter-modern' (2000 b, 140).<sup>85</sup>

As certain cultural discourses are foregrounded or assume a hegemonic position in the service of anti-colonial nationalism, co-terminously there is a marginalization of other distinct politico-cultural groups. However, Lloyd's work is not focused on the overview or the grand narratives of history, he is 'more engaged with the fine grain of the alternative narratives and practises embedded in Irish cultural history' (1997, 90). In particular, Lloyd has proved a consistent and virulent critic of liberation nationalism, his

conclusion is that anti-colonial nationalism is an innately imitative politico-cultural phenomenon, as it replicates 'the forms of the bourgeois state that emerge in time with imperialism' (Lloyd, 1987, 208).

## **Ireland and Subalternity**

In his foreword to *Selected Subaltern Studies*, and alluding to the politics of the Subaltern collective, Said writes:

Theirs is no history of ideas, no calmly Olympian narrative of events, no disengaged objective recital of facts. It is rather sharply contestatory, an attempt to wrest control of the Indian past from its *scribes and curators in the present*. And if there can be no actual taking of power in the writing of history, there can at least be a demystifying exposure of what material interests are at stake, *what ideology and method are employed, what parties advanced, which defended, displaced, defeated*. [my emphases] (1988, vii)

Significantly, in wresting the past from the petrification of linear narrative, subaltern historiography liberates subsumed, fragmentary histories. As Gibbons outlines, through Benjamin, the past possesses a vigorous valence in the present. Indeed both Gibbons' and Lloyd's reclamations of the past from 'its scribes and curators in the present', politicizes the representation of the past. Lloyd's radical appropriation of subaltern reading strategies in an Irish context interrogates the representational synchronicity of the state and its national narrative. Invoking Guha's notes on 'the Historiography of Colonial India', Lloyd deconstructs the authorial, and authoritative, self-evidence of 'elite historiography' (Guha, 1988, 38). He concludes, '[t]he imagination of the nation is both the form and the representational limit of history, properly speaking' (Lloyd, 1999, 26);

in other words, the successful and integrated narration of the nation becomes, simultaneously, the historical legislation of the nation. Elements or excesses that are adjudged extant or non-contiguous with the nation's image of itself are perfunctorily elided from or marginalized within the authorized 'story'. Such manoeuvres, then, are constitutive of what Guha calls, 'the ideological character of historiography itself' (1988, 39).

Subaltern groups and their histories are not entirely excised or remote from the totalized, historical narrative, as Lloyd argues, through Gramsci:

Subaltern groups can thus be thought of as having a double history: on the one hand, they play out their own discrete and complex formations and traditions; on the other, occluded by their difference from dominant narratives and forms and by those forms themselves, they are nonetheless 'intertwined with [the history] of civil society', and thereby with the history of States and groups of States. (1993, 127)

Here we also see Lloyd's theoretical and political departure from Gramsci. Whereas Gramsci envisages the subaltern as the state in process, as potential unity arising out its contingent fragmentation, Lloyd relocates the subaltern as necessarily alternative to the hegemonic state-formation; it is not 'the state in emergence' (Lloyd, 1993, 127). Lloyd's inflection of Gramsci's subaltern, then, displaces the representational and ethical boundaries of state-nationalisms. His conceptualization articulates a much more labile constellation of historical narratives, part of which involves the interrogation of what Amin calls, 'the narrative strategies by which the people get constructed into a nation' (1995, 2). Strategies which cannot 'do historical justice to the complex articulation of nationalist struggle with other social movements', or fail 'to envisage the progressive

moment in nationalisms, which, globally, are not resurgent but continuous, not fixated, but in transformation' (Lloyd, 1999, 20).

The 'unrepresentable' cultural forms are occluded from 'official' narratives through a process of 'uneven incorporation' (Lloyd, 1993, 123). Subaltern spaces are not strictly silent, but are unheard or unheeded by their absence from or their inability to commandeer representational space. As Prakash notes:

the notion of the subalterns' radical heterogeneity with, though not autonomy from, the dominant remains crucial...In other words, subalterns and subalternity do not disappear into discourse but appear in its interstices, subordinated by structures over which they exert pressure. (1994, 1482)

These subject-positions and practices are co-terminous with the nation-state, emphatically not sedimentary residues of an archaic and dispensable tradition, but conversely they are actively synchronic with the gestation and birth of the bourgeois nationalist body politic. The divination and representation of these cultural accretions is a strategy of re-appropriation, as Prakash concludes:

it delves into the history of colonialism not only to document its record of domination but also to identify its failures, silences, and impasses; not only to chronicle the career of dominant discourses but to track those (subaltern) positions that could not be properly recognized and named only 'normalized.' (1994, 1486)

The historiography of postcolonial critique traces the suppressions and elisions of imperial or foundational histories; similarly it must re-present the unpalatable truths of imperial diplomacy, colonial administration, and capitalist-imperialist rapacity.<sup>86</sup> These subaltern histories, then, will divine the occlusions, and navigate the margins, of political

and cultural discourse as well as unmasking the contextually differentiated imperial teleologies of ruthless acquisition and as Prakash terms its 'normalization' (1994, 1486).

While critics of postcolonial theory indict its apparent apolitical, academic location, the *Subaltern Studies* group base their intervention not only on a desire to distinguish the subaltern voice within imperialist discourse, but equally to develop this project of recovery and resistance into a concrete political praxis. Thus the recovery of occluded historical voices is not solely a matter of academic encasement/glorification but 'leaves open the possibility for the further reconstruction of an emancipatory and hegemonic postcolonial political order: if subaltern traditions and practices are better understood, they can still serve as the basis for building alternative political communities that will truly liberate 'the people'' (Mallon, 1994, 1496).

Hybridization and 'adulteration' resist assimilation to the dominant discourse of nationalism, and they constitute recalcitrant elements, as they are inassimilable 'to statist nationalism' (Lloyd, 1993, 8). Lloyd's concept of 'adulteration' is characterized by those cultural formations that are resistant to 'a nationalism...[that is], programmatically concerned with the homogenisation of the people as a national political entity' (Lloyd, 1993, 100). The process, and indeed the fact, of colonial hybridization problematizes both the dominant imperial ideology and the counter-imperial monologic nationalism. Partha Chatterjee argues that, 'the popular is also appropriated in a sanitized form, carefully erased of all marks of vulgarity, coarseness, localism, and sectarian identity. The very timelessness of its "structure" opens itself to normalization' (1992, 73). Hence there is a calibration of the national community to the needs of the nascent state formation; that which is amenable to the state's hegemonic image of itself is assiduously valorized and

moulded. Contrarily, as both Lloyd and Gibbons illustrate, remainders exist; cultural and political fragments that are inconducive to the 'timelessness' of progress and modernization persist aloof from hegemonic representation. This fact, as Lloyd suggests, does not constitute exile to anachronism but rather these discourses retain a crucial valence in their coevality with the state. Cultural forms, Lloyd lists nationalist street balladry, may be 'unrepresentable' but significantly are not rendered extinct or obsolete. Just as imperial endeavour/accumulation legitimized forms of circumscribed exoticism or domesticated forms of alterity, the nationalist agents of independence countenance only that which is amenable to the phoenix narrative of the fledgling postcolonial state.

## **Postcolonial Recovery**

Lloyd's most recent intervention has focused on the notions of colonial trauma and the mechanisms of post-colonial recovery. In his analysis, Lloyd draws heavily on particular case studies and on the theoretical insights of psychology; he locates comparisons between the trauma of the individual victim and that of the traumatized, colonized society. 'Melancholy survivals' manifest in the fragmented, subaltern histories of colonial trauma. Eschewing the essentialist notion of a retrieval of a prelapsarian, precolonial self, Lloyd locates a fractured subject, a subject that is not amenable to the unity of modern society. The subaltern process of 'living on', then, indexes recalcitrance; the necessary narrative 'recovery' of state-led nationalisms cannot assimilate such political and cultural excesses, which as Lloyd affirmatively concludes are, 'potentialities for producing and reproducing a life that lies athwart modernity' (2000 a, 219). In these



survivals Lloyd divines the Benjaminian prospect of a 'determination to imagine alternative ways of being', through which, 'a different future finds its means' (1999, 18).

Lloyd eschews the notion that post-colonial recovery is achieved within the formerly colonized society; instead he affirms that there is no 'retrieval of a lost self', but that the 'subject' is transformed (Lloyd, 2000 a, 215). Lloyd's reference to an altered subject, and his insistence on the existence of forms of alternative cultural 'living on' arise from his earlier work in *Anomalous States*. The notion of 'recovery' is a symptom of state-nationalism, in that both are governed by processes of normalization that proceed to obliterate or occlude the 'unrepresentable' or the non-modern. Lloyd contends that colonialism, and an attenuated form of anti-colonial nationalism, are inherently implicated in the project of modernization, and that they are constitutive elements of the condition of modernity. Accordingly, the resistant elements of culture, those that are 'unrepresentable', do not form part of this post-colonial 'recovery'.

Lloyd posits the argument that, fundamentally, the issue under consideration in Irish culture is a 'matter of verisimilitude', in effect 'which narrative of 'Irishness' comes to seem self-evident, normative and truthful' (1993, 6). As Lloyd argues, the construction and possession of narratives is a matter of politics, the state itself is empowered to 'determine the forms within which representation can take place' (1993, 6). He investigates nationalist cultural expression at an interstitial level, evident in balladry and street entertainers, neither of which were amenable to the formation of what Lloyd sees as a counter-hegemonic, and what later becomes state-led, nationalism. Lloyd traces the development of a nationalism that simply inverted the imperialist mechanism but only acquired a native operator.

He canvasses a systematic and continuous confrontation with 'the historical narrative' and there is never simply one or two voices to be located in Ireland's, or any colonized country's, historical narrative, nor is there a solitary time for their registration: one should always be alive to the 'undeveloped possibilities in continually opening the historical narratives' (1993, 10). Lloyd achieves a balance in his theorization between the recognition of the localized, in the form of balladry, and the concomitant necessity of a structuralized referent. His 'constant point of theoretical reference' is the work of Antonio Gramsci, which is centred on the investigation of the formation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic structures (Lloyd, 1993, 9). As Lloyd argues, Gramsci's schema 'stands as a paradigmatic instance of the transformation of theoretical concepts in their elaboration through specific national situations' (1993, 9). Gramsci's theories on the relationship between the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic penetrate the processes of state formation and underpin Lloyd's argument concerning the 'unrepresentable' within Irish history. Lloyd concludes 'any radical cultural studies... and particularly one which seeks to articulate the potential of residual and emergent formations, will have to engage explicitly with the critique of the state for which these formations are its unrecognizable' (1993, 10).

Post-colonial self-examination, then, is as much an inquiry into the post-independence history of the nation as it is of the colonial legacy. Lloyd forwards a schema that demands an ongoing awareness of the elisions of the post-colonial state and of the exclusionary/attenuated inflection of anti-colonial nationalism that occasioned its inception. Lloyd acknowledges the 'atypicality' of Ireland's position as a bona fide postcolonial society and, in Terence Brown's terms, '[Lloyd believes] the modern history

of Ireland is the history of colonialism. The manifold dislocations he discerns in the country's cultural formations are to be attributed to that status and to that alone' (1997, 465). The dislocations that Lloyd adumbrates include the cultural and historical sectarian fissure that exists on the island; the place of the Irish language within a post-colonial Ireland; the question of the extent to which Irish nationalism has been seen as a derivative of its British counterpart.

### **Postcolonial Historiography**

In 'Colonial Trauma/ Postcolonial Recovery' Lloyd contends, '[i]n some ways it is this last detail that most exemplifies the dehumanization of the colonized, the denial of an interest in the future that is the index of human subjectivity' (2000 a, 227). Lloyd's immediate concern is with the Great Irish Famine, but his remark has a resonance beyond that particular historical context. While he registers a callous material denial of interest in the future, Lloyd succinctly encapsulates a triadic conjunction of Steiner, White and Benjamin. As I have noted with respect to Deane's focus of the linguistic struggle within a colonized society, and invoking Steiner, the possibility of altering one's material circumstances in the present is achieved through a linguistic mobilization. Thus, language and narrative representation are vital to the identitarian politics of any contested social space. Whether one interrogates language as performance or as text, its inescapable transformative potencies are sites and routes of memorial and historical struggle. Equally, in a more historiographic sense, both White and Benjamin are acutely aware of human interest in the future; an interest that is inherently linked to the image and control of one's past. The legitimacy of a society's present and immanent future lies in the control of

historical narrative: control in two forms, firstly autonomy over its representation and secondly, hegemony over its excesses.

At a representational level, White's metahistorical critique diagnoses the political hue of historical interpretation; it is an act of fictional representation and operates within delineated tropic parameters. Thus textual representation of 'history' is politically corruptible. The tropic strategies of historical representation can function by delimiting the avenues of linguistic excess and its transformative potential, but also through forms of representational structuralism, the hegemonic political group can preclude Benjamin's disruptive memory. Thus through textual strategies, an integrated linguistic, historical narrative is capable of foreclosing readings of history that proceed against the grain. Fundamentally, radical re-examinations of Irish history and historiographic practice have drawn on both classic Euro-American philosophy and the subversive historiography of subaltern studies. However, as Whelan notes, 'the challenges to this dominant revisionism have come from outside the orthodoxy of disciplinary history' (2003 b, 1); effectively historians have signally failed to engage in a Bourdieuan process of critical self-reflexiveness. The postcolonial and metahistoriographical optics have been reneged by the very constituencies that are under scrutiny. To a large extent the revisionist *mentalité*, which eschewed disciplinary self-reflection and theoretical analyses, was and remains a product of its position as 'the academic orthodoxy within the discipline of history' (Whelan, 2003 b, 7).

In calling for a 'positive critique' (Lloyd, 1993, 151), Lloyd coalesces with the theoretical methodologies of both Deane and Gibbons, he argues:

rather than reject theory out of hand, as is the practice in some circles, on the sometimes correct grounds that it is merely a recuperative extension of Western thinking or modes of domination, I am interested in how such theoretical models themselves are refracted and refunctioned in the very resistance of anomalous materials. (1993, 151)

Lloyd explicitly segues with Gibbons' 1998 *Interventions* editorial in diagnosing the local possibilities of international theoretical resources. Ireland will not, and cannot, definitively alter or re-configure postcolonial methodology but it can necessarily supplement or refine its applications. As I will argue subsequently, the animus of postcolonial practice is emphatically not to render theoretical typologies or templates, but to react, refract and enrich diverse readings of disparate postcolonial societies. In effect, and contra Gerry Smyth's rather blithe assertion, Ireland is not definitively postcolonial nor should it aspire to become a 'blue-print' of postcoloniality; rather as Lloyd again urges, '[i]n such a differential analysis of cultural forms I would trace the possibility of articulating the very disparate histories of colonized peoples without succumbing to the universalizing drive of 'comparative studies'' (1993, 9). In accenting the notion of 'disparate histories', Lloyd manifests the logic of Irish postcolonial studies. Just as Deane and Gibbons deride the limited philosophical resource of revisionist critique in its staunch refusal to engage with theoretical discourse, postcolonial readings deploy such theoretical readings against the monochromatic linearity of imperial and revisionist historical narrative.

Enabled by the reading strategies of poststructuralist, postcolonial and subalternist methodology, Irish postcolonial critics assail the revisionist conceptualization of liberal modernity. Rather than legitimate a prescriptive ethic of forgetting or an economy of

communal amnesia, postcolonial reading restores a rememorative impulse in lieu of the fixated historical gaze of revisionist historiography. The singular teleology of modernization theory, then, precludes the actualization of disruptive and enabling engagements with history and memory. However, postcolonial historical reading is the act of registering the living accretions of an occluded past, not simply an adoration of a museumized or calcified tradition.

Returning to Lloyd:

they [state-oriented nationalisms] relegate those elements that are incommensurable with modernity to the position of a backwardness that is symptomatic of a refusal to be cured...I want to argue that a *nontherapeutic relation to the past*, structured around the notion of survival or living on rather than recovery is what should guide our critique of modernity and ground a different mode of historicization [my emphasis]. (2003 a, 217)

The logic of Lloyd's analysis of Ireland's differentiated relation to colonialism is guided by Benjamin's insistence on 'the contemporaneity of the dead, the subterranean persistence of social forms that make no sense, for the sake of recalcitrance to the morbid logic of identity' (1999 a, 27). Alternative historical, cultural, memorial forms and possibilities are not embodiments of residual or anachronistic modalities, but in Lloyd's dialectic are coeval mobilizations 'of radical discontinuity with the rationale of developmental history' (1999 a, 26). For Lloyd, as with all Irish postcolonial critics, the temporal and attitudinal division of tradition and modernity is a strategic misnomer.

In effect such an argument differentiates postcolonial critique from the teleological axis of Marxist critics like Eagleton, who maintain the dichotomous falsehood while interrogating the condition of modernity. Lloyd's conceptualization of a

counter-modern Irish society, which debunks the dichotomous supposition of tradition and modernity, is countered by Eagleton's contention that '[t]radition and modernity were intimately interwoven' (1995, 275) in nineteenth century Ireland. This commingling of tradition and modernity is located within a materialist continuum by Eagleton, and the resultant Irish economic conditions are diagnosed in Marxist terms as 'combined and uneven development' (1995, 274). He writes:

There was no question of an eyeball-to-eyeball encounter between tradition and modernity. Irish society was *stratified* in this respect, made up of disparate time scales. Its history was differentiated rather than homogenous, as the anglicised and the atavistic existed side by side [my emphasis]. (1995, 278)

Lodged in a class-based dialectic, Eagleton's forceful discretion between even and uneven development, tradition and modernity and 'anglicised' and 'atavistic', services the teleology of Marxist criticism. Although discrete, tradition and modernity are intimates, and it is this very intimacy that sharpens the sense of disaffected class-based tension, which fuels Eagleton's Marxist reading. He continues by invoking Benjamin:

The Irish are supposed to fetishise the past; but in quite what sense this constitutes a backward-looking mentality is debatable. As with Walter Benjamin's anti-historicist spirit, it would seem less a question of grasping the past as the prehistory of the present, than of constellating an image from that past with a quick sense of the contemporary. (1995, 279)

Despite the dynamic mobility ascribed to the past, it seems that Eagleton maintains a naturalized vision of the discrete existences of both the contemporary and the past.

Lloyd's insistence on a re-constituted historical continuum, one in which the 'traditional' is co-terminous with the modern, in fact might be termed 'counter-modern'

(1997, 90), rather than traditional, rehearses an ethics of postcolonial historical reading. Just as Gibbons and Mallon suggests ways to redraw the ethical geography/plane of postcolonial solidarity, Lloyd's historical framework negates the binarism of developmental historical narration. Such a negation is suggestive of a further ethical dimension of newly constituted postcolonial analysis. The historiographic register of previously unrepresented or subaltern groups/practices, in an Irish context for example, can serve as an instructive theoretical index within a broader matrix of postcolonial societies; the ethical import of postcolonial studies thus extends from historiography to literature to politics.

Lloyd, in particular, has imported and mobilized the concept of subalternity in Irish postcolonial criticism, he notes, 'the terms 'postcolonial' and 'subaltern' designate in different but related ways the desire to elaborate social spaces which are recalcitrant to any straightforward absorption...of Ireland into European modernity' (1999, 77). His conceptualization of a radical, postcolonial Irish historiography is explicitly indebted to the critique of Chakrabarty and the Subaltern collective. Equally Lloyd's characterization of nineteenth century Irish street ballads as a form of recalcitrant nationalist expression intersects with Guha's contention that subaltern constituencies act in history '*on their own*, that is *independently of the elite*', subaltern politics represented 'an *autonomous* domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter' (Guha, 1988, 3-4).



## Modernity/Counter-Modernity

More recently Lloyd has focused on the Irish Famine; he has broached the epochal humanitarian disaster with the intention of falsifying the crude dichotomy of tradition and modernity. Reading through Foley and Boylan<sup>87</sup>, Lloyd traces the conceptualization of a developmental historical continuum within imperial discourse. The doctrine of political economy, canvassed in Ireland most famously by Archbishop Richard Whateley, diagnosed a civilizational archaism within Irish society. Lloyd notes:

Critical was the capacity for sustained productive labour that the Irish were held so singularly to lack. This capacity turned on the emergence of the rationally self-interested individual whose choices and desires invisibly regulate both production and consumption. (2003 a, 213)

The productive citizen of an imperial civilization must, then, engage with the demands and responsibilities of the *laissez-faire* market economy. Not only were the archaic economic practices enjoined to participate within a productive economy, but also the doctrinaire discourse of political economy instituted an equivalent moral and ethical economy. In effect what was prescribed was an ethics of futurity; the profligate traditionalism of the Irish subsistence economy was lodged in exclusively presentist terms and thus thwarted the developmental trajectory of imperial modernity. In a similar vein, Lloyd avers to the differentiation of national characters, as we have seen such readings are commonplace in postcolonial theory, and indeed Deane's readings are indebted to the discourse of national dispositions. Thus what commences as a functional economic disparity also nourishes an anthropological matrix. Importantly both operate within and in fact re-enforce the conceptualization of a developmental paradigm.

Tradition and modernity collide in variant social crucibles: economics, anthropology, politics and culture. Even though Lloyd only invokes Whateley, his reading is diagnostic of a much broader discourse of 'infantization' or developmental history; imperial writers such as Herman Merivale<sup>88</sup> were equally active in propagating the conceptual dichotomies of modernity/tradition and civilization/savagery. Lloyd proceeds further, however, and does not limit his discussion to the purely philosophical diagnoses of political economy. Echoing Gibbons' elucidation of the corporeal as site of imperial inscription and anti-imperial resistance, Lloyd argues:

This catalog of abstract qualities of the political economic subject at once obscures and reveals the fact that what is at stake is producing not merely a new set of psychic and ethical dispositions, or even a new 'social body' but in a quite immediate sense a new physical economy for the Irish body. (2003 a, 214)

Directly counter to the idealized, productive civilized body were the subversive, performative somatics of Irish 'tradition.' Irish society and culture, orally based, potato-dependent, and economically subsistent, were anthropologically regressive, and in Lloyd's diagnosis the Irish body became the site and the means of civilizational amelioration. Just as the figurative practices of allegory were excessive to the developmental narratives of modernity and presented subversive agencies, Lloyd exposes the minatory potential and effects of keening as an orally constituted performance that is equally as in excess of accepted narrative forms. The comprehensible and commensurable structure of narrative, and by extension of civilized tropes and conventions, is obscured in 'the performance of emotion' (Lloyd, 2003 a, 209); an unfamiliar form of oral theatre dissolves the accepted spaces of emotional expression.

And just as Gibbons underscores the subversive potency of incommensurable performative forms, Lloyd concludes, 'it is less the concealed content that gives rise to disturbance than to the form itself as a striking instance of Irish cultural difference from English' (2003, a, 210). The ritual drama of keening, or allegorically constituted agrarian violence, becomes an index of subversion and cultural incommensurability. In effect, Lloyd's most recent interventions are characteristic of a concern with 'the body', its performance and performances. Lloyd articulates traceable networks, moments of counter-modern recalcitrance by exploring the physical body in public and private space. The mouth, keening, oral culture and the public house are indices of such counter-modernity.<sup>89</sup>

The key point regarding keening, Ireland's subsistence potato economy or perceived inferior national character is that Lloyd does not conceive of them in terms of the tradition/modernity axis.<sup>90</sup> Equally, as I shall discuss at greater length below, his designation of a counter-hegemonic subalternity is not based on any theoretical oppositionality or dichotomy. In all of these formulations Lloyd's concern is to theorize and legitimate alternative or counter-modern practices and cultural spaces. It is not a matter of resistance and opposition in a circular dichotomous struggle; Lloyd institutes viable economic and cultural alternatives to attenuated understandings of tradition and modernity. In strictly economic terms, Lloyd reads the Irish subsistence, potato-based economy as a remarkable alternative to the British system of modernized [corn-based] market economy. As we have seen, the dictates of political economy perceived a profound economic and cultural retardation within Irish society.<sup>91</sup> Lloyd's argument is that 'political economy reached a theoretical crisis in Ireland; Ireland was theoretically

recalcitrant' (2003, b).<sup>92</sup> The viability of the potato-based economy defied the logic of developmental economics and rather than existing as an antecedent or anachronistic system, in fact proceeded as a legitimate, alternative to the British economic model. The very legitimacy of this recalcitrant economic practice, thus, invalidated the philosophical moorings of political economy. By this invalidation in the field of economics, Lloyd, then, questions the entire validity of the tradition/ modernity dichotomy. Lloyd's critical work encompasses the fields of historiography, economics, politics, memory and literature with the express intention, and result, of de-legitimizing this dichotomous formula and in turn explicating the viability and simultaneity of counter-modern communities and practices.

### **Challenging the rationalities of history**

In *Ireland after History* Lloyd correctly issues a lateral invocation regarding the future trajectory of Irish cultural studies. He calls for:

a series of challenges to what is established as the common sense of both academic and public discourse: to their procedures, to their periodizations, to their hierarchies of identities and institutions, to the disposition to the local and the central, the traditional and the modern, the margin and the mainstream. Challenges, in other words, to the reasons of state that are embedded in the rationalities of history. (1999 a, 37)

Ostensibly, Lloyd re-treads much of his previous critical work in this manifesto, in other words he repeats his suspicion of false dichotomies that are initiated and sustain the requirements of a hegemonic state formation. But perhaps what is most revealing is the almost Bourdieuan beginning to Lloyd's invocation. In a sense, Lloyd demonstrates a

tacit awareness of the contingent structure of *all* forms of institutional authority. He specifically avers to areas of established academic procedures, periodizations and hierarchies of identities and institutions, all of which are fundamental concerns of both postcolonial theory and, as I shall discuss below, Bourdieu's educational sociology. Whereas Lloyd's demand remains undeveloped in his subsequent interventions, my belief is that by refracting Bourdieu through academic debates on Irish postcolonial studies, we can initiate one of Lloyd's challenges to established discourses.

For critics like Lloyd and Gibbons, then, Irish history and polyvalent nationalism represent a variegation of possibility; ostensibly 'a child's purse, full of useless things', the unrepresented or 'hidden' formations are as relevant to contemporary Irish society as the modernizing stability of liberal culture. Gareth Griffiths believes that when authentic speech is treated as a 'fetishized cultural commodity', it is employed 'to enact a discourse of 'liberal violence', re-enacting its own oppression on the subjects it purports to represent and defend' (1995, 241). The fetishization of Irish nationalism along these parameters established a self-congratulatory, unproblematic ideal of Irishness, and in so doing eroded the heterogeneity that was, and is, latent within Irish history. According to Gibbons the intellectual hangover of self-praise at the seamless of a sedulously plotted cultural narrative is still operative. Its chief symptom being a critical mawkishness that sees the espousal of national identity as, '[m]onological and thus inimical to entering into critical dialogue, as if polyphonic discourse and openness towards the other somehow required the obliteration of one's own identity' (Gibbons, 1994, 29). As critics of modernization, and of the historiographical scaffolding on which this process is

founded, both Gibbons and Lloyd are discursively and politically sympathetic to the ideals and modalities of the *Subaltern Studies* group, that as Frederick Cooper concludes,

has turned what could be yet another exercise in Western self-indulgence-endless critiques of modernity, of the universalizing pretensions of Western discourse-into something more valuable because it insists that the subject positions of colonized peoples that European teleologies obscure should not simply be allowed to dissolve. (1994, 1518)

In Ireland and particularly since the influx and influence of postcolonial studies, history and historiography have interfaced with literary studies not on the basis of conflicts over what exactly happened, but more fundamentally on the very ways in which historical writing is composed, employed and received. Indeed Irish history as an academic pursuit has been resolutely intransigent in its refusal to engage in any form of self-reflexive critique or to furnish any evidence of meta-historical awareness. It accepts, *sans doute*, the inherited modes of historical representation; logic and rationality prevail without any sense of historical distantiation that might 'trouble' the narrative, its reception and the authorial position.

Again, Chakrabarty confronts this very confluence of nation-building and its buttressing through narrational continuity, he notes:

[p]ostmodern critiques of 'grand narratives' have been used as ammunition in the process to argue that the nation cannot have just one standardized narrative, that the nation is always a contingent result of many contesting narratives. Minority histories, one might say, in part express the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies. (1998, 15)

As we have noted both Gibbons and Lloyd attempt to disabuse Irish historical narrative of the unitary and modernizing energies of 'historical method' (Gibbons, 2001, 139). The trauma of colonialism renders the possibilities of narrative uniformity redundant, as expressions of cultural and political community and identity manifest in alternative and unrepresentable forms. Both Gibbons and Lloyd operate within the same discursive economy as Chakrabarty, as they invoke and defend the agency and viability of minority histories. Chakrabarty continues, '[t]he point about historical narratives requiring a certain minimum investment in rationality has recently been made in the discussion of postmodernism' (1998, 16-17). This notion reflects the needs of a disciplinary, as well as politically and epistemologically, bound narrative; the challenges to historical representation rest in constituencies that explode and are incompatible with the tropic parameters of disciplinary history. The motivation, then, of revisionist historiography is the successful construction of a clearly identifiable, rational historical continuum within which there is a qualitative and quantitative demarcation between past and present. Contrarily, the radical mobilization of essentialist myths and of tradition is not retrograde nostalgia, but reminds one of what Chakrabarty terms 'the plurality of existing times' (1998, 25). As he concludes, '[t]hus the writing of history must implicitly assume a plurality of times existing together, a disjuncture of the present with itself' (1998, 25). The 'disjuncture of the present time with itself' is the trace effect of the perpetual contemporaneity of the subaltern or minority pasts, and in Lloyd's terms, which explicitly echo Kiberd's, is an index of 'the unfinished project of decolonization in Ireland' (2003 c, 49).

## The Echochamber of Irish History

Living in Ireland, one lives in multiple time, constantly engaged in a dialogue between past and present. We inhabit the space between memory and history. If we have learned anything from the disastrous twentieth century, it is surely that there is no such thing as 'objective' history, a version of the past free of the freight of the present. (Whelan, 2001, 44)

Of the Dominican monastery nothing remains but the gloomy Church of St. Nikolai, its interior splendor resting entirely on black and gold: an afterglow of past atrocities. But the memory of the black-robed monastic order lives on only in the name of the market, as it does in that of a summer holiday named St. Dominic's Day, which since the Middle Ages has survived all manner of political change and today attracts natives and tourists with street musicians, sausage stands, and all kinds of baubles and trumpery. (Gunter Grass, *The Call of the Toad*, 4)

Grass lyrically captures the living watermarks of social memory; the Polish urban landscape pulses with the experiential and chronological history 'of past atrocities.' It is not only the philosophical resonances of Grass' historical rumination that seems apposite to the current discussion, but also the physical location of these living memories: Danzig. Danzig is a city with a torrid history of imperial conquest from both east and west; it is a border city on the precipice of two military and political leviathans. Grass records the physical and memorial imprint of conquest, a concern that has relevance beyond both his text and beyond Polish borders. The past, then, is possessive of durability, but this does not perforce represent a repressive or atavistic legacy. As many of the critics examined in the dissertation outline, the past can endure in enabling and dynamic forms.

In a recent article on the historical and memorial legacy of Robert Emmet, Whelan invokes the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur.<sup>93</sup> Whelan reminds us of Ricoeur's



dictum concerning the victims of political injustice: that to be forgotten is to die again (2003 a, 51). For Whelan, together with Gibbons, Lloyd, Deane and Kiberd, the past is not a lumpen corpse of historically deceased facts and events; rather it retains signally enabling and politically charged valences. In fact Emmet's speech from the dock embodies, both verbally and performatively, the resonant legacy of Ireland's republican and nationalist histories. Whelan's work is characterized by a concern with the representational elements of historical writing as much as with the factual recovery of historical narratives. Within this dialectic, memory is co-terminous and covalent with the documented historical past as Whelan defers to Milan Kundera's oft cited, and enduring, maxim, 'the struggle for power is the struggle of memory against forgetting' (1998, ix-x).<sup>94</sup> The politics of historical representation are deeply imbricated with the wider social processes of representational politics. Contra the positivist delineation of historical record expounded by revisionist methodology, memory, interpretation and remembrance<sup>95</sup> subtend Whelan's historiographical practice.

While it is disingenuous to posit the existence of a unified 'school' of postcolonial historiography, Whelan's methodology certainly dovetails with the philosophical and historiographic anima of Prakash and Chakrabarty's postfoundational and 'provincializing' historiography. Whelan's work is primarily devoted to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Ireland, specifically the geneses, events and legacies of United Irish and republican history. The intricacies of this historical period are clearly beyond the scope of the current discussion, but of immediate relevance are the methodological and theoretical principles that underwrite Whelan's historiographical method.<sup>96</sup> The most profitable point of departure is actually the very last sentence of

Whelan's 1996 monograph, *The Tree of Liberty*. Referring to the narrative representation of the 1798 rising in subsequent nineteenth century records, Whelan concludes:

The very instability of the narrative of '98 since '98 is a salutary reminder that past and present are constantly imbricated and the positivist reading of historical texts is no longer adequate to the enterprise of historical scholarship. (1996, 175)

We are confronted with two essential points here, firstly, it is untenable to conceive of the relationship between past and present as a divisive vacuum separating one from the other *ad infinitum*, rather it is more accurate to envisage the structure of a rememorative 'echo chamber of Irish history' (2003 a, 51).<sup>97</sup> Secondly, at a representational or textual level, Whelan draws on White's tropic interrogation of historical writing, exposing the interpretative fabric of all historical narrative representations. These two central arguments insert Whelan's historiographic method into a postfoundational continuum; the self-perpetuating legitimacy of the unified historical text and historical subject is conclusively undermined. By dramatizing the interpretative cast of an always already present historical past, Whelan transfuses historical reading and writing with an explicit political import.

Whelan's re-reading of the historical narratives of the 1798 rebellion signal the insipid and diverse political, cultural and social parties that sought to appropriate the 'significance' of the event. Through historical readings of the pre-rebellion period, various degrees of aspersion, eccentricity and suspicion were cast on the insurgent United Irishmen. Whelan's research reveals a demonstrable political investment at work in the historiography of nineteenth century Ireland. However such political re-readings of 'decisive' or 'divisive' acts of anti-imperial insurrection are consistently dismissed as

nationalist apologia. Through an ideologically aware postcolonial historiography, Whelan registers the constructed artifices of strategically motivated historical narratives.

It is this politicized reading of cultural and historical texts and practices that represents the most enabling of postcolonialism's theoretical resources. Again referring to the narrative mobilization of 1798 in nineteenth century historical accounts, Whelan writes:

The struggle for control of the meaning of the 1790s was also a struggle for political legitimacy, and the high drama of the Union debate was dominated by a discussion of 1798. The interpretation of 1798 was designed to mould public opinion and influence policy formation: the rebellion never passed into history because it never passed out of politics. (1996, 133)

Whelan assails the diffuse rehearsals of depoliticizing interpretations of the rebellion and emphatically registers the cogency of the political, intellectual genesis and structure of the actual rebellion, in contradistinction to the ill-conceived conflagration that was portrayed for public digestion. As Jim Merod argues, in a different context, the depoliticization of cultural, literary and historical, narratives and actions are themselves political or ideological strategies (1987, 1-37 *passim*).<sup>98</sup> Historical interpretation and narrative representation are matters of selectivity and as White outlines, they are tropological in nature as well as being freighted with ideological interests. In challenging and debunking an historiographical framework underwritten by an ostensible objectivity or self-professed apolitical stance, Whelan undermines what he terms:

the baneful binary of modernisation and tradition – the Hegelian view that all that is lost to history is well lost, the Scottish Enlightenment paradigm in which what is sacrificed to progress is retrieved imaginatively as nostalgia. (2002 a, 60)

The separation of poetry and politics, and the *telos* of Hegelian progress, are intimates within a revisionist, modernizing dialectic. If cultural discourses remain fixed as artistic artefacts, their artistry can remain as testimony to the cultural progress of a society in tandem with that of its liberal economics and politics. In a sense there is a level of stability between text and political context within this liberal spectrum, but little creative tension. The disjunction between political hegemony of imperial and/or postcolonial societies and unrepresented cultural discourses is one facet of colonial history that Whelan and postcolonial theorists at large attempt to chart. In concert with international postcolonial literary and historical practice, Whelan recovers both the marginalia and the broader socio-political events of Irish history; the significance of an historical event is never solely registered within the confines of the archival record. As Whelan attests, 'memory in Ireland was deployed for radical political purposes. Memory acted as a spur to agency rather than a prop to passivity' (2002 a, 61). The logic of Enlightenment continuity and modernity falters, as Whelan argues:

[i]n the Irish case then as in other colonial situations, tradition and custom were not based on continuity but on violence, instability and discontinuity. Tradition was not anterior or antecedent to modernity but absolutely incorporated and sustained by it. (2003 c, 3)

Contrary to or defying the teleological or developmental linearity of modernity, Ireland inhabits its own forms of counter-modernity. The chronologically based indices of Enlightenment rationalism, which demand anteriority in its other, are confounded in a cultural landscape that 'displayed igneous or metamorphic rather than sedimentary historical layering' (Whelan, 2003 c, 3).

The dynamism of radical memory sheds the containing lineaments of nostalgia; radical memory challenges the present rather than affirming it through wistful backward glances. Nostalgic retrievals are culled from the linear anteriority of modernity; those nostalgized moments are part of the same historical narrative and trajectory as the present moment of modernity. Whelan outlines the project of radical memory in the following terms, '[r]adical past seeks not for the past it had, but for the past it had not, the desired past; not an actual history but a possible history' (2003 c, 21). Again confounding the tropic and factual parameters, as well as the structural *telos*, of historical writing, radical memory traces the narrative excesses of historical possibility. Indeed just as Kiberd and Mathews locate the dynamic potential of the revival period in Ireland as an energy that failed to endure, radical memory 'deploys the past to challenge the present, to release cultural energies stored in thwarted moments from the past' (2003 c, 21). Radical memory represents the location and activation of historical possibility in the present and in the future. Moreover it has roots in Burke's notion of alternative 'past futures', specifically, radical memory is implicit in the Burkean idea of 'a choice of inheritance' (Gibbons, 2003 b, 17).

Central to the notion of recovering 'radical memory' or recuperating tradition in a postcolonial context, then, is not so much to engender a comforting sense of nostalgia. The intention, rather, is that the performative or ritualistic elements of traditional culture might be wedded to, or be informative of, contemporary cultural and social practices.<sup>99</sup> Ritual, in its traditional forms, was/is adjudged incongruous in terms of the modern. Equally, in reading historical practices, postcolonial historiography attends to those facets of experience that lie athwart or in excess of linear narrative representation. In other

words, the excessive theatre of anti-colonial resistance, which was once diagnosed as non-contiguous with the state's image of itself, demands representation in the postcolonial moment. This is not merely a matter of representation for its own sake; contrarily such acts of historical recovery constitute instances of political enunciation. Implicit with this radical, memorial enunciation is the seed of utopian possibility; such radical remembrance liberates a submerged chorus of alternative futures in the past. As Whelan concludes:

Memory allows us to liberate ourselves from the ligatures of the past through the capacity for forgiveness; it also establishes a link to the future through the capacity for promising...There is more in the past than what happened; at any given point in time, multiple trajectories toward the future were possible. Memory can restore this openness to the past. (2003 e, 93)

### **The politics of time**

In his third thesis on the philosophy of history, Benjamin argues, '[a] chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history' (1992, 246). Benjamin's prescription runs directly counter to the philosophical/civilizational spirit of Scottish Enlightenment thinking, which, as Whelan notes, counted all that was lost to history as well lost. Behind this Enlightenment mindset lay a belief in the progressive/ameliorative nature of historical development. What materializes, then, is a hierarchy of civilizational times and spaces; as Whelan remarks, '[h]istory proper could now be joined by geography as a means of tracing human

evolution in all its stages and periods' (2000, 185). Within this temporal-spatial matrix, enlightened, Christian, industrialized and rational Europe was the apex of civilization, and civility. Tradition and barbarism were represented as anachronistic and irrational residues within a 'stadial schema' (Whelan, 2000, 185), a schema that promoted a hierarchical model of cultures and races.<sup>100</sup>

As we have discussed in chapter two, post-Union measures to culturally integrate Ireland into a now *de facto* British political unity were problematic. Co-terminous with the development of a stadial schema of civilizational progress was 'an emerging racial theory' (Whelan, 2001, 24). The emerging discourses of national character furnished expedient indices of racial classification. Rather than attempt to improve or modernize the barbaric, the pre-modern or the irrational, the authority and force of classificatory control was exerted on the genetically, and in Ireland's case, confessionally recalcitrant 'other' (Whelan, 2001, 24-25). Spurr adumbrates concisely the logic of rational discourse, which deeply informed the mechanics of imperial control:

Every discourse orders itself both externally and internally: it marks itself off against the kind of language it excludes, while it establishes within its own limits a system of classification, arrangement, and distribution...A statement can lay claim to truth, Foucault says, only by obeying a discursive police. Within the realm of discourse, classification performs this policing function, assigning positions, regulating groups, and enforcing boundaries. (1993, 62-63)

A differentiated raft of representational media colluded in propagating the stadial rationalization of space and time. Under an 'eminently rational discourse', Whelan concludes, '[c]ultural erasure occurred under the pressure of a politics of time: the state forcibly broke open the encapsulated, stagnant time of a stranded stage, releasing it into

linear, historical time' (2000, 187). In a colonial context, such as Ireland, which has undergone the benevolent imperialism of an 'eminently rational discourse', it is not so easy to consign the past to 'the dustbin of history' (Whelan, 2000, 187).

Whelan's exposure of such a self-defining 'stadial schema' is endorsed by Chakrabarty's historiographic provincialization of European modernity. Chakrabarty disputes the unflagging anchorage of the unified modern subject, together with the centrality of its subtending narratives of progress. He argues:

It was through recourse to some version of a stagiest theory of history-ranging from simple evolutionary schemas to sophisticated understandings of "uneven development"-that European political and social thought made room for the political modernity of the subaltern classes. (2000 a, 9)

The philosophical and political institution of this civilizational, and historicist, model, reminds us of the urgency, as Lloyd and Gibbons highlight, of registering the counter-modern coequality of these multiple subaltern histories. Or as Johannes Fabian terms it, it is necessary to redress the strategic 'denial of coevalness' (Chakrabarty, 2000 a, 8). The 'coevalness' of subaltern histories, which persist in defiance of the containing gestures of historical stadialism, confirms the present's disjunction with itself. Again Chakrabarty encapsulates the energy of such a historical consciousness, he states:

since difference is always the nature of a relationship for its separates just as it connects (as, indeed, does a border), one could argue that alongside the present or the modern the medieval must linger as well, if only as that which exists as the limit or the border to the practices and discourses that define the modern. (2000 a, 110)



The differential projects that contribute to postcolonial studies, including its Irish franchise, problematize the regulatory function of historical and literary representations. In effect, the re-imagination and re-presentation of cultural and political texts and practices within postcolonial projects abides by Benjamin's injunction that '[i]n every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it' (1992, 247).

**'angels of intellect and rationality'**<sup>101</sup>

[historiographical debate] should not be the work of the individual scholar, nor yet rival schools of interpretation, but rather the ensemble of activities and practices in which ideas of history are embedded or a dialectic of past-present relations is rehearsed. (Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 8)

Shakir Mustafa provides a concise summative comment on the utility of the mythic within what he calls 'revisionist texts' (2002, 71). The mythic '[s]eems to have lost its potency as a way of knowing the world and has consequently been demoted to a synonym of the archaic, the occult, the atavistic' (Mustafa, 2002, 71).<sup>102</sup> Mustafa's conclusion again elaborates the rigidity of empirical evaluation and categorical assignment, which foreclose the potential open-endedness ascribed to *mythos* by Kearney (1984, 23-24). Such texts exhibit, what Mustafa terms, '[a] mythophobic attitude' (2002, 76). Indeed it is the persistence of such methodological procedures that, according to Eagleton, are elemental to recent internecine political and disciplinary agons in Irish academia. He writes:

Hamstrung by his empiricist education, the revisionist historian is sometimes slow to appreciate the symbolic dimension of action, and must accordingly go to school with the cultural critic. No historical event is finally separable from the way it is symbolised in social consciousness; and if this truth had been more surely grasped by a positivistically-inclined historiography, as it is by the historians of *mentalité*, much tedious argumentative spadework might have proved unnecessary. (1998 b, 319)

While Whelan's historiographic practice draws on a range of meta-theoretical material, White, Ricoeur, Lloyd, Gibbons and Chakrabarty, his reading of recent and contemporary Irish historiography is firmly in opposition to revisionist historical writing<sup>103</sup>. Whelan outlines the urgency of these ongoing historiographical debates:

Over the last three decades in Ireland, a vigorous and at times vicious historiographical debate has proceeded alongside the Northern Troubles. In a country where current political divides were based as much on the past as on contemporary social divisions, and where the past was claimed as a mandate for political action, the appeal to history was ever present in public discourse. (2003 b, 1)

The continuing pressure occasioned by the omnipresent immanence of violence in Northern Irish society in the names of republican separatism and militant loyalism infused historical reading and writing with profound political implications. As Deane, McCarthy and Cleary have discussed at length, revisionist historical practice was doggedly conservative in its politics and in its methodological discourse. Spawned in the 1930s, historical revisionism maintained an avowedly anti-nationalist posture, instead actively denigrating the mythic genealogy and agency of Irish political and cultural nationalism. In effect, as Whelan outlines, the project of historical revisionism segued

with what might be termed a counter-revivalist *geist* of the post-independence Irish establishment.

Embodying the intellectual vanguard of the revisionist *mentalité* were *Irish Historical Studies*<sup>104</sup> and *The Bell*<sup>105</sup>; both publications were part of a powerful post-independence mind-set of consolidation within the state rather than any type of celebration of the nation. In fact they are emblematic of what Lloyd describes as the 'conjunction between the disciplinary formation of history and the institutional legitimation of the modern state' (1999, 40). As Whelan convincingly argues, the early revisionist project was a federated assault on the legacy and energies of the erstwhile Irish Literary Revival; it was, in fact, symptomatic of a broader atmospheric positivism of the 1930s. (Whelan, 2003 f)<sup>106</sup> In a way, then, the impetus of Irish postcolonial studies derives from an interest in re-invigorating the generative traditionalism of political and cultural moments such as the Literary Revival.

But more relevant to our discussion is the latter-day orthodoxy of revisionist methodology in Irish literary and historical studies. In the wake of a recrudescence of concerted militant republican violence in the North, the political demands of the Southern Irish establishment were partially served by an academic legitimation of modernization and a synchronous marginalization/demonization of political nationalism.<sup>107</sup> Echoing McCarthy's lengthier examination of revisionism, Whelan notes, '[i]n this sense revisionism represented a strategy of containment, stressing the urgency of reformatting popular attitudes to the past in order to undermine the appeal of republicanism' (2003 b, 8).<sup>108</sup> Inverting L.P. Hartley's famous aphorism, the revisionist re-calibration of Irish

history was so urgent precisely because the past was *not* a foreign country in many people's minds.<sup>109</sup>

Equally Whelan's terminology registers Cleary's specific argument in relation to the partition of Ireland<sup>110</sup> and the crises that such a partition has engendered; the exogenous factors of a broad historical continuum of imperial and anti-colonial history prove too explosive and require 'containment' in partitioned state-lets, standardized textbooks, and narrow historiographical practice. The drawbridge between modernization and minatory tradition and myth was drawn up to safeguard the *telos* of the state from the iniquities of its nationalist past. Just as Whelan argues in a historico-geographical context:

Stable regions with fixed boundaries may create an arbitrary, artificial sense of identity that ignores difference and individuality. The construction of regions must therefore constantly involve their deconstruction. The notion of stable regions with fixed boundaries has to be measured against the Heraclitean flux of economy, society and culture in an age more Dionysian than Apollonian. (1996 b, 129)

The sclerotic divisions of modernity and tradition, culture and politics, history and memory are as porous and permeable as the fixity of geographical, regional boundaries. In fact the fluidity of narrative interpretation, both historical and contemporary, and the agency of memory, individual and communal, are the precipitants of the Heraclitean fluxes of geographical, spatial identities. The inauguration of a state and its narrative legitimation within an economy of revisionist texts and practices cannot extinguish the vitality of alternative narratives and identities. What Whelan points to in the region is complicit with the operations of Lloyd and Gibbons as they diagnose the coevality of

subsumed forms of traditional culture; forms that are not anachronistic but alternatively modern.

Whelan promotes a radical reconceptualization of Ireland's colonial heritage; in a recent article, 'The Green Atlantic: Radical Reciprocities between Ireland and America in the Long Eighteenth century'<sup>111</sup>, he resurrects the Atlantic historical paradigm first pioneered by Beers-Quinn in the 1940s and by Canny from the mid-1970s. As a corollary to Cleary's insertion of colonial Ireland into a modernizing, global capitalist enterprise, Whelan traces the development of an equivalent economy of ideational trade; a commerce of triangulated trans-Atlantic republican thought. He relates:

Serious United Irish related incidents broke out in Jamaica, Newfoundland, Guernsey, South Africa, Botany Bay and the United States. The international horizons of the United Irishmen and their sense of participation in a cosmopolitan political project to transform the entire global order is a crucial dimension to a full understanding of them. (2002 b, 25-26)

Again rather than isolating republican ideals within the flow of strictly urban/metropolitan politics, Whelan traces the vertiginous networks of United Irish military and ideational mobilization. The historiographical import is registered in his effort to construct a heritage of unified republican and United Irish activity. Instead of perpetuating a revisionist-inscribed caricature of anachronistic, regressive and archaic nationalism borne of myth, superstition and 'popery', Whelan's interventions recast the oppositional tenets of hoary historical debates. The genealogies of Irish nationalism and republicanism were not exclusively nourished by the actualization of archaic mythology and superstition, but instead inhabited a philosophical location within an alternatively modern current of political discourse.

## Historiography and the performance of resistance

Recalling White's influential metahistoriography the prodigious Dutch literary historian, Joep Leerssen writes:

Historical theory in the wake of Hayden White has placed great stress on the 'constructed' nature of historical discourse and the radical division between historical discourse and that ideal-typical Rankean past 'as it actually was'. (2001, 212)

Leerssen, however, develops the historiographic debate further; rather than confining his argument to White's critique of historical *writing*, Leerssen invokes both Ricoeur and Maurice Halbwachs.<sup>112</sup> Echoing Gibbons' notion of identity-formation as a series of performed acts, Leerssen's reconceptualization of historical memory and remembrance, firstly embraces the notion of intentional human *action* in the interpretation of historical events; a concept that is also alluded to by Carter.<sup>113</sup> Of greater significance, Leerssen argues, '[t]he *res gestae*, past events and occurrences, took on meaning even as they occurred, and from that moment onwards have been transmitted in an ongoing process of reckoning and remembering' (2001, 213). In Halbwach's terms, the past or the historical cannot legitimately be contained or separated in objectified narratives; the performative facets of identity are emplotted within the performance of memory. Meaning and identity cohere over time in the spatial performance of remembrance.

While White's tropic exegesis of historical writing exposes the constitutive literariness of the discipline, through Ricoeur and Halbwachs, Leerssen re-asserts the viability of historical experience as rememorative record. Indeed White's textual

interrogation is a necessary corollary to Ricoeur and Halbwachs. The disciplinary, tropic representation of historical personages, events and places authorizes the autonomous latter day judgements of historians. Equally by dissolving the periodized historical continuum, Halbwachs intersects with White's exposure of the literary mechanisms of historical writing. Just as White exposes the framing representational devices of historical writing, Leerssen argues, Ricoeur and Halbwachs debunk the structures of remembrance and memorial interpretation. Such disciplinary challenges have led to a situation where:

History writing nowadays is concerned almost exclusively with underdogs, indeed underdoghood is indispensable to obtain political or historical sympathy, anyone daring to take an interest in upperdogs will be confronted by questions about whether this is not elitist and perpetuates the injustice of old hegemonies. (Leerssen, 2001, 218-219)

Besides, pointing to the politics of historical representation, Leerssen alludes to one of the most urgent ethical questions of current postcolonial historiographic debate: subaltern histories. The idea of 'underdoghood' as a theoretical idiom within postcolonial literary and historical writing is a topic that I will deal with at length below.

Whelan encapsulates the United Irish project as follows:

The United Irishmen's necks were set in concrete, staring relentlessly forward. They saw their project in Ireland as simply to accelerate the reception of Enlightenment principles. Their relationship with popular culture therefore was radically different from a cultural nationalist programme: they wished not to valorise but to politicise it. (1996 a, 61)

Again we note the conjunction of a future-oriented 'popular culture', a potently modernizing fusion of traditional culture and modern media. There were three principle

resources deployed: the creation of a 'vernacular prose' in order 'to challenge the very style of political discourse' (Whelan, 1996 a, 71); the dissemination of 'cheap pamphlets, newspapers, songbooks, prints and broadsheets', which subverted the authority of elite culture, and thirdly, 'the development of genres which overcame the literary barrier...ballads, prophecies, toasts, oaths, catechisms and sermons' (Whelan, 1996 a, 72).

In treating of the United Irish mobilisation in these terms, Whelan intersects with the postcolonial readings of Lloyd and Gibbons at two levels. Firstly, all three are concerned with popular representation and expression; this concern stems from a unilateral conviction that such forms were latterly adjudged 'unrepresentable' within counter-hegemonic Irish nationalism in the early twentieth century. Secondly, and to my mind much more provocatively, through a historically protracted perspective and at a cross-disciplinary level, we see the interrogation of performative cultural expression that is put to political ends. In a sense we have a number of effective anti-colonial representations traced by Whelan, Gibbons and Lloyd. These postcolonial readings privilege the body as a site of anti-colonial resistance, as the objective integrities of élite culture, textual representation and political discourse undergo layers of structural mutation. Equally the text itself dissolves as an integrated referent of imperial authority, as both its form and mediums are shot through with destabilizing, subversive and 'vernacular' possibilities. Emphasizing the dissimulating, and in a way the 'provincializing', effects of these performative, resistant genres, Whelan quotes a hostile Squire Firebrand:



Tis songs that is most to be dreaded of all things. Singing Billy is a damned bad custom: it infects a whole country and makes them half mad, because they rejoice and forget their cares, and forget their duty, and forget their betters. By heavens, I'll put an end to singing in this part of the country in a short time. And there's whistling is near as bad: do you hear much whistling nowadays? (1996 a, 72)

Whelan stresses the disruptive valence of the past in the present and in pathways to possible futures, but as he acknowledges, 'the past cannot be restored, memory can' (1998, x). The continued presence of the past is not the hoary spectres of archaic tradition or monocultural ethnicity but has been repeatedly dramatized by Whelan in terms of geographical and geological conceits. Drawing on the historical geography of Estyn Evans and Tom Jones Hughes, Whelan surmizes, 'existing cultural landscapes...are communal archives, palimpsests created by the sedimentation of cultural experience through time' (1996 b, 127). And more recently in discussing Joyce's *Dubliners* through the work of Peter Ackroyd, he concludes, '[i]n a country like Ireland with a troubled history, the seemingly quiet surface was a deceptive crust, which offered only a temporary stay against the flows of unfinished history seething beneath it' (2002 a, 87). Just as there are potentially volatile layers of representational interpretation, tropic form and factual deployment in constructing historical narrative, so too past, 'living' energies, potent memory and enabling traditions are secreted within and beneath the physicality of the present.

### **'the scent of human flesh'**<sup>114</sup>

Not only is Whelan's historiographic practice infused with the resources of recent postcolonial historiography, but his methodology is also braided with the principles of the

*Annales* School of historical writing.<sup>115</sup> Whelan's historical approach blends the source material of archive, geographical survey and popular remembrance. Irish postcolonial studies is not, and cannot be, a single discipline; it is, by its very practice, a confluence of disciplinary resources. Likewise Whelan's polyvalent historiographic register rehearses Marc Bloch's invocation, '[w]e simply ask both to bear in mind that historical research will tolerate no autarchy. Isolated, each will understand only by halves, even within his own field of study' (1954, 47). Whelan's oeuvre, then, is characterized by a complex distillation of cross-disciplinary and philosophical methodologies; as demonstrated above, intersections and influences include, Bloch, Chakrabarty, and White. But equally, in accenting the agency of 'radical memory', Whelan echoes E.P. Thompson's assertion of working class consciousness.<sup>116</sup> In fact the work of both Whelan and Thompson is clearly indebted to Bloch, when he writes:

Behind the features of the landscape, behind tools or machinery, behind what appears to be the most formalised written documents, and behind institutions, which seem almost entirely detached from their founders, there are men, and it is men that history seeks to grasp. Failing that it will be at best but *an exercise in erudition*. The good historian is like the giant of the fairy tale. He knows that whenever he catches the scent of human flesh, there his quarry lies. (1954, 26)

In a recent contribution dealing with 'the decline and rebirth of "folk memory"', Beiner argues, '[y]et studies of Irish popular culture reveal that, rather than constituting an irreconcilable dichotomy, features of "traditional" and "modern" societies have regularly coexisted. This realisation ultimately undermines the validity of linear developmental models' (2003, 8). As we have discussed above, the sclerotic binarisms of the rational *Weltanschauung* are patently redundant in the context of [Irish] folk memory,

oral culture and popular remembrance. Beiner's explication of Irish folklore, particularly in the west of Ireland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, evidences the differential durability of the 'traditional' within and against the 'modern'. Just as Lloyd documents the persistence of recalcitrant socio-political counter-modernities in nineteenth century Ireland, Beiner argues that folklore and folk memory, 'offer living testimony as to how remnants of historical traditions underwent transformations but survived into a world of technologically enhanced and commercially popularised social memory' (2003, 32).

The perceived inexorability of 'modernity's space' (Lloyd, 1999, 18), and its subtending narrative of progress, is countered within postcolonial analyses of Irish history by recourse to the methodology of the subaltern historiographic perspective. But equally, Benjamin is enlisted in re-readings of Irish colonial history. History, then, is disabused of its seamless linearity and of its unproblematic teleological momentum. As is evident from Whelan's and Lloyd's readings, Irish history is marked by emergency, discontinuity and recurrent acts of resistance and struggle. This historiographic framework diagnoses disruptive memory resurfacing in the present, not as nostalgia, but as 'subaltern refusals' (Lloyd, 1996, 18); the hegemonic political constituency invests in the integrity and legitimacy of the unified historical subject. The integral, individual subject is, of course, essential to the contiguity of the state and its own self-propagating historical narrative. Benjamin's reading of 'history against the grain' transfuses postcolonial critiques of Irish history with the ability to trace the unrepresented or marginalized individuals, groups, practices and texts of Irish culture and politics. The stability of the text, of the performance and of the historical narrative subtends the unity

of the subject or the citizen of the state; therefore the disruptive impact of occluded historical memory is an enactment of the continuous postcolonial interrogation of the incarnate postcolonial state.

We can, then, locate Lloyd and Whelan within the heritage of Said's postcolonial discourse analysis, and in particular that of *Orientalism*. Equally Said's concluding remarks in his later, and otherwise problematic, 1993 edition *Culture and Imperialism* seem apposite. Here, Said delineates the apparent failures of European 'high' theory and Western Marxism; he characterizes these discourses as:

cultural coefficients of liberation [which] haven't in the main proved themselves to be reliable allies in the resistance to imperialism, on the contrary, one may suspect that they are part of the same invidious universalism that connected culture with imperialism for centuries. (1993, 337)

He continues, however, by extolling the virtues of 'liberationist anti-imperialism' (1993, 337), which has endeavoured to dissolve the hegemonic unities of Eurocentric discourses. Said's tri-partite formulation intersects with the issues at stake and under scrutiny in Lloyd's and Whelan's postcolonial criticism and historiography. He notes:

First, by a new integrative, or contrapuntal orientation in history that sees Western and non-Western experiences as belonging together because connected by imperialism. Second, by an imaginative, even Utopian vision which reconceives *emancipatory (as opposed to confining) theory and performance*. Third, by an investment in neither new authorities, doctrines and *encoded orthodoxies*, nor in established institutions and causes, but in a particular sort of nomadic, migration and *anti-narrative energy* [my emphasis]. (1993, 337)

In particular, the italicized sections of Said's manifesto-like summary resonate in the critical interventions of Lloyd and Whelan. Essentially, as with Kiberd's radical reading

of the Irish Literary Revival<sup>117</sup>, this postcolonial practice strives to liberate memory, performance and historical narratives from debilitating unities.

Eamon Maher and Michael Boss adequately summarize the theoretical and historical preoccupations of the interventions outlined in this chapter. These Irish postcolonial critics represent, '[w]hat Walter Benjamin once called 'revolutionary nostalgia', ie. an active remembering of the suppressed voices of tradition which allowed the possibility of seeing a continuity between past and present without falling back on a traditionalist stance' (Maher and Boss, 2003, 18). Postcolonial studies is not simply a matter of aggregating the discrete, reified abstractions of identity politics in pursuit of a national identity. Conversely, as Gibbons argues, referring to Paul Willemen<sup>118</sup>:

It may be necessary to go beyond existing paradigms of nationalism, but only after having absorbed their insistence on difference, and the specificity of historical time and cultural space... 'discourses of nationalism and those addressing national specificity are not identical'. (1994, 30)

As the critics discussed in this chapter illustrate, conceptions of national identity and nationalism are polysemic and polyvalent. The negotiation of postcolonial national identity, then, is a profoundly contestatory and contradictory series of processes. It involves, in the Irish context, not only oppositional criticism and re-presentation, but much more necessarily, both the imagination and representation of alternative voices and practices.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Women's Studies, Feminism and Postcolonial Studies

The land took me in her embrace; I wed the land and dreamed her freedom.  
(Michael Hartnett, 'Sibelius in Silence', *Selected and New Poems*, 91)

Turning away from the obviously political, we also want to know what women from all the different religious, political and social groups thought about those important everyday issues that affect us all – love, marriage, children, health, education, work – only then will we be close to recovering our past and through this, to arriving at some understanding of the complex roots that have made our society what it is today. (Margaret Ward, *In their own voices: Women and Irish Nationalism*, 1)

The two sexes mutually corrupt and improve each other. This I believe to be an indisputable truth, extending it to every virtue. Chastity, modesty, public spirit, and all the noble train of virtues, on which social virtue and happiness are built, should be understood and cultivated by all mankind, or they will be cultivated to little effect. (Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 151)

## **Postcolonial Women's Studies**

The re-presentation of women's histories is a constituent element of the cultural politics of postcolonial studies. Similarly postcolonial critique is itself one of a range of discursive modes through which feminine voices, texts and practices are re-presented. Feminist literary history, women's history, oral history and subaltern historiography are neither discrete discursive strategies nor are they reducible one to the other. Thus any consideration of the complex and differentiated relations between gender, colonialism and nationalism must be alert to these multiple methodological resources. Postcolonial readings of gendered histories draw on, but are not bound by, the resources of this matrix of literary and historiographic engagement.

Drawing parallels between feminist theory and postcolonial theory, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue:

Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to re-instate the marginalised in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonial criticism, sought to invert the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions in place of a male-dominated canon. (1989, 175)

Both discourses have, however, progressed beyond the bald assertion of opposition, and, instead have succeeded in foregrounding the complex diversity of material experience, by which the very structures of narrative representation are scrutinized, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin continue:

But like post-colonial criticism, feminist criticism has now turned away from such simple inversions towards a questioning of forms and modes, to unmasking the assumptions upon which such canonical constructions are founded, moving first to make their cryptic bases visible and then to destabilise them. (1989, 175-176)

Feminist and postcolonial theories are future-oriented discourses, seeking representative change in the material circumstance of disenfranchized constituencies. Neither can be collapsed into the other nor should their theoretical projects be reduced to poststructuralist excess. The theoretical exchanges and political imbrications of postcolonial and feminist theory must be translated into an effective praxis. But also these very theoretical exchanges must be policed themselves, so that the materiality of a practical cultural politics is not diluted. Postcolonial theory, women's history, subaltern studies and feminist theory can possibly engage in mutually enabling, interdisciplinary sorties.

It is possible to outline the principle theoretical and historical confrontations within these debates. Firstly, the postcolonial and subaltern deconstructions of anti-colonial nationalism have succeeded in registering the contributions of groups and individuals who had been elided from, or 'normalized' within, the postcolonial nation-state's official self-narration. Similarly in negotiating the gender politics of the colonial period itself, historians and literary critics attempt to navigate the overwriting discourses of both colonial and patriarchal authority. As I discuss in detail below, subaltern studies and oral history have been effective in re-presenting the agency of colonized, gendered subaltern constituencies. Furthermore, these debates on the political and cultural constructions of gender have accented its inherent historical contingency. In effect, these interventions have sought to denaturalize gender as a discursive category, and thereby render it recalcitrant to categorical objectification.

David Alderson and Fiona Beckett provide a cursory genealogy of the differentiated, and oppositional, mobilizations of gendered representation in Irish colonial



and nationalist history. They note 'both colonial ideology and nationalist movements have promoted feminine concepts of the nation. From the perspective of the colonial centre...Ireland has been sexualised as a territory awaiting – even inviting – invasion and penetration' (1999, 61). Furthermore writers like Matthew Arnold<sup>119</sup> exoticized the feminine Celtic, Irish race, Ireland became 'the unreasoning faculty within the body politic, repository simultaneously of imaginative sympathy and of a potentially destabilising petulance', while the nationalist movement maintained the tropic genderization of Ireland, developing 'its own idealisations of the nation as a woman who might inspire her young men to heroic action and self-sacrifice in her defence' (Alderson and Beckett, 1999, 61).<sup>120</sup>

Underwriting each of these gendered discourses is a politics of exclusion, draped in the metaphoricity of inclusion. As I discussed above, in its imitative relation to imperial discourse, nationalism often repeats the political and cultural occlusions that it ostensibly seeks to redress. As postcolonial critics and historians attempt to represent the efforts and practices of female historical actors, they are confronted with the representational strictures of imperialism, patriarchy and class. Gendered postcolonial studies, then, witnesses a confluence of political and disciplinary agenda and procedures, as well as ethnic and geographical material disparities.

Challenging the dichotomous, binary logic of essentialist constructions of gender and race, Mary Jean Corbett confronts the discursive, and colonial, inter-relations of Irish and English cultures. Corbett's reading complicates oppositional understandings of self/other, colonizer/colonized and male/female, as she identifies an economy of identitarian exchange 'in which simple binaries cannot hold' (2000, 3). Moreover,

Corbett proposes that gender, and its naturalization/institutionalization at the site of the family, is *the* crucial agent in the perpetuation of both political and verbal representational control in Ireland. She argues, 'in the English-Irish context, gender provides perhaps the most fundamental and enduring discursive means for signifying Irish political incapacity' (2000, 16).

Equally, Corbett correctly appreciates that the discursive mobilization of gender as a vehicle of representational control is not transhistorically uniform. The logic of binary thinking, she contends, founders on the intimacy of the Anglo-Irish colonial relation. This is an intimacy rooted in both the geographical proximity and racial contiguity of the islands, but equally because of the political intimacy instituted in 1801 with the Act of Union. In other words the persistence of what Whelan calls 'the other within' (2001 b, 13), vitalizes the political and cultural incongruities, and ambiguities, of the Irish colonial context. Corbett's reading of Anglo-Irish relations through the lens of gender politics operates emphatically within a postcolonial theoretical matrix. However, in negotiating the mutual exchanges of Anglo-Irish identity politics, Corbett refuses the homogeneity of unqualified historical or geographical analogies. Referring to the work of Gibbons and Deane on the prevalence of racial, colonial and civilizational stereotypes, and averring to the longevity of such dichotomous idioms, Corbett concludes that their 'rearticulation with new elements under new conditions in the mid-nineteenth century thus bears close investigation for the historically specific results it yields' (2000, 88).

## Does History have a Gender?

Writing on the radical potential, and urgency, of women's histories, the social scientist Joan Wallach Scott concludes that such narratives:

challenge the accuracy of fixed binary distinctions between men and women in the past and present, and expose the very political nature of history written in those terms...[they expose] the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies. With this approach women's history critically confronts the politics of existing histories. (1988, 27)

Wallach Scott's manifesto for women's history registers the concerns of both subaltern and postcolonial studies; her historical perspective acknowledges the coequality of gendered alterities within the narratives of patriarchy. Likewise, as Gibbons, Lloyd, Whelan and Kiberd illustrate with respect to Irish colonial history, and as I discuss below in relation to Ireland's history of gender and colonialism, hegemonic historical narratives are underwritten by stern editorial procedures. It is a point implicit in Marjorie Howes' consideration of Yeats' relation to Irish nationalism in which, echoing Chatterjee's discourse on nationalism, she argues that 'constructions of nationality that are the most flexible and contradictory may well be the most powerful' (1996, 12).

In their contribution to 'An Agenda for women's history, 1500-1900'<sup>121</sup>, Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd cite the introductory editorial comments from the first volume of *Gender and History*, in which it is argued:

The integration of the experiences, languages, and perspectives of women into our understanding of the past...requires a fundamental transformation of received categories and modes of thinking, as well as a new conceptualization of the very

definition of historical study and of the nature of those who have the power to define it. (1989, 4)

The editors enumerate four distinct but interrelated arenas of critical reappraisal through which women, and gender, might be historically represented. It is not simply a matter of documentary reclamation, rather in actually accenting the differentials of gendered histories, the historian can confront the established modes of historical thinking and representation. History, as a disciplinary phenomenon, is both contributive to, and contingent on, the social classification of gender. In trying to negotiate the possibilities of egalitarian representation, then, historical and literary critical readings of gendered postcolonial identities are faced with lateral methodological problems.

Both the sociologist Pat O'Connor and the historian Margaret Ward are emphatic in their conviction that women have been deliberately elided or manipulated within both the Irish body politic and its historical narratives. O'Connor asserts that '[w]omen in Ireland are accustomed to making choices and creating meaning and identity with structures which, to a greater or lesser extent, are not of their own choosing' (1998, 255), while Ward argues:

Men have written women out of history, that is an undeniable truth, and it has occurred despite the fact that in many instances the history of women's struggles has been available for those who have had the inclination to look beyond their prejudices. (1991, 4)

Both points are forceful indictments of what is perceived as institutional or objective social structures, which marginalize both the political and verbal representation of women. O'Connor's statement, however, seems reductive, in that she diagnoses a lateral process of gender-based discrimination, but fails to move beyond the objective

parameters of this discrimination to any field of subjective or local resistance to such authority. Ward, at least, gestures to the existence of alternative histories that lie both within and athwart the standard narratives of Irish history. Equally O'Connor seems to homogenize 'women' as a social and discursive category, whereas Ward cites the evident plurality of subsumed histories.

Reading or recovering Irish women's histories through subaltern or postcolonial perspectives can deprivilege the authority of incumbent historiography. Such radical representation, as Luddy, O'Dowd and MacCurtain outline in meticulous detail, must include social, political, legal, economic, cultural, religious, educational and labour histories. These diverse historical fields, however, must not be re-presented in terms of assessing how women simply *contributed*. In order to circumvent the objectification, or fetishization, of women and their histories, the modes of historical writing themselves must be reconsidered. The 'naturalized' orders of gender roles cannot dictate the terms of historical representation nor in turn be dictated by historical representation. Recalling Gerda Lerner<sup>122</sup>, Ward writes:

In writing this type of history, the goalposts do not change. It is not male-defined, because much of it is detailing women's autonomous contribution, but at the same time women continue to be the outgroup, fitting into categories and value-systems which consider 'man' as the measure of significance. Gerda Lerner has described this as 'contribution history'. (1991, 18)<sup>123</sup>

Allessandro Portelli suggests that privileging the individual subjectivities of historical actors is more important than establishing the reliability of oral historical testimonies. In an argument resembling Gasset's on the chimerical texture of historical 'facts', Portelli notes:

oral sources had a 'different' form of reliability that lay precisely in their subjectivity. By including error, imagination, and desire, oral sources reveal not only the history of what happened, but the history of what it meant; meaning (as revealed by narrative and linguistic form) rather than 'fact' is what makes oral history different, and a necessary tool for the history of subjectivity. (1996, 399)<sup>124</sup>

Of course individuals cannot be excised from the objective conditions of their social lives, but Portelli's point is relevant to the postcolonial divination of female subjectivity under both patriarchal and colonial dispensations. The work of oral history and the input of oral testimony can provide gendered challenges to both imperial and nationalist histories, as well as articulating theoretical censure to the idiomatic excess of postcolonial theory.<sup>125</sup> In other words, the subversive performance of oral testimony can dissolve the categorical restraints of either linear historical representation and the ostensibly liberating tropes of postcolonial theory. The record of and receptivity to, the subjective can circumscribe the authority of historical and theoretical objectification.

Chandra Mohanty urges for discretion between the political discourses of Western feminism and the representation of 'Third World woman' (1997, 255).<sup>126</sup> She believes that feminist theorization of the situation of 'Woman' in the Third World:

eventually ends up constructing monolithic images of 'Third World Woman' by ignoring the complex and mobile relationships between their historical materiality on the level of specific oppressions and political choices on the one hand and their general discursive representations on the other. (1997, 269)

Mohanty's point throws into relief the qualitative difference between the theoretical representation of 'woman' and the differentiated material realities of women. Her argument extends the ethical concern of postcolonial studies; in seeking to redress the

oppression of gendered, racial or class objectification, postcolonial or subaltern critics/historians cannot re-establish the representational hierarchies of patriarchy, imperialism or class. It is an issue also alluded to by Spivak:

Reporting on, or better still, participating in, antisexist work among women of color or women in class oppression in the First World or in the Third World is undeniably on the agenda. We should also welcome all the information retrieval in these silenced areas that is taking place in anthropology, political science, history and sociology. Yet the assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject sustains such work and will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever. (1993, 90)

This extended point braids the subalternist projects with the politics of representation confronted, and re-imagined, by feminist criticism and women's history; Spivak explicitly asserts a cross-disciplinary range and impetus. But, significantly, she also registers the insipid persistence of hegemonic/patriarchal idioms and paradigms within ostensibly liberatory initiatives. Spivak's conclusion, then, records the inescapable imprint of patriarchal, or Western European discursive affects and languages within marginal, yet aspirationally resistant discourses.

Endorsing Mohanty's caveat, in relation to Irish women's histories, Maria Luddy notes, '[w]omen were not a homogenous mass and their politics differed according to their class. Women's role in politics in nineteenth-century Ireland was diverse and involved women from all social classes' (1997, 90). Luddy notes, however, that systems of gendered subordination or hierarchy also existed within nationalist political and cultural movements, manifest in both the structures of organization and the language of representation (1997, 96). It is a point that will be addressed at greater length below. In

the same volume of essays Joan Hoff supplements the critical-historical caveat of both Mohanty and Luddy; Hoff decries the idiomatic excess of poststructuralist theory and rejects its abstraction, and homogenization, of concrete political problems. Inveighing against its dematerialization, and effective depoliticization, of gender, Hoff argues:

Like all post-modern theories, post-structuralism casts into doubt stable meanings and sees language as so slippery that it compromises the historians' ability to identify facts and chronological narratives. It also uses gender as a category of analysis to reduce the experiences of women, struggling to define themselves and control their lives in particular historical contexts, to mere subjective stories. (1997, 32)

In evacuating language of its representational anchorage and political purchase, Hoff contends that post-structuralism leaves 'political reformers without generalizations about the commonly shared experiences of women as a basis for action' (1997, 32-33). Hoff correctly censures the potential containing gestures of theoretical abstraction, but she does not accept the destabilizing capacities of post-structuralist readings. In reducing post-structuralism to an agent of postmodern indulgence, Hoff cannot accept it as a potential 'basis for action' in itself.

Benita Parry endorses Hoff's critique of post-structuralist theory in a specifically postcolonial context. Parry rejects both Spivak's and Bhabha's insistence on the persistent authority of colonial discourse, under which, respectively, the subaltern/native is incapable of discursive representation or reduced to affective modes of articulation in mimicry or sly civility. The post-structuralist elements of postcolonial theory, then, are seen as innately disabling to the recovery of native and/or female voices. Buttressing Hoff's historiographic critique, Parry diagnoses such theoretical excess as a further stage



in imperial domination, one that fails to create an adequate space for the colonized/marginalized as historical actor. In a sense discourse becomes a colonizer in its own right, further marginalizing those it ostensibly strives to liberate and/or represent.

Women's histories or Women's studies cannot proceed on the basis of studying 'woman' or 'women' as reified abstractions, nor can it read them as inhabitants of/actors in entirely alternative historical spheres/continuum. History has overwritten, and is underwritten by, conceptions of gender. Postcolonial studies, and its affiliations with both gender and feminist studies, must not simply insert the contributions of women into authorized historical narratives, but can re-calibrate the modalities of historical, and political representation, through the reclamation of the variegated and coeval manifestations of female political and historical participation.<sup>127</sup> Pamela Cox concludes:

Future feminist histories must still focus on those subject to power, but they should also focus more vigorously and consistently on the continuities and connectivities of power. This would allow for a valuable retheorising of historically powerful categories *across* time and space. (1999, 168)

## **Gender and Nationalism**

Chatterjee exposes what he terms the derivative fabric of nationalist thought in India. Characterizing nationalism as an elemental force in the processes of industrial/economic modernization and state ideological hegemony, he argues:

Nationalist texts were addressed both to 'the people' who were said to constitute the nation and to the colonial masters whose claim to rule nationalism questioned. To both, nationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the

backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world. (1986, 30)

The fomentation of a bourgeois nationalist consciousness is founded on a reactionary impulse, an impulse that concomitantly depends on the homogenization of the national community. Simply, the liberatory rhetoric of anti-colonial nationalism is subtended by, or rehearses, new forms of exclusion and politico-cultural domination. Nationalism proceeded as, Chatterjee continues, 'a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based' (1986, 30). In responding to the debilitating discourse of imperial control, and disempowerment through nationalistic modalities, anti-colonial agitation remained within the philosophical, cultural orbit of its antagonist. The creation of a national community within anti-colonial thought perpetuated the discursive/representational procedures of epistemological objectification. Or as Chatterjee concludes, 'it reasons within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponds to the very structure of power nationalist thought seeks to repudiate' (1986, 38).

The relationship between woman and nation is a complex and differentially transhistorical fixture of colonial and postcolonial societies. Within both anti-colonial and state-led nationalisms, women are discursively 'located' as part of the narratives of struggle and consolidation. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis cite five ways in which women are accommodated within nationalist movements: as symbols of nation, as biological reproducers of the nation, as transmitters of national culture, as boundary guards between nations and as active agents in nationalist struggles (1993, *passim*).

While the first four modes are 'manageable' within 'the nationalism of the state', the final manifestation of female agency within the national struggle drew 'on subordinate popular traditions in a way that was deeply antithetical to the logic of the state formation' (Lloyd, 1993, 81). In other words, the state demands, and creates, amenable versions of its own gendered communities. As both Gibbons' and Lloyds' work demonstrates, the stable subject of modernity is a prerequisite of a consolidating postcolonial nation-state. Cultural, political, genderized, sexual, or spiritual recalcitrance or ambiguity, therefore, was not conducive to 'the singular history through which the state seeks to incorporate and regulate its political subjects' (Lloyd, 1999, 84).<sup>128</sup>

Cynthia Enloe argues that '[c]hanges in relations between women and men necessitated by the exigencies of nationalist warfare did not survive once the new nation-state was established' (1989, 54).<sup>129</sup> While Enloe's point captures the narrative excision of women and the political management of gender in post-Independence Ireland, it bleaches the feminist or socialist mandates that were co-terminous with the Irish nationalist enterprise. What is significant, then, is the re-calibration of a polyvalent political and cultural ferment to a constructed and stable national and moral self-image.<sup>130</sup> And embedded within this self-imagination was the vexed issue of gender politics, specifically the function of women as national ideals, national mothers and historical actors. Furthermore, in their ethical and political affiliations with the Catholic Church, Free State governments brought the issues of gender and sexuality under their administrative purview.<sup>131</sup> What emerged was, as Margaret O'Callaghan suggests, 'a nation that had defined itself in terms of an external enemy no sooner lost that enemy than she had created a substitute within herself. In Ireland that internal enemy was

immorality' (1983, 70).<sup>132</sup> Indeed crystallizing both O'Callaghan's and Enloe's arguments, Howes observes:

Despite its vexed and frequently antagonistic relationship with Irish feminism, Irish revolutionary nationalism had given women limited opportunities for becoming involved in national politics, and had to some extent fostered a new atmosphere of freedom and equality between the sexes in Ireland during the Anglo-Irish war. However, the civil war and its aftermath entailed a return to amore repressive sexual and social order, and the Irish feminist movement became weakened and fragmented. (1996, 135)

The construction of an integral national identity operates between the polarities of feminine national ideal (allegory) and the underlying belief in the carceral and moral corruptibility of the female body. In Foucauldian fashion, Howes notes, 'the postcolonial pursuit of national self-definition meant that moral and sexual issues were more explicitly and more intimately bound up with actual or potential crises of national integrity and identity than elsewhere' (1996, 136). As Cannon Harris also argues, matters of sexuality and gender were deeply informative of debates on Irish national identity and were interwoven with nationalist rhetoric. A naturalized ideal of Irish femininity was retailed through concatenated measures of constitutional law, religious dogma and nationalist rhetoric. In Howes' view these measures were underwritten by the abstracted belief that the behaviour of women could 'best embody and safeguard the national character' (1996, 137).<sup>133</sup> This conservative, and deracinating, form of identitarian 'embodiment', in fact, confirms Lloyd's historiographic contention that:

history is written from the perspective of and with the aim of producing a non-contradictory subject. In doing so, history constitutes and differentiates the developed and the undeveloped, the civil and the savage, the rational and the

irrational, the orderly and the violent. Resolution is the containment by the state of the crises constantly produced by the power of these differentiations. (1999, 17)

As Lloyd, Howes, hooks, Gibbons and Innes<sup>134</sup> acknowledge, the voices of female historical actors are not silent, but are marginalized within imperialism's and patriarchy's and conservative nationalism's naturalizing discourses of sameness. Similarly, Wills contests nationalistic delineations of gendered roles or ideals; her postcolonial reading emphasizes 'the negative aspects of the image of the motherland for Irish women' (1993, 53). Furthermore, and here her approach explicitly echoes Gibbons', she illustrates 'that certain 'improper' uses of the allegory (focusing on the body and sexuality) serve an important political and aesthetic function in destabilising the very grounds of the conservative nationalist appeal' (Wills, 1993, 53).

Howes asserts the differentiated and complex interactions of gender, sexuality and Irish nationalism. Echoing Anthias and Yuval-Davis, Howes reveals that '[n]ational discourses take up gender and sexuality as metaphors *and* as concrete realities with material resources and direct implications for political action' (1996, 12). Reading through Yeats, she interrogates conceptions of nationalism as either a homogenous politico-cultural process or as a linear historical discourse. In contradistinction to a Fanonian nationalist continuum, in which nationalism is a staging-post on the anti-colonial vector, Howes accents 'the power struggles, contradictions and ambivalences beneath an apparently unified tradition' (1996, 65). In Howes' terms, nationalist discourse is beset with subterranean ambiguities and tensions; despite the naturalizing mechanisms of nationalist rhetoric, it is grounded in crisis and conflict. Again, Howes' critique of Irish nationalism transfixes the veneer of bourgeois state-nationalism, and in

so doing it segues with contemporary postcolonial theory and the practices of women's history. In denaturalizing the retrograde reifications of gender, class and nation, Howes demonstrates their necessary material interaction, as well as signalling the underlying conflictual dynamics generated by such interaction.<sup>135</sup>

However, liberating gender or 'woman' from their objectifications within nationalist discourse is only part of the effort. Writing on the politics of travel representation, Caren Kaplan argues:

Feminism, however, as an articulation of modernity, has an ambivalent relationship to empire. In the struggle to expand the realm of social and political power for women, Western feminism has sometimes relied upon the frontiers and zones of difference established through economic and cultural imperialism. (1995, 33)

In other words, just as anti-colonial nationalism mutated into an attenuated, and exclusionary, politico-cultural force, feminism exhibits an equal reductive and homogenizing tenacity. Though gender may be successfully diagnosed, and illustrated, as an effect of hegemonic power structures and its representations, there are tangible contextual specifics dictated by class, race, ethnicity and geography. The exposure of an objective system of oppression cannot be usurped by a counter-*system* of ostensible liberation. As Mohanty argues:

...in the context of the hegemony of the Western scholarly establishment in the production and dissemination of texts, and in the context of the legitimising imperative of humanistic and scientific discourse, the definition of "the Third World woman" as a monolith may well tie into the larger economic and ideological praxis of "disinterested" scientific inquiry and pluralism that are the surface manifestations of a latent economic and cultural colonization of the "non-Western" world. (1997, 274)

Mathews argues that the gender politics of the national revival initiatives in Ireland were instrumental in the 'feminization of the domestic space and the concomitant restriction of female possibility' (2003, 143). He concludes that such initiatives were 'responsible for the social and familial restriction of women from the turn of the century onwards' (2003, 143).<sup>136</sup>

In an earlier intervention, Lyn Innes traces how women responded and adapted to the 'the mythicization of Ireland itself as female' (1993, 4), and she examines the political relations between Irish nationalism and feminism during the same period. Asserting the relative critical and historical neglect of female writers, journalists and political agitators, Innes notes, '[a]n approach to history and to political change as the work of groups rather than individual personalities...also typifies much literary and cultural activity carried on by women with a commitment to Irish nationalism' (1993, 125). Both Innes and Howes accept the naturalizing constructions of Irish femininity within and through nationalist political and cultural rhetoric. The patriarchal order of Irish literary and theatrical nationalism, according to Innes, operated in such a fashion that 'women became identified with Ireland, both as images of an ideal order which they sought to restore, and as images of an Ireland that had been betrayed, or had collaborated in its own betrayal' (1993, 178). This prescriptive paradigm demanded socio-political fixity in its metaphorical assertions of Irish womanhood and nationality. However, in recording the efforts of female Irish political activists, such as the Parnell Sisters, Alice Milligan, Maud Gonne, Countess Markiewicz, Lady Gregory and Anna Johnson, among others, in terms of their radical, political journalism, literary/dramatic output and political/military participation, Innes exposes not just the *quantitative* contributions of

women, but also confirms the potent *qualitative* input of these radical female constituencies.<sup>137</sup>

These female constituencies reveal what Howes locates in Yeats' 'eugenic model of nationality' (1996, 185). Postcolonial readings of Irish anti-colonial nationalism confirm that 'instead of secure and natural foundations, harmonious relations between the individual and the nation, and synthesis', nationalism is subtended by 'arbitrariness, violence, and irresolvable conflict' (Howes, 1996, 185). Echoing Corbett's earlier point on the family-structure and its role in imperial representation, Howes concludes that gendered postcolonial readings can present 'in exaggerated and explicit form the things that often lurk behind the facades of more attractive versions of the nation...by re-figuring and refusing, the naturalising work that conventional conceptions of gender, sexuality and the family often perform' (1996, 185).

### **The Body, Silence and Resistance**

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault articulates the state's necessary codification of its subjects' physical bodies; sex and sexuality became at once the most 'silenced' and yet the most 'articulated' discourses within civil society. He writes:

The state must know what is happening with its citizen's sex and the use they make of it, but each individual must also be capable of controlling the use he makes of it. Between the state and the individual, sex became an issue and a public issue no less; it became invested by a whole network of discourses, new forms of knowledge, analyses and exhortations. (1979, 26)



Gender and sexuality, then, became emplotted within the stabilizing discursive necessities of social order. The control and codification of human sexuality became a mechanism through which naturalized conceptions of gender(s) were administered. In other words, under unambiguous classifications and institutional dictates, the codification of gender contributed to the realization of a stable historical and political subject.<sup>138</sup>

In an Irish politico-cultural context, Cannon Harris locates a similar operation in traditional, patriarchal versions of nationalism. She argues that the dichotomization and regulation of gender and sexuality persisted in Irish counter-imperialist cultural and political discourses:

At first glance, the relationship between Irish nationalism and orthodox medicine appears to be clearly antagonistic. Turn-of-the-century Irish nationalist writing explicitly identifies state-sponsored medicine as an imperial tool and attempts to inspire resistance to it. But that same nationalist movement tacitly accepts medical constructions of the body-in part because they are indissociable from constructions of masculinity and femininity in which the nationalist movement is heavily invested. (2002, 12)

In Chatterjee's terms, the human body, and especially the female body, was one of the fragments of the nation that required adequate representation.

The act of textual or performative enunciation is an act of exclusion, as we noted above, the spoken or written word cannot exist without its 'silenced' others. In discussing the condition or experience of subalternity, again we encounter such 'silence' or representational elision. But as my discussion elaborates, the 'silenced' subaltern is not devoid of agency, it may be unheeded or marginal but it is not entirely aphasic. Writing on the use of silence within the structures of hegemonic identity-formation, Trinh T.

Minh-Ha challenges the naturalized dichotomy of speech (male) and silence (female).

She argues:

Within the context of women's speech, silence has many faces. Like the veiling of the woman, silence can only be subversive when it frees itself from the male-defined context of absence, lack, and fear as feminine territories...Silence is so commonly set in opposition with speech. Speech as a will not to say or a will to unsay and a language of its own has barely been explored. (1997, 416)

Minh-Ha effectively relegates speech, as a male-centred act, as the locus of value for feminist interrogations of patriarchal identity-systems. The silences of imperial, patriarchal or state-nationalist representations are only considered so if these hegemonic systems are granted articulatory authority. Subaltern 'silences' are necessarily effects of the articulatory will of domination, but as Minh-Ha outlines, they are potentially subversive in their alterity.

Gibbons offers a similar argument in his reading of Pat Murphy's film *Anne Devlin*.<sup>139</sup> In what amounts to an Irish cinematic representation of Minh-Ha's resistant silence, Murphy's film, according to Gibbons:

points to a political project in which the silent bearers of history, whether they be women or the labouring poor, cease to be instruments of social designs worked out by others...but actively intervene in bringing about their own emancipation. (1996, 116)

Just as Harris, through Foucault, charts the classificatory sequestration of the (female) carceral under imperial and patriarchal nationalist discourses, Gibbons locates a resistant force in the 'mute eloquence of the body' (1996, 116). This somatic articulacy is an index of conscious female agency; resistance is literally *embodied*. Murphy's historical-

cinematic character is representative of a re-calibrated speech/silence dichotomy, in Gibbons terms, 'Anne's silence is not a given, it is an achievement: it is silence that comes from holding something back rather than from having nothing to say' (1996, 116).

Both the historical construction of gender and linear historical narrative are functions of a rational, classificatory and, essentially, deracinating dialectic. Disciplinary history creates its own historical time and equally depends on the acceptance of a linear historical continuum. These factors, then, are contributive to the ideological manufacture of a stable, recognizable subject, which is effectively disembodied in its objective, discursive representation. Recording the centrality of bodily control within imperial and patriarchal discourses illustrates the literal disembodiment of historical subjects. The value of both Minh-Ha's and Gibbons' critiques is that they signal the possibilities of effective somatic resistance, reclaiming agency for the subjective and sundering the centrifugal forces of hegemonic objectification. In other words, they imagine beyond woman as man's 'other' or beyond silence as speech's necessary 'other', thereby removing the authority of the self-instituted self/centre. The idiom of silence informs the performance of resistance, or as Gibbons concludes:

[Anne's] suffering and endurance have nothing to do with acquiescence or passivity but are a mode of resistance, an act of intransigence which places a formidable barrier in the path of those who seek to exploit and dominate others. (1996, 116)

Both Minh-Ha's and Gibbons' arguments signal an ideational/positional re-definition of feminist/female resistance. Effective subversion does not depend on antagonistic engagements with, or structural inversions of, a centrally authorized hegemony. While Minh-Ha and Gibbons accent somatic silence as a resistant agent, bell

hooks interrogates the ethical motivations of international feminist theory. Recalling Mohanty, hooks cites racial, ethnic, class and geographical disparities as material and moral impediments to a unilateral feminist agenda, what she terms '[t]he idea of "common oppression"' (1997, 396). hooks argues that such an idea disguises and mystifies 'the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality' (1997, 396). She rejects such a platform as it merely ratifies the authority of the oppressor; the idea of escaping the theoretical and political orbits of the oppressor, then, links hooks, Minh-Ha and Gibbons.

The underlying animus of hooks' re-imagined feminist agenda is the idea of difference as the basis for solidarity. It is here that hooks, and feminist theory, intersect with the ethical project of postcolonial studies. As I argue, the creation of critical typologies, universal paradigms, or idiomatic metaphors are futile, as they over-invest in the 'sameness' of colonial and postcolonial experiences. The validity, and valence, of both feminist theory and postcolonial theory is in their navigation of both the local and the universal, in the manipulation of difference as a source of unity. In arguing that 'women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity' (hooks, 1997, 411), hooks coalesces with the theoretical agenda proposed by Lloyd for postcolonial projects, when he argues that 'concepts and abstractions that we bring to bear from other theoretical work have constantly and self-consciously to undergo modification and sometimes transformation in relation to other sites' (1999, 14).

## 'A True Story'

The fact that history is essentially an act of interpretation, a re-reading of documents, means that it hides our origins from us. For, by its nature, history excludes all that is not quoted or written down. Only what has been transcribed is available for interpretation...History has an historical horizon which is constituted by the activity of history itself: the horizon of writing. It offers the mechanism for generating a tradition, but not the means of reflecting on the validity of the tradition itself. (Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an essay in spatial history*, 326.)

Drawing on O'Cathain and O'Flanagan's, *The Living Landscape*, Beiner reveals the intimacy of fairy lore and 'the living landscape' of rural communities:

Fairy lore is central in Irish oral tradition, presenting a parallel universe, a mirror world, which may appear fantastic but nevertheless played a real and concrete role in the life of rural communities...fairy lore can provide essential insight towards deciphering the mental world of communities on the periphery of modernisation. (2001, 417)

These performed, oral narratives were vital reservoirs of social memory, cultural history and superstition, acting as necessary structures of mediation between past/present and real/supernatural. In delineating the radical alterity of these traditional discourses, Beiner invokes Angela Bourke's writing on what she calls 'the virtual reality of Irish fairy legend' (Bourke, 1996, 7-25). Within this cultural matrix there is a process of discursive negotiation, as tradition coincides with modernity, the real with the phantasmal, the past with the present and the oral with the textual.<sup>140</sup>

In her compelling, subalternist text, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary*<sup>141</sup>, Bourke argues:

One feature which makes fairy-legends so tenacious in a changing cultural environment is the concision and vivid memorability of their central themes. Another is their connection to real, named, people, and to real places in a known landscape. Yet another reason why they survive is that their narratives interact so intimately with the practicalities and the emotional realities of daily life. (1999, 29)

The force of the fairy-legend, a form deeply embedded within Irish oral traditions, is that it is an intimately *performed* narrative experience. Unfolding in interstitial spaces outside the strict pieties of post-1850 Catholicism,<sup>142</sup> and clearly recalcitrant to the logic of British state narration, the fairy-legend, and its attendant tropes, is indexical of socio-cultural alterity. Indeed Bourke's delineation of 'a system of interlocking units of narrative' (1999, 29), a system that interlocks routine, time and landscape as well as the individual and the community, echoes in Whelan's discussion of the present absences of the Irish [cultural] landscape (2003 c). These systems of belief were diagnosed as the anachronistic esoterism of a benighted peasantry, but as Bourke's astute reading of the competing freights of narrative authority exhibits, and in Whelan's terms, '[t]radition was not anterior or antecedent to modernity but absolutely incorporated and sustained by it' (2003 c, 3).<sup>143</sup>

Bourke notes:

[t]heirs was an oral culture, its knowledge stored in human memory, in retrievable form, in stories of human action. They used vivid imagery and repetition to make facts, techniques and ideas memorable, and employed riddles, paradox and humour to teach the mental discipline at which they themselves excelled. (1999, 60)

Remembrance and interpretation segue in each individual performance of the oral representation. The historical record of an event, practice or belief, then, is traced in the

enactment of memory by the individual or the community, within the community. Not only was there a recalcitrant oral culture of storytelling, but as Bourke suggests, there existed an alternative domain of orally based, communal education. In marked contrast to the arid educational modalities of Victorian imperialism, these alternative methods of inculcation were founded on the subversive tropes of 'riddles, paradox and humour.' Equally, the oral narratives of instruction do not merely *transmit* information, but concurrently they nourish the perpetuation of this cultural *milieu* through the actual technique of learning; through the modalities of oral storytelling and their committal to memory, we see the existence of a legitimate, evolved and fluid cultural inheritance.<sup>144</sup>

Again, echoing Gibbons, Lloyd and Whelan, the body remains a site of social and cultural significance. The world is perceived through the received wisdoms and mechanisms of the oral heritage; these 'stories of human action' are only articulated through the physical intimacy of oral representation. As I have discussed above with respect to Gibbons, Lloyd and Whelan, Bourke's explication of oral tradition and folklore underlines the subversive potency of these somatic, recalcitrant discourses. While the fairy-legend is non-contiguous with the logic of modernity, it provided a structure or undergirding to the socio-cultural functions of peasant communities in Ireland.<sup>145</sup>

Emphasizing the valence of such cultural narratives, Bourke argues:

Brought up against the impatient rationalism of a Michael McCarthy, stories like these are easily labelled superstition, but they were never designed to be told to such as him...unless for entertainment. Told to a sympathetic audience, however, who were prepared to suspend scepticism in the interest of pleasure and wisdom, they were packed with meaning. (1999, 164-165)

Reviewing Bourke's text, Gearóid Ó Cruaíoch opens with the emphatic and revealing statement, '[t]his is an unsettling work, both in the story it recounts and in the somewhat experimental way the author chooses to structure and present her material' (2000, 178). In another review of Bourke's work, the novelist Éilís Ní Dhuibne remarks:

The book is a history, in that it reports and analyses all the facts of the case and of the subsequent trial; it is a folkloristic study, in that it examines the folk beliefs which underpinned the event; and it is a literary work, thanks not only to Angela Bourke's beautiful writing, but also to the artistic shape of the book, and to the imaginative method which underlies its construction. (2000, 361)

As Ní Dhuibne correctly notes, Bourke's edition skirts the tropic parameters of a variety of discourses, and it is perhaps such a technique that facilitates the necessary 'unsettling' effect of subaltern histories. Significantly this 'unsettling' effect recalls the Benjaminian notion of 'rupture', wherein the past has the capacity to disrupt the present. Indeed Bourke records a debt to Benjamin; she concludes, '[t]hroughout this book I have argued, following Walter Benjamin, that narrative has the power to convey ideas, and to offer them in resilient, subtle forms that can resist the sometimes brutal logic of the loudest voice' (1999, 208). Again we return to the dialectic of articulation and silence; that which is voiced is dependent on the silence of others for its register. Or as Gibbons notes:

narratives in Irish culture offer no insulation from history, and are only as resilient as their capacity to articulate the voices of those who have not been heard, rejecting the habits of authority which have enabled some to continually shout down others. (2003 d, 75)

Through what might be termed 'tropic agility', or perhaps hybridity, Bourke does not simply record or 'answer back'. Confluent orality, historical writing and literary



representation, she alerts us to the architecture of narrative itself.<sup>146</sup> The story of Bridget Cleary's death and the subsequent trial is not enunciated or represented in a concise, linear fashion. Engaging with much contemporary postcolonial historiography, which itself draws on Benjamin, Bourke reminds us of the 'igneous, metamorphic' instability of memory and historical narrative. However, if we take Ní Dhuibhne's point to its logical conclusion, Bourke achieves more than Ní Dhuibhne attributes to her. By interweaving the diffuse tropes of representation [both oral and written] Bourke, in fact, subverts the notion of narrative integrity.

Beiner argues:

Accommodating multiple narratives, referring to numerous heroes and told in different versions, folk history allows for the possibility of multiple 'histories' rather than insisting on a singular account of the past. Although folklore is sometimes stigmatized as antiquarian and backward, its democratic nature allows for the articulation of radical subaltern voices, providing a stage for the histories of the oppressed and disinherited. (2000 a, 168)

Bourke, then, intervenes in the ethical negotiations of postcolonial theory and historiography; she interrogates the cultural and representational politics of gender relations in nineteenth century Ireland, the imperial relationship between Britain and Ireland, and the cultural exchanges and incommensurabilities of urban and rural communities. As I have mentioned, Bourke seeks to redress the hegemony of 'the loudest voice', and as such her text is a subalternist account of the silenced yet co-terminous others of both imperial modernity and nationalist history. Through an imbrication of popular culture, oral tradition, state/police records and journalistic accounts, Bourke dissolves the narrative coherence of historical fact and representation. Furthermore, such

a narrative strategy confluences the ostensibly antagonistic media of modernity and tradition. Just as 'the loudest voice' depends on its silenced others for articulatory register, so too the purported opposites of modern and traditional culture, information and record collude both in the past and, as Bourke's text embodies, in the present. It is this inalienable conjunction of the modern/modernity with its alternatives/counter-movements that nourishes the 'unsettling' impact of the past in the present.

Just as Gasset reminds us that facts do not create reality, but simply serve to obscure or hide reality<sup>147</sup>, Bourke's suggestive subtitle, 'A True Story', is a suitable admonition that 'truth' and 'stories' are never easy bedfellows. The selectivity on which stories are constructed does not permit the representation of objective 'truths'; rather it facilitates the creation of contingent truths through interpretation. As Bourke acknowledges, both the telling and the reception of any story is predicated on the facility of interpretation. She writes:

Everyone who tells a story offers an interpretation of the facts narrated, however, and the way the dots are joined profoundly affects the picture that appears...[m]any of the decisions that go into the shaping of a narrative are conscious and deliberate; some are dictated by tradition; others are necessarily unconscious. (1999, 208)

Bourke's subaltern methodology, then, not only owes a debt to the work of postcolonial historiography, but also exhibits traces of a poststructuralist conception of authorial meaning and autonomy. Just as diverse versions of Bridget Cleary's story emerge from within the cacophonous layering of articulation and silence, Bourke as historical, literary and folkloristic author recognizes the ambiguity and instability of her own authorial agency. One of the strengths of Bourke's text, then, in particular her

summative reflections, is the extent of her critical and authorial self-reflexiveness. While the text itself is a layered embodiment of tropic self-awareness, Bourke further attests to the contingency of the subaltern author. As I have outlined, drawing on Bourdieu, the ethical responsibility of the postcolonial critic is not simply to react critically to criticism itself or to the interventions of others, but *per force* demands a level of critical self-reflexiveness. Criticism and its corollary meta-criticism cannot be effective without a lateral self-reflexive mobilization. Bourke notes:

this has been an interdisciplinary study and, in working to build as complete a picture as possible, I have sometimes ventured into territory that was new to me; I have also undoubtedly been influenced to a greater extent than I am aware of by my own preoccupations and preconceptions. (1999, 208)

Ní Dhuibhne concludes her review with the poetic line, 'Bridget Cleary the woman is a mystery, buried in layers of silences' (2000, 362). Bridget Cleary remains an enigmatic figure, unknowable in factual terms, as there are no official photographs or personal records. Perhaps then her ambiguous agency remains in the contemporary oral renditions of these events, in the children's rhymes about her death or in Bourke's necessarily incomplete but provocative account. In many ways Bourke's subaltern account, with its medley of narrative tropes, allows Bridget Cleary to register, in Whelan's terms, as a present absence on both the physical and cultural landscape of Ballyvadlea and east Tipperary. Bourke's intervention registers the powerful currency of social memory and folk histories, as it records and embodies the valence of 'living histories' (Beiner, 2000 a, 168).

## Spivak's subaltern

Spivak's seminal intervention tracks the representational limits of subaltern historiography. The 'clamor' of the historian's disciplinary training, or 'consciousness effect', effectively forecloses the possibility of representation (1993, 82). Genderizing the subaltern, Spivak notes a two-fold process of hegemonic representational inscription:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced...It is, rather, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (1993, 82-83)

Although relinquishing the viability of subaltern representations, Spivak, in an almost conciliatory gesture, notes the pyrrhic success of Guha and the subaltern historiographic collective. Despite the prefigured limitations of subaltern retrievals, 'their text articulates the difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility' (1993, 80).

Bourke's multivalent narrative account, with its reclamation of Bridget Cleary's story reminds us of Spivak's contention that, '[i]mperialism's image as the establisher of good society is marked by the espousal of the woman as object of protection from her own kind' (1993, 93). Furthermore, Spivak asks, '[h]ow should one examine the dissimulation of patriarchal strategy, which apparently grants the woman free choice as *subject*?' (1993, 94). Despite the possibilities of multi-sourced accounts, Spivak suggests that each, and all, of these mediations further inscribes or overwrites the consciousness of the female subject. For Spivak, then, the inscribed, subaltern location prohibits radical

subaltern agency; the subaltern is interred within a series of overdetermined and disabling discursive, epistemological and ontological positions. Where Lloyd diagnoses the radical self-presence of alternative modernities, Spivak's reading of the subaltern permits no such agency. She concludes:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernity. (1993, 102)

### **Gender: the burning issue**

Acknowledging the initiative of Indian subaltern scholars in regaining 'the lost voices of the oppressed' (2001, 32), Beiner gestures towards the democratizing possibilities of oral history in retrieving further subaltern historical elisions and misrepresentations. He concludes, '[s]ince the 1960s, oral history in different regions has spearheaded the effort to democratise history and liberate it from focusing on hegemonic narratives. Oral history lends an ear to the alternative histories of the disinherited' (2001, 32). Equally, as Bourke admits, '[c]ases of marital violence, and of women killed by their husbands in their own homes, are not unusual. The story of Bridget Cleary is firstly one of 'domestic' violence...Their [the Clearys'] society was strongly patriarchal' (1999, 208). The story straddles both subaltern and gender histories, in a manner suggestive of Spivak's doubly marginalized and inscribed subaltern female; Bridget Cleary inhabited a patriarchal community within a colonized society. In representing the intersection of such elided histories and cultural legacies, the critic/historian must be alert to the effective

'double colonization' of the female subject. But equally, as Mae Gwendolyn Henderson warns:

the 'critical insights' of one reading might well be the 'blind spots' of another reading. That is, by privileging one category of analysis at the expense of others, each critical method risks setting up what Fredric Jameson describes as 'strategies of containment'. (1993, 258)

In evacuating the hegemony of 'the loudest voice', Bourke's intervention avoids constructing a Jamesonian 'strategy of containment.' The confluence of tropic strategies is, in Beiner's terms, a democratization of the historical stage (2000 a, 168); it permits the articulation of alternative voices. Bourke's narrative positioning of folk-legend, oral story telling, court testimony, popular memory and journalistic reportage engenders a sense of 'unsettling' ambiguity.<sup>148</sup> A sense that accords with Laura E. Donaldson's conclusion that all narratives, gendered, racial or class are necessarily overlapping. Donaldson writes:

Such a story field denies the privileging of any plot (or gender identity) for women's lives in its affirmation of *stories* (and genders); it also demands that each story negotiate its own position in relation to all other positions. This model aptly describes that 'solidarity in multiplicity'...[it] provides the enabling conditions for feminism to its journey to a post-colonial liberation. (1993, 139)

Moynagh Sullivan argues that the discursive category of 'woman' or 'gender' is harnessed as 'an object through which Irish studies can mediate its relationship to itself' (2000, 250). Within contemporary critical debates gender is outmanoeuvred in acts of Jamesonian 'containment'. Its ostensible representation and articulation, in the recent additional two volumes of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* for instance, constitutes a "quarantining" of women's writing into a separate space, and into a sub-

category' (Sullivan, 2000, 250); essentially such a tactic 'continues a logistical state of play wherein women's writing continues to occupy a space which is representationally derivative and in excess of the primary or originary space' (Sullivan, 2000, 250). While Sullivan's initial point is valid, the latter argument is somewhat problematic, in that it suggests a legitimate 'centre' or 'fulcrum'/'locus' of representational authority. Gender cannot persist as a relegated function of 'Irishness' nor can it remain as a containing metaphor, as Sullivan rightly concludes. Equally, however, there must be an investment in the divination of alternative representational spaces and the recuperation of alternative historical stages.

The 'mystery' that Ní Dhuibhne attributes to the persona of Bridget Cleary firstly forecloses her deployment as an object of representational mediation or containment, but secondly, Bourke's text by-passes Sullivan's call for a share of 'originary space' in weaving a fissiparous and 'unsettling' alternative historical narrative. A narrative that does not privilege or fetishize gender, class or ethnic code; that is all the more inclusive and enabling for its representational ambivalence, and as Beiner contends with respect to folklore, stands as '[a] living history [sic]...a synthesis between elements of historical reality, imagination, invention and interpretation' (2000 a, 169).<sup>149</sup> The variegated reading strategies of postcolonial studies, women's history and feminist critique *can* productively conspire in representing alternative historical narratives, which can prove politically and culturally enabling in the present and in the future. As Siobhán Kilfeather notes:

Supported by the growing influence of postcolonial critique, Irish feminists have begun to be more interested in uncovering indigenous modes of thought and activity

as models for feminist practice. In the last ten years there has been a growth of interest in folklore and the oral tradition, in collecting and representing women's narratives, in facilitating groups which have had difficulty in gaining access to the public sphere - for example travellers, the economic underclasses, sex workers, survivors of violence, lone parents, asylum seekers. (2002, 759)



## CHAPTER SIX

### Space, Nation and Modernity

When considered in relationship to space, the nation may be seen to have two moments or conditions. First, nationhood implies the existence of a *market* gradually built up over a historical period of varying length. Such a market is a complex ensemble of commercial relations and communication networks. It subordinates local or regional markets to the national one, and thus must have a hierarchy of levels...Secondly, nationhood implies *violence* – the violence of a military state, be it feudal, bourgeois, imperialist, or some other variety. It implies, in other words, a political power controlling and exploiting the resources of the market or the growth of the productive forces in order to maintain and further its rule. (Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 112)

There is always a figure in the landscape. (J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies*, 4)

Many of us may be glad to see the back of Holy Ireland, martyred Ireland and peasant Ireland. Most of us may have wanted nothing so much as to be normal, prosperous Europeans. But what, now that we have arrived, is left to us? What, if anything, is distinctively ours? (Fintan O'Toole, *The Irish Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1999)<sup>150</sup>

## **Ireland and Modernity**

In this chapter I outline, and discuss, some of the most recent interventions in three specific, yet closely related, arenas of Irish political and cultural discourse: spatial critique, modernization and nationalism. I will cursorily address the work of Smyth on spatial criticism, Cleary and McCarthy on modernization, and Graham on Irish nationalism. The three areas are not mutually exclusive and I will, necessarily, highlight the relevant exchanges between both the individual critics concerned and the topics themselves. Interwoven within all three discussions are the ideas of Gramsci, whose critique of hegemony and counter-hegemony, as we have seen, is directly influential in Irish postcolonial studies and will be specifically invoked in this chapter.

Modernization theory cleaves to, and enforces, the crude binarism of tradition and modernity, and it subscribes to the naturalized dichotomies of a Manichean *Weltanschauung*. In as much as it accents the primacy of economic forces in social and political development, modernization theory intersects with classical Marxist theory. However, the retailing of the inalienable merit of economic progress in the form of market-capitalism marks the limits of this theoretical intersection. Likewise, it can be legitimately viewed as a philosophical inheritor of Enlightenment thinking, as it elects the rational citizen-subject to mediate its reified conceptualizations. The progressive certainties of modernization, largely based and justified on an economy of basic binarisms, require paradigmatic rationalizations of both space and time. A task that is undertaken, as we shall discuss below, by what we might call ‘the narrative legislators’ of the modernizing/modern nation-state.

The vexed issue in an Irish context is that Ireland's enforced insertion into imperial modernity under a British colonial regime, contradictorily, preceded any process of domestic modernization. The profound colonial concussion of Irish history is, in part, attributable to this paradoxical historical development. In its use as a ground for colonial experimentation, Ireland was surreptitiously enjoined to participate in global modernity in the nineteenth century. However, a concerted process of industrial and economic modernization was not evident until the late 1950s and 1960s. As the previous chapters have adumbrated the critical responses, and alternatives, to imperial modernity heighten the voltage of critical crises. Proposing a generously lateral critical framework, Berger concluded:

I believe that the critique of modernity will be one of the great intellectual tasks of the future, be it as a comprehensive exercise or in separate parts. The scope is broadly *cross-cultural*. It will be a task that, by its nature, will have to be *interdisciplinary*...It will also be the task linking theory and praxis, touching, as it does, certain fundamental philosophical as well as highly concrete practical-political questions. The task is also of human and *moral* urgency. For what it is finally all about is the question of how we, and our children, can live in a humanly tolerable way in the world created by modernization [my emphasis]. (1977, 111-112)

Berger's critical manifesto crystallizes many of the theoretical and political objectives of contemporary postcolonial studies. His imprimatur cites the valence of interdisciplinary interventions on the interface between postcolonial studies, modernity and modernization theory.

**‘the self-consuming future of the modern’<sup>151</sup>**

In his book, *Facing up to Modernity*, the sociologist Peter Berger underlined the urgency of critical engagement with modernity. Likewise, the cross-cultural remit of this critical relation to modernity nourishes, in Berger’s view, the ethical responsibilities of modernity’s interlocutors. And in confronting the legacies and contemporary manifestations of both modernity and the practical-political consequences of modernization theory, Berger’s intellectual programme deeply informs Cleary’s understanding of the postcolonial-modernization dialectic. Finally, and here Berger betrays his sociological roots, in canvassing a conjoined theoretical and practical methodology, Berger’s rhetoric is firmly draped in Bourdieu’s scientific philosophy of sociological research.<sup>152</sup>

In theorizing the constitution of so-called ‘nationalisms against the state’, Lloyd concludes:

The sense of the state depends on the relegation of other modes of sociality to the domain of non-sense; its rationality requires the production of irrationality as the form of that which *must* exceed its modes of interpellation...The state must expunge, through ideological or repressive state apparatuses, cultural or social forms which are in excess of its own rationality and whose rationality is other to its own. (1999, 35-36)

The rational stable subject is the key microstructure of modernity; the progress of modernization, likewise, is nourished by the rational decisions of a suitably interpellated subject. In its pursuit, and consolidation, of political and economic modernization, the state is instrumental in ideologically choreographing the interpellation of its citizen-

subjects. And, as Lloyd and Gibbons illustrate, both seizure of legitimate discourse and of the organs of state-historical narration are elemental to the achievement of such stability.

Mulhern summarily narrates the discourse of modernization in similar terms:

Yet it persists as a general form of understanding, promoting a determinate mode of representation, of social structure, dynamics, interest and agency. Modernizing discourse homogenizes social formations and reinscribes their differences as sets of technical functions...which, once quantified, indicate relative states of backwardness and progress. (1998, 22-23)

His précis of modernizing discourse, again, underscores the veneration of temporality, or perhaps more precisely chronology, which is a crucial feature of its rhetoric. He continues, '[t]he complex time-space of social relations within and among states resolves itself into a simple narrative whose actors are moving... towards a common end, the pragmatically 'modern' condition' (1998, 23).<sup>153</sup>

In an Irish context, McCarthy notes:

modernisation theory assumes the fundamental stability of the social, economic and political system in which it is deployed. It cannot deal with a situation in which that dispensation is open to question, hence its tendency to shut out alternative thinking. (2000, 22)

As the previous chapters have illuminated, the advocates of modernization are principally identified as revisionist historians or cultural critics. In particular, forms of atavistic Irish nationalism have been assailed, and caricatured, by revisionism in its efforts to purge Irish political and cultural debate of what are perceived as retrogressive, debilitating and anachronistic political excesses. In effect, in its philosophical affiliation with

modernization theory, such revisionist commentary has been driven to excise Irish society of a diagnosed predilection for 'the backward glance'. Confirming this point, MacLaughlin concludes:

In Ireland, revisionism and modernisation theory literally marked the coming-of-age of a new institutionalised and state-centred Irish intelligentsia who have sought to break from what they perceive as the 'narrow nationalism' of the nineteenth century by embracing the narrow logic of cost-benefit analysis. (1994, 44)

Pursuant to the critiques of revisionism by Deane, Gibbons, Kiberd and Whelan, McCarthy records the state-oriented disciplinization of historical writing. In its institution of 'mythophobic' historical narrative, revisionist historiography, in McCarthy's view, serviced 'the elaboration of the nation', which in itself is '[an] enabling possibility of the state' (2000, 38). In this respect McCarthy rehearses the specific arguments of both Deane and Lloyd, who, as we have seen, register the co-existence of verbal and political representation. Thus one of the principal arenas of contestation between postcolonial studies and the advocates of modernization has been the fraught terrain of historical writing.

Guided by the philosophical reflections of Benjamin, then, Irish postcolonial studies eschews the monocular gaze of modernization theory's developmental and historical trajectory. In McCarthy's terms, there was a collusion-in-representation between the state's need to foster a modern 'imagined community' and the scholarly/critical projects of revisionist historians and critics. Reading through Anderson, McCarthy portrays the co-imagination of a modernized/modernizing and historically 'mature' nation-state.<sup>154</sup> McCarthy asserts:

These imaginings achieve social and political authority through their relationships to the dominant means of communication and cultural reproduction in the community – newspapers, publishers, the electronic media (radio, television and film), advertising, the entire system of education. So the nation tends to be imagined via the mediation of powerfully centralising forces in society, organs of civil society and of the state, that tend to have been organised in terms set by the national state. (2000, 39)

McCarthy's is an overtly Gramscian idiom; he reflects on the construction of a hegemonic structure that maintains lateral ideological and self-perpetuating representational control. Equally the 'imaginings' are of a decidedly spatial nature. The realization and consolidation of authority is effected in space, but also through the sequestration, in representation, of physical and psychological space.

McCarthy diagnoses an inadequate theorization of the processes and effects of Irish modernization, and, as Cleary contests, the recent postcolonial cathexis within Irish Studies stems from these unsatisfactory, trammelled conceptualizations of Irish modernization. In Soja's terms, '[m]odernization is, like all social processes, unevenly developed across time and space and this inscribes quite different historical geographies across different regional social formations' (1989, 27). Just as Smyth, Cleary, McCarthy, and Graham argue, specific identities or broader postcolonial experiences are irreducible to tenuous universals or patterns. The presiding tenet, then, is that contextual indices, in terms of space-time and social being, predicate any form of comprehensive appreciation of situational identities.

McCarthy argues:

the blockage to critical views of Irish modernisation has worked on the level of ideology, where a particular set of ideas has been accepted as 'common sense', and

very little space is available in which to assess the adequacy of this theory to the Irish case, or to suggest alternatives. (2000, 15)

Broadly speaking, then, McCarthy characterizes both recent socio-political and intellectual history as collusively revisionist and in thrall to the impulses of economic modernization. Indeed there appears to be an active homology of political and intellectual discourses, whereby the tropes of traditional political nationalism are alienated in favour of a deeply conservative breed of modernization. McCarthy continues, “‘revisionism’ is not only an historians’ argument but is the historiographic outrider of the discourse of modernity as it has come to be understood in Ireland’, and a politically conservative nexus of intellectual and media influence has sanctioned ‘a rather attenuated discourse of modernisation theory’ (2000, 18). McCarthy’s diagnosis echoes Gibbons’ earlier *Field Day* editorial, as both subscribe to the view that revisionist historians actually inveigh against a consciously devised, discursive fiction. In other words, ‘[i]n relation to an attenuated and restricted tradition, it is easy to appear ‘modern’’ (McCarthy, 2000, 19).

Perhaps it is at this point that postcolonial theory enters contemporary cultural dialectics, as Cleary surmizes, ‘modernisation theory is the real discursive opponent of postcolonial theory’ (2002 b).<sup>155</sup> Postcolonial theory assumes the discursive responsibility in ‘suggesting alternatives’ to modernization theory, and it exhibits a distinct advantage by not relying on a rather crude and attenuated dichotomy between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ (Cleary, 2002 b). Thus, where modernization theory evangelizes on the unilateral merits of economic and technological progress, with its gaze firmly fixed on the future, postcolonial theory proposes a non-prescriptive transhistorical and transgeographical perspective. As Graham urges, ‘there can and should be no sole



outcome of the application of cultural theory to Irish culture – cultural theory is itself contested from within and is in a continual state of flux’ (1999, 3-4). Equally, there must be critical vigilance in order that the *perpetual* deferral of meaning and identity, characteristic of much Byzantine commentary within postmodern theory, is avoided.

Returning to Mulhern, who provides a distillation of modernization theory:

[m]odernity as such has no necessary social content: it is a form of ‘temporalization’, an invariant production of present, past and future that ‘valorizes the new’ and, by that very act, ‘produces the old’, along with the characteristic modes of its embrace, the distinctively modern phenomenon of traditionalism and reaction. (1998, 20)

In this process of ‘temporalization’ the nouveau regime of modernization, and its advocates, expertly reproduce the civilizational *mentalité* and *geist* of erstwhile imperial discourse. The temporalized idiom of colonial intervention, or indeed ‘mission’, is manifest in its conviction that indigenes required ‘improvement’; that the colony represented an ante-diluvian, primitive milieu. The taxonomies of colonial discourse are founded on instructive benevolence – a form of objective patronage on the part of colonizer.<sup>156</sup> Both the space of the colony and the subjects that populate that space reside prior to civilization within the colonial continuum. Therefore such communities and landscapes require a form of chronologically based civilizational edification. Specifically, one detects a sense of patriarchal condescension in the tropes of Herman Merivale and Richard Whateley; the native is effectively, and literally, infantilized. The dichotomous nature of contemporary modernization theory diagnosed by Cleary is merely an inflection of the temporally calibrated civilizational zeal of an historical colonial discourse.

Postcolonial theory emerged in the 1980s as a discursive alternative to modernization theory, becoming a means through which the putative progressive certainties of modernization could be dislodged.<sup>157</sup> McCarthy's critique accentuates the inability, or unwillingness, of revisionist intellectuals to engage in any form of self-critique; he pursues a similar theoretical trajectory in relation to academic self-examination operative in this dissertation. While McCarthy limits his discourse to the collusive intellectual/political nexus of Irish modernization, an equivalent, lateral intervention is demanded with respect to current Irish postcolonial theory. Specifically, regarding the limits of academic discourse, the standardization of theoretical paradigms and the domestication of methodologies and attendant taxonomies of critical inquiry.

Cleary continues, '[t]he dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity' that subtends modernization discourse has been used effectively by Irish liberals genuinely concerned to secularize the oppressively Catholic state culture established in the Irish Republic after independence' (2003, 91-92). This sclerotic binarism is effectively contested within the dialectic of postcolonial readings on Ireland; in particular Kiberd dramatizes a profound symbiosis between tradition and modernity within colonial Irish society. Postcolonial analyses that are willing to question the presumed progressive modernity, enshrined as economic capitalist development and secularization, read Irish culture and social history as exhibiting an unequivocal proclivity toward, often enforced, modernization. The imposition of institutional, disciplinary and educational state/imperial systems in the nineteenth century is evidential of the capacity of a traditional society to absorb agencies of modernity. As Kiberd notes, Ireland was a colonial 'laboratory' (1984,

6); in other words the introduction of primary education and advanced methods of policing in Ireland preceded their application in England.<sup>158</sup> Without experiencing any protracted process of social or economic modernization or industrialization, Irish society's initiation into various aspects of latter-day modernity frequently foreshadowed that of the more industrialized metropolitan, imperial centre.

While Cleary canvasses postcolonial theory as an effective substitute to modernization theory, this should not be perceived as a theoretical posture of diametric opposition. Postcolonial theory's remit is not to ensure that 'its application assumes and underwrites the triumph of the independent post-colonial nation' (Graham, 1999, 3-4). An effective cultural theory radically interrogates the contemporary structures of both nation and state, as well as the mechanics of its liberation and/or foundation. Graham continues, '[t]he increasing institutionalisation of the practises of Irish Studies seems likely to cement rather than diffuse the critical assumptions through which Ireland has been understood until now' (1999, 3). The roles of political and cultural representation, then, remain the crucial issues at stake within postcolonial analysis. Is postcolonial theory merely constitutive of a *nouveau* form of hegemonic reification, or in reality can, as Foucault demands, there be a seizure of the discourses? Similarly, as the process of academic institutionalization proceeds, what exactly becomes institutionalized?

By entering Ireland's colonial experience into a framework of aggrandizing capitalist expansion, Cleary short-circuits the purblind perspectives of revisionist historiography. Not only had revisionism created its own fetish of mythic nationalism as discursive 'strawman', it had also projected a disingenuous composite profile of the

‘Third World’. This incriminating composite served one function: to disabuse Ireland of its postcolonial pretensions. Cleary inserts Ireland’s colonial *long durée* into a protracted process of systematic capitalist enterprise within both an intra-European context and also beyond the ‘land’ empires of the European landmass. Ireland, then, belongs exclusively neither to the genealogy of European Enlightenment modernity nor to a matrix of traditional, colonized societies. As Cleary suggests:

Those who contend that Western Europe represents the appropriate comparative framework for the evaluation of Irish society assume an essentially homologous relationship between the country’s location, socio-economic composition and culture...The postcolonialist perspective, in contrast, suspends the notion of homologies, and attempts to investigate the *discrepant* ways in which Irish socio-economic composition and political and cultural templates overdetermine each other. (2003 a, 24)

Eagleton argues, ‘[p]ostcolonialism’, like postmodernism in general, is among other things a brand of culturalism, which inflates the significance of cultural factors in human affairs’ (1998 a, 26). Such an interdiction is entirely consonant with Eagleton’s Marxist credentials, but to a certain extent it does provide a prescient point of criticism, if it does simultaneously border on the reductive. Irish political, cultural, and economic histories have never undergone a protracted Marxist examination; Ireland possesses no Marxist critical heritage at all. Therefore, to return to McCarthy, Irish modernization has largely been exempted from any form of sustained exogenous critical examination, he notes, ‘[m]odernisation was understood in a manner separated from the discourses of critical modernism, in the social, cultural or political sense’ (2000, 27). The intellectual mediation of an evolving socio-political landscape was abdicated in favour of a ‘non-

ideological, technology-led' conception of modernity, a modernity that proactively eschewed forms of critical thought that sanctioned 'the influence of theory, ideas or ideology' (McCarthy, 2000, 27). Thus Cleary's dialectical relation of postcolonial and modernization theories assumes its valence and urgency from this stated exigency to interrogate the ideological fabric and applications of cultural discourses. *Contra* Eagleton, then, postcolonial theory takes representative account of the impact of cultural factors on politico-economic development in order to make explicit its ideological constitution.

In eschewing or critically interrogating the philosophical and material trajectories of modernization theory as well as departing from a strictly Marxist critical mode, the resources of postcolonial theory deny the legitimacy of a teleologically based historical narrative. While emphatically differentiated in theoretical terms, a teleological understanding of historical development subtends both Marxist philosophy and modernization theory. Contrarily, postcolonial literary criticism and historiography eschew such an integrated and linear narration. History, within this postcolonial theoretical framework, is as much concerned with the disruptive potencies of the past in the present as it is with the unity of a future-oriented narrative. Both the language and the practice of historical writing/meaning are contingent; the *telos* is shed because it depends on the identification or location of narrative/philosophical stability. Ultimately, and in contradistinction to both modernization theory and classical Marxist theory, postcolonial literary and historical studies stake a claim in the future for marginalized groups; they are

engaged in the development of critical languages and historiographic practices that articulate a multiplicity of possibility.

## **Literature and Partition**

One of the most engaging interventions in recent debates on modernization, nationalism, space and postcolonial studies is Cleary's *Literature, Partition and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine*. In a detailed reading of this significant text, I now want to focus my discussion on the specifics and the import of Cleary's arguments. As it embraces all of the arenas of discussion touched on in this chapter, I feel that such close attention is warranted. Current Irish postcolonial critique is engaged in a systematic deconstruction of the progressive myths of economic and social modernization. As such, Cleary is a constituent of a lateral economy of ideas that deploys the analytical tropes of postcolonial theory in order to furnish a less rigidly 'liberal' cultural politics. *Literature, Partition and the Nation State* can be located within the same discursive genealogy as Gibbons' *Transformations in Irish Culture*, McCarthy's *Modernisation, Crisis and Culture in Ireland*, and most recently, Gibbons' co-edited *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*. These interventions are loosely federated at an ideational level, and they attempt to subvert the monochromatic, and inherently ideological, socio-historical narratives of liberal modernization.

Specifically Cleary contends, 'the dialectic between tradition and modernity that had its origins in the colonial stratification of populations was instantiated and preserved in the cultures of the rival states that emerged out of partition' (2002 a, 58). The

legitimate state formations embodied by Zionist Israel and Unionist Northern Ireland became symbols of progressive modernity; their inalienable legitimacy, therefore, was a function of their institution as state entities. Indeed, echoing the afore-mentioned interventions of Gibbons and McCarthy, Cleary combines a lucid explication of densely theoretical material with a close reading of a range of textual representation.

It is now untenable to critically quarantine political and cultural discourses, particularly within postcolonial theorization; as cited above, Lloyd affirms, '[t]he very division between politics and culture that is the hallmark of liberal ideology is conceptually bankrupt throughout the colonial world.' Cleary locates his intervention within a critical continuum 'in which the traumatic events and legacies of partition acquire an imaginative truth for the peoples involved' (2002 a, 2). He attempts to reconcile the overarching structural logic of colonial settlement partition with the diversity of specific cultural contexts, in particular, the partition settlements initiated in both Ireland and Israel can be seen to germinate within the same political/colonial logic. Cleary identifies their British provenance, their flawed structures of post-partition governance, and their recent violent implosions as evidential of their inherent discursive fraternity.

It has been lamented that Irish cultural critics have tended to operate in a peculiarly reactionary or 'delayed' manner with respect to the Northern troubles. Criticism, in this view, has assumed a rearguard posture, and has singularly failed to engage successfully with the present moment, with the *bona fide* moments of crisis. Cleary succeeds in transfusing the particular circumstances of partition, and indeed

postcolonial theory, with what O'Dowd terms 'material dimensions' (1988, 8). His text, like any incisive critical-intellectual intervention, assumes its urgency from the present moment, as he navigates mutually destructive and comparative genealogies of geographical and historical dislocation.

Partition, Cleary argues, gestures within a nationalist *imaginary* that is incapable and/or unwilling to register the diverse cadences of cross-communal and inter-communal cultural discourse. Thus, within the nation-state, discourses of nationalist expression are weighted according to the needs of the hegemonic politico-cultural constituency. The political circumstances that obtain in contemporary Northern Ireland and Israel are located within this genealogy of state-legitimated nationalist expression. However, the persistence of recalcitrant cultural groups within these partitioned political units has engendered, and perpetuates, anti-state violence. Just as Lloyd, Gibbons, and the Indian subaltern historiographic collective diagnose the existence of 'unrepresented' marginal cultural forms within the structurally Euro-centric nation-state, so Cleary identifies partition as complicit within this system of politico-cultural disempowerment. The logic of partition assumes the intractability of inter-ethnic dispute and, Cleary notes, 'it is designed to restructure political space to accommodate such conflict rather than tackle or transform the wider conditions that generated it in the first instance' (2002 a, 29). Again, the impulses of modernization and its consolidation in the recognized tropes and forms of the state materialize in a skewed political solution. The dynamics of traditional ethnic cleavage are elided in place of a 'modern' political analeptic.



The discussion's warrant lies in the fact that the histories of (post-) colonial partition have been heretofore treated in isolation, consequently, 'there has been little sustained or extended comparative analysis of such situations' (2002 a, 3). As mentioned above, Cleary recently pitted postcolonial theory as the true discursive opponent of modernization theory, a theoretical dramatization that seeks to redress the state-fulfilling fictions of technological progress. Cleary's text operates emphatically within a colonial/postcolonial continuum as he explicates both the political motivations and machinations of the partition of settler colonies, and concurrently marries the cultural-artistic discourses of postcolonialism to more concretely political dynamics. One of the abiding strengths of postcolonial theory is its reading of culture as inherently ideological; the mechanisms of political representation, then, are synonymous with the modalities of verbal representation. Equally, Cleary's text efficiently executes a laterally comparative mode of critical inquiry without compromising the specific contextual purchase of diverse politico-cultural communities.

The combined discursive structure of Cleary's philosophical-textual explication of disparate partitioned societies accords with Lefebvre's elaboration of the architecture of social 'spatiality'.<sup>159</sup> In a comprehensive theoretical and textual examination of colonial settlement, political ideology and practice, and cultural representation, Cleary interrogates the represented spaces, the representative spaces, and the representational spaces of (post-) settlement colonialism. The psychophysical omnipresence of the disputed border and its minatory hinterland accentuates the preponderance of spatial factors in the formation of politico-cultural identity. The violent eruptions in both

partitioned states since the late 1960s have not only had material political repercussions, but simultaneously have bled into cultural discourses. Both literary representation and critical debate, including historiography, have been embroiled in a profoundly divisive dialectic. The central issue that presides is the fundamental legitimacy of the state *contra* the marginalized minority populations and cultures. But it is not only the stability of the state *tout court* that is at stake, the very ideals and discourses that underwrite its existence also become threatened by the diverse modalities of cultural, political, and violent opposition.

Through a methodical and unenlightened dependence on the formal structures of the nation-state, dissonant voices or so-called illegitimate constituencies have been marginalized or simply elided. Eamonn Hughes calls Northern Ireland ‘a border country’ (1991, 1), and Cleary diagnoses a dearth of imagination, as the North’s border is consistently perceived as a containment facility within which the mutually destructive inter-ethnic conflict proceeds without the input of exogenous factors. The border is conceived of only in terms of ‘separateness’ and of distance rather than what it actually represents: proximity and interaction. The teleology of all political classes is self-preservation, which is only realized through the maintenance of stability. Consequently, neither British nor Irish states have willingly conceived of their own intimacy to the ‘internecine’ conflict within the partitioned Northern statelet. Similarly Israel propagates an unrepentant, and internationally unreprieved, imagination of itself in aggrandizing terms only.

The separation of poetry and politics, to invoke Edna Longley, is realized by a telescoping of the ethnic sectarianism of Northern Irish society, while concurrently marginalizing the reality of the state border to the periphery of the narrative. By insisting on such a discursive dichotomy, both politicians and critics disabuse political conflict of its integral cultural genesis. Crucially, Cleary does not unequivocally invest cultural discourses with unquestioned critical valence. In fact many of the texts under scrutiny, including Joan Lingard's *Across the Barricades*, Bernard MacLaverty's *Cal*, and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*, and, in an Israeli context, Amos Oz's two novels, *Elsewhere*, *Perhaps* and *A Perfect Peace*, are chastized for their apparent default to the state as legitimate political and cultural unity. As Cleary dolefully concludes, 'they engineer a crisis that will cause the protagonist eventually to affirm the state order that he or she had initially thought to reject' (2002, a, 183). In essence, then, the irrational anti-state impulses of these fictional protagonists signal the recalcitrance of traditional representation, a recalcitrance that is successfully subdued within 'narratives [that] repudiate Northern nationalism in sorrow as well as anger because the cost of dismantling the state border seems too high to contemplate' (2002 a, 138). The 'unrepresented' discourses of traditional nationalisms are not co-terminous with the state. And the internal and external exiles of displaced populations cannot be resolved without 'meaningful exchange with alterity' (2002 a, 181).

Lingard, MacLaverty, and Jordan all produce narratives that partition political discourses and sexuality; as creative artists all three construct narratives in which the working-class republican/nationalist protagonist must conclusively disavow all political

allegiances in favour of the state legitimated structures enshrined in feminized domesticity. In concert with the prevailing political and diplomatic attitudes of both British and Irish governments, these artists fail to adequately register the exogenous influences and/or resonances of Irish partition and the attendant internecine conflict. Not only, then, is the matter and manner of northern partition enveloped by a form of political containment, but also it is co-terminously sealed within its geographical borders by indigenous cultural representation.

Cleary's work canvasses and exemplifies the lateral potency of comparative literary studies. Indeed the text actualizes Kiberd's belief in the fundamental comparability of Irish political and cultural history in terms of colonial and postcolonial discourse analysis. Cleary's postcolonial dialectic is not designed to initiate either a retrospective nostalgia or an ahistorical transgeography. By juxtaposing and integrating the cultural politics that underwrite colonial partition, Cleary combines theoretical universality with differentiated contextual specifics.

Cleary affords an entire concluding chapter to *Men in the Sun*, a novel by the Palestinian writer, Ghassan Kanafani. Kanafani is garnered as a creative antinomy to Lingard, MacLaverty, Jordan, and Oz; whereas these artists offer some form of narrative resolution or cyclical finality in terms of political acquiescence to the prevailing state institutions, Kanafani furnishes the Palestinian people with a less 'contained' resolution. The 'entropic endings and resigned diminuendos' of the Northern novels, and those of Oz are usurped by a text that:

[does] not at all acquiesce with what already is or despair of resistance: on the contrary, it demands resistance, but it stipulates that it must be based on an unflinching analysis of the objective conditions of the Palestinian situation. (2002 a, 223)

Kanafani's text exemplifies the necessary human toll of anguish and corporeal suffering that is exacted by neo-colonial displacement. In bold contrast to the semantic mechanics of legality and diplomacy, Kanafani's novel indicts the foundational faults of a malignant global system of disenfranchisement. The underlying problematic for the Palestinian people is 'that while their stateless condition induces nationalism, their dispersal across so many states thwarts the construction of a common nation-state' (2002 a, 187). Current political theory demands the synchronicity of spatiality and temporality before sanctioning any unified political entity. In fact, the dispersal of Palestinian people is actualized, in some quarters, as a verifiable reason for thwarting their nationalist aspirations. But, as Cleary notes, there is scant attention afforded to the mutuality of causes within the dialectic of partition/anti-partition politics. *Literature, Partition and the Nation State* broaches the most decisive and divisive of theoretical issues: nationalism and state sovereignty. Cleary poses serious questions with respect to both the material, spatial dynamics of contemporary colonialism/postcolonialism and to the theoretical tropes through which postcolonialism is mediated.

### **The 'nation' debate**

Graham's primary preoccupation is to advance a framework from which a more expansive and comprehensive application of post-colonial theory can be facilitated in

Ireland. His work is, therefore, concentrated on criticizing recent and current interventions in Irish post-colonial theory, and is focused on the deconstruction of one of the primary themes of these interventions: nationalism. It is Graham's contention that post-colonial theory must progress beyond a fixation with the deconstruction of nationalism. Graham forges traceable critical links with subaltern historiographic reading in asserting that the ideologies of state-nationalism are simply a continuance of imperial control. The tropes and structures of identity-construction within a national paradigm are Euro-centric political ideologies, and have been transferred to post-colonial/peripheral contexts. Nationalism, in its theoretical form, is a constituent of a distinctly Euro-centric episteme, and Graham contends, 'the very idea of nationality...itself was transferred to the colonies by imperialist ideology' (1998, 238).

Graham acknowledges that his critique of nationalism is part of a wider and more long-term process of 're-thinking, re-positioning and revising nationalism [which] has become the central preoccupation of intellectual movements in Irish culture' (1998, 234). He broaches both traditional, political nationalism and the recent development of the concept of post-nationalism. Graham's primary concern is the extent to which the discursive concept of 'the nation' continues to maintain an insipid influence/gravity not just within contemporary Irish political philosophy, but also equally within Irish cultural criticism. Graham delineates a definite program of post-colonial analysis for Ireland, he asserts, 'post-colonial Irish cultural criticism would attempt to deconstruct the ideologies arising from colonialism and post-colonialism, while believing that ideology constitutes culture' (1994, 41). He is concerned with foregrounding issues such as gender, class,

ethnicity, race, and localized history, discourses that invariably become marginalized within 'the homogenised discourse of nationalism' (1994, 40).

Graham's critical engagement with nationalism has broached the post-nationalist rhetoric of both the philosopher Richard Kearney and the politician John Hume.<sup>160</sup> He characterizes post-nationalism as 'notable for its attempt to describe an evolution rather than a revolution', as it persists with a restrictive ideological paradigm and 'as such it might serve as an example of how the concept of the nation continues to circumscribe critical and theoretical discourses which appear to go beyond it' (1998, 237). Indeed the criticism levelled by Graham at the discourse of post-nationalism is extended in his assessment of the *Field Day* enterprise, and in particular his treatment of Deane's work.

While not jettisoning the valence or historical import of nationalism, Graham's critique accents the exigent representation of submerged social constituencies. He refers explicitly to the necessary re-invigoration of 'the dissidences of gender and subalternity' (1998, 239), which can significantly undermine 'the complacencies of historiography' (1998, 239). Graham's analysis, then, telescopes the ideological genealogy of 'the nation' in postcolonial contexts, and in eschewing post-nationalist conceptualizations, he refuses to accept an *evolution* within nationalist discourses as a legitimate alternative to a structural *revolution* in the historiographic and critical theorization of 'the nation'. Post-nationalism may expand both the legislative and imaginative space of the nation, but in Graham's view it still cleaves to the value of the nation as a political and cultural concept. In this sense, Graham's criticism of post-nationalist discourse is inseparable from his multiple theoretical endorsements of subaltern historiography, a topic that I

consider at greater length below. In rejecting the post-nationalist alternatives of either Kearney or Hume, Graham indicts their inability to conceive of the political and cultural limitations of 'the nation', and in this sense it echoes his critique of Deane's and *Field Day's* relation to Irish nationalism.

As we have discussed above, Deane and Kiberd readily accept the paucity of traditional and hard-line Irish political nationalism but in Graham's view 'reveal that the necessary postcolonial denigration of the nation as a political ideology is intensely problematic [for them]' (1994, 36). Mulhern seconds Graham's critique of *Field Day's* devotion to a nationalist agenda. Mulhern's most direct interventions have addressed the publication and the politics of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, especially the editorial contribution of Gibbons. Summarizing the motive political force behind *Field Day*, Mulhern writes:

Field Day's intervention, as this anthology illustrates it, is adapted in advance to an unexamined hierarchy of values in which the crux of Ireland-as-unfulfilled-nation is paramount, with the consequence that culture neither civilises nor deconstructs the national question but essentialises it as an Irish fate. (1998, 156)

In other words, 'the nation' and 'nationalism' remain the loci of politico-cultural debate; any topic of discussion is permissible so long as it is refracted through the prism of nationality. Both Graham and Mulhern, then, read *Field Day's* critiques, and representations, of Irish texts and practices in much the same fashion as Lloyd, Gibbons, Deane, Kiberd and Whelan read the counter-revivalist torpor of Free State Ireland. To use Mulhern's terminology, in their respective critical appraisals these critics diagnose a 'strictly-plotted cultural narrative' (1998, 154).



However, Mulhern proceeds further than Graham, he resolutely links the resuscitation of a narrowly plotted nationalist cultural politics with the mobilization of postcolonial theory. While Graham suggests that postcolonial studies, in particular subaltern studies (2001, 88-89), can effectively disabuse nationalism of its rhetorical and political import, Mulhern demurs at the inference that Ireland can be legitimately considered a postcolonial society. He argues, '[t]he name for this is postcolonial melancholy. Its political implication, like any nationalism prolonged beyond its validating political occasions, is confusionist and retrograde' (1998, 161). Mulhern's eschewal of nationalism seems to refer to a monolithic politico-cultural discourse; the breed he cites is clearly anti-colonial nationalism. Such a delimited vista fails to register nationalistic expression that was not even permitted to participate, or were represented in bastardized forms, at such 'validating political occasions'. Contrary to the work of Irish postcolonial studies, Mulhern's conception of the national is as attenuated as the model he attributes to *Field Day*, and Gibbons.

Moreover by imputing that such critics are victims of 'postcolonial melancholy', Mulhern's argument, as we shall see, coheres with both Longley's and Robbins', both of whom invoke temporal distance as a disqualifier in debates on historical cultural trauma. Appealing to the mechanics of temporality in dealing with the affective, psychological matters of political and cultural trauma, Mulhern concludes:

But to represent the history that actually unfolded, the accomplished colonial fact, as the defining crux of Irish culture today-*three generations after independence*- is tantamount to suggesting that indigenous propertied classes and their politico-

cultural elites are not really responsible for the forms of exploitation and oppression they have conserved or developed in their own bourgeois state. (1998, 161)

Again as I discuss at greater length below, both Cleary and Kinsella provide convincing counter-arguments to the suggestion that colonialism, and its exertions, are unilaterally expunged/excised with the departure of direct political rule. Again, in rebutting Mulhern's, Longley's and Robbins' separate, but related, arguments we are reminded of Lloyd's critique of Kennedy's empirical disavowal of Ireland's postcoloniality. It is simply untenable to convene or to disperse arguments for or against Irish postcoloniality on the basis of temporal or statistical integers. The empirical logic that clothes these arguments is, as Lloyd asserts, elemental to the oppressive quality of facticity.

Graham's argument is patently not to deny the existence of 'the nation' or Irish nationalism, as Smyth alleges, but his critique represents a manifestation of the 'critical responsibility' actually demanded by Smyth (Smyth, 1995, 29). Postcolonial theory should provide space wherein the concept of 'the nation' relinquishes exclusive rights as the sole, or at least the primary locus of both political and cultural debate in Ireland. Both Smyth and Graham offer divergent and tentative avenues of critical inquiry, in terms of 'radical contexts' as discussed in relation to Smyth, and subsequently, as Graham urges, in terms of a re-assessment of the legitimacy of 'nation-oriented' critical debate. It is my intention, then, to offer a provisional critique of both viewpoints and subsequently to provide some insights or nuancing to the respective critiques on an individual basis and in relation to each other.

Smyth contends that the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland have provided an opportunity:

to examine at close quarters some of the dominant issues of modern intellectual discourse: the relationship between politics and culture, the role of the intellectual, the emergence in the late twentieth century of certain kinds of discursive formations and effects and so on. (1995, 28)

By extension then, surely Graham's critique of nationalism demonstrates a will and an intention to engage with each of these facets of modern intellectual discourse. The provision/formulation of critiques on the emergence, employment/development, and persistence of the philosophy of political nationalism are central features of any consideration of the relationship between politics and culture. Equally, the critic is treating of the role of the intellectual by firstly interrogating discursive ideologies, and secondly by participating within and/or reacting against these ideologies; the critic is further revealing his/her own intellectual location vis-à-vis the ideology at hand or ideology *tout court*, by openly engaging with specific ideological formations and/or the broader philosophical concept of ideology itself. And finally, through the employment of a nuanced postcolonial theory, the critic is both operating within and capable of examining what Smyth loosely terms 'certain kinds of discursive formations', including postcolonial theory, postnationalism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and nationalism (1995, 28).

Graham's critique of nationalism, then, proves more productive than Smyth's in that he recognizes the inherent limitations of a discursive dependence on 'the nation' as a cultural and political point of default. Graham's conclusions do not constitute 'a post-colonial criticism totally inimical to nationalism' nor do they represent 'an unrealistic sacrifice of history to theory' (1995, 25-29). In fact, Smyth's critique is manifestly

concerned with deconstructing, what Graham terms, ‘politicised readings of Irish culture’ (1999, 26). Graham also openly acknowledges the ‘ultimate importance of the nation as the cultural dynamic of colonialism/postcolonialism but stops [sic] celebrating the nation’ (1995/96, 35). However as I have argued with respect to Smyth above, neither Smyth nor Graham fully recognize or acknowledge the persistence of nationalism in contemporary Ireland, specifically in the Republic; neither critic broaches the notion of a post-colonial nationalism or nationalistic-consciousness. While there is a lateral recognition of the *historical* diversity and plurality of nationalisms in colonized and de-colonizing societies, there is a belief that nationalism represents part of ‘the integrity of the past’ (Smyth, 1995, 28). Both Smyth and Graham portray nationalism in Ireland as the means by which we have arrived at this point: an independent sovereign nation-state. Just as Smyth registers specific reservations with respect to the nature of contemporary postcolonial critique, and in particular the limitations enforced by its institutional character, Graham similarly points to ‘the unsystematic, *ad hoc* and tendentious ways in which the theories of postcolonial criticism have been applied to Ireland’ (1994, 29). Graham’s vision of a productive application of postcolonial criticism in an Irish context has been principally concerned with ‘raising politico-methodological questions of what, if anything, is to be done with ‘the nation’ in producing revitalized reading strategies for Irish culture’ (1998, 239).

## **Banal Nationalism and the State**

However, little reference or thought is expended on the fact that as a so-called First World nation-state we have unequivocally assumed the *de rigueur* politico-economic formation and system of governance and expression of communal solidarity/will. Thus it is inappropriate to consign political nationalism to either ‘historical perspectives’ or in contemporary contexts to construct a here/there paradigm in relation to reactionary Third World nationalisms. The question that arises then is, if we reside in, participate in and assume/demand loyalty to a form of democratic nation-state, how can this situation persist in perpetuity if there is not some form of unifying nationalism in the public consciousness? Michael Billig’s notion of ‘banal nationalism’ is one discourse that provides certain insights into how we are consistently reminded or ‘flagged’ of our nationhood.<sup>161</sup> Thus, while Graham is correct to interrogate nationalism in its cultural and ideological forms through a post-colonial reading, it is also exigent that Irish post-colonial critics examine/locate the forms of nationalism that persist in contemporary Ireland, besides the obvious straw-men of traditional, hard-line political nationalism.

Billig’s examination of the contemporary indices of banal nationalism stresses the unassuming social-psychological mechanisms through which citizen-subjects of nation-states are consistently reminded of their nationality. In this sense, Billig’s project relates to Smyth’s spatial critique of postcolonial space, subaltern interrogations of state-enabled (and enabling) nationalisms and Soja’s spatial critique of modernity. Simply, Billig outlines the spatial, cognitive mechanisms through which nationality is suggested and re-

enforced on a daily, and apparently mundane basis; in effect it is the quotidian naturalization of nationality. While McCarthy and Amin register the macro-narrational techniques deployed to compose the modern state's national story, Billig traces the banal devices that constantly, and convincingly, operate on individuals and communities in flagging the existence of the nation. For instance, by way of co-ordinated, yet ostensibly innocuous, structures such as newspaper titles, *The Irish Times*, *France Soir* or *USA Today*, 'this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding' (Billig, 1995, 7).

Banal nationalism, then, inhabits our daily spaces, attuning us unconsciously to the narrative of a temporally and spatially configured incumbent nation-state. The very banality of this nationalistic economy emphatically buttresses the identification of discrete nationalities. Equally, the subtle, or apparently concealed, identitarian indices of banal nationalism re-affirm the national space. Billig notes, '[t]he metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building' (1995, 6-7). These seemingly 'hidden' fibres of the national body-politic perform in space and in turn assert the nationality of that space. Consequently, Billig's delineation of the profundity of nationalism's banal insinuation within the space of the nation-state and the cognitive spaces of individuals signals yet another arena of contestation for the retrieval of both contemporary, and historical, subaltern spaces, alternative modernities and submerged nationalisms. Although explicitly referring to Third World nationalisms, Amin's comments are instructive:

Most writings on Third World nationalism, in their preoccupation with social origins and politics, have tended to bypass the question of nationalist narratives. The ways in which the nation was talked about are considered an aspect of ideology; or, alternatively, writing the history of a particular national struggle itself becomes part of an ongoing nationalist enterprise. This leaves virtually no space for the *interrogation of narrative strategies* by which people get constructed into a nation [my emphasis]. (1995, 2)

## Colonial and Postcolonial Space<sup>162</sup>

The clay of the trench wall was malleable as Plasticine, and from it we'd make brick cities – Lilliputs of Belfast – on the plain above, and bombard them with marbles or pebbles, for a condition of a city was its eventual destruction. Then men came with cross-staves and theodolites, and paced the landscape; shortly after, a giant earth-moving machine moved in and tore a swathe across the war theatre; and our blitzed stage properties vanished forever under the chevroned caterpillar-tracks of Brobdingnag. The house started to go up, attaining hitherto unknown levels. I used to watch the bricklayers ply their trade, as they deployed Masonic tools of plumb-line, try-square and spirit-level, setting up, taut parallels of pegs and string, before throwing down neatly gauged dollops of mortar, laying brick in practised, quick monotony, chinking each into its matrix with skilled dints of the trowel. Had their basic modules been alphabet bricks, I could have seen them building lapidary sentences and paragraphs, as the storeyed houses became emboldened by their hyphenated, skyward narrative, and entered the ongoing, fractious epic that is Belfast. (Ciaran Carson, *The Star Factory*, 125-126)

Opening his 'Notes on Italian History', Gramsci writes:

The historical unity of the ruling classes is realised in the State, and their history is essentially the history of States and of groups of States. But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political (though such forms of unity do

have their importance too, and not in a purely formal sense); the fundamental historical unity, concretely results from the organic relations between State or political society and “civil” society. (1971, 52)

Gramsci’s reflection is clearly cast in a geographical framework; the historical integrity of the State is not merely emplotted within linear narrative, but is emphatically enacted within a spatial context. The historical unity of the State is a spatial incarnation of political hegemony. This point is confirmed by Said, who refers to Gramsci’s conception of history as ‘essentially geographical and territorial, a history made up of several overlapping territories’ (Viswanathan, 2004, 58). The class struggle of Gramsci’s historical, Marxist dialectic unfolds, then, within and between contested territorial boundaries. Such a geographical inflection of modernity necessarily relates to analyses of colonialism and to the representational politics of colonial discourse and postcolonial studies. Said offers Gramsci’s territorialization of political hegemony and counter-hegemonic struggle as a viable alternative to ‘the temporal [view of history]...going back to a *fons et origio* – a miraculous, originary point’ (Viswanathan, 2004, 58).

Likewise, noting the relative turn towards spatial critique, the geographer Yvonne Whelan notes:

In recent years cultural geographers have begun to focus their research on space as a setting for the exercise of power. The fact that our world is an accumulation of spaces, as much as an accumulation of the experiences of time, has been recognized...One of the geographer’s tasks, therefore, is to decode the many, layered meanings embedded in the symbolic spaces in which we live. (2003, 91-92)<sup>163</sup>



Such a re-presentation of an alternative spatial axis has clear resonances within, and relevance to, current Irish postcolonial criticism. This is particularly emphatic in Smyth's most recent work on space and the Irish cultural imagination, he argues, 'Irish cultural debate has organized (some would say calcified) itself around a temporal or teleological axis, with emphasis on the validity of various explanatory models of the past' (1995, 26). The spatial critique espoused by Smyth is deeply influenced by the work of both Soja and Lefebvre, as he analyses the idea of the 'production of space', and highlights the fabricated or the Saidian 'beginnings' of the relationship between politics and culture. Soja contends:

[t]he temporality of social life, from the routines and events of day-to-day activity to the longer run making of history, is rooted in spatial contingency in much the same way that the spatiality of social life is rooted in temporal/historical contingency. (1985, 98-99)

Thus, both temporally constituted history and spatiality are inherently related and become 'theoretically concomitant' (Soja, 1985, 98-99). Smyth's critique is concerned with animating the space in which a politico-cultural criticism can develop; the presumed passivity of a 'spatial' context is all too frequently overshadowed by a predominant *telos* or temporal dependence.

The notion of a *material* space is particularly exigent in a colonial/postcolonial context in which the basic, and foundational, antagonism is a dispute over territorial sovereignty and proprietorship. As has been previously diagnosed the colony was often perceived as a wild and exotic location by the *arriviste* colonizer, or alternatively as an un-inscribed canvass on which to impress the civilizing zeal of the 'centre'. Scott

Brewster notes, '[t]erritorializing tropes were deployed both in colonialist discourse and in cultural and political nationalism: these competing projects of mapping could take the shape of the Ordnance Survey or the idealisation of the West in the Revival' (1999, 125). The vacuous space was appropriated by a geographical and moral homology, wherein the colonizing impulse was to tame and to civilize both the landscape and the objects encountered therein. As Smyth demonstrates in an Irish context, the landscape became an exotic vista within a here/there paradigm, he points out, '[t]he local landscape is recruited for a discursive economy which limits it to those attributes and emotions set in place at the point of (supposedly) first contact: exoticism, quaintness, danger, colour, primitiveness' (2001 a, 26).

The space of colonial contact and interaction is an aspect of the colonizer's gaze; it is the passive domain in which the politico-cultural history of amalgamation may proceed through a process of colonizer/colonized familiarity. Smyth's intention, therefore, is to address the tendentious assumption that these historical formations can be treated of solely within a temporally-exclusive continuum. In his diagnosis, as we have noted, Irish colonial history has been remarkable for its concentration on a presupposed and/or retrospectively imposed *telos*. Smyth seeks to explode these temporally based discourses with an infusion of spatial possibilities and, as he terms it, by providing criticism with a methodology that invokes radical contexts.

In a similar manner to the work of Carter, Smyth locates spatial analysis as a potentially liberating discourse through which:

[a] radical Irish cultural studies would be [able to produce] cognitive maps which enable Irish people to locate themselves in relation to their own local environment and to the series of increasingly larger networks of power which bear upon these environments. (2001 a, 19)

Smyth's project is designed to highlight the interdependence of both the temporal and the spatial, as Soja outlines, in order firstly to undermine universalizing and ideologically informed historical narratives; and secondly to complicate any idea of 'Irishness' in terms of 'radical contexts', in other words to forge a critical idiom that recognizes the relevance and import of Ireland as a nation/state; as a European periphery; as a global actor, but equally to act on a subjective level in relation to gender; class; language, and geographical context. The cohesion and division of these socio-cultural affiliations are too often presumed in spatial terms and are broached as teleologically constituted entities.

Smyth invokes the cultural and social geography of both Soja and Lefebvre in his effort to formulate a proto-modular schema of spatialized politico-cultural analysis. Thus in his critique 'social space remains the space of society [in which] all subjects are situated... in which they must either recognise themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify' (Lefebvre, 2001, 35).<sup>164</sup> Soja concludes, '[s]pace has been shaped and moulded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political, and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies' (1997, 247). Space, then, is not conceived of as an inert backdrop to the progression of diverse politico-cultural teleologies. Smyth's analysis focuses on these very politico-cultural teleologies, and his underlying aim is to deconstruct the apparent freestanding nature of these political and cultural discourses.

Space, then, is the initial arena of contestation in the colonial context; space is always in contestation whether or not this takes the form of inter-communal violence or discord. Space is filled with ideologies and it is always political even in ostensibly pacific contemporary societies. It is contested through property investment and speculation, industrial location and accessibility to potential markets, thus the notion of proximity in a rapidly contracting context increases the contestation of space. The actions that unfold within this space are an integral part of the broader spatio-temporal historical process. Space produces society and in turn society produces its own spaces, which in turn perpetuate and change that society, as manifested in both Soja's and Lefebvre's differentiation between 'representational' and 'representative' spaces. Therefore the nation-state, and the discourses that sanction its existence, must be analysed in terms of the spatial indices that underwrite its hegemonic positions. If an area is not invested with a sense of worth or origin or identity then it is not worth defending. The notion of mapping, both cartographically and cognitively, is central to the concepts of control or appropriation within an established episteme. Acts of cultural invention, the search for origins, and banal and other forms of nationalism represent attempts to legitimize seizure or attempts at seizure of space. Space becomes place when it is under contestation, and with recognition of the 'other' both temporal precedence and the transformations of space into place become the cultural tools of identity formation.

Soja's conception of 'space-forming' and 'space-contingent' social relations provides Smyth's critique with a valuable nuance in unlocking the presumed naturalness of these discourses; such presumptions can be inherently contained or sanctioned by the

logic of temporally-based narratives (1997, 247-248). As we have discussed above, Carter argues 'imperial' history is fundamentally beholden to the logic of cause and effect and within such a discourse space is only animated through the subject's actions within or on it. By introducing ideas such as displacement, borders and social space, Smyth attempts to unravel/unsettle the assumed/ familiar seams of 'imperial' or temporal logic. Furthermore his interrogation of the spatial dynamics of political and cultural discourses confirms Ley and Duncan's argument that '[landscape] is a synthesis of charisma and context, a text which may be read to reveal the force of dominant ideas and prevailing practices, as well as the idiosyncrasies of a particular author' (1993, 329).

The projects of postcolonial naming, mapping or historical representation do not seek to institute recalibrated historical truths. As Smyth suggests they must:

attempt instead to express both the historical contingency and the ontological hybridity of space; for if hybridity and contingency were exacerbated by the historical encounter between coloniser and colonised, they appear to constitute the natural condition of landscape and of the language used to describe landscape. (2001 a, 45)

Similarly Nash's invocation of multiple cultural spaces reflects both Gibbons' and Lloyd's commitment to the plurality of modernities. Highlighting the critical input of postcolonial and feminist scholarship, Nash argues that such 'remapping and renaming do not replace one authoritative representation with another but with multiple names and multiple maps' (1993, 54). The critical reading strategies of a spatialized postcolonial studies, then, must confront self-assertive representational authorities, and in the process

redirect attention towards ‘the replayed shards of feeling arising from a particular place’ (Hunt, 1998, 49).<sup>165</sup>

## Critical Space

If landscape is a principal repository of communal memory and history, as well as cultural identity, then the spatial realm is unquestionably central to the representation of postcolonial identities. The representation of colonial histories is not simply a matter of confronting the physical accretions of conquest or the physical co-ordinates of postcolonial space. Rather the spatiality of historical events, of individuals acting in, being acted upon or being ignored in space must be addressed. In other words, the spatiality of historical narrative, which implicitly privileges temporality, must be mined and/or interrogated for its tendentious assertions, strategic inclusions and wilful elisions. Such a spatial critique is intimately bound to the self-image of the nation-state. Writing on the development of Indian state-nationalism, Amin argues:

The master saga of nationalist struggles is built around the retelling of certain well-known and memorable events. There is very often an exasperating and chronicle-like quality about such celebratory accounts, but the significance of nationalist narratives lies in their elaborate and heroic setting down, or ‘figuring’, the *triumph* of good over evil...The organisation, unity, discipline and morality of the nationalist public are thereby underscored [my emphasis]. (1995, 2-3)

In Amin’s terms, the nationalist ‘chronicle’ is dematerialized into the realms of morality; it accedes to an atemporal space through its tactical narrative figuration. The abstracted narrative of the nation in a transcendent, and carefully screened, tale provides both ethical

and historical sanctification for the naturalized polity. But of course it is the idea of ‘triumph’ that connotes the progressive posture of the hegemonic nation-state. The temporality implicit to the notion of ‘triumph’ inserts the nation’s existence into a future-oriented tide.

Amin’s point is illustrated further in Leerssen’s remarks on historical writing, when he concedes, ‘[a]lthough history-writing is not a technical, empirical science, it is certainly a scientific endeavour to the extent that its academic praxis follows this pattern of *falsification-driven progress* [my emphasis]’ (1996 a, 152). Explicitly referring to Karl Popper’s principles on scientific discovery, Leerssen’s argument suggests the progressive, and legislative, functions of historical narratives. Not only is this point relevant to Amin’s interrogation of nationalist history, but also, it segues with McCarthy’s diagnosis of the confluence of interests between Irish revisionist historiography and the modernizing Irish nation-state. The demands for political and cultural stability in the contemporary space of the nation-state, then, can be serviced by a rationalization of historical space and time in the form of, returning to Gibbons, ‘consoling fictions’. The logic of which is consummately expressed by Foster, when in exposing the bankruptcy of and ‘the limitations of the old manifest-destiny notion of Irish nationalism’, he affirms, ‘that history is not about manifest destinies, but about unexpected and unforeseen futures’ (2001 a, 53-54). Curiously the past seems to have lost its tenancy rights on Foster’s historical estate; history may no longer be about *predestined futures*, but it is still emphatically about charting *the future*.

In contextualizing his pre-history of Irish nationalism in *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, Leerssen offers brief comments on the nature of nationalism as a political and cultural phenomenon. He writes:

in its strict sense it means specifically that claims towards sovereignty and autonomy are derived, not so much from arguments of constitutional jurisprudence, economic or political expediency or equity, but from a hypostacized national identity or cultural individuality. The principle of national identity inspires and demands exclusive political loyalty and furnishes the moral legitimation for claims towards independence. (1996 b, 14)

Again Amin's argument is instructive; it is precisely this breed of co-ordinated, and self-narrated, state nationalist discourse which is the one of the kernel objects of postcolonial critiques. Leerssen's précis of the composition of nationalism points to the exigency of postcolonial analyses of the state's self-proclaimed sovereignty over the nation. The uni-directional idiom of state-nationalism, again evidenced in Leerssen's comments, conceals 'much that has been suppressed in the historical creation of postcolonial nation-states, much that has been erased or glossed over when nationalist discourse has set down its own life history' (Chatterjee, 1986, 170).

Significantly, the *telos* of any of these reclamations of subaltern, alternative or suppressed histories or social spaces is not simply to insert them into the progressive swell of modernity or of modernization. The representation of marginal political and cultural spaces, of suppressed nationalisms or of alternative modernities is not to induct them into a centralized, modern continuum. Rather, their representation constitutes, and here I defer again to Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 'site[s] of resistance to the present



social order and...force[s] subverting that order and inventing a new one' (2002, 16). Furthermore, Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin's argument seconds both McCarthy's and MacLaughlin's critiques, which chart the tangible links between the modernizing policies and ambitions of the Irish nation-state and the strategic deployment of a didactic, revisionist historiography. They conclude:

As recent past, history is used as a bogeyman in a kind of rhetoric of binary terror. Either you accept the deregulated ruthlessness of the market or you will be cast back into the eternal night of emigration and high unemployment...In this either/or scenario, economic destiny is squared with political fate so that oppositional forces who contest the equation are variously presented as naïve, retrograde, irresponsible or ungrateful. (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002, 7)

As has become apparent in this chapter, postcolonial studies' most recent interfaces with modernity, modernization, nationalism and space are subtended by a homology of multiplicity and alterity. Postcolonial studies rejects the retail of unity: unity as nation-state, unity as linear historical trajectory or unity as the story of economic progress. In the end the objects of postcolonial studies' retrievals are the dissenting absences that facilitate spatial, modernized or national unities.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **‘re-describing the describer as it [he or she] re-describes the described’<sup>166</sup>: Postcolonial Metatheory.**

Reading and writing words encompasses the reading of the world, that is, the critical understanding of politics in the world. (Paulo Freire, 1987, 212-213)

A critic once got lost in a poem.  
He saw no signposts there marked ‘Home’.  
Every subtle thing he swept aside-  
he heard the brittle noise and wept.  
He started to implore his god,  
and called on some academic ghost.  
‘Straight on,’ they said, ‘to line one-o-two,’  
where he found a Dantean allusion-post.  
He got home and praised the song.  
He saw no craft or polish there,  
no fine concealments, delicate and strong,  
just a clumsy sign that got him out.  
His compass was no use in such a place,  
a land where there was neither north or south.  
(Michael Hartnett, ‘The Purge’, *A Necklace Of Wrens*, 83-85)<sup>167</sup>

### **'a token of the future'**

The interventions of Kiberd, Deane, Lloyd, Whelan, Bourke, Gibbons and Cairns and Richards have been complemented by a form of meta-criticism through the recent work of Graham, Smyth, Cleary, Connolly and Kirkland: there is a current interest in effectively theorizing postcolonial theory itself. These interventions have assessed the theoretical corpus and trajectory of Irish postcolonial theory, and have offered both original modes of theoretical development and/or highlighted the limitations of postcolonial theory thus far. These metacritical interventions accord with O'Brien's assertion that, 'just as Derrida and Lacan problematise the aetiology of meaning, so theoretical writing must interrogate theoretical writing if it is not to fall upon a 'tu quoque' charge of preferential reading' (2000, 52).

While earlier Irish, and international, postcolonial criticism has a tangible political edge in its frequently 'oppositional' or diametric discursive examination, Bhabha, Spivak, among others, have furnished postcolonial theory with 'a broader range of theoretical options' (Hooper, 2002, 7). And such theoretically grounded interventions have resulted in the problematization of easy divisions, elisions, and certainties within colonial discourse analysis. The impending threat, however, is that such theoretical abstraction has the latent potential to hamstring/blunt/circumscribe the material, political import of postcolonialism as a discursive resource.

Graham argues:

the 'mal archive' which marks Irish criticism is, as Derrida suggests it must be, 'a token of the future'; this 'token' is, in turn, bound to 'the possibility of a forgetfulness'...Archival 'token' and the futurology of 'Ireland' then find

themselves caught in the supplemented cycle promising and forgetting which is Irish criticism. (2001, 35)

Echoing the Godwinian sentiments of the epigraph at the beginning of the dissertation, Graham diagnoses a promise of fulfilment in the act of curiosity or in the critical act. The possibility of alternative futures, of moving beyond the immediate or the present is inextricable from the deployment of a critical language. Criticism, then, nurtures, utopian possibilities. The divination and the mobilization of 'promising' critical languages are underwritten by a desire for change; the critical act harbours a revolutionary possibility. Whether focused on the present, telescoping the past or unstitching the exercise of power in politics, culture and economics, the critical act contains a revolutionary impulse. Criticism facilitates the enunciation of disaffection. As this dissertation demonstrates, theoretical postcolonial criticism should emanate from an ethics of disaffection, but the theoretical idioms of contemporary cultural theory frequently stray from this sense of material disaffection and often become an exercise in verbose vanity. These theoretical excesses are exactly what Graham terms 'the supplemented cycle of promising and forgetting' (2001, 35).

Neil Lazarus interrogates the recent postcolonial theoretical cathexis in his article 'Academic capital and Canon Formation in Postcolonial Studies'; he comments:

To observe that 'Postcolonial Studies' has come, since its inception as a field of specialisation and intellectual investment roughly twenty years ago, to assume a position of legitimacy and even prestige within the Euro-American academy, is today a commonplace. (2002 a, 1)<sup>168</sup>

Lazarus' citation of 'intellectual investment' echoes the previous discussion of 'academic territory' by Moloney and Thompson, and indeed the notion of academic self-

aggrandizement is a persistent accusation levelled at the practitioners of postcolonial theorization. But Lazarus expands on this argument and locates the proliferation of a meta-industry 'around' the principal, almost canonical texts and paradigms of 'Postcolonial Studies'. He notes, 'in addition to the hundreds of books and thousands of articles that might be said to be *in* the field or indeed in one sense to make it up...there has recently emerged a burgeoning collection of texts that take *the field itself* as their object' (Lazarus 2002 a, 1). In essence, there has been a proliferation of intrinsic and extrinsic disciplinary postcolonialism; there is an identifiable expansion from a concerted discursis of the micro-details of theoretical inquiry to the elucidation of a metacritique of the macrostructural paradigms of postcolonial analysis.

While the tropes and paradigms of such a politico-cultural resource are gaining almost universal currency, concurrently there is a burgeoning concern, evidenced in recent interventions, with respect to the structural lexicon or theoretical idiom of Irish postcolonial analysis. Specifically, Irish critics such as Kirkland, Graham, Connolly, and Smyth have initiated a self-reflective dialectic within Irish postcolonial studies. The swift importation of terminology or critical vocabulary, the legitimacy of comparative, postcolonial methodology, and the 'materiality' of postcolonial interventions are among the most fundamental issues registered within this meta-discursis. To these basic concerns might be added the question, are the conceptual tropes of postcolonial theory operative in such a way that 'earlier events' become mere functions of indicative linguistic or theoretical lexicon? (Ayers, 1953, 155) Simply put, is there a sense in which history becomes the object of retrospective theory, or as Smyth asserts 'it is a sacrifice of history to theory' (1995, 28).<sup>169</sup>

The designation of a metacritique of Irish postcolonial studies is a matter of 'epistemological vigilance' (Bourdieu, 1996, xiii); those who read must also be read. While the expansion, and what I see as a 'deepening', of postcolonial theory has and is dismissed perfunctorily as little besides a voguish academic cachet, its limits are not internally imposed but conversely derive largely from its external characterization as an academic/theoretical menace. It is precisely the absence of a concerted cross-disciplinary will that constitutes the current limitations of postcolonial discourse. Effectively, the project of postcolonial metacritique, of which this dissertation is an element, answers *in parvo* McCarthy's invocation for a form of critical self-reflection. Each critical intervention perforce assumes or exercises a degree of authority, but is merely, in this case, the authority to initiate such a 'beginning', to divine a thread or a logic to the confluence of ideational possibilities and genealogies that rendered under the rubric of Irish postcolonial criticism.

In his delineation of 'The Critic's Technique in Thirteen Theses' Benjamin accents the combative nature of the critic's vocation and the critical *milieu*. In the opening two theses, Benjamin argues, firstly, that '[t]he critic is the strategist in the literary battle', and secondly, he warns that '[h]e who cannot take sides should keep silent' (1979, 66). Benjamin emphatically jettisons any pretensions to critical objectivity and implicitly infers the moral/ethical implications and responsibilities of critical intervention. His theses, then, are not so much speculations as bald demands on critical constituencies. Such critico-philosophical invocations are easily applied to current debates on postcolonial criticism, including its Irish declension, as many recent interventions within Irish postcolonial studies are overtly concerned with the *practical*

possibilities of abstracted critical debate and its economy of discursive strategies and theoretical language.

Smyth articulates such metacritical sentiment, 'it is no use congratulating ourselves for deconstructing the paradoxes of colonial imposition if that liberatory gesture occurs within a discursive landscape mapped in advance by the colonial encounter' (1999 b, 30). As we have discussed above, Smyth re-iterates one of the foundational concerns of both feminist critics and women's historians vis-à-vis the theoretical and historiographic infiltration of their projects by poststructuralist methodology. In Benjamin's terms, Smyth's remarks indict what are essentially self-defeating critical tactics in broader representational encounters. A similar point is made by Nandy in his psychological discursis on colonial relations, a point directly drawn on by Smyth. Smyth's metacritique of oppositional theoretical discourse is galvanized by Nandy's assertion that colonialism 'creates a culture in which the ruled constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the ruler' (1983, iii). Postcolonial criticism is charged with the task of mining original discursive strategies or critical *manoeuvres* if a representative or emancipatory critical language is to escape the gravitational pull of colonial discourse, or if it is to avoid the institution of new forms of self-referential hegemony.

Just as Gibbons contends that a society requires both creative and critical representation, Smyth underscores the centrality of the critical act in constructing viable cultural spaces through which national identity can be verbalized. He notes:

A present-day shift in emphasis to critical discourse, therefore, signals a recognition that there can be no decolonising literature, no national culture of resistance, before a

prefiguring *critical* discourse creates a series of social and institutional spaces in which a culture and its particular effects can function and have meaning. (1999 b, 33)

Criticism, in Smyth's argument, is revealed as an innately ambivalent practice; it holds the germ of imaginative, creative possibility in cleaving such cultural spaces, but equally it withholds in its 'function in validating, refining, and policing the cultural acts wherein the national narrative is performed' (1999 b, 33). As I discuss below with respect to Graham, criticism contains the prospect of future change, but as Smyth warns, it also imposes its own naturalizing order on political and cultural fragments. A notion, that as we discussed above, relates to diverse repressed political and cultural constituencies in Irish history.

Notwithstanding the critical and historiographic initiatives of groups like the *Subaltern Studies* collective, Smyth divines no genuine emancipatory prospect within postcolonial criticism in its current forms. In Smyth's view there is no liberation from the discursive web of colonial discourse, or, in Nandy's phrase, from 'the products of the imperial culture' (1983, iii). The representational, both political and verbal, liberation of subaltern or marginalized narratives through postcolonial or subaltern critical-historiographic strategies, is excessively conditional on the *medium* of liberation. In a conclusion that is resignatory in its relinquishing of effective critical agency, Smyth writes:

A strategy based on the parodic disruption of 'normal' relations can quite easily become the *sign* of marginality, a psychotic, exotic realm of activity beyond meaning and intention, drained of any potential for practical intervention. (1999 b, 43)



Smyth's conclusion recalls Said's earlier delineation of the institutional domestication of radical cultural theory within academic departments. Not only are marginality and liminality *contained* in their normalization as 'signs' of oppression, but as Said argues:

[t]he irony is that it has been the university's practice to admit the subversions of cultural theory in order to some degree to neutralize them by fixing them in the status of academic subspecialties. So now we have the curious spectacle of teachers teaching theories that have been completely displaced – wrenched is the better word – from their contexts. (1993, 389)

Smyth outlines, at length, the charges laid against post-colonial theory: 'its elision of history, its textual fetishism, its exorbitant prose, its inability to register outside the institution, and its lack of self-consciousness with regard to its own function within wider politico-economic temporalities' (1999, 212). In support of his argument Smyth has invoked Ahmad, who himself has concluded that the majority of post-colonial theory constitutes little more than a 'conversation among academic professionals' (Smyth, 1999, 214).

## **The New Essentialism**

In a specifically Irish context, as I have mentioned, Smyth has engaged with the work of Graham, and specifically Graham's critique of nationalism. Smyth contends 'if one important part of the critic's responsibility is to invent possible futures, another is to respect the integrity of the past, even those parts which we consider flawed or detrimental to our aims' (1995, 28). In Smyth's view, nationalism should not be excoriated entirely from critical analyses; while he acknowledges that its origins are of a derivative nature

this fact alone does not invalidate it as a viable discourse. He contends that these anti-colonial discourses of nationalist expression 'were necessarily altered when articulated to various forms of decolonising politics' (1998, 27). Smyth maintains that the re-constitution of nationalism within liberatory politics compromises any analysis focused exclusively on its derivative or imitative nature.

Smyth's conception of Irish critical theory is a suitable point of departure, to invoke his own terminology, as it will provide an apposite exposition of the manner in which he perceives postcolonial theory. Smyth contends that theory should not be permitted 'to dominate the critical process', but that it should be utilized 'as a point, or a series of points of departure for criticism' (1997, 25). By its very conception within and projection outwards from 'the centre', theory becomes implicated within binding discursive formations. Smyth admonishes against an unquestioning assumption of purely theoretical models in both literary and cultural criticism, and he advocates a form of praxis where the containing/prohibitive/trammelled nature of theory is eschewed; thus theory becomes a vehicle of differentiated potentials rather than a prescriptive praxis. In canvassing such a theoretical model, Smyth echoes the work of Gibbons, as we have seen, in urging for a historicized or deeply contextualized form of theory. As we shall see below, Smyth's theoretical *modus operandi* is underwritten by a belief in contingency and radical contextualization in the location of specific identities.

Smyth identifies criticism as a discourse that does not simply 'identify the links between culture and nation *after the creative act*' (1999, 33). On the contrary, he affords criticism a large degree of precedence and predominance in the process of identity-formation. The spaces for the actualization of creativity are cleared by 'the critical act'

(Smyth, 1999, 33). Alternatively, theory is deployed as a series of points of departure in which a radically contextualized criticism can open up discursive spaces allowing the primary acts of representation to be realized. In other words, theory refuses differentiation and is culpable in perpetuating the false orthodoxy of naturally constructed discourses. Smyth's 'points of departure' problematize purely theoretical discourses, as his work on spatial analysis will demonstrate. He highlights the constricted parameters/ends to which critical discourse is frequently seconded; in facilitating creativity and its reception, criticism sets the terms of engagement.

Smyth asserts that Ireland is 'possibly the first truly postcolonial state', a condition that is arrived at by the symbiosis of 'discourses of change and discourses of continuity', and equally through a perception of 'uncertainty as empowering' (1997, 179). Presumably the discontinuity and uncertainty are implicit in the destabilization of the profound homology of the political and the cultural, as tradition and modernity function dialectically within a nation-state in dialogue with its own discontinuous conception and uncertain prospects. The empowering dynamics of uncertainty therefore may be utilized in the emergence of a criticism, and hence creativity. Smyth's radical contexts, in the form of gender, sexuality, region, locality, and class, are inherently implicated in these discourses of discontinuity, as the contemporary uncertainty that they engender engages in an enabling symbiosis with the discourses of continuity. It is not a matter of jettisoning notions of nationalism, nationhood or colonialism, but of productively challenging these with the historical legitimacy of previously submerged discourses.

However, Smyth's contention, and attendant definition, that Ireland 'may be the first, truly postcolonial state' hints at two of the primary areas of debate in contemporary Irish cultural criticism. Firstly, to what extent is it reasonable or accurate to approach Ireland, including its political and cultural history, in terms of its *exceptionality*? This question is consonant with the notion of contextualization, a recurrent feature of Smyth's critical *oeuvre*; is it apposite to frame paradigmatic approaches to Irish history in terms of a strictly European context, or alternatively within a broader colonial/postcolonial context? Smyth's argument echoes that of Lloyd, in fact his terminology is almost verbatim, he asserts '[f]or although enthusiastically European in one regard, Modern Ireland is operating along a recognisably different historical trajectory' (1997, 174). Thus we return to a form of conceptual external association with respect to European history: *we are in, but we are out*. The argument proceeds that, while we *are* geographically located within an archipelago of peripheral islands of Western Europe, we are also potential constituents of the formerly colonized Third World. Indeed Gibbons has put it in such language, 'Ireland is a First World country, but with a Third World memory' (1996, 3). The assertion of our impoverished heritage in terms of contemporary affluence actually underscores the contentiousness of the exceptionalism argument. However, that is neither to say that there should be a form of historical-cultural homogeneity nor that there are not inherent intranational discrepancies. Given the immutable geographical facts of Ireland's proximity to Britain and indeed to the European mainland, we should not be reliant on the deployment of an over-deterministic colonial model.

Smyth also diagnoses Ireland as postcolonial by pointing to a degree of 'self-obsession', and he believes that as a nation we refuse to submit to broad comparative

analyses, facts that are deemed indicative/symptomatic of a protracted colonial concussion (1997, 176). However Smyth exhibits a level of theoretical simplicity in his deterministic contention that it is colonialism alone that 'continues to limit the possibilities of Irish identity decades after the onset of the postcolonial era' (1997,176). There is little doubt that a history of colonization does have profound after-effects, but blandly asserting that there is a unified monolith in the form of colonialism merely demonstrates the limitations of contemporary criticism in being unable to conceptually transcend or evolve beyond such simplified tropes.

While, as we have noted, Smyth's theoretical engagement is punctuated by several instances of over-simplification and occlusion, he has engaged in a necessary and developing meta-critique of Irish postcolonial theory. Smyth has provided a valuable, admittedly summary, critique of postcolonial theory, and he adumbrates its fundamental institutional bias, noting that, '[a]s the potential for critics and historians to engage with wider intellectual issues and scholarly endeavours has increased so a greater self-consciousness with regard to issues of methodology and archive has emerged' (1999, 211). Smyth notes the diversity of academic/intellectual participants in contemporary postcolonial theory, and he points to a tangible deficiency in current critical practice. While the borders of academic disciplines have been diluted in a multi/inter-disciplinary dialectic, the nature of this cross-pollinating discourse has not been conclusively critiqued. Although this interdisciplinary co-ordination may ostensibly seem unequivocally productive, and while it has the potential to foster heretofore-unrealized critical insight, the very fact of its academic location has yet to be thoroughly analysed.

It is Smyth's contention that it remains all too easy for theory, and the academics/intellectuals who engage with it, to remain aloof from social action and to avoid active, political participation. Postcolonial theory's 'exorbitant prose', then, is identified as the means by which it has become little more than an 'academic conversation'. Smyth's contention that postcolonial theory is characterized by a level of 'textual fetishism' echoes the work of Stephen Howe; Howe's thesis is founded on a rejection of the textual exclusivity of contemporary postcolonial theory in Ireland. However, Smyth's critique is designed as a theoretical corrective rather than a polemical caricature. The elision of the practical-political is achieved through this practice of textual fetishism, as an over-dependence on a political/cultural homology serves to preclude a materially active praxis. The inherent danger identified by Smyth is that there has been a 'reconfiguration of the *political* as merely a matter of reading/writing skills' (1999, 212). In other words, the imbrication of postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism has created a critical plain that is no longer cognizant of 'the material dimensions' (O'Dowd, 1988, 8). In Smyth's view so long as 'the material dimensions' are marginalized the possibility of creativity through discontinuity is diminished. Within his critical-theoretical purview, then, the containment afforded by 'sacrificing history to theory' has been embraced within Irish postcolonial criticism (1995, 28). The destabilizing possibilities of radical contextualization are avoided by maintaining a textual word-game wherein these natural affiliations remain untroubled.

Smyth identifies a 'new essentialism' operative within current Irish critical discourse; specifically he alludes to the recovery of nationalism by academics such as Kiberd and Richards. Through an apparent inability to formulate a conclusive Irish

identity in terms of postcolonial praxis, there has been a resultant resuscitation of so-called 'nation-oriented' critique. As we have discussed, there is an emphatic national thread to Kiberd's criticism; however it is engaged in a form of radical nostalgia that does not essentialize or idealize the past, but contrarily mines for the potent cultural dynamics of Irish history. These dynamics are neither fossilized nor museumized but are perceived as potential, contemporary informants for Irish political and cultural life.

### **Deconstructing Theory**

Graham is overtly engaged with the application of the methodologies of post-colonial theory in an Irish context. He is concerned with the notion that post-colonial theory may be appropriated and mutated in order to facilitate specific Irish conditions, and he is wary of interventions that 'pull the post-colonial into a rendition of Irish criticism that is primarily justified, rather than altered, by post-colonial theory' (1996, 62). Graham does not subscribe to the belief that post-colonial theory alters with each new context, nor that it is instantly amenable to diverse locations. Graham's conviction is based on an understanding of the theoretical implications of basing a theoretical paradigm on an overtly divisive concept such as nationalism, as he argues, 'the concept of the nation continues to circumscribe critical and theoretical discourses which appear to go beyond it' (1998, 237).

Graham diagnoses a peculiarly troubling facility in Ireland's proximate relationship with Britain; as both colonial victim and perpetrator, Ireland is signally a most fertile context in which to read Bhabha's subversive cultural politics. Concepts such as 'the fetish', 'mimicry', and 'hybridity' acquire singular valence within the Irish

context. Therefore it is on these bases that postcolonial analyses should proceed, not simply on empirical, ethnic, or geographical qualifiers or disqualifiers. Graham is indicative of a 'deepening' of postcolonial theorization vis-à-vis Ireland and its Anglo-Irish relations. In other words, more recent critical interventions are involved in two closely related discursive projects. Initially, there is evidence of a more concerted deployment of poststructuralist strains of postcolonial theory, as exemplified in the work of both Bhabha and Spivak. But equally the 'travel' of such high theory has not been without any level of caution; as I shall demonstrate, contemporary theory has seen the germination of an Irish metacritical discourse that expressly audits the suitability, application, and motivations preceding the employment of postcolonial tropes and paradigms.

## Metacritique

The contradiction inherent in this theory-and perhaps in most theories that develop as responses to the need for movement and change-is that it risks becoming a theoretical overstatement, a theoretical parody of the situation it was formulated originally to remedy or overcome. (Edward Said, *The World, The Text, The Critic*. 239)

In his introductory remarks to a 1989 interview with Bourdieu, Loic Wacquant refers to Bourdieu's edition *Homo Academicus*. Wacquant characterizes the text as 'a political intervention in the specific politics of intellectual life' (2). Bourdieu's ambition in producing a lateral, and empirical, review of the French academy was, Wacquant argues:



that the socio-analytic instruments he sharpens in this book can be used in academic struggles to help increase the autonomy of the scientific field and thereby the political responsibility of its participants by making them more aware of the hidden determinants that operate within and upon it. (1989, 2)

As Godwin's epigraphic comments highlight, critical curiosity can become a self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling pursuit. The premise, then, of Bourdieu's self-reflexive sociology is that an effective theory-as-practice can only emerge out of a self-reflexive academic/intellectual field. If theory is its own self-contained legislator, entrapped in an ever-present parsing devoid of *future* possibilities, it degenerates into a discourse of objectification. Critics of postcolonial theory come both from within and without the field, and from a range of academic disciplines and intellectual interests. These interventions operate at two levels, firstly at a constructive metatheoretical level, and less promisingly, in the form of strategic polemic. This section is concerned with the metatheoretical commentary that has emerged primarily within Irish postcolonial studies. The idiomatic form of postcolonial theory and the potential, or implicit, political implications and agendas of such theoretical language are signalled as the most problematic facets of the debates. In a sense, the urgency of metacritical interrogations of the politics and language of postcolonial theory is founded on Bourdieu's suspicion that:

the blindness of intellectuals to the social forces which rule the intellectual field, and therefore their practices, is what explains that, collectively, often under very radical airs, the intelligentsia almost always contribute to the perpetuation of dominant forces. (Wacquant, 1989, 18)

While Bourdieu's sentiments are, to my mind, excessively pessimistic, it does alert us to the encasing and structuring fabric of academic 'jargon'. Furthermore, metatheoretical

engagements must retain a consistent level of epistemological vigilance regarding their own linguistic operations and theoretical procedures. Metatheory is not matter of idiomatic lamination, but of ethical imagination.

As Graham argues:

On a metacritical level the question is: how does criticism of Irish writing proceed beyond the justificatory argument for the value of postcolonial paradigms and begin to deploy the strategies of such theories in ways which are sensitive to the contours of Irish particularities. (2002 a, 32-33)

Criticism, therefore, needs to evolve beyond the defensive postures of 'positions' and towards a realization that postcolonial theory is not, and never was, as insidious a political stratagem as has been widely canvassed. Instead, it is time to consider the potentially illuminative theoretical mechanisms within which one can read transcolonial analogies as well as illuminate, as Graham notes 'the contours of Irish particularities' (2002 a, 32-33).

Again, in a similar manner to Smyth, Graham is preoccupied with undermining prevailing ideological paradigms and he contends, 'the use of a cultural theory informed by postcolonial criticism denies or complicates such teleological frameworks' (1999, 4). Despite the micro-dialectic between both Smyth and Graham, their underlying theoretical frameworks are remarkably consonant. Graham's assertion that cultural theory, by implication postcolonial theory, 'locates moments of transience, instability and inauthenticity... [in order] to question the frame in which ideas of the state are articulated' (1999, 4), resonates with both Lloyd's concept of adulteration and Smyth's

intention of complicating the 'profound homology of political discourse and cultural discourse' (1995, 25).

Graham affirms 'postcolonialism now functions as a force in cultural studies which continually turns its attention to gender, class, ethnicity, race, and ironically enough, local history' (1994, 40); the notion of plurality and diversity in the theoretical constitution of postcolonial criticism is immediately apparent. But equally the simple fact of such diversity implicitly registers the temporal and spatial flux that is inherent to Irish cultural studies. By turning its attention to the aforementioned social relations, postcolonial theory cannot simply provide a universal theoretical template for, as an example, the concept of class in Irish society. In other words, these social relations are not conclusively *treated* in purely conceptual terms; having been the objects of 'attention' by critic-academics they are not simply put to bed. Thus, a more accurate and reflective cultural theory can only emerge through the employment of a concept akin to Smyth's 'radical contexts', which firstly recognizes the changing nature of these contexts, and secondly is fully cognizant of the tendentious and situated constitution of its own tropes and paradigms. In Graham's terms it is the ability to identify 'transcultural movements and interactions' (1994, 41), as well as a capability to look 'beyond the safe simplicities and binarisms' (1996, 33) which marks postcolonial theory as a potentially productive intervention in Irish culture.

Perhaps the most pertinent aspect of Graham's theory-as-practice is evinced in his critique of nationalism and the resultant dialogue with Smyth. Graham's initial argument centred on the understanding that:

[p]ostcolonialism is no longer bound to celebrate the advent of the nation at any point where it arises out of domination, and in recent years postcolonialism has been involved in constructing a critique of the ideology and praxis of nationality in the postcolonial world. (1998, 239)

Graham's thesis echoes similar critiques that have been undertaken by critics such as Lloyd, Richards, Kiberd, and Deane. He argues that a celebration of nationhood in the colonial world merely constitutes a celebration of an essentially Eurocentric discursive formation. As Benedict Anderson affirms 'the nation proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent' (1991, 67). Thus the theoretical urgency of postcolonial criticism is dictated by a desire 'to fracture the homogeneity of nationalist discourse' as well as to recognize the heterogeneity of nationalisms and to move beyond the underlying ideological constraints of 'the nation' as *telos* (1994, 40).

Deane has consistently referred to the ideas of origins and 'cultural invention' (Deane, 1990, 17) and likewise the Mexican novelist Octavio Paz strikes a similar note in his conceptualization of society and culture. Paz argues 'society invents itself by creating its institutions. To institute means to found, and society founds itself whenever it institutes itself as a culture' (1987, 145). Thus society becomes a language in Paz's formulation; he delineates a direct correlation between the evolution of political communities and their origins in forms of cultural and social conglomeration. Paz's analysis provides an instructive artistic/philosophical avenue of investigation in the present context, as both Smyth and Graham, indeed postcolonial criticism as a series of discursive practices, are keen to stress the possibility of a coincidence of/relationship between a universal theoretical resource and local politico-cultural heterogeneity.

As Graham outlines, postcolonial theory strives to expose the ideological texture of culture, 'postcolonial Irish cultural criticism would attempt to deconstruct the ideologies arising from colonialism and postcolonialism while believing that ideology inevitably constitutes culture' (1994, 41). Graham's critique is not a reactionary rejection of ideology *per se*, but represents a theoretical framework in which ideologies are productively deconstructed, in other words, under which discursive dominants are self-consciously re-presented and/or destabilized. By invoking Paz we might offer a tentative characterization of the task at hand in a putative postcolonial society such as Ireland. Through recognition of the ideological potentialities of culture it is possible to discern its employment by, and acquiescence to, institutional formations [state, education, church, media]. Accordingly, culture as a means of containment, or as Paz terms it 'as functional' (1987, 147), is employed in order to realize specific socio-political ends.

However, there is a liberatory and 'creative' element: social imagination, which represents a means of emancipating culture from its role as a mere 'social tool' (1987, 147). Graham's conception is that of a radical criticism that exposes the 'functional' to harsh critique/exposition and in turn provides a theoretical framework in which diversity can be imagined. Simply, he envisions a trope in which cultures can imagine and re-imagine themselves outside the oppositional teleologies of the ideological and the anti-ideological. Graham argues for a postcolonial criticism that can firstly 'prioritise cultural interchange' (1994, 41), and secondly that can facilitate the 're-invigoration [sic] of the dissidences of gender and subalternity, undermine the complacencies of historiography and move towards a notion of Irish culture which views the dialogic hybridity of 'Irishness' in empowered ways' (1998, 239). The liminality of Ireland's postcolonial

position, in Graham's view, demands a criticism that is capable of being a constituent of 'the social imagination [that] is the agent of historical change' (1987, 147).

### **Criticism, Utopianism or Futurology?**

In his essay 'A warmer memory: speaking of Ireland', Graham throws into relief the conceptual nomenclature of 'Irish Studies' and 'Ireland'. The materiality of cultural critique recedes, therefore, as the favoured deployment of paradigmatic typologies and conceptual tropes both envelope and distantiate any semblance of Irish 'reality'. Perhaps overstating the case slightly, Graham concludes:

The teasing gap between the modern and 'the non-modern', between concrete definition and continually deferred definition, has become such a trope of Irish criticism that we might wonder whether a fuller analysis of Irish criticism in the last century would not reveal this to be self-fulfilling function of criticism itself, rather than the inevitable and serious game of pursuit of national and literary explication which it again and again reappears as. (2001, 54)

By invoking Barthes' Michelet and Albert Memmi, Graham avers to the impossibility of critically 'representing' history from below – just as Spivak's subaltern cannot speak, can the endeavours of books such as, *Theorising Ireland*, *Reinventing Ireland*, or *Inventing Ireland* ever approximate to an adequate sense of 'Ireland'? He concludes, '[p]ut simply, if 'Ireland existed self-evidently, why would we need to examine it, contest it, invent it, state its anomalies, or write it?' (2002 b, 38).

In *Deconstructing Ireland*, he interrogates the dim intellectual prospect that Irish criticism has become an end in itself; that the induction of the reading strategies of post-structuralism and the attendant catachrestic theorizations have revealed little besides Irish

critics' fascination with Irish criticism and concomitantly a 'a 'cited', quoted version of itself [Ireland] which is both excessive and phantasmal' (Graham, 2001, xi). The multifarious impulses of Irish criticism have, in recent decades, crystallized around a series of identitarian binarisms. Salient issues of tradition/modernity; nationalism/unionism; postcolonialism/revisionism and 'the past'/'the future', ostensibly operative in oppositional voices have become entrenched in a cacophony of what might be called debate without genuine debate.

The will to radical self-critique is absent as a discursive uniformity and critical self-obsession produces a series of 'supposedly adversarial positions' (Graham, 2001, 52). In effect the degree to which 'supposedly adversarial positions' become entwined, in particular postcolonial theory and revisionist criticism, hints at a sense of mutual dependence: the vigour of 'opposition' reduces both to functions of each other's discourse. As Graham notes: '[t]he power of these repetitious patterns in Irish criticism is that in their phoenix narrative both the moment of destruction and restitution have a drama which postpones and drowns out other voices' (2001, 52). Criticism's multiplicity is silenced or whitewashed by the necessary assumption and/or allocation of aesthetic/political positions: an effective colour-coded index of Irish politico-cultural commentary.

Graham argues:

Giving 'Ireland' a meaning which fills out the term comfortably is seemingly the underwriting principle of Irish criticism's existence, with the aesthetic, the cultural, the generic and the 'minor' all given a presence within critical writing on Ireland by their contribution as slivers of 'Ireland', which are temporarily imagined as hived off from the undisrupted, unseeable whole. (2001, 66)

Implicit within Graham's overview of Irish criticism is the sense of ambivalence diagnosed by Smyth. Criticism is a primary function of identity-politics; equally it is invigorated with both consolidatory and liberatory capacities. However, behind the sense of expectation (Graham, 2001, 67), with its superficial transformative face, lies a debilitating experience of delay. The critical language of change mutates into an idiom of deferral, which can just as easily be construed as an ideology of (always already) delayed liberation. Between Smyth and Graham, it seems, we see the historical centrality of the critical act in the creation of cultural space, but likewise we are forewarned of its naturalizing and 'self-fulfilling' tropes. Eagleton, in fact, articulates the crux of Graham's critique, in his reflection on the nature of an emancipatory socialist praxis. Eagleton writes:

Socialism belongs to the capitalist epoch as much as does the stock exchange, and like any emancipatory theory is preoccupied with putting itself progressively out of business. Emancipatory politics exist to bring about the material conditions which spell their own demise, and so always have some peculiar self-destruct device built into them. (1988, 7)

Graham's argument, then, would seem to suggest that Irish cultural criticism inoculates itself against its own destruction. In extending its own life span, Irish criticism refuses to confront, or foment, the crisis of its own demise, without which it merely services circuitous abstraction.



## **A Devil's Dictionary of Postcolonial Studies**<sup>170</sup>

One of the most evident features, and most frequent criticisms, of postcolonial theory is its idiomatic language. Postcolonial theory is not alone in mobilizing such linguistic density and in fact it draws on much of its theoretical precursors, including psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction. However, it is apparent that critics of postcolonial theory have adduced a fatal paradox at the core of its deployment of such elusive terminology. Scholars such as Bhabha and Spivak employ poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and deconstructive readings in networks of catachrestic analysis in order to initiate a process of discursive, political and cultural ambivalence and subversion. These very theoretical interventions/manoeuvres, though ostensibly enabling and empowering, are derided as further alienating the exact constituencies they are designed to represent.

Freighted with the philosophical history and hegemony of western intellectualism, critics ask, how can such idioms materially cohere with the Third World subject? Further, is the idiomatic fabric of postcolonial theory a radical political agent, capable of *bona fide* social equalization; is it an ethical language that genuinely realizes or provokes concrete political liberation and/or representation, or is it yet another form of depoliticizing abstraction, of linguistic encasement? Bourdieu concludes of academic language, ' [it is] designed to dazzle rather than to enlighten, the academic livery of the word fulfils the eminent function of keeping the pupil at a distance. *E longinquo reverential*: respectful distance and respect through distance' (1994, 3).

For Bourdieu's pupil can we read the unrepresented, disenfranchized communities of postcolonial and neocolonial societies? Are the taxonomies of postcolonial theory

grounded in any form of sincere ethics, or are they constitutive of disciplinary/theoretical habit – habit that has no material purchase other than the perpetuation of academic orthodoxies? Of course there is a crucial difference between the close physical proximities of the teacher-pupil relations and the relative locations of the majority of postcolonial critics and the communities they seek to represent. However, Bourdieu's point remains apposite, whether the academic/theorist/critic is responding to a visible pupil or composing a theoretical treatise, there is an invocation of a 'manipulation of words' (Bourdieu, 1994, 4).

Even a cursory reading of many postcolonial 'readers' will impress with the circulatory nature of the theoretical terminology. This is not to say that postcolonial studies is not a highly enabling framework of literary and historical critique. But that it is exigent that those operating within the field develop a sense of self-reflexivity with respect to their discipline, its language and paradigms and their own position within the field. It is not the notion or conceptual paradigm of postcolonialism that constitutes the essential problem *per se*, rather some of the theoretical excesses or tautologies that operate under its rubric. Political change is effected in and through language, but never through tautology, ossification or fetishization. Again Bourdieu is illuminative on the nature of attenuated linguistic economies:

The ability to understand and to manipulate these learned languages – artificial languages, *par excellence* – where we see the natural language of human intelligence at work immediately distinguishes intelligent students from all the rest. It is thanks to this ideology of a profession that academics can vouch for professorial judgments as strictly equitable. But in reality they consecrate cultural privilege. Language is the

most active and elusive part of the cultural heritage which each individual owes to his background. (1994, 8)

Bourdieu portrays an ideologically based professional coterie of academics, whose hegemony is predicated on and preserved by a mastery of 'learned languages'.

### **Splitting the Subaltern or 'epistemological necrophilia'<sup>171</sup>**

In this his reputation was great, though perhaps not equal to his merits; for it happens here, as in other departments of human society, that, however the subalterns may furnish wisdom and skill, the principals exclusively possess the éclat. (William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 260)

In his classic 1794 novel, Godwin deploys a term that has generated, and continues to generate, a lateral theoretical conversation within contemporary postcolonial studies: subaltern. Godwin draws on the original etymology of the term, which has its roots in the sixteenth century and designated a low military ranking. Yet the plight and endurances of the protagonist, Caleb Williams, resonate in many of our contemporary critical debates. Effectively, Caleb becomes an affect of power, most obviously with respect to his master/pursuer, Falkland. Notably he undergoes processes of representational 'layering'; he discovers versions of his own narrative in rumour, gossip, in the blurbs on wanted-posters and in popular broadside publications. As we have seen, modernity/counter-modernity and speech/silence are dependent intimates; likewise the exercise of power is intimate with the experience of powerlessness. Centrality dissolves without the presence of marginality. From this perspective, then, Godwin's text is an

ethical and a critical forbearer of contemporary subaltern readings. It is neither a treatise on counter-hegemonic usurpation nor is it a celebration of the ethical superiority of disenfranchisement. Rather through the intimacy of power with its oppressed 'other', Godwin hints at the possibility of subversive alterity. Caleb possesses, in a Benjaminian sense, the narrative possibility to disrupt the surface of the 'present' narrative; his intimate knowledge of Falkland's murderous transgression is coeval with his own exile, persecution and misfortune. One of the lessons of Godwin's text, then, and the responsibility of the intersected projects of subaltern studies and postcolonial historiography, is the negotiation of an ethical, critical idiom with which to subvert the consistent 'writing over' of such marginalized constituencies by 'legitimate', authoritative discourses.<sup>172</sup>

## **Beyond Postcolonial Theory**

San Juan Jr. has produced a full-length polemic on the limitations of postcolonial theory, an edition ambitiously, and rather misleadingly, entitled *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*. The most provocative of San Juan Jr.'s chapters is his discussion of postcolonial idioms, specifically the deployment of Gramsci's notion of subalternity in historiography and cultural history. He argues:

In this sense, 'subaltern' becomes a moment in the strategy of a fundamental class striving for hegemony (consent armored with force) by establishing the 'integral state' via a political party as leader of a historic bloc striving to universalize an expansive, self-reflexive, critical world-view. (87)

What is perhaps most notable is the definitional or 'locational' conflicts written onto subalternity as a social, political, class, or gender constituency; as we have seen, from its etymological provenance as a sixteenth century military designation to Godwin's class-based deployment and through to Gramsci's Marxist mobilization. Latterly, as we have seen, subaltern studies, Lloyd and postcolonial studies at large have broadened, not always helpfully, the definitional resonance of subalternity. It no longer retains an *exclusive* class-based import, but in fact is danger of becoming an inert signifier of a universalized sense of oppression. Its theoretical utility rests, perhaps, as a signal of oppression rather than as a terminological embodiment of marginality.

Subaltern historiography is concerned, then, with a differentiated project of historical and literary representation; it is a diffusive ethical reading of wilful elision, distortion and control. Subaltern histories cannot become confrontational objects with which to oppose the ethical order of empire, rather they suggest the layered texts of historical narrative. These narratives are not preoccupied merely with reclaiming the text, but in effect they compromise the integrated text; they seize narrative space and time by demonstrating how the dichotomous narratives of imperial and civil society operate on false imperatives. Subaltern histories are signals of the concatenated narratives of modernity and counter-modernity. Or as Thompson writes, with respect to the emergence of English working class consciousness, '[i] am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the obsolete hand-loom weaver, the utopian artist, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity' (Yeo, 1998, 217).

San Juan Jr. further notes, 'Gramsci holds that subalternity is a condition marked by the absence of a will or project on the part of a social group to achieve an integral, organic, critical self-consciousness' (1998, 95). The *Subaltern Studies* historiographic collective, through its federated and regular publication of research papers, is assailed as attempting to appropriate or to ventriloquize such a 'critical self-awareness.' Representational mediation is charged as an insidious sequestration of individual and/or communal autonomy. The ethical issue thereby raised is, should no effort at historical representation be exercised? Is such a course more ethically pure than any effort at representation? Alternatively, do initiatives, such as *Subaltern Studies*, effectively accentuate the inarticulacy of subaltern constituencies, or is this inarticulacy a function of the effort itself? Are historical representations designed to fail in order to underscore the traditional marginalization or elision of historical communities and practices? The writing of history is a philosophical, ethical and literary task; it is emphatically not a matter of establishing integrated, fact-based narratives. Contrarily, the most pressing ethical concern of historical writing and writing on history is, and should be, the disestablishment of the mechanisms that inaugurate 'established facts.'

The represented constituencies of an historical narrative are 'voiced', but behind the unified historical enunciation are necessary, and resounding, silences. To invoke both Benjamin and San Juan Jr., then, subaltern historiography is concerned with interrogating the vocalized authority of historical utterance. It does so by tracing, or at least acknowledging, the enforced narrative silence that actually breathes life into the represented historical enunciation. Speech and silence, just like modernity and counter-modernity, are epistemological as well ontological bedfellows. Such a conclusion, then,

pertains to the theoretical idioms that manifest within subalternist readings, as the articulation of theoretical representation is also a matter of cultural politics. The ethical legitimacy derives from the attempt to expose both imperial and state-nationalist 'lies of silence.'

Neither postcolonial studies nor subaltern studies, then, are simply projects concerned with representation in language; as Spivak admits, even the return of linguistic representation is not successful. The languages of cultural and historical representation are frequently stained with the legacies of the diverse experiences of global and capitalist imperialism. In the end all relationships and dialogues are manifestly political, and perhaps the task is to successfully foment an ethical, self-reflexive awareness of these power relations/disparities, or as Gibbons suggests, to initiate dialogic relations that circumvent the structures of imperial authorities. These dialogues/conversations are not 'answering back' to the enunciations of power in any oppositional or reactionary sense, but are legitimate and radical alternatives based on, as Gibbons and Mallon suggest, alternative solidarity and non-hierarchical relations. It is the capacity and the willingness of postcolonial communities to recognize and appreciate their mutual silences as forms of resistant articulation.

The return of language does not necessitate a commitment to textual representation, but can, as I have discussed in Gibbons, Lloyd and Whelan, become a resistant performance in language, or [resistant performative language]. Indeed just as Amin traces the enactment of communal memory, the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire records an equivalent performance of resistance among uneducated and disempowered Brazilian peasants. Freire recounts:

The word struggle, for instance, aroused lively discussions among various groups at different *asentamientos* [individual settlements for the former tenants of large estates, the latifundium]. Peasants talked about what acquiring a deeper knowledge meant for them, specifically, the struggle to obtain the right to land. In these discussions they related a little of their history not found in conventional textbooks. To dramatize these facts not only stimulates peasants' self-expression but also develops their political consciousness. (1985, 26)

Freire's project facilitates a process of 'conscientization', wherein disenfranchized peasant communities and individuals become cognizant of their situation within an oppressive objective system. The point concerning my discussion is that the stimulus to self-awareness is not of necessity a textual representation, this can and does operate effectively, but it is records/recollections that both occur and are expressed 'outside' the official historical text that prove most subversive and enabling. The lived performances of identity and memory generate a sense of immanent and intimate possibility, a tactile, somatic sensation of resistance. It is a question of both spatial and temporal re-negotiation, as Chakrabarty concludes with respect to India, and in a way this brings us back to the interrogations of Scottish Enlightenment thinking by Gibbons and Whelan:

One cannot think of this plural history of power and provide accounts of the modern political subject in India without at the same time radically questioning the nature of historical time. Imaginations of socially just futures for humans usually take the idea of single, homogenous, and secular historical time for granted...I argue that this view is not an adequate intellectual resource for thinking about the political modernity of colonial and postcolonial India. (Chakrabarty, 2000 a, 15)

Freire continues, '[r]eading and writing words encompasses the reading of the world, that is, the critical understanding of politics in the world' (1987, 212-213). The postcolonial project, most effectively initiated by Said's *Orientalism*, mobilizes and



provokes political readings of cultural discourses as well as cultural readings of political discourses. The two 'reading' engagements are, however, co-terminous as the enactment of imperial power and dispossession was, and still is, subtended by a presiding politico-cultural authority. An awareness of the multifarious reading and writing strategies of imperial control is fostered through a critical consciousness of their explicit and implicit manifestation. The ability to 'read' as suggested by Freire is a matter of furnishing a degree of critical self-consciousness among the unrepresented or of tracing historical moments of conscious or unconscious anti-colonial resistance. Postcolonial reading and writing extends beyond the limitations of the integrated text; resistance and subversive representation [or the subversion of representation] inhabit the cacophonous silences that accentuate the register of the instituted historical text/voice.

### **An Irish Subalternity?**

The rhetoric of colonialism can only arise or manifest itself from within the colony or from contact with the colony; thereby the ideologies that came to characterize colonialism – racism, essentialism, tourism – can only be seen to become animated *during* colonialism. Thus colonialism, to an extent, creates itself, just as Deane and Said assert that cultures 'invent' or 'begin' themselves; the discourses that came to represent global imperialism were neither natural nor were they entirely preconceived. Likewise the tropes of cultural and postcolonial criticism must be designed, firstly, to problematize these colonialist ideologies, but equally the language and the theoretical concepts of postcolonial studies must not be assumed as natural and freestanding. Like the critic-intellectual who engages with it, post-colonial theorization must be fully cognizant of the

fact that 'intellectual work' also has its protocols' (Smyth, 1999, 217). The proliferation of terminology and paradigms within the corpus of Irish postcolonial studies, a diverse and by no means unified corpus, has introduced concepts such as hybridity, subalternity, mimicry, the other, space/place, liminality, and irony to debates on Irish cultural and political history. Nevertheless this discursive trend must not proceed in terms of a rarefied universal coda or insular definitions, but as Graham has correctly asserted:

Rethinking the concepts of irony, hybridity, mimicry the contact zone and transculturation in the Irish context will produce readings of Irish culture which arise out of a recognition of the claustrophobic intensity of the relationship between Ireland and Britain. (1994, 41)

In an effort to bypass the recurrent default to the concept of 'the nation' within Irish cultural criticism, or the blithe assumption of its meritorious intrinsic location, Graham examines the notion of subalternity, itself a laterally employed concept within the field of postcolonial theory. Graham re-iterates his constant theoretical refrain in his efforts to contextualize his discussion, he asserts, 'no longer can the post-colonial nation be regarded as a triumph of the labours of oppressed people...[the nation] is itself an over-homogenizing, oppressive ideology which elides the multiplicity of subaltern classes and groups' (1996 b, 365). Initially Graham's critique of nationalism, vis-à-vis its subsumption of gendered and subaltern discourses, rehearses many of the arguments formulated by Lloyd, and equally he recognizes the ostensible role of nationalism as a neo-imperial, conservative discourse. His critique addresses Irish nationalist discourse; Graham dismisses the most conspicuous manifestation of nationalist sentiment in the form of 'the overarching umbrella of Irish nationalism and its end-product state' which

constitutes a discourse of rationalization that is complicit in assuming and 'enforcing the subaltern status of women and other marginalized groups' (1996 b, 367). Graham's examination of Irish anti-colonial nationalism's evolution rather than its revolution echoes Lloyd's analysis of state-led nationalisms, which assume a hegemonic status in the 'postcolonial moment.'

However, Graham is not satisfied with Lloyd's critical alternative wherein he [Lloyd] 're-inscribes nationalism as a subversive force in cultural theory' (1996 b, 367). Lloyd's critique of nationalism is centred on the concepts of 'adulteration' and 'melancholy survivals', both of which are restless and residual manifestations of marginalized discourses. As we have noted Lloyd, like Graham, is committed to problematizing the homogenizing *telos* of the nation-state; he does not believe that the teleological result of nationalist struggle is necessarily enshrined in the formation of the state. However, as Graham points out, Lloyd fails to sanction any *telos* other than perpetual discontinuity and fragmentation, indeed 'Lloyd's understanding [of] nationalism [is] as always insurgent but never hegemonous' (1996 b, 368). As Graham correctly diagnoses, Lloyd's reading 'contorts the ideology nationalism by separating it from and fetishizing the concept of the state' (1996 b, 368). Equally, Lloyd constructs a corollary fetish of the subaltern itself by 'ethically endowing' the notion of subalternity (Graham, 1996 b, 368). Lloyd's interpretation is limited by his assertion of the presumed naturalness of the subaltern class and its fetishization as an ethically pure formation.

Tying the utopian ideal of Irish critical futurology to a specific metatheoretical concern, Graham notes:

Ethically endowing the position of the subaltern can lead to a revelling in the insurgency of nationalism or feminism which easily slides into a continuous and necessary restatement of their oppressed position. Indeed it forms an academic subject which would be lost were it to progress...Subalternity, decried as a politically unjust status by those who speak about it, will simultaneously function as an invocation of an unspoilt consciousness, pure because disempowered. (2001, 110)

Lloyd's inflection of 'subalternity' is, Graham notes, based on a presumption that the oppressed subaltern resides in a state of perpetual insurgency. Contrary to Gramsci's original explication of a counter-hegemonic subaltern, wherein seizure of the state was a material *telos*, Lloyd does not theorize any form of hegemonic consolidation or representation in a usurped state-formation. In re-negotiating the political animus of the subaltern class, Lloyd it seems institutes an ethical fetish; the oppressed remain unsullied by the demands or responsibilities of power. The purity of the subaltern is maintained by its renunciation of the perceived legitimacy of political hegemony; in effect it retains the romantic purity and the ethical superiority of a perpetual revolutionary location.

In tactically sidestepping the dichotomous relations of modernity/tradition, hegemony/counter-hegemony, Lloyd's subaltern recalibrates the ethical economy of postcolonial studies. Subaltern constituencies that embody this sense of ethical alterity populate Lloyd's modernities; the issue of power relations is not simply that of binary opposition, or perpetual insurgency, as Graham would argue. Lloyd's subaltern is not actively insurgent, but its very unconscious cultural practices are subversive, very often incommensurable, resistant effects.<sup>173</sup> Lloyd's inflection of 'subalternity' and his methodological adoption of subaltern historiographic practice are, effectively, misconstrued by Graham's insistence on the perpetually insurgent subaltern as a self-

defeating category. Just as Hobsbawm argues that peasant communities are 'pre-political people who have not yet found, or only begin to find, specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world' (1978, 2), so Graham's reading of Lloyd's subaltern retains a dichotomized paradigm. While Graham and Hobsbawm operate in remote disciplines, both fail to recognize the radical coequality of subaltern groups. Chakrabarty underscores such radical coequality when he offers insightful summative comments on Guha's subaltern project:

Guha insisted that instead of being an anachronism in a modernizing world, the peasant was a real contemporary of colonialism and a fundamental part of modernity that colonial rule gave rise to in India. The peasant's was not a "backward" consciousness, a mentality left over from the past, baffled by modern political and economic institution and yet resistant to them. (2000 b, 17)

Graham's critique of Lloyd's insurgent subaltern has been supplemented, latterly, by Emer Nolan's re-reading of Lloyd's engagement with Joyce's 'Cyclops' chapter in *Ulysses*. She concludes her essay by arguing, '[b]ut neither is it possible to interpret 'Cyclops' as a clash between modernity (nationalism) and antimodernity (subalternity)' (2000, 92). Again we witness a dichotomous discursive relation, Nolan reads the state (modern)/subaltern relation as one of oppositional antagonism. Earlier in the same essay Nolan offers a definition/approximation of subalternity and subaltern history. She writes, '[s]uch subaltern groups and their histories recede from the official narrative of nationalist history and are consigned to no more than the irrational cultural substrate of the rationalizing modern state' (2000, 79). The persistence of excess or irrationality does not denote archaism or anachronism, and as Lloyd convincingly argues, such excess is anterior to the rational impulse or modernizing *telos* of the modern state. If there is a

friction, it is derived from excess, or an inability to control such excess, rather than from debilitation into direct oppositionality. Nolan continues, '[f]or intellectuals are surely not confined to either a passive acceptance of the existing forms of the state or its utter repudiation' (2000, 90), such an assertion is self-evidently true and is, despite Nolan's inference, precisely the remit and the capacity of postcolonial studies, including its Irish variant.

The project of incorporating a subalternist perspective into readings of Irish history is not to enter a bi-vocal repudiation of the state or its historical narrative. Critics attempt to highlight its elisions, interrogate the motives for such elision and re-present the victims of such historical editing. The viability of political and cultural communities is not in question; the authority enshrined in the state and its role in both creating and essentially embodying attenuated political and cultural communities requires subaltern histories. In Lloyd's political and cultural schema subalternity constitutes a struggle for representation, political and verbal, rather than a simple struggle for hegemony.

Nevertheless, Nolan, reading through *Ulysses*, points to the tropic constitution of the subaltern condition. She notes:

[i]f *Ulysses* accords with the paradigm of subaltern history, it already illustrates the irony of such a history- in announcing that articulation has been denied to some, we necessarily articulate their case on their behalf. This is the difference between writing about subalternity (criticism) and being subaltern. Can a subaltern be aware of being so and remain subaltern? Or, more precisely, can such an awareness be articulated without loss of the condition which is defined by inarticulacy? (2000, 90)

From an ethical perspective, then, can, we respond to Nolan's question? A question that is a consistent, perhaps the most consistent interrogation of postcolonial subalternity. If

the subaltern is *coercively inarticulate*, mis- or non-represented within imperial or nationalist histories, then surely this constitutes a profound ethical and political strategy. Therefore in attempting to represent, to trace or articulate the histories of subaltern communities or individuals, postcolonial studies must signal an ethical criticism. Neither subaltern studies nor postcolonial theory at large are constitutively definitive or accomplished. Again we return to Kirkland's and San Juan Jr.'s caveats; both the language and the historical practice of postcolonial studies must resist the development or legitimation of 'containing metaphors.' Nolan's point is entirely valid, questioning as it does the ethical texture of a theoretical language and critical position, however such questions ultimately are characteristically limited. Postcolonial theory diagnoses ethical problems/disparities and has the potential to suggest alternative ethical frameworks; it does not and cannot prescribe definitive ethical solutions.

In historically re-presenting subaltern constituencies, there are clearly inalienable spatial elements; oppression is not simply enacted over time but, as Gramsci recognized, it unfolds within and between concrete, spatial and territorial contexts. Again reflecting on Gramsci's spatial conception of political struggle, Said notes:

[h]e thought in geographical terms, and the *Prison Notebooks* are a kind of map of modernity. They're not a history of modernity, but his notes really try to place everything, like a military map; I mean that there was always some struggle going on over territory. (Viswanathan, 2004, 195)

In accenting the spatial materiality of Gramsci's theoretical writings, Said reminds us of the need to police, discriminate and frequently to disown complacent idiomatic parsing in postcolonial analyses. Postcolonial studies can, and must, learn from the urgency placed

by Gramsci on the demands of what Said calls 'discrepant realities...on the ground' (Viswanathan, 2004, 195). Extending the notion of a spatialized subalternity to an Irish context, Whelan points to the subaltern value of Ireland's cultural landscape. Whelan considers such a resource as 'potentially a democratic document from which can be recuperated the history of the undocumented. In this approach, history is reconstructed by seeing the landscape through the eyes of those who made it' (1996 b, 127).

While there is a mitigating effect in articulating subaltern histories, the effort, when based on liberatory ethical principles, is preferable to an entire historical subsummation or elision/distortion/disenfranchizement. Lloyd locates moments of cultural, political and economic alterity within subaltern histories, and equally Amin's 'historical fieldwork' is a vital element of counter-modern narrative participation.<sup>174</sup> The meta-theoretical readings of both Graham and Nolan are reminders of the exigency of a self-reflective critical ethics within postcolonial studies and contemporary historiographic practice.<sup>175</sup> Critical language and critical practice, then, are emphatically not excused from the ethical economy of their own investigations. As Deane writes:

Like any academic endeavour, postcolonial scholarship needs to use generalizations and abstract categories; it is constantly in danger of creating its own theoretical universalisms. Thus various universalizing tendencies –political and theoretical- sit uneasily alongside critiques of universalism and a preoccupation with the local and particular. And postcolonial studies vacillates between two ethical imperatives – the advocacy of universal rights and the injunction to respect the other. The first can simply replicate imperialism, the second can lapse into ethically rudderless relativism. (2000, 13)



## **In Theory, Out of Practice?**

It is vital, then, to patrol and to examine consistently the relationship between the idiomatic representationalism of postcolonial theory and the material purchase of political and cultural actualities, without dissolving that necessary relationship. The crux of such theoretical debates depends on an adequate recognition and representation of marginality without reverting to any breed of textual, theoretical or representational fetish. As I have argued with respect to the interventions of Graham, Kirkland, Smyth, San Juan Jr. and Dirlik, a linguistic denotation of marginality is inescapable but cannot become an immutable signifier or typology of such marginality.

Graham's admonition is a prescient *caveat* for postcolonial criticism as a whole, he further concludes that '[i]f nationalism is subaltern only when it is unsuccessful (still insurgent, rather than in the process of forming the state), then there is a serious intellectual danger of celebrating the subalternity of subaltern groups' (1996, 368). While otherwise canvassing the utility of subaltern historiography, Prakash demonstrates an awareness of the limits or potential limitations of over-determining subalternity as a critical concept and as an historical constituency. Prakash argues, '[o]f course, the tension between the recovery of the subaltern as a subject outside the elite discourse and the analysis of subalternity as an effect of discursive systems was present from the beginning' (1994, 1480).

Just as Graham's reading illustrates, critics must be alert to the possibility of postcolonialism's 'subalternity' degenerating into a mere 'effect' of an academically constituted 'discursive system.' The diffuse/centrifugal valences of subalternity must not be sanitized or marketed as a theoretical 'ideal'; its position is not outside 'elite'

discourse but firmly within, hence its innate subversive potentialities. Accordingly, the fetishization of terminology and conceptual models for their own sake engenders/creates a situation whereby an academic conversation is complicit in the perpetuation of patronizing/dominant discourses rather than pursuing the productive deployment/engagement of postcolonialism's critical inquiries and paradigms.

Within historiography, it is not a question of divining transgeographical subaltern equivalences or types, but the resources of subaltern studies should be employed in tracing the effects of power, of navigating the counter-narratives of historical modernity, of unstitching the seams of developmental history in order to locate the disparate and local accretions of narrative elision and epistemic violence. Subalternity cannot become a mere adjectival anchor or containing flourish of idiomatic theorization. Instead it must be viewed as signal of marginalization rather than a generic type; subalternity can be viewed as an historical process or an effect of power. While it may be effectively voiceless within the system, in a Benjaminian sense, it has a proximate location to the present and hence a latent disruptive capacity.

Notwithstanding the ethical critiques of Gibbons and Mallon, the projects of postcolonial studies must perforce retain a sensitivity to the precarious relation between theory and the material conditions of postcolonial and colonial societies. One of the overriding issues that remains, and that should persist within postcolonial critical theory and practice, is the ethical question of what actually authorizes such critical analyses? As I have demonstrated, postcolonial historiography strives to articulate, often through the signalling of the impossibility of articulation, the accretions, moments and traces of subaltern or unrepresented political and cultural groups. While there ought to be a critical

self-awareness vis-à-vis the deployment of critical tropes and the nature of 'postcoloniality' itself, similarly the effectiveness of a representative postcolonial studies depends on a consistent policing of the ethical frameworks through which it operates. In other words, what is the basis or what are the ethical foundations that undergird the mobilization of critical tropes such as hybridity, subaltern, liminality, syncretism, mixing, and crossings? What are the nurturing values or ethical preconditions that bind and legitimate such brachiating cultural poetics? Approximating the current ethical positions of postcolonial critics, Alfred J. Lopez concludes, '[b]eyond poststructuralist academic exercises, the best postcolonial writings share a desire for agency, a willingness to stand *for* something, even if that agency and its object or focus are more ambivalent than their critics let on' (2001, 18).

Graham's argument regarding a homogenizing discursive/social formation is equally as applicable to the so-called postcolonial critical industry. Critical inquiry is in danger of stagnating through the canonization of a selection of theoretical terminology and/or homologies/vocabularies of criticism. There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of labelling disenfranchised or disempowered or marginalized social elements/communities, once 'named' they have become discursively sanctioned. By subscribing to notions of academic/intellectual/theoretical signifiers we further preclude/defer practical intervention by limiting the scope/remit of postcolonial studies to the theoretical plane.

Graham's re-situation of the subaltern as a conceptual tool of postcolonial critique, coupled with Kirkland's reappraisal of the deployment of hybridity within Irish cultural studies discussed below, provide prescient elaborations on previous theoretical

interventions. The evolution of recent theoretical debates to the degree elaborated on above is entirely necessary, in that it exhibits an ability and a will to engage in a form of self-reflexive critique. As McCarthy argues, and also Smyth and Ahmad, contemporary academic/intellectuals must appreciate the conditions of their own creation. Politics, academic paradigms, and theoretical concepts are never entirely mutually exclusive, and in examining broad politico-cultural entities and communities in contextualized terms we must also be cognizant of the need to pursue self-criticism in similar trajectories.

Cleary, perhaps, registers an affirmative challenge to the future prospects of Irish postcolonial studies:

[t]he point, finally, is not to adduce whether Ireland is or is not really 'just like' any of these situations since no two colonial sites are *ever completely identical*. It is, rather, to think the ways in which specific national configurations are always the product of dislocating intersections between local and global processes that are not simply random but part of the internally contradictory structure of the modern capitalist system [my emphasis]. (2003, 104)

Firstly, then, in squaring the disequilibrium between local and global forces Cleary refashions Kiberd's reflection on the relativities of tradition and modernity in a more economically biased idiom. His argument is congruent with many of the critiques heretofore exercised, urging that a competent postcolonial criticism neither caricatures Ireland as vacuumed within a patina of 'exceptionality' nor does it defer to dissimulating universalisms or theoretical predilection. In confronting societies through the prism of postcolonial methodology we accept that each context furnishes our work with differential conditions and histories.

However, this does not disqualify the possibility of 'cross-periphery dialogue'; manifestly we cannot operate within a dialectic of facile analogy, but nevertheless the structural relations of cultural dialogue no longer depend on vertical vectors. It is exigent that the spatial paradigms of postcolonial critique are reconfigured or re-calibrated along non-hierarchical trajectories. The interfaces of the local and the global, the traditional and the modern have produced a concatenation of political voices, not all of which register within historical or cultural maps of modernity; the task then of postcolonial theory is to attune itself to recovering and representing such elisions. Equally there is a need for dynamic self-awareness within theoretical commentary; despite potential charges of tautology or *cento*, the theory of theory remains, and within postcolonial studies will become, a central nexus of contestation, innovation and, notionally, clarity. As the theoretical and metatheoretical interventions of Irish postcolonial studies demonstrate, the task at hand is to navigate the ultimately disenfranchizing ethical endowment of critical language and an effective postcolonial praxis. These meta-critical caveats cannot in themselves function as *a priori* disqualifiers, but are reminders of the promises of an ethical criticism.

### **Free-play or Theoretical labels?**

Kirkland asserts:

Postcolonial theoretical terminology has become normative within Irish Studies...[for] many critics what is troubling in such a development is not merely the ethical or teleological imperatives of postcolonial theory but the fact that despite Ireland's status as one of the first nations to decolonize, the incomplete nature of this

project has, until recently, inhibited the development of what can be considered an indigenous mode of postcolonial thinking. (2002, 53)

As we have seen, one of the primary indictments of postcolonial theorization is its 'easy transferability', within which the concrete, material circumstances of postcolonial societies are elided or remain undifferentiated. Kirkland offers a suitably metacritical caveat to Irish postcolonial discourse, urging, 'that the postcolonial can be perceived through Ireland rather than, crucially, Ireland being perceived through the postcolonial' (2002, 53). While accepting the employment of broadly comparative theoretical models, Kirkland does so only in so far as the integral specificities of (post) colonial contexts are differentiated. Indeed, in deference to the materiality of postcolonial analyses, Kirkland resurrects Fanonian anti-colonial discourse. However his inflection of Fanon's discourse differs sharply from Kiberd's strictly modular version; such a modulated 'transfer' is an anathema to the specificity of place and sensitivity toward divergent material conditions canvassed by Kirkland.

Alternatively, he enlists Fanon's work in terms of its commitment to, and resolute belief in, 'the total liberation [which] concerns all sectors of the personality' (2002, 55). The postcolonial imperative is sanctioned to the extent that it addresses the diversity and particularities of given historical, colonial contexts. Postcolonial perspectives enable specific historical readings of specific colonial conditions, and postcolonial theory provides a battery of discursive resources with which to address these issues. Kirkland echoes Smyth in his conviction that postcolonial theory has compromised its integral, and founding, relation with 'decolonising practice' (2002, 62). As Lazarus argues, '[p]ostcolonial studies not only emerged in close chronological proximity to the *end of*

*the era of decolonisation*. It has also characteristically offered something approximating a *monumentalisation of this moment* [my emphasis]' (2002 a, 3).

## **Containing Metaphors**

At the core of contemporary Irish postcolonial criticism is the relationship between the individual and the institution. The readings of both Deane and Kiberd, for instance, are less concerned with the individual, than with furnishing 'binary models of analysis' (Kirkland, 1999, 214). Following Graham's disavowal of an 'ethically endowed' subaltern, Kirkland broaches another lexically postcolonial condition or typology: hybridity. By invoking the concept of hybridity, Kirkland firstly interrogates a key trope within postcolonial and cultural studies, and crucially examines its deployment at the level of institutional or academic discourse. What is at stake for Kirkland, then, is not only the radical deconstruction of hybridity as a viable critical trope, but equally the active forms it assumes within Irish postcolonial studies. The development of an effective meta-critique of postcolonial theory is at least partly predicated on the policing of both its terminological politics, and its specific and comparative applications. Thus, Kirkland's explication of hybridity, and its functions, is part of a larger critical project that is designed to foreclose the facile domestication and/or partial 'celebration' of postcolonial idioms. By encasing hybridity in a form of apolitical and celebratory pluralism, postcolonial critics endow artists with 'a prophetic function...one which operates at a level remote from 'practical politics'' (Kirkland, 1999, 223). Again, we return to the notion of discursive fetishization that canvasses the idealized margins or the purified peripheries.<sup>176</sup> Essentially, it is an effort to destabilize postcolonial theoretical tropes

within Irish literary and cultural studies, which can, through a process of normalization, disabuse criticism of its interventionist responsibilities.

Hybridity is canvassed as a potentially enabling and subversive discursive, as well as political, location within postcolonial studies. Its syncretic fabric is demarcated as a site of 'slippage' and cross-pollinated potency in both colonial and postcolonial societies. In contrast to strictly binary critiques of identity-formation, hybridity is perceived as a dualistic position of both/and in which, through a consistent deferral of identity, the subject is empowered. The indistinct or hybrid identity, then, operates within a Saidian or Foucauldian continuum in which naming or identity recognition constitutes a form of oppressive or controlling hegemony. The instability of reference thus enshrined in hybrid identities or cultures is perceived as a means of liberatory cultural politics.

For Bhabha resistance is located in repetition and displacement, rather than in direct opposition or contradiction. Within this framework the hybrid, or hybridity, become integral moments of affective subversion, Bhabha writes, '[h]ybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority-its rules of recognition' (1994 a, 114). The naturalized symmetry of self/other is dissolved in Bhabha's dialectic, as the anchored fixities of cultural differentiation 'are not simply *there* to be seen or appropriated' (1994 a, 114). Resistance is not a conscious investment in a language of subversion or opposition, and as such Bhabha's ambivalent resistance resembles the somatic silences of resistance expounded by both Gibbons and Minh-Ha. Rather than trace effective resistance to moments of open discursive confrontation, Bhabha's hybrid forms engender



dissembling instances of discomfiting ambiguity. Whereas antagonistic verbal or political confrontation/articulation accepts the centre as its locus of value, both the affective and the silent undermine in their refusal or indeterminacy. In this way the actual articulation of domination has embedded within it its own subversion, Bhabha notes:

The enunciative process introduces a split in the performative present of cultural identification; a split between the traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference, and the necessary negation of the certitude in the circulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as a practice of domination, or resistance. (1994 b, 35)

Ella Shohat juxtaposes the liberatory potentialities of Spivak's 'strategic essentialism', and cultural hybridity. Under the strangulating pressures of colonial dispossession, Shohat maintains, colonized societies and cultures have valid claims to 'compensatory originarism', a facility she defines as 'the strategic requirement to recover (or construct) a past, even if it is a partially imaginary one' (1995, 175). Confronted with the metrocentric discourses of poststructuralism and postmodern narrative incredulity, concrete re-enfranchisement is foreclosed. While the narrative scaffolding of oppression is dismantled under such critical appraisal, so too, Shohat feels, are avenues of minority resistance and representation. With such a contention in mind, Shohat argues against Stuart Hall, affirming that, 'the fact that identity and experience are narrated, constructed, caught up in the spiral of representation and intertextuality does not mean...that nothing is at stake, or that the struggle is over' (1995, 174).

Shohat's understanding of hybridity differs from Bhabha's mischievous poststructuralist readings of colonial discourse. Whereas Bhabha's hybrid is a function of the instability of reference inherent within the colonial enunciation, Shohat does not

attribute the same level of agency to the ambivalence diagnosed by Bhabha. While Bhabha's colonized communities resist in their affective compromise of the 'original', Shohat believes that '[a] celebration of syncretism and hybridity *per se* thus always runs the danger of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence' (1995, 175). Her reading of colonial hybridity, then, devalues the currency of its ambiguous performance, hence her invocation of an exigent, alternative 'compensatory originalism'. For Shohat, the hybrid is far too enmeshed within, and dependent upon, the act of colonial transgression. As Philip Darby concludes, and further critiquing Bhabha's resistant hybridity:

There is still, however, an evident reluctance to break from fixed anchorages. Even Homi Bhabha, whose work represents a new chapter in exploring the potentialities of hybridity and cultural change, is unable to dispense with the innate oppositions of the grand narrative. (1998, 224)

Despite the disruption promised by Bhabha's hybridity, both Shohat and Darby elicit the persistence of fixed identitarian categories. Bhabha may trace paranoia, mimicry and the dissolution of meaning, but, these critics ask, is his discourse prone to the re-assertion of binary thinking?

However, in an astute appraisal of such a discursive programme, Kirkland identifies serious elisions in what is ostensibly a liberating conceptualization. Kirkland adumbrates the proximity of hybridity and institutional self-propagation, he notes, 'the danger remains that in evoking the subaltern category within Irish cultural studies we merely buttress the prevailing academic discourse against its other by restricting the play of the hybrid to a *containing metaphor* [my emphasis]' (1999, 220). The self-

preservatory instinct of institutional practices, in effect, invents a malleable yet eminently controllable 'other'. In ostensibly tracing the evolution of a diffuse and potentially exponential politico-cultural dynamic, the institutional tropes of postcolonial theory merely sanction a trammelled/toothless and *purely discursive* typology.

Just as Graham registers the limitations of Lloyd's fetishized subaltern, Kirkland notes just such an operation in both Gibbons' *Transformations in Irish Culture* and Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*. Through a methodology grounded in cultural historicism, both critics point to the possibility of creative, and by extension political, liberation above and beyond both the rhetoric of traditional nationalist expression and liberal modernization. Kirkland's intervention, then, is motivated by the need to transcend any simple *recognition* of cultural hybridity. By merely registering the subversive potential of allegory, or adumbrating the Fanonian architecture of 'the literature of the modern nation', neither Gibbons nor Kiberd 'allow the recognition of the hybridized identity to question the frame of the relationships between subaltern, institution and nation' (Kirkland, 1999, 222). The hybrid is not an applied or generic term or state, but an unpredictable, ambivalent series of differentiated instances, processes, and utterances. Significantly then, Kirkland questions the sociality of the hybrid as operative within postcolonial theory, he concludes, '[f]rom an institutional perspective the postcolonial framework of the hybrid as it is emerging often appears totalizing and contextually insensitive due to an inability to recognize the full epistemological instability it engenders' (1999, 225-226).

In Bhabha's terms:

Cultures come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are vicariously addressed to – *through* – an Other. This erases any essentialist claims for the inherent authenticity or purity of cultures which, when inscribed in the naturalistic sign of symbolic consciousness frequently become political arguments for the hierarchy and ascendancy of powerful cultures. (1994, 58)

The political and critical force of the hybrid, then, derives less for its constitution as an antagonistic *unity*, than from its enactment as 'a state of being *in between*' (Kirkland, 1999, 219). Kirkland's critique of hybridity is not based on a unilateral rejection of its political potency, but rather on its apparent tenorial position within the academic institution. Rather than exploiting the provisionality of the hybrid or its transitory enunciative location, a hollow victory is construed through the metaphoric representation of marginality. Young captures the dislocating nature of Bhabha's, and by derivation Kirkland's, inflection of hybridity, '[h]ybridity here becomes a third term which can never in fact *be* third because, as a monstrous invention, a miscreated perversion of its progenitors, it exhausts the differences between them' (1995, 23).

The danger, as diagnosed by Kirkland, is that the 'exorbitant prose' of postcolonial theory is becoming more sequestered within a containing lexicon of its own making (Smyth, 1999, 212). Through the creation of an attenuated theoretical idiom of concepts and paradigms, the gap between postcolonial and decolonizing practice, and postcolonial theorization is widening. Consequently, the very real instability and heterogeneity of 'the local space' is elided. Kirkland's express scepticism concerning the deployment of a truly subversive hybridity, coupled with Graham's wariness about the ethically endowed subaltern, brings into focus one of the principal problematics of

contemporary Irish, and international, postcolonial criticism (Spivak, 1990, 142). Just as we have noted a form of academic institutionalization and intellectual specialization within postcolonial studies, such a discursive imbroglio has also occasioned/precipitated a form of terminological orthodoxy. A taxonomy of postcolonial concepts has developed wherein the theoretical tropes have become signifiers for diverse socio-political groups.

The facility to cast oneself as 'subaltern', 'hybrid', or 'marginalized' has become a *sine qua non* of postcolonial respectability; it is a situation in which 'terminology-as-type' is operative. The task, then, as articulated in an Irish context by Kirkland, Graham, and latterly Connolly, is to re-present the tropes and paradigms of postcolonial criticism in less trammelled and politically ineffectual guises. In effect, 'an awareness of the hybrid, the heterogeneous and the anomalous should not be the catalyst for celebration', but should produce a criticism that reneges such containing fiats in favour of a more participatory cultural politics (Kirkland, 1999, 225-226).

As Bourdieu notes, 'the output of an academic system, on the other hand, is determined by the absolute or relative quantity of information transmitted through language. For there are few activities which consist so exclusively as teaching in the manipulation of words' (1994, 4). The valorization of postcolonial perspectives by literary departments accentuates the rapport between institutional power structures and linguistic academic reading. While Bourdieu, in this case, examines the teacher/student relationship in the French higher educational system, his signalling of the linguistic excess of academic teaching, and for my purposes critique, neatly intersects with Kirkland and Graham's admonishing reading of current postcolonial nomenclature and practice.

Kirkland's is a legitimate point; the dispatching of uncritical terminology is inherently retrograde within any analytical and political discipline. Indeed it is an issue directly alluded to by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam:

A celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated with questions of historical hegemonies, risks sanctifying the *fait accompli* of colonial violence...As a descriptive catch-all term, 'hybridity' fails to discriminate between diverse modalities of hybridity: colonial imposition, obligatory assimilation, political co-option, cultural mimicry and so forth. (1994, 42)

In celebrating 'hybridity' or politico-cultural diversity, the critic must be cognizant of the terms of celebration, both the epistemological terms and literally the idiomatic terms. Again we return to the drama of critical ethics; objectification through categorization serves a debilitating and futile political project. The construction of or 'writing' of hybridity remains a question of power and by investing a critical term with an over-determined liberatory valence, postcolonial theory may in fact, to paraphrase Gibbons, continue to travel roads 'patrolled by global powers' (1996, 180).

Kirkland, Graham and Connolly consummately outline the pitfalls and limitations of propagating postcolonial 'containing metaphors', but Bourdieu goes much further. While we can point to a strategic control exerted by postcolonial theorists over un(der)represented constituencies in terms of a distancing academic taxonomy, Bourdieu avers to a subjective insecurity and self-interest in operation within academia. If we supplement the caveats of the Irish critics with Bourdieu's reading, academia seems a riot of political manoeuvres. Not only is the language of academic theory capable of calcifying liberatory aspirations in diverse postcolonial societies, Bourdieu goes on to argue:

the lecturer who foregoes the marvels of professorial language and gives methodical and explicit presentations risks appearing as a primary school teacher who has strayed into higher education or as a non-conformist who will also find the institution turned against him, even though he has answered real needs and unacknowledged expectations. (1994, 14)<sup>177</sup>

The initial part of Bourdieu's formulation deliberately verges on the absurd, yet it does retain a certain currency in that it manifests the desire for adequacy within the academic profession. And again while it is an extreme exemplification, it raises the key issues of control and time as essential facets of academic power; perception as a 'primary school teacher' is an inadequate store of symbolic capital [an inappropriate habitus within the field] and therefore precludes consecration. The latter part of the argument is germane to Irish academic discourse, indeed all forms of institutionally based organizations. Bourdieu introduces a basic ethical dimension to his explication of academic discourse by addressing the sincerity of its motivations and methods. He inquires as to whether academic language is primarily a mechanism for communication, a mechanism of pedagogical instruction or alternatively a mode of tautological self-preservation, intimately bound to the processes of careerist advancement and the dialectic of consecration? Similarly we can pose a corollary question, is the language of postcolonial theory capable of, and are critics interested in, moments of political, economic and social improvement? Again the idiomatic theory must consider its own ethical position; can postcolonial studies sustain itself on an attenuated battery of typologies? The self-reflection of academics on their institutionally based and contingent positions can only proceed in concert with a complementary interrogation of its reading and writing mechanisms. Again Bourdieu reflects on the dynamics of the teacher-pupil axis:

In short, research into the causes of the linguistic misunderstanding which characterizes the teaching relationship must extend to the functions which this failure serves in perpetuating the system. Every effort to transform the system which is not accompanied by an attempt to transform attitudes towards the system (and conversely) is doomed to failure. (1994, 3)

Such an attitude is equally relevant to the system of Irish postcolonial studies; are linguistic and theoretical density the problem or merely agents/functions of a more lateral issue?

Clearly, then, intellectuals become tenured within institutionalized formations; at a 'macro' level we note the specialization of academic labour, and increasing alienation and/or suspicion within and between academic disciplines. Simultaneously, there is a definite institutionalization of critical tropes and methodologies, as political affiliations and investments impede on the gestation and application of competing cultural theories. The institutionalization of Irish Studies, within which postcolonial criticism is operative, precipitates homologies of *legitimate* discourse. A familiar vocabulary of intellectual practice evolves through sanctioned academics, approved journals, and hermetic conferencing. As Kirkland diagnoses critical theory frequently operates with its own interests in mind, the 'containing metaphors' of academic diction, in this pessimistic view, promise little more than attenuated and conditional identities (1999, 220).

Howes and Attridge make a similar point, '[l]ike any academic endeavour, postcolonial scholarship needs to use generalizations and abstract categories; it is constantly in danger of creating its own theoretical universalisms' (2000, 12). One of the signal necessities of future postcolonial theoretical debate and praxis is a policing of such abstraction. As it is a constitutively ethical discourse, postcolonial studies must navigate



the ethical terrain between advocacy of *universal* rights and the enfranchisement the marginalized. While critics of postcolonial criticism, literary history and historiography cite its terminological and philosophical dependence on 'Western' epistemology, the subversive potential of postcolonial studies resides in the location and enactment of alternative and catachrestic readings of modernity, resistance, power and representation.

In Bourdieu's dialectic the theoretical is inoperative without a logic of practice. Wacquant further asserts:

Like method, theory properly conceived should not be severed from research work that nourishes it and which it continually guides and structures...Bourdieu wishes to recover the practical side of theory, as a knowledge-producing activity...[w]hat he stands poised against is theoretical work done for its own sake, or the 'institution' of theory as a separate, self-enclosed, and self-referential realm of discourse – 'logology', that is, 'words about words.' Bourdieu has little time for *conspicuous theorizing*, freed from connection to the practical constraints and realities of empirical work, and he shows little sympathy for the splitting of Concepts and their endless rearrangement [my emphasis]. (1992, 30-31)

Quite simply Bourdieu eschews as futile any project that proceeds on the basis of perpetual idiomatic and conceptual parsing. In the context of Irish postcolonial studies there is no great leap of critical imagination demanded in order to appreciate the relevance and resonance of Wacquant's summative comments on Bourdieu. Again Wacquant re-iterates the first principles of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, accenting the theory-as-practice equation. The issues at stake for contemporary Irish postcolonial studies are twofold. Firstly, to what extent is the corpus of postcolonial inquiry, as it currently proceeds, a fashion of 'logology', in the sense that revisionist critics are apt in their derision of a textually confined methodology? Equally, if we reject the above

criticism, and proceed on the grounds that postcolonial methodology is of an intrinsic worth as a series of reading and writing strategies, how can we arrest and/or foreclose the development of tautological meta-criticism? The challenge, as delineated by Bourdieu, is to ensure that postcolonial theoretical readings of culture, politics and economics assume levels of material register. The task, then, is to critically measure the currency of this metacritical conversation and to evaluate whether or not it registers as a genuinely enabling theoretical argument, or if it recedes into the realms of 'conspicuous theorizing' (Wacquant, 1992, 30-31).

## **Tropical Postcolonial History**

White's tropological exegesis of disciplinary historiography extends beyond his interrogation of the textual figurations of historical representation. His metahistoriographic commentary is also relevant to debates on academic disciplinarity and the politics of academic discourse. Writing on the disciplinarity of history, White concludes:

Every discipline, I suppose, is, as Nietzsche saw most clearly, constituted by what it *forbids* its practitioners to do. Every discipline is made up of a set of restrictions on thought and imagination, and none is more hedged about with taboos than professional historiography – so much so that the so-called "historical method" consists of little more than the injunction to "get the story straight"...and to avoid both the conceptual overdetermination and imaginative excess (ie., "enthusiasm") at any price. (1985, 126)<sup>178</sup>

Sober narrative emplotment, in contrast to 'imaginative excess', provides a suitable facility for the representation, in Rankean terms, 'of what really happened'. White

diagnoses a political animus in what is, purportedly, a non-ideological record of detachment and plain speech (1985, 127). The presiding myth of historical writing, and that subscribed to by 'professional historians', is the essential transparency of language, its capacity as a non-ideological vehicle of representation. There are not only political motives behind *what* is studied and recorded, but these coalesce with *how* events are represented. Facts are allied to empirical representation, jargon on the other hand facilitates, '[the] ideological deformation [sic] of the "facts"' (White, 1985, 134). White's discourse extends to the field of [Irish] postcolonial studies, as many of the debates, as we have seen, centre on the tension between the deployment, and usefulness, of 'florid' language and representational accuracy.

Not only, then, have White's ideas on the nature of historical writing and professional historiography deeply influenced the micro-theoretical interventions of postcolonial historiography, they concisely contextualize the broader critical/linguistic politics of academic disciplinarity. Pre-figuring the work of Irish critics such as Deane, Lloyd, Graham, and echoing Bourdieu, White underlines the ideological fabric of all representation and representative devices:

The issue of ideology points to the fact that there is no value-neutral mode of emplotment, explanation, or even description of any field of events, whether imaginary or real, and suggests that the very use of language itself implies or entails a specific posture before the world which is ethical, ideological, or more generally political; not only all interpretation, but also all language is politically contaminated. (1985, 129)

The recognition of language's omni-political nature is, then, a first step in negotiating a more inclusive ethical critical language. Eschewing confrontation with this ideological

texture or simply disavowing such a possibility is, in Bourdieu's terms, failing to exercise 'epistemological vigilance'. In such a conclusion, the lateral ideological import of language as representative and creative device undercuts the argument that it is *only* the strategic or abstracted idiomatic language that performs a politically evasive function. White's argument actually extends beyond Bourdieu's castigation of precocious academic discourse, as it places all texts and communicative exchanges in an ideologically relative context. Countering claims to the objectivity and linguistic transparency of historians, White finally concludes, '[w]hat they fail to recognize is that ordinary language itself has its own forms of terminological determinism, represented by the figures of speech without which discourse itself is impossible' (1985, 134).

### **Postcolonial Criticism: Crisis and Solidarity**

Moore-Gilbert proposes an oscillating and interdisciplinary relation between postcolonial studies and imperial history. Dispelling the viability of disciplinary discretion and mutual abstraction, he suggests that this discursive axis is better conceived of in terms 'of a healthy disputed border area, which simultaneously brings together and keeps distinct the fields of knowledge in question' (1999, 409). Equally Moore-Gilbert dispels any notion of full disciplinary integration, correctly anticipating that either discretion or frontal integration would alleviate any sense of critical crisis, out of which theoretical, or possibly political, alternatives might accrue. It is a point underlined by Spivak, as she argues, '[t]he performance of these tasks, of the historian and teacher of literary studies, must critically "interrupt" each other, *bring each other to crisis* [my emphasis]' (1987, 241). This view confirms Paul de Man's contention that 'the notion of

crisis and that of criticism are very closely linked, so much so that one could state that all true criticism occurs in the mode of crisis' (1989, 8).

Both Spivak and Moore-Gilbert impress the ethical responsibilities of critical intervention. Through the induction of crisis, critical engagement destabilizes the unitary, and unifying, impulses of 'normalized' disciplinary, as well as political and cultural, modalities. In de Man's terms, such criticism brings itself to crisis as it reflects upon its own genealogy. Similarly, in diagnosing the urgency of such critical mobility, Spivak and Moore-Gilbert underline the exigency of *denaturalizing* the practices of discrete disciplines through exposure to, interaction with and understanding of alternative discourses. It is not unreasonable to suggest, then, that this disciplinary exchange has an ethical corollary in Gibbons' notion of cultural 'lateral mobility', or in Mallon's 'non-hierarchical dialogue'. What all of these approaches have in common is the fact that none are grounded in the production of sameness, or in the installation of bland analogies.

The encountering of difference does not foreclose solidarity emerging out of shared experiences of oppression. In the mobile, ethical disciplinary and theoretical dialectics summarized above, conversant strangers foment a sense of generative crisis. Effectively crystallizing such a point, and in discussing Burkean notions of justice and ethics, Gibbons invokes Uday Singh Mehta:

[a]s Uday Singh Mehta argues, it is not that Burke is rejecting reason, but his purpose is 'to enlarge its ambit, to make it social and more passionate and more informed by the uncertain vagaries that attend and inform experience'. This provides for a more grounded, alternative cosmopolitanism in that 'it holds out the possibility, and only the possibility, that through the understanding of what gives experiences their meaning two strangers may come to converse with each other, perhaps befriend

each other, perhaps disagree with each other, along with the myriad other eventualities that structure where a conversation may lead and end up. (2003 b, 178)

The 'myriad other eventualities' are precluded if discretion or insularity prevail and the conversation is never sparked into existence. Moreover it is this 'outward' impulse that provokes Susan Stafford Friedman to register a similar contention, she concludes that ' "[t]ravel" elsewhere to other disciplines can stimulate new ways of thinking about home, particularly as learning about others dislocates, disorients, and disturbs. Travel elsewhere denaturalises home' (2001, 507-508).

Nicholas Dirks dispels the myth that colonialism was, in fact, a unified, paradigmatic concert of ideologies, which were systematically and consciously administered from a metropolitan centre. Rather, Dirks, argues, '[i]t [colonialism] was a moment when new encounters within the world facilitated the formation of categories of metropole and colony in the first place' (1992, 6). This is not to say a that spirit of magnanimity or benignity subtended colonialism, Dirks continues:

But colonialism was not only good to think. The world was full of incentives for accumulation of all kinds, from knowledge to spices, from narratives to command posts. There were compelling reasons to invent systematic beliefs about cultural differences, unifying such disparate projects as the precarious formation of national identity and the relentless exploitation of economic resources. (1992, 6-7)

Colonialism, then, cannot be interrogated through discursive strategies that depend on its transhistorical or transgeographical homogeneity for their critical purchase. Arguing with respect to Irish colonial history, Cleary asserts a similar point to that of Dirks. Cleary accents the contextually disparate experiences and legacies of various forms of colonialism, rejecting any templative reduction of the histories of colonialism. He notes,

'[d]espite the fact that they share certain fundamental similarities, different colonial histories have their own distinct textures and contours, something that attempts to elucidate a 'classical' colonial condition inevitable efface' (2003 b, 56). While not diluting local or regional experiences of imperialism, in terms of chronology, race, geographical location, or indeed varieties of imperialist expansion, Cleary diagnoses the presence of cultural affinities between postcolonial societies. For Cleary, the values of a postcolonial paradigm are lodged in this very fact: differentiated heritages of imperialism can avail of a vertiginous battery of critical resources without succumbing to a modular homogeneity.

Cleary's reading of the similarities and differences between diverse colonial crucibles is emphatic of postcolonial studies' critical oscillation between the local and the universal. Furthermore, it re-capitulates both Lloyd's and Gibbons' assertion of *difference* as a primary indice of postcolonial theoretical and ethical projects. The differential, and differentiating, projects of postcolonial studies, then, are alternatives to the homogenizing unities of modernization. Chiming with Cleary, Lloyd and Gibbons, Makki concludes:

in this new geopolitical configuration, hegemonic knowledge was recast in order to make 'sense' of the new global order. The opposition between 'civilised' and 'primitive', which had been intrinsic to justifying colonisation at the height of imperial incorporation, was no longer viable. The formerly colonised had to be brought out of the dialectics of colonial difference into a universalising discourse. (2004, 155)<sup>179</sup>

Cleary's nuanced assessment of colonial histories succinctly counters Smyth's earlier *categorical* statement that Ireland is quite possibly emerging as 'the first truly

postcolonial state'. In Cleary's view it is the very differential fabric of colonialism itself that sanctions Ireland's inclusion within postcolonial theoretical discourses. To use Graham's phrase, Ireland's 'liminal' relation to colonialism is not, in fact, as exceptional as is widely imagined. Cleary states:

This mutual entanglement of colonial and metropolitan imperial histories is not at all exceptional; it is in fact a commonplace of modern imperial history. What it does suggest, however, is that twentieth century Irish social and cultural history remains closely bound up with the wider history of empire and imperialism. (2003 b, 56-57)

In establishing postcolonial studies as the discursive opponent of modernization theory, Cleary suggests that the animus of postcolonial studies is to 'determine how Irish social and cultural development was mediated by colonial capitalism' (2003 a, 43). In other words, the mediating macro-structures of global capitalism must be interrogated in terms of their accreted local legacies across an international range of postcolonial societies. Again in an idiom that resembles both Gibbons and Mallon, but that infers a more economic methodology, Cleary notes 'postcolonial studies impels Irish Studies in the direction of *conjunctural global analysis* [my emphasis]' (2003 a, 44). However, cultural discourses remain a crucial facet of postcolonial analyses, in Moore-Gilbert's view they are 'indispensable for a full understanding of the histories of imperialism' (1999, 398). And it is a fact not lost on Cleary; yet while he factors in the contributive share of cultural analysis, it ultimately remains secondary to 'the internally contradictory structure of the modern capitalist world system' (2003 a, 45).

Barbara Christian vocalizes the widely held suspicion that literary critical theory, from which many of the projects of contemporary postcolonial studies initially sprouted,



is merely a re-packaged authoritarian orthodoxy. In this, and as I discuss at length in chapter nine, Christian echoes many interlocutors of postcolonial studies. She feels that:

[t]he new emphasis on literary critical theory is as hegemonic as the world which it attacks. I see the language it creates as one which mystifies rather than clarifies our condition, making it possible for a few people who know that particular language to control the critical scene—that language surfaced, interestingly enough, just when the literature of peoples of color, of black women, of Latin Americans, of Africans began to move to 'the centre'. (1995, 459)

Christian's conclusion concisely records some of the most transparent problems of postcolonial studies' critics. Despite a legitimate, almost Bourdieuan characterization of academic capital, Christian's portrait of a synchronized postcolonial conspiracy of domination over emergent, 'new' literatures is both reductive and paranoiac. Equally, and this is a point resolutely rebutted by Cleary, Christian attributes an excessive degree of instrumentality and uniformity to theoretical readings of emergent, marginal literatures. While there is a merit to her metatheoretical commentary on the hegemonic possibilities of critical orthodoxies, Christian's argument seems oblivious to both the theoretical and geographical differentials accommodated within contemporary postcolonial studies. Of far more utility is Cleary's conclusion:

The point, finally, is not to adduce whether Ireland is or is not really 'just like' any of these situations, since no two colonial sites are ever completely identical. It is, rather, to think the ways in which specific national configurations are always the product of dislocating intersections between local and global processes. (2003 a, 45)

Wills draws an important distinction between the theoretical excess, and interpretive evasion, of postmodern readings and the catachrestic strategies of postcolonial readings.<sup>180</sup> She writes:

*The refusal of communication, the resistance to interpretation, the parody of privacy through secrecy* is directed outwards...[f]or the fragmentation of historical narrative, and the parody of public or official forms of discourse have a very specific function in colonial and post-colonial cultures; they are not necessarily, or not only, the signs of a global postmodernism [my emphasis]. (1993, 76)

While the two may, in theory, coalesce in strategies of incredulity, Wills' differentiation underscores the ethical responsibilities of postcolonial studies. Equally, her brief citation of discursive modes, as highlighted above, registers the alternative routes undertaken by postcolonial critiques. Specifically 'the refusal of communication' is suggestive of subaltern readings and the somatic resistance touched on by Gibbons, Lloyd and Minh-Ha. Finally, Wills' cursory précis intersects with the ethical duties of postcolonial critics and historians, as outlined latterly by Whelan. Alluding to the discrete responsibilities of postcolonialism and postmodernism, Wills' comments foreshadow Whelan's, already cited insistence on the need for 'trust in testimony, in the expressive function of language, in the moral power of narrative, enables 'an ethics of discourse' (2003 e, 108).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **‘giddy innovation and restless vanity’: Critiquing**

#### **Postcolonial Studies<sup>181</sup>**

‘Culture’ has been foregrounded as a topic in our time partly because of the growing importance of ethnic minorities in the west consequent on the globalization of capital, but also because it has become for the first time in history a major force of material production in its own right. It is also a natural stomping-ground of intellectuals, who can find outlets in this field which are denied to them by the political deadlocks of our time, and thus can act as a form of theoretical displacement as well as of political enrichment. (Terry Eagleton, *Crazy John and The Bishop*, 326)

The site of struggle within fields, however, is not just over possession of capital but over the very definition of what capital is at stake and what is valued...Social fields are structured by the differential possession of forms of capital but individuals are also motivated to increase their possession of this capital. There is, therefore, a dynamic process of a reproduction of social fields. (Lisa Lucas, *The research ‘game’: a sociological study of academic research work in two universities*, 103-104)

As once the circus was needed to counterbalance the Gradgrindery, so now Gradgrindery may be what is needed to counterbalance the Rousseauistic free-for-all that our subject has become. (Jonathan Bate, ‘Navigating the Circus of Fancy’, 23)

**'Weetabix Theory'**<sup>182</sup>

In their editorial introduction to the first issue of *Postcolonial Studies*, Sanjay Seth, Leela Gandhi and Michael Dutton readily acknowledged the recent, and still apparent, ascendancy of postcolonial criticism within university teaching and research:

Once counter-canonical and enablingly amorphous in its motivations, the postcolonial has now acquired institutional validity. Respectable, popular, publishable and pedagogically secure, it is time for postcolonialism to become self-critical and introspective and, so also, to resist the seductions of canonicity and disciplinarity...It [*Postcolonial Studies*] hopes, once again, to facilitate a critique of knowledges rather than to become the triumphant purveyor of a new epistemic orthodoxy. (1998, 9)

The preceding chapter illustrates that there is a lateral recognition of the elevated 'stock' of Irish postcolonial studies, but more importantly the interventions discussed demonstrate the willingness of Irish critics to constructively foreclose the possibility of theoretical ossification or philosophical triumphalism on the part of Irish postcolonial studies. Rather than operate as a form of knowledge that produces definitive answers, Irish postcolonial studies continually poses radical questions of established forms of knowledge and modes of representation. As Seth, Gandhi and Dutton elaborate, these questions must also be continually focused on the theoretical, disciplinary and political procedures of postcolonial studies.

Synchronous with the development of [Irish] postcolonial studies have been consistent, vigorous and, often, legitimate critical interrogations of its discursive practices and agendas. In this chapter I will outline and critique a wide selection of both international and specifically Irish critics, (literary critics, historians, economists and

novelists), who have inveighed against the theoretical resources, historical foundations and political strategies of postcolonial methodology. In summary, these critiques identify manifold shortcomings both within and around postcolonial studies including: its apparent celebration of anachronistic nationalism; its vacant language games; culturalist bias; ostensible neocolonial pretensions as a dominant academic orthodoxy; the careerism/opportunism of postcolonial theorists; its apparent betrayal or relegation of classical Marxist praxis; its homogenizing tropes and theoretical universalism; its veneration of 'abstraction' over empiricism, and its fetishization of oppression. While many of these limitations can be justified, it is my intention to delineate, but also to engage with, the arguments of this critical constituency. I will, firstly, rehearse the arguments of the protagonists of an international conversation on postcolonial studies before examining the particular Irish critiques of postcolonial studies in chapter nine. The chapters will, of course, overlap, as many of the broader criticisms of postcolonial studies as an international discourse have been applied to its Irish variant. Nevertheless, there are also debates that are confined to Irish politico-cultural debate.

### **'objects of knowledge'**

One of the earliest critical interventions that highlighted the lacunae of colonial discourse analysis was Benita Parry's 1987 essay, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse'; the critique centred on the notion of colonial 'othering' and the possibilities of effective resistance.<sup>183</sup> Reading through Fanon, she argued that analysts of colonial discourse, particularly Bhabha and Spivak, were excessively concerned with the mechanisms of colonial 'othering' and that they attributed disproportionate agency to

colonial discourse under which 'the colonized [was] constructed by colonialist ideology' (1987, 29). She applauds the achievements of colonial discourse analysis in '[h]aving freed the study of colonialist writing from an empiricist criticism and a liberal politics to disclose the ideological construction of colonialism's objects of knowledge' (1987, 33). Yet significant theoretical issues were generated by a refusal 'of western historiography, [rejection of] a Marxist version...and [disavowal of] liberationist histories accused of weaving a seamless narrative' (Parry, 1987, 33).

Though Parry cites Marxist theory, it is not laboured in the essay. Of more significance is her contention that, 'the notion of epistemic violence and the occluding of reverse discourses have obliterated the role of the native as historical subject and combatant, possessor of an-other knowledge and producer of alternative traditions' (1987, 34). Principally interrogating Bhabha and Spivak, though Said and Abdul JanMohamed are also cited, Parry divines a series of reading methodologies that operate within an attenuated vista. In effect, the authoritative representations of the colonizer, and any moments of resistance enacted against such representational hegemony, depend exclusively on the agency of the colonial centre. Even in the location of the affective subversion of 'sly civility'<sup>184</sup> and 'mimicry'<sup>185</sup>, Bhabha's cultural politics exhibit narrow critical borders.

As Parry argues above, the colonized is flensed of discursive agency in all areas of colonial discourse analysis; colonial authority is the historical locus of representational erasure and resistance, while latter day theory denies the legitimacy of anti-colonial texts and fails to register the alternative traditions of 'the native as historical subject' (Parry, 1987, 34). Parry's critique was an instructive intervention at the time and certainly alerted

colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial studies to its own critical limitations. By drawing attention to the idea of 'alternative traditions', Parry sidestepped /circumvented the continued adherence to the authority of colonial texts. Regardless of subversive re-readings, it was a matter of exigency to escape the orbit of such narratives in an effort to expand both the remit and the efficacy of postcolonial studies. Again, Irish postcolonial studies has adhered to Parry's invocation, as the work discussed in previous chapters amply demonstrates.

Parry's theoretical and political exemplar is Fanon, whose anti-colonial writing elucidates a committed programme of direct political and cultural action. In Parry's formulation, then, the discursive analyses of Bhabha and Spivak, while striving to register protracted and ideological representational occlusion and also to trace instances of affective resistance, in fact exacerbates such occlusion. In locating affective resistance, syncretism or hybridity, Parry maintains, these critics delimit 'the space in which the colonized can be written back into history' (1987, 39). Consequently, we witness the rehearsal of a consistent argument within postcolonial studies: how does the location of *affective* resistance translate into an *effective* and genuinely resistant politics?

There is, nevertheless, a presiding difficulty with Parry's critique and with her proposed discursive alternative. The value of Fanon in Parry's view is his advocacy of, 'the construction of a politically-conscious, unified revolutionary Self, standing in unmitigated antagonism to the oppressor, occupying a combative subject position from which the wretched of the earth are enabled to mobilize an armed struggle against colonial power' (1987, 30). Underlying such a programme is the rejection of identitarian 'mixing' or cultural exchange; Parry disavows the affective representational transactions

of the colonizer-colonized relationship. It is very difficult to concur completely with Parry's paradigm in the light of recent Irish postcolonial studies, and in the wake of Nandy's exploration of the mutual psychological dependencies of the colonial milieu. The cultural politics of colonialism are fraught with differentiated moments of exchange, imposition, appropriation, subversion and mimicry. Contra Parry's model, Irish postcolonial studies demonstrates the coequality and confluence of previously dichotomized discourses including, modernity/counter-modernity; speech/silence; colonizer/colonized; text/orality and memory/history. Equally, hybridity does not have to be a universal denotation of oppression or terminological containment, countering Parry's argument Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin conclude:

In fact, it is arguable that to move towards a genuine affirmation of multiple forms of native 'difference', we must recognize that this hybridity will inevitable continue. This is a prerequisite of a *radical appropriation* which can achieve a genuinely transformative and interventionist criticism of contemporary post-colonial reality. (1989, 180)

Ultimately Parry's rigid appropriation of Fanon must accede to more multivalent and fluid theoretical and political projects.

## **Modernity and Postcolonial Studies**

Critiquing Chakrabarty's interventions, Lazarus argues that modernity has become 'the privileged conceptual figure of this new postcolonialist scholarship' (2002 a, 5). Moreover, he asserts that with such a critical manoeuvre postcolonial studies has affected 'a strange double disavowal' (2002 a, 5). Postcolonial studies, Lazarus



maintains, merely substituted one ideological incumbent with its own version of hegemonic discourse. He concludes that postcolonial studies performs a disingenuous essentialization of modernity, effectively collapsing the progress of modernity into the development of empire (2002 a, 6-7). In an argument that, in many respects, anticipates the metacritical engagements of chapter seven, Lazarus decries the attendant conceptual fetishization of fragmentation and provisionality within postcolonial studies. Ultimately, modernity is merely a convenient fall guy for the *nouveau* ideological ambitions of postcolonial academic aspirants.

The limitation of Lazarus' critique is apparent, most significantly he pitches postcolonial studies as an oppositional interlocutor of modernity. However, as the work discussed in previous chapter suggests, the purpose of postcolonial projects is *not* to confront, or usurp, the hegemonic locations of modernity. What escapes Lazarus' critical imaginary is the divination and existence of alternative and counter-modernities, which are the principal objects of postcolonial studies. In this context, postcolonial studies' relation to modernity should not be viewed in terms of Gramsci's hegemony versus counter-hegemony, nor is it, as Graham notes, ideology versus anti-ideology, both of which presume a teleology of state-seizure. Rather, postcolonial studies strives to produce and represent non-ideological, and alternatively modern, political and cultural spaces, times and practices. As Lloyd asserts, the projects of postcolonial studies, and their critical relation to modernity and modernization, are not the seizure of the incumbent state structures, but the expansion of 'the space for the imagination and realization of alternative social forms' (1999, 37).

## **Postcolonial sophistry**<sup>186</sup>

In 1995 Russell Jacoby<sup>187</sup> published a vitriolic, and in truth caricatured, critique of postcolonial studies entitled, 'Colonial Writers lost in the post'. Jacoby's intervention is excessively 'jargonized' in itself, and is emblematic of the vituperative and reactionary nature of many critiques of postcolonial theory. Initially, Jacoby concedes:

Any evaluation of postcolonial theory must acknowledge its salutary effort to challenge repressive intellectual divisions of labour; its practitioners have boldly ignored conventional and repressive categorizing. They have also rightfully protested a single standard of beauty and art, which western critics sometimes assume; and they have helped open the traditional canon to those who have been slighted. All this is to the good. (1995 a, 17)

But immediately, he takes with the other hand in a sharp, polemic outburst, '[y]et any kind of evaluation must assess what is less honourable: the tidal wave of jargon, the political posturing, the conceptual banalities, and the unstoppable self-promotion and cheering' (1995 a, 17). In this acute critical incision, ironically embellished with such linguistic excess as metaphor and adjectival emphasis that is so often derided in postcolonial studies, Jacoby enumerates the principal concerns of postcolonial studies' critics.

Combining two of the recurrent criticisms of postcolonial theory, Dirlik concludes:

In other words, a critique that starts off with a repudiation of the universalistic pretensions of Marxist language ends up not with its dispersion in to local vernaculars but with a return to another First World language with universalistic epistemological pretensions. It enables us, at least, to locate postcolonial criticism in the contemporary First World. (1994, 342)

Dirlik diagnoses the persistent relegation and/or elision of material factors, specifically the rise of global capitalism, as a mitigation of the 'pretensions' of postcolonial critique. Questions of disenfranchisement and representation, Dirlik argues, are abstracted from the economic realities of global capitalist development into the idiomatic mediations of poststructuralist theory. In renegeing the material praxis of Marxist theory, then, the 'convoluted prose' (Jacoby, 1995, 17) of postcolonial theory seeks 'refuge in aesthetic phraseology' (Dirlik, 1994, 343). Dirlik is keen to illustrate that the eschewal of material, radical politics by postcolonial theory evidences its political enervation and inherent conservatism. Underlying his Marxist critique is an interest in presenting postcolonial studies as a neo-conservative, First World orthodoxy. Such a conservatism and duplicitous self-interest is manifest in its idiomatic content, political inertia and institutional tenure.

Postcolonial studies, then, falls foul of what Eagleton dubs 'the Marxist heresy known as culturalism' (1998, 244). In weighting the political gravity of cultural representations, postcolonial studies reduces its material, political valence. It merely patronizes a *symbolic* economy in its relegation of the exigencies of capitalist development and material class struggles. The central contradiction at the heart of Eagleton's argument against postcolonial studies, as well as those of other Marxist critics, is that in assailing its purported abstracted tropes and culturalist bias, they firstly fail to reflect on the necessarily abstracted nature of classical Marxist philosophy. Equally it also marginalizes, or significantly qualifies, the tangible Marxist heritage of postcolonial studies, in terms of its genealogical sources within, and ideational debts to, revolutionary anti-colonial thought and praxis.

Elsewhere Dirlik asserts:

Among the pasts that are erased by the postcolonial are revolutionary pasts...The postcolonial has become a convenient way of naming and containing problems that have appeared with global reconfigurations...Postcolonialism has assumed something of the power of a self-perpetuating discourse (aided, no doubt, by its marketability in academia and the publishing industry). Even the critique of postcolonialism is rendered readily into a vehicle for its propagation. (1999 a, 156)

While Dirlik's second point has a degree of validity, his concluding assertions concerning the 'marketability' or 'self-propagation' of postcolonial studies are certainly mitigating. If we recall Bourdieu's argument that academic disputes actually conceal a mutuality of interest, then Dirlik's apparent, vociferous dismissal of postcolonial studies is compromised. If postcolonial studies is a 'self-perpetuating discourse', then given the volume and frequency of Dirlik's interventions, he has a vested interest in that 'perpetuation'; indeed he occupies a central function in its continued ascendancy. This is not to argue that criticism of postcolonial theory is invalid, but that self-interest disguised as dismissal is a retrograde mode of critical analysis. Citing recent works by Childs and Williams, Gandhi, Loomba, Moore-Gilbert, Quayson and Young, Lazarus argues that postcolonial studies is, to all intents and purposes, a successful academic/critical industry in its own right. If Lazarus, who critiques postcolonial studies as trenchantly as Dirlik, can enumerate these meta-interventions as evidence of what Dirlik calls above, 'the critique of postcolonialism', then equally both Dirlik and Lazarus should include their own work as part of this broader field of postcolonial criticism. In an irony that neither critic can, or perhaps refuses, to perceive, both are as dependent on the publishing industry's penchant for postcolonial theory as any of the critics that they indict.

## Postcolonialism and Revolution

The accumulation and circulation of capital within the global economic system appears as the only legitimate generalization in Ahmad's theoretical matrix. In ethically reading the dynamics of political, cultural and racial disparity within historically and geographically remote colonized locations, capital remains the dominant factor in this circulatory system of global imperialism. Ahmad thus suggests the transhistorical and transgeographical consistency of capital, not necessarily classical Marxist theory:

it seems more appropriate to think of the many genealogies of this dominance than to speak of an undifferentiated 'postcoloniality'...certain historical generalizations *can* be made, not on the basis of 'postcoloniality', but on the basis of the insertion into the global capitalist system of societies that had many *other* similarities, despite that fact that one was colonized and the other not; the basis for generalization in this instance would be the history not of colonialism but of capital itself. (1995, 26-27)

Similarly, at the core of Dirlik's problematic is the notion that radical Marxist praxis is the *sine qua non* of revolutionary possibility and political action. In effect, the ostensible culturalist bias of postcolonial studies firstly elides or diminishes 'revolutionary pasts', and secondly prohibits the enactment of future revolutionary action. Or as he concludes in 'Is there History after Eurocentrism? Globalism, Postcolonialism, and the Disavowal of History', '[t]he postcolonial rush to culture is an escape not only from the structures of political economy, but more importantly from revolutionary radicalisms of the past, which are now denied not only contemporary relevance, but even past significance' (1999 b, 23). In the light of my discussion of Irish postcolonial studies, Dirlik's assertion in that context seems tendentious at best, if not wholly inaccurate. Lloyd offers a salutary

reminder of the responsibilities assumed by Irish postcolonial studies, as well as a categorical corrective to Dirlik's unqualified generalization:

Irish postcolonial studies is dedicated to the work of retrieving the different rhythms of historically marginalized cultures and to the alternative conceptions of culture and social relations that account for their occlusion from written history. But it is no less dedicated to imagining out of that different knowledge the alternative projects that will convert the damage of history into the terms of future survival. (2003 c, 62)

Dirlik's commentary is founded on an absence of self-reflexiveness; he operates in overtly oppositional terms, displacing the 'tenets' of postcolonialism with the 'tenets' of his own argument. Culture is usurped by 'political economy' and poststructuralism is chastened by Marxist theory. Confounding Dirlik's Marxist critique, and arguing for a dialogic exchange between empiricist, imperial historians and postcolonial literary and cultural critics, Dane Kennedy warns:

it has made it clear that any assessment of this interaction which ignores the cultural dimension-that is, the realm of mutual representations of self and the other-is one that misses what may well be the most persistent and profound legacy of the imperial experience. (1996, 359)

Culture retains a signally enabling valence within postcolonial studies, and contrary to Dirlik's critique, it is not a matter of relegating one dimension of the colonial experience or privileging another. As Moore-Gilbert further underlines, referring to Kennedy's earlier point:

Without greater willingness to engage with the 'cultural' domain, imperial historiography is unlikely to be able to fully illuminate the continuities (and changes) in 'structures of feeling', systems of representation and cultural/political attitudes between the colonial and contemporary periods. (1999, 409)

Kennedy's and Moore-Gilbert's points are equally as applicable in the case of Marxist critics such as Dirlik and Ahmad. The politics of representation and the fraught interface of modernity/counter-modernity are questions of critical urgency within historical studies of and contemporary engagements with postcolonial cultures.

Allied to the Marxist critiques of both Dirlik and Ahmad, San Juan Jr. further accents what he perceives as a rarefied and abstracted theoretical project. Diagnosing a political disingenuity at the core of postcolonial studies, San Juan Jr. dismisses it as 'metaphysical idealism' (1998, 9). Such idealism merely institutes its own teleological 'counterrevolutionary politics' (1998, 9), and simultaneously:

occludes its own historical determinacy by deploying psychoanalytical and linguistic conceptual frameworks that take market/exchange relations for granted. It takes as given the ideological assumptions of utilitarian individual as normative and natural. (San Juan Jr., 1998, 9-10)

San Juan Jr. again emphasizes the extent to which, he believes, the idiomacy of postcolonial studies has become estranged from the material conditions of both its genesis and its contemporary constituencies. Citing Ahmad and Parry, he contends that postcolonial theory, a body of projects that remain undifferentiated in San Juan Jr.'s critique, functions within ' "the main cultural tropes of bourgeois humanism"' (1998, 265). Through abstracted paradigms and exorbitant language, postcolonial theory affects a retrogressive and counterrevolutionary exercise, which, significantly, disables urgent forms of 'social praxis' (Parry, 1987, 43).

Lazarus, Dirlik and Ahmad excise the Marxist heritage of postcolonial theory in an effort to blunt or disavow both its 'revolutionary' capacity and genealogy. By

artificially expanding the philosophical and historical hiatus between the praxis of liberation, anti-colonial movements, with roots in Marxist thought, and the more recent discursive readings of postcolonial studies, they sequester postcolonial studies in a falsified academic, First World shell. Effectively, an essentialized version/narrative of postcolonial studies is created; a suitable theoretical and political strawman with which to endow 'genuine' Marxist theory with increased political currency.

The legacies of colonialism are not simply economic disparities or inequalities, but these legacies must be interrogated in terms of a slew of broader cultural and political factors, including ethnicity, creed, gender, geography and historiography, as well as class. Essentially, the circulatory system of global capital is understood as more than an economic system, it is perceived as a series of cultural and political processes. In eschewing and critically interrogating the philosophical and material trajectories of modernization theory as well as departing from a strictly Marxist critical heritage, the resources of postcolonial studies deny the legitimacy of a teleologically based historical narrative. While emphatically differentiated in theoretical terms, a teleological understanding of historical progress/development subtends both Marxist philosophy and modernization theory. Contrarily, postcolonial literary criticism and historiography reject such an integrated narrative possibility. Within this theoretical framework, history is as much concerned with the disruptive potencies of the past in the present as it is with the unity of a future-oriented narrative. Both the language and the practice of historical understanding, then, are contingent; the *telos* is shed because it depends on the identification and successful location of both narrative and subject-position. Such stability is characterized by perpetual politico-economic progress within the theories of



modernization or the projected certainty of class-based social and political revolution with a classical Marxist dialectic. As Young argues:

Postcolonial theory involves a political analysis of the cultural history of colonialism, and investigates its contemporary effects in western and tricontinent cultures, making connections between the past and the politics of the present...[p]ostcolonial theory operates within the historical legacy of Marxist critique on which it continues to draw but which it simultaneously transfers according to the precedent of the greatest tricontinental anti-colonial intellectual politicians. (2001, 6)

In reclaiming postcolonial studies' Marxist heritage, Young directly contradicts the strategic critiques of Lazarus, Ahmad and Dirlik. Denying the Marxist genealogy of postcolonial studies enables critics to consign its projects to the domain of academic vanity and disciplinary 'fashionability', thereby evacuating it of all material political purchase and possibility.

Lazarus adds:

The heteronomy of postcolonial studies to this critical theory field has meant access to it and – even more – visibility or consecration within it has tended to be contingent upon the presentation and display of the appropriate “post-“ theoretical credentials...[t]he poststructuralist investments that characterize at least the institutionally consecrated forms of postcolonial studies are not merely indifferent, but actively hostile, to Marxism. (2002 a, 1-2)

Drawing heavily on Bourdieu's educational sociology of academic disciplinarity, Lazarus portrays an opportunistic discourse. But in leaning so heavily on Bourdieu in his denigration of one field, Lazarus fails to register/acknowledge the consecrational and/or contingent agents of his or any other academic field. If one invokes Bourdieu to critique a

specific academic field, then one must be aware that such critique invariably betrays an interest in that field. Lazarus' intervention is a tacit acceptance of the stakes of the game; not only, then, is his critique selective on the limitations of postcolonial studies, but its Bourdieuan methodology is equally flawed.

### **Postcolonial literary studies**

Lazarus extends his criticism of postcolonial studies beyond its theoretical and political limitations, arguing that in its readings of postcolonial literatures such criticism has effectively erected a *nouveau* literary canon. In its literary critical manifestation, Lazarus contends, postcolonial studies refers 'to a woefully restricted and attenuated corpus of works' (2002 b, 2). Rather than functioning as theoreticians/theorists or historians of resistance, representational politics or material exploitation, 'the pomopostcolonialists misdiagnose [sic] a discrete and restricted mode of practice as a cultural universal' (2002 b, 13). The elisions and tendentious traditions of authorized canonicity are not, Lazarus rightly argues, relieved by the delimitation of a restrictive alternative canon. Canonicity as a discursive manoeuvre is subtended by a politics of selectivity and exclusion, and thereby cannot be laterally representative. In Lazarus' view, then, postcolonial studies not only arrogates a position of institutional tenure through dense theoretical codification, but also operates a system of counter-canonical consecration in postcolonial literary studies.

He indicts 'the sheer opportunism of so many of the critical readings currently being produced' and pessimistically concludes:

To read across postcolonial literary studies is to find...the same questions being asked, the same methods, techniques, and conventions being used, the same concepts mobilised, the same conclusions drawn, about the work of a remarkably small number of writers. (2002 b, 4)

It is a portrait of a homogenized, and homogenizing, methodology; reading between the lines of Lazarus' conclusions, this homogeneity is both a function and an index of the politically ineffectual capacities of postcolonial practice. Homogenization and counter-canoncity become the instruments of consolidation, stability and institutionalization. Critical engagement with postcolonial literary representation, then, is as politically benign as either of its theoretical or historiographical corollaries. In Ahmad's view, '[i]t is this sense that some British universities seem to be institutionalizing that singular pedagogical object called 'new literatures', 'emergent literatures' and postcolonial literatures' (1995 b, 8).

Lazarus' contention that a reconstituted postcolonial canon, largely populated by the novels of Salman Rushdie, has a degree of validity and certainly alerts us to the consecrational pretensions of academic criticism. Consecrational procedures are, as Bourdieu outlines, functions of all fields in which symbolic and cultural capital are at stake. This dissertation is illustrative and in itself is symptomatic of/vulnerable to a consecrational process within a delimited field of academic research. Equally canons or traditions, while never natural givens, are functions of the inherent political fabric of cultural interaction, exchange and authority. And as Lazarus urges, there is an undeniable need for the inclusion of an expanded corpus of postcolonial literary works both within critical research and academic pedagogy. The problems with Lazarus' and Ahmad's arguments, however, are, firstly, that they betray their own petrified political prejudices

in attempting to provide constructive alternatives to postcolonial literary studies, and secondly such prejudices manifest in crudely essentialist characterizations of postcolonial literary studies; these are further gestures towards imputing postcolonial studies' conservative complicity with the institutional hegemony of global capitalism.

The only occasion in which economic factors are permissible as a concern of postcolonial studies is in discussions of the cynical 'careerism' of its most prominent practitioners. Characteristically, '[p]ostcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a *comprador* intelligentsia' (Appiah, 1997, 432); the indulgent verbosity that elides the revolutionary pasts of anti-colonial movements both nourishes and is generated by an aggrandizing academic elite. As I argue above, there is little doubt that the machinations of the various spheres of academic management, promotion and production are ferociously political, and that, as such, levels of consecration and exclusion are operational. My argument is, however, that this alone is insufficient to disqualify or jettison an entire field of theoretical and historical projects. There are manifold limitations and contradictions inherent to all areas of academic theorization and pedagogy, including postcolonial studies.

The difficulty with critiques such those produced by Dirlik, Lazarus and Ahmad, is that they depend upon the assumption that postcolonial theory is institutionally complicit with neo-colonial exploitation, continued political marginalization and re-configured representational alienation, which as I argue is patently false. Emphasizing this point, Dirlik dismisses the 'radical' claims of postcolonial studies; in his words they appear 'benign' (1994, 347). Postcolonial studies possesses neither the combined will nor

indeed the political capacity to disrupt the disparities of prevailing power structures. He argues:

By throwing the cover of culture over material relationships, as if one had little to do with the other, such a focus diverts criticism of capitalism to the criticism of Eurocentric ideology, which not only helps postcolonialism disguise its own ideological limitations but also, ironically, provides an alibi for inequality, exploitation, and oppression in their modern guises under capitalist relationships. (1994, 347)

In fact, postcolonial studies is a product of 'the ideology of global capitalism' (Dirlik, 1994, 347); its estrangement from the Marxist revolutionary pasts of anti-colonial activism and agitation is finally complete.

One of the most progressive developments of Irish postcolonial studies has been the move away from a reliance on purely literary, textual representation. As I demonstrated in both chapters two, three and four, there is an increasing preoccupation with history and historiography. Influenced by the metahistoriography of White and the subaltern methodology of postcolonial historiography, Irish postcolonial critics interrogate the representational politics of historical narrative, both its inclusions and elisions. Whereas an exclusive telescoping of Irish literary representation was symptomatic of the initial textual bias of colonial discourse analysis, latterly the representative articulation of subaltern histories and voices has furnished a more concretely political dimension to Irish postcolonial studies.

Critiquing postcolonial studies, Phillip Darby writes:

The root problem is that postcolonial stratagems are often too removed from the actual conditions under which people live their lives. As critics have suggested, the

postcolonial model is essentially discursive, it does not sufficiently look beyond language and text. (1998, 225)

Besides questioning Darby's tendentious use of the rigid concept of 'the postcolonial model', the counter-argument is that since so much colonial administration, ideology and representation was exercised through textual means, close critical readings are an essential of postcolonial studies. Furthermore, the work of both Gibbons and Lloyd is demonstrative of the ways in which postcolonial studies locates moments or practices of non-textual resistance. In performative spaces that lie athwart the integrated textual representations of colonialism, or elitist nationalism, the critic divines strategic and affective enactments of subversion. The purpose of such historical reading, then, is not to cauterize its effectiveness in the past or the present, as Dirlik would contend, but to redeem/re-present such energies as potent agents in the present and towards the future.

The unifying animus of these critiques is a sense of betrayal by a re-calibrated discourse whose single radical characteristic is its lamentable radical 'chic'; a voguish declension of *nouveau* poststructuralist idiomatic word-play. The difficulty with these interventions is, as I have demonstrated, that while they occasionally identify legitimate grounds for criticism-providing initial steps of Bourdieuan self-reflexiveness-they are ultimately mitigated by intransigent, and oppositional, position-taking. As Graham argues in the previous chapter, such critical practices merely stagnate constructive debate. Equally, they persistently default to deliberate elision, tactical mis-reading or unequivocal dismissal.<sup>188</sup>

## **Bourdieu and the critic**

If we return to a Bourdieuan moment of clarity, even in the very act of critiquing and ultimately vilifying the presumptions and culturalism of postcolonialism, Ahmad, Dirlik, and San Juan Jr., actually accept the value of the stakes involved in this critical debate. Most explicitly both Ahmad and Dirlik indict 'ethnic' or 'postcolonial' academics for behaving disingenuously, and for exploiting their ethnicity to careerist ends by promoting the proliferation of postcolonial studies. The perceived fashionability and opportunism of Spivak or Bhabha is contritely condemned by Dirlik and Ahmad; Ahmad notes:

This aggrandized sense of the term [postcolonial], as connoting generic definitions of periods, authors and writings, gathered force through a system of mutual citations and cross-referencing among a handful of influential writers and their associates. (1995, 28)

While Ahmad's assertion may very well have a degree of truth, he fails to see the irony of his own critical position. Such intra-academic invective confirms Bourdieu's belief that all academic debate, however antagonistic, buttresses the positions of both sides. Both sides of a critical debate recognize that the debate is worth conducting. Debates on postcolonial studies, then, implicitly and explicitly accept its legitimacy as a series of discursive practices.

In dealing with the vagaries of one's own field the critic is confronted with foundational 'epistemological problems' (Bourdieu, 1996, 1). According to Bourdieu the critic is 'involved' in the proximate social world, I would argue, however, that even in the act or process of studying that particular social world such involvement does not cease.

Simply because one *chooses* to objectify the academic field in terms of a critical survey, a scholarly précis or theoretical polemic does not voluntarily sever the practical or scholarly involvement of the author-critic. Irish postcolonial studies is certainly an object of critique/study within the dissertation, but concurrently I cannot remove myself from this academic matrix. The significance of Bourdieu, then, rests in his initial self-reflective animus, his concern with the qualitative nature of academic language and his valid observation that the academic field is a value-laden and politically charged social world.

Bourdieu rather mischievously writes:

Another property of fields, a less visible one, is that all the agents that are involved in a field share a certain number of fundamental interests, namely everything that is linked to the very existence of the field. This leads to an objective complicity, which underlies all antagonisms. (1993, 74)

Every intervention within a critical debate, however internally divisive such an intervention may seem, is subtended by a tacit acceptance of the need to reproduce the particular field. Within any academic field, then, any engagement that is complementary, qualificatory, or explicitly polemic is hard-wired with the desire 'to produce belief in the value of the stakes' (Bourdieu, 1993, 74). Even though there are critics who ostensibly intervene in debunking the paradigms of postcolonial theory and its relevance to Irish studies, the spectre of McCarthy's 'false oppositionality' reappears. As academics we are adequately sensitive to the stakes at play within our field of production; in other words we are aware of 'the terms of play and the specific stakes involved' (Lucas, 2001, 2). The dissertation is just one such self-aware intervention within the field of Irish academic studies or more specifically what might be designated as the subfield of Irish postcolonial studies. To my mind there is no question but there exists a gap in our understanding of



the field, specifically vis-à-vis its machinations at the levels of theory and practice and in terms of the relationship between the two. My intervention fully accepts the stakes involved and is conceived of as a summary critique of the subfield of Irish postcolonial studies as it is constituted as a battery of theoretical resources, as an institutional-educational phenomenon and as a practical, political vehicle of social criticism and participation.

While there is a traceable Irish inflection of postcolonial theory, Irish history, culture and politics are not reducible to universalist typologies of postcoloniality, but neither are they entirely exceptional; a fact that is widely canvassed within Irish postcolonial debates. Contrarily, Dirlik, Ahmad and Lazarus enthusiastically declaim postcolonialism's readings of imperialism and colonialism as unified historical entities, but ironically their own critiques betray homogenized conceptions of postcolonial studies. The variegated projects and interventions that constitute Irish postcolonial studies embrace the economic, political and cultural elements of Ireland's colonial history. Similarly, and with one eye on the future, they seek to transfuse Ireland's current postcolonial experience with dynamic agents of its political and cultural revolutionary and counter-modern pasts. The deployment of 'theory' as tool of engagement with colonial histories and postcolonial legacies is not simply a recrudescence of colonialism in new forms of epistemological control. Rather, as Said explains:

The work of intellectuals...[who] address the metropolis using the techniques, the discourse, the very weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European, now adopted for insurgency or revisionism at the very heart of the Western center. (1990, 29)

In asserting the liberatory 'free-play' of hybrid or syncretic identities, postcolonial theory offers an ethical cultural politics. The difficulty surfaces, however, in the delineation of conceptual apparatuses; in Bourdieu's terms a hiatus exists between the theoretical mobilization of hybridity and its practical political currency. As Kirkland notes above there is a significant danger that such political currency may be smothered by degrees of theoretical or idiomatic lamination. However, this is not to say that the conceptualization of cultural identity in terms of a potentially liberatory *telos* is perpetually or necessarily retrograde. San Juan Jr. diagnoses the presence of 'ineluctable constraints' (1992, 3) on the 'free-play' of identities; effectively that identity can neither be formed through non-consensual dictat nor alternatively by way of postmodern predilection. San Juan Jr. argues:

Identities can be deconstructed and reconstructed, as the current postmodernist orthodoxy claims, but I think only up to a point: Ineluctable constraints exist...Constraints of the historical past, the force of what Bourdieu calls inherited *habitus*, public perceptions maintained by the media and other ideological apparatuses of civil society, the official and received consensus hypostatized as acceptable 'commonsense', immigration laws, the routine discourse of business and private occasions- all these no doubt circumscribe the available space and the hospitable occasion in which to invent one's identity by fiat. (1992, 3-4)

Specifically, then, we encounter Bourdieu at two levels: firstly within the very structure and machinations of critical theory, and secondly in the macrostructures of theoretical engagement. Simply, as critical meta-theory outlines, the objectifications of analytical idioms must not enact prohibitive gestures but rather must retain a fluidity or malleability that can either flourish or fail in the diversity of colonial/postcolonial societies.

Identities, then, are contingent but not exponential; in San Juan Jr.'s framework identitarian politics oscillate between, but never exclusively depend upon, subjective experiences and objective structures. Necessarily, postcolonial theory is in itself a contingent discourse. It too cannot perform as an objective paradigm but neither is it reasonable to expect any theoretical dramatizations of multifarious individual/communal postcolonial experience. Habitus influences the full range of postcolonial experiences; theorists, theorized and theory itself do not operate as mutually exclusive political constituencies nor can the very real differentials of these locations be elided in critical typologies. Infinite deferral and theoretical diffusion is neither a viable nor a desirable politico-cultural option.

San Juan Jr. focuses on two arenas of postcolonial debate: terminological representation and the ethics of equality and liberation. Just as Kirkland's caveat against 'containing metaphors' is emblematic of a broader concern with postcolonial tropes, San Juan Jr. explicitly engages with the politics of theoretical nomination. In a similar vein to Kirkland, he notes, 'throughout this book, I argue against the culturalist abuse of 'ethnicity' to mask hegemonic domination under the pretext of pluralist toleration' (1992, 15). It is one of the features of contemporary postcolonial theory that there is a delimited range of discursive exchange and cross reading. In compiling a critical survey, one notes the undoubted assimilation of 'foreign' ideas but noticeably within a concentrated [and repetitive] cabal of international critics. San Juan Jr., Mallon, and Amin are rarely, if ever, cited in Irish criticism, yet their work is manifestly enabling/germane to postcolonial Irish studies. Not only does San Juan Jr.'s admonition echo in Kirkland's caveat, but also resounds with equal force in Gibbons' remark on hybridity; Gibbons

avers to 'the risks inherent in uncritical adulations of 'hybridity' as an empowerment strategy for diasporic or post-colonial identity- particularly when it involves accommodation with the values of powerful expansionist cultures already built on racism' (1996, 176). To mix the critical terminology of Irish and Philippine-American: containing metaphors are the embodiments of hegemonic domination. The ethical impetus/gravity of postcolonial studies depends on the political effectiveness/purchase of its critical interventions. Again we return to San Juan Jr.'s juxtaposition of postmodernism and Bourdieuan theory; he concludes, '[i]n dissolving the subject as possible agent of critical transformation postmodernism ignores those developments and apologizes for the status quo' (1992, 16).

Postmodernism's cataclysm of identitarian possibility is superficially liberating and in fact fosters increased and shrouded degrees of pluralist control/homogeneity. In vacating any sense of identitarian anchorage, postmodernism effectively depoliticizes individual and communal relations. Infinity of choice is, in effect, an incarceration in a debilitating gyre of self-absorption. The politics of liberation and solidarity, canvassed by Mallon, Gibbons, Lloyd and San Juan Jr., regards such pluralism as fundamentally devoid of ethical concern. Postcolonial ethics *are* preoccupied with diffusing and accommodating individual and communal identities, but equally they canvass a sense of lateral ethical awareness. Reading through Mike Davis, San Juan Jr. articulates, *in parvo*, the wider theoretical ethical trajectory of postcolonial studies:

Any political strategy concentrating on the axial problem of the revolutionary-democratic struggle for equality must be built on the 'increasing solidarity between

the liberation movements in Southern Africa and Latin America and the movements of the Black and Hispanic communities in the USA.' (1992, 18-19)

While San Juan Jr.'s strategy is consonant with Gibbons and Mallon, it is entirely racially motivated. Nonetheless it operates within a similar philosophical matrix: re-enfranchisement of marginalized communities through ethical and political consanguinity. Clearly we cannot elide the vast class, ethnic and geographical disparities of these dispersed constituencies, but the aspiration to affect an ethical language through a mode of lateral thinking is an instructive and potentially enabling political and critical strategy. As I have discussed with respect to Gibbons and Mallon, there are different perspectives with which to position these 'axial problems': vertical/horizontal.

San Juan Jr. indicts what he calls, 'the force of 'cultural pluralism'' for propagating/nurturing a 'myth of oneness via precisely the empty, all-purpose signifiers of diversity, pluralism and so on...' (1992, 37). The ostensibly pluralist agenda of liberalism is exposed as a dubious ruse of qualified inclusiveness. Significantly San Juan Jr.'s admonition segues with two recent/relevant arguments in current Irish cultural debate. As I have explained, his argument intersects with Kirkland's analysis of postcolonial taxonomies. However, simultaneously, in revealing the self-fulfilling myths of liberal pluralism, San Juan Jr. is also linked to Whelan's, McCarthy's and Cleary's explication of modernization theory and revisionist historiography. Liberal modernization subscribes to an unequivocal *telos* of progress and development, in other words, a projective temporal vector. No matter how inclusive such an ideological discourse appears to be, the diversity embraced is necessarily subsumed within its modernizing teleology. Equally, as I have outlined in relation to Lloyd, Whelan, Gibbons, McCarthy

and Cleary, the revisionist and modernization projects harbour their own 'myth of oneness', and in this context, Ireland belongs to a broader politico-cultural matrix of liberal modernity. It is the function of postcolonial studies to redress the synchrony of liberal pluralism and to representatively address the diachrony of historical difference (San Juan Jr., 1992, 37).

San Juan Jr., unwittingly, strikes the keynote of postcolonial studies, as it is currently conceived of in terms of literary representation; he warns, '[l]iterary theory is thus not innocent of political complicity by way of the framework or paradigm that inform it, together with its ethical and moral implications' (1992, 39). Although literary criticism is a single facet of postcolonial studies, San Juan Jr.'s statement is apposite. Regardless of the ethical implications of postcolonial studies, including its commitment to a liberatory cultural politics, it cannot obviate its fundamental political temper. San Juan Jr.'s point underscores the idea that simply because postcolonial studies reads political and cultural discourses in terms of liberation, representation and counter-hegemony, this does not warrant any idealization or sanctification of its theoretical paradigms or manoeuvres.

## **The Empire Writes Back**

In a number of recent essays Mitchell has taken the historical 'treatment' of Roger Casement as the starting point for provocative elaborations on and examinations of both imperial and post-imperial historiography. The function of the historian is not only to pose questions of the past and of primary, archival sources, but equally questions must be raised as to the nature of disciplinary history as a discourse. As we have seen, these are

issues previously addressed by White, which have since been transplanted into Irish cultural debate, principally by non-historians. Mitchell's historiographical work is pertinent for two reasons, firstly he is a practicing historian who is willing to engage with such meta-historiographic debate, and secondly he confronts urgent and contentious aspects of Irish political and (anti-) imperial history.<sup>189</sup> Mitchell contends:

What histories survive and how they survive is as significant as those histories that do not survive; the histories we choose instead to silence. Public records, correspondences, diaries, biographies, testimonies contain 'facts' which constitute 'history' but they certainly do not contain the whole story. (2003 b, 1)

Here Mitchell alludes to the existence of what might be termed, 'historical hierarchies and a hierarchy of histories'. Furthermore he draws on the ideas of the Spanish philosopher of history and revolution, José Ortega y Gasset, who argues that what we perceive as the factual presentation of reality is actually illusory. As Gasset remarks in *Man and Crisis*, '[f]acts cover up reality' (1962 [1922], 13).

Averring to a rarely articulated historiographic consensus, Mitchell notes, 'that the historical narrative is engineered through political necessity' (2003 b, 18). It is a point that Mitchell further develops in referring to the work of A.P. Thornton, a historian of empire and significantly a contributor to the *Historiography* volume of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. The incestuous relations between political urgency and historical representation are consummately encapsulated in the opening remarks of Thornton's essay in which he quotes directly from the historian Herbert Butterfield, '[s]ometimes we teach and write the kind of history that is appropriate to our organization, congenial to the intellectual climate of our part of the world' (Thornton,

1999, 612). Remarkably, Thornton reveals the tactical operational procedures of historiographic practice, he notes, 'sometimes, however sometimes becomes all the time' (1999, 612). The positioning or strategic intercalation of historical 'facts', events or individuals into a wilfully fashioned narrative is a matter of political expediency. Both the impetus and exigency of postcolonial historiographic readings are crystallized in Thornton's confessional remarks.

Interrogating the practice of colonial discourse critique and its influence on the historiography of imperialism, D.A. Washbrook notes, '[b]esides archival documentary 'texts', imperial historians now were invited to 'read' buildings and paintings, music and novels, street-plans and public-rituals. They were also enjoined to read documentary texts in a very different way' (1999, 599). While Washbrook's summative comment on a radicalized approach to postcolonial, imperial history is an adequate representation of subalternist practice; his intervention largely imputes the illegitimacy of such historiographical methodology. As part of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Washbrook's essay is physically located within a highly politicized manoeuvre. And, rather than perform a radical or self-reflective enactment of historiographical practice, Washbrook merely summarizes and ambushes both colonial discourse analysis and subaltern historiography. The watchword of imperial history or of its Irish declension, revisionism, is empiricism. Indeed Washbrook's counter-arguments to subaltern methodology are buttressed by the vicissitudes of 'empirical observations' (1999, 603) and 'empirical points' (1999, 604).

Not to be outdone by the flippancy of Irish critics of postcolonial studies, Washbrook's argument provides similar and equally dismissive comments on



postcolonial historiography. Again we are witness to a rehearsal of a mindset that unequivocally digests the self-evidence of empirical fact. Rather than perceive or read empirical fact as constitutively chimerical, exclusionary or autocratic, Washbrook's historiographical *Weltanschauung* deliberates the wood without seeing the trees. If we return to the quotation above, Washbrook's inclusion of 'scare quotes' immediately casts a pall over the legitimacy of just such 'readings.' We are explicitly and implicitly alerted to the difference of these forms of historical readings, and in a sense doubt and suspicion are imputed to such discursive practices. The epistemic violence of empire, the contextual as well as textual distortions/impositions/traumas of colonialism are rendered docile by Washbrook's devotion to empire. Contrary to Washbrook's historiographic philosophy, facts do not represent reality they *create a reality*<sup>190</sup>: therefore such a commitment to the empirical facts of imperial history signals an intransigent political, and defensive, animus.

In perhaps the most sinister passage of Washbrook's argument, he claims:

Colonial rule was often thinly stretched and could scarcely have sustained itself without the 'collaboration' of local power structures. But is hardly reconstituted the system entirely anew, and it had constantly to take into account the imperatives generated by their specific local forms. The power relations of colonialism were inextricably bound up with the power relations *between* colonial subjects themselves. (1999, 604)

Such a disingenuous passage can only be read as apologetic of the imperial mission; the scarcely sustainable and thinly stretched mission of conversion, exploitation, racism, torture, slavery, impoverishment and disenfranchisement is ruefully dependent on [note the scare quotes again] 'collaboration'. The docility of empire and its Enlightenment project is only realized through the willing participation of its subjects. Reading both

Roger Casement's *Amazon Journal* and his reports from the Congo, it is hard to sympathize with Washbrook's caricature of a docile, imperial 'boy's own' mission. Even in situations of collaboration or colonial subversion, as delineated in Bhabha's explication of colonial mimicry, the stability of fact is severely mitigated.

While Washbrook can undermine the dearth of empirical anchorage in colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial historiographic practice, it is self-evident that his own delineation of colonial relations would be ameliorated by a greater application/understanding of the catachrestic theorization of both Bhabha and Spivak. Subaltern studies broaches both the empirical and theoretical, yet in so doing elicits sustained criticism from the empirical pedants of imperial history.<sup>191</sup> Washbrook's intervention segues with the revisionist and modernization dialectic of Irish politico-cultural debate. Much postcolonial critique is centred on the interrogation of the Enlightenment, its service of empire, its constitution of the individuality, liberty and freedom; this is emphatically the case, as we have discussed, in relation to postcolonial Irish studies.

Washbrook argues at length:

Yet such nihilism is clearly difficult to sustain, and having demolished the epistemological epistemes of the Enlightenment thought, discourse theory seems drawn to attaching to its own counter-propositions claims to the same status in 'truth' and 'freedom' as Enlightenment makes for its own forms of knowledge...The result is self-contradictory: but a self-contradiction which is deeply revealing. In practice, discourse theory- like the Romanticism which gave rise to it<sup>192</sup> – appears inextricably bound to the Enlightenment which it cannot entirely 'reject' without silencing itself. (1999, 607)

Again we are tethered to a dichotomous reading: Enlightenment or its deconstruction are the sole discursive trajectories diagnosed by Washbrook. Contrary to such binary thinking, the currents of postcolonial Irish studies flow in more lateral and imaginative channels. It is not simply a matter of acting upon or reacting against Enlightenment rationality *ad infinitum*, which become counter-productive modes of thinking, and in fact debilitating circular actions. Oppositionality is usurped, then, by imagination in terms of the delineation of alternative Enlightenments, alternative modernities, and alternative cultural spaces. Such a project does not render the Enlightenment invisible or inert, rather as Deane argues, '[m]odernity wears the mask of capital because capital compromises both underdevelopment and development, not as opposites, but as contiguous conditions' (2000, 26). Irish postcolonial studies does not operate within a dialectic of confrontation, opposition or binary argumentation, conversely, and echoing Deane and Lloyd, postcolonial Irish critics acknowledge the contiguity of modernity, Enlightenment, and the counter-modern. Effective resistance is not mobilized through insistent direct opposition, which is too often mutually debilitating, but rather it is latent in the ambiguity, potential subversion and the alterity of contiguity and intimacy.

Returning to Amin's subaltern representation of Chauri Chaura, he notes:

Which differences between them and me, I asked myself, were erased through our affinity? Which remained? And which were created as we talked about events, about Gandhi, and about much else besides? How would these affect the possibility of generating a different narrative of Chauri Chaura and Indian nationalism?...Historical fieldwork and the narratives emerging out of it were seen by many to feed into a history. *Kitab nikri! Kitab!* (a book will come out of this) was the cue used in the village to align memories into stories. (1995, 5)

The fieldwork of this subaltern practice does not venerate or fetishize the empirical fact; in effect it engenders a subaltern community of memorial narration. Such remembrance need not always remain as unruly *contradictions* of official narrative, but are transfusive alternatives to a politics of instituted remembrance and forgetting. The writing of histories is an evolutionary process; it is not underwritten by the finality of an undisputable narrative product. Amin's sentiments on the cooperative nature of historical remembrance are confirmed by Whelan's recent conclusion that, '[t]he making of history is necessarily an ongoing and collaborative process. History is a journey, not a destination. For the open-minded historian, the important thing is the journey' (2004, 11).

As Amin further concludes, and again he echoes the concerns of Irish postcolonial critics, '[b]ut a narrative which seeks to interrogate official accounts with local memory can ill afford to wrap individual actors in prefabricated pasts within which the local is habitually forsaken in the supposed interests of a grand national' (1995, 6). Such an invocation, perhaps even manifesto, explicitly contradicts Washbrook's disingenuous and dubious assertion that 'colonial discourse theory becomes a new mechanism of imperialism in an age of multicultural, globalized capitalism' (1999, 609). The effectiveness with which postcolonial critics interrogate the imbrication of culture and politics, historically and contemporaneously; the implication of historiography with the legacies and iniquities of imperialism; and the persistence of cultural and political orthodoxies of power is hardly countered, then, by the rather facile and unsustainable imputation that postcolonial studies itself represents a *nouveau* orthodoxy.

## **What's in a Name?**

In 1995 Ahmad published an essay entitled 'Postcolonialism: What's in a Name?', Ahmad's choice of title is revealing of much contemporary critical theory, but equally it is suggestive of the solutions to these prevailing quandaries. Debating the legitimacy, the sinister inferences/implications or the vacuity of critical disciplines with sole reference to their titular designations is merely tautological. Postcoloniality remains a political, cultural, economic and ethical experience, and its theorization is only possible through a battery of differentiated discursive resources that is neither strictly analogical, transhistorical nor transgeographical. Rather these interventions and conceptual mobilizations are animated by differentiated ethical considerations of inequality, non-representation, oppression and disenfranchisement. In fact by deliberating the declensions and conjugations of 'postcolonialism' or parsing the structure of 'postcoloniality', critics dematerialize and devalue the historical and contemporary purchase/currency of what are and can be instructive theoretical/critical resources.

Academic language or critical idiomacy are crucial to any discussion of academic, critical, historical or political fields, including the field of postcolonial studies. Indeed negotiations within and about the politics of theorization constitute surging disciplinary pursuits in themselves. The feminist critic, Elaine Showalter dismisses the tautological, and politically impotent, jargon of literary and theoretical studies, '[t]he problem with literary jargon, however, is not that outsiders resent it. The problem is that the habit of expressing one's ideas in a highly conventional idiom gradually incapacitates the ability to write with clarity and force, and sometimes even to have opinions at all' (2001, 11). Showalter's conclusion, then, concurs with Bourdieu's interrogations of both academic

discourse and the academic field, as politically conservative and self-aggrandizing entities. Merod broadens the critical context, but retains a sceptical view on the radical, political potentialities of critical intervention. He argues:

Too often the act of criticism and/or act of interpretation is over-determined by the precise 'institutional' location of the critical/academic aspirant rather than by the diffuse historical/contextual conditions of the discourse under critical interpretation. The act of criticism, then, is over-written [and under-mined] by the demands of the self-perpetuating 'institutional' structure. (1987, 12)

Each of these critical caveats is valid, as they re-affirm the necessity for a persistent self-reflexive, meta-theoretical practice. Both Showalter's and Merod's points emphasize the urgency of a politically and materially proactive praxis, yet, following Bourdieu, both accent the pessimistic prospects of such a development. Postcolonial studies offers instructive critical resources with which to initiate such a process; as I have argued, if we are to overcome the delimited ethical, historical and theoretical vistas of critics like Washbrook, Dirlik, Ahmad and Lazarus, it is vital that we admit the strategies of postcolonial critique to our critical analyses. As I outline throughout the dissertation, this is not an assertion of a postcolonial critical or ethical *programme*, but merely suggestive of the enabling *interdisciplinary*, critical resources of postcolonial projects. Perhaps we can take instruction from Jean Paul Sartre's comments on the nature of the intellectual, '[n]ow, it is a fact, that an intellectual is someone who fails to mind his own business' (1972, 12).

## CHAPTER NINE:

### **‘Fanon’s One Big Idea’<sup>193</sup>: Revising Irish Postcolonial**

#### **Studies**

The jury is still out on whether postcolonial theory in Ireland has indeed supplanted the rhetorical binaries of unreconstructed nationalism to illuminate the complexity of the Irish experience and rescue subaltern identities, or whether, it simply slightly adjusts the familiar rhetoric of blame giving us caricatures or stylized diagrams of what we already knew about historical oppression and marginalization and endemic cultural incompetences. (Norman Vance, ‘Review of Terry Eagleton’s *Scholars and Rebels*, Francis Mulhern’s *The Present lasts a Long Time* and Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket, and David Alderson (eds.) *Ireland In Proximity: History, Gender and Space*’, 182)

‘A man should ‘unbias his mind as much as possible’. He [Jonathan Swift] consistently deplored the knee-jerk categorizing of people on party lines, when ‘in order to find the character of a person, instead of inquiring whether he be a man of virtue, honour, piety, wit, good sense, or learning; the modern question is only, whether he be Whig or Tory, under which terms all good and ill qualities are included’ (Victoria Glendinning, *Jonathan Swift*, 92).

### **'fuzzy thinking on Irish history'**

In the introduction to his seminal treatise, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz manifestly admonishes against the 'infallibility' of any one theoretical school or discipline. Drawing on the work of Susanne Langer, Geertz caricatures the supine devotion of academia to cyclical changes in theoretical hierarchies:

[t]he sudden vogue of such a *grande idée*, crowding out almost everything else for a while, is due, she [Langer] says, 'to the fact that all sensitive and active minds turn at once to exploiting it. We try it in every connection, for every purpose, experiment with possible stretches of its strict meaning, with generalizations and derivatives'. (Geertz, 1973, 3)

To many Irish critics and scholars, Geertz's and Langer's comments would seem particularly apposite to recent Irish cultural and historical writing, accenting as they have the colonial dimension of Irish literary, political and economic history. In broaching the notion of 'Irish' postcolonial studies, one must delineate the counter-arguments that maintain the gross inapplicability of a postcolonial methodology to Irish cultural and political history. This section will relate the variety and intransigence of argumentation against Ireland's situation within a postcolonial theoretical matrix. By considering the interventions of Edna Longley, Stephen Howe, Francis Mulhern, R.F. Foster and Liam Kennedy, this chapter will serve a dual purpose. Firstly it will highlight the specifics of these critical responses to Irish postcolonial studies, and their dissonance or consonance with international critical ripostes to postcolonial theory. More significantly, however, the cursory nature of many of these engagements will, I intend, obviate the validity of the revisionist position.



Cleary demonstrates that there are three principal grounds on which critics disqualify Ireland's 'postcolonial pretensions' (Kennedy, 1992/93, 107). They are economic grounds and geographical location; an unwillingness to accept historical responsibility wherein 'postcolonial melancholy' (Mulhern, 1998, 158) is an easy method of transferring responsibility onto an oppressive colonial heritage, and finally because Ireland achieved independence over eighty years ago, there should have been ample time to transcend the traumas of colonial and postcolonial experience. Cleary crystallizes these objections in concluding:

the argument that conceptions of twentieth-century Ireland as a 'postcolonial society' are simply misplaced concessions to current theoretical fashion in cultural studies because Ireland was never a typical 'Third World' society depends, ironically enough, on the same abstractedly homogenised conception of colonisation and decolonisation for which some versions of postcolonial theory are correctly criticised. (2003 b, 2)

Such criticism depends for its foothold on a logic of essentialism; the assertion conceals and exposes a moment of self-betrayal. In deriding a perceived theoretical or paradigmatic simplification, these critics become enmeshed within a corollary simplification. Furthermore we shall return at length to the charges of theoretical fashionability, idiomatic modishness and critical *chic* that ricochet wildly around revisionist critiques of Irish postcolonial studies.

However there is a Bourdieuan resonance to the practice of a revisionist critique of Irish postcolonial studies. By emphasizing or trying to attach a sense of fashionability to the co-option of postcolonial methodology to Irish literary and historiographic studies, critics demonstrate an awareness of the contingency of academic discourse. At a

superficial level and in Bourdieu's terms, reading the proliferation of postcolonial theory as a form of symbolic capital-accumulation is perfectly legitimate. The problem that arises, within Irish academic studies, is that literary and historiographic debates in the last three decades have been largely inseparable from, but not reducible to, the Northern Troubles. The volatile proximity of violence, culture, history and politics on the island has certainly informed debate within academic spheres. Thus, while criticism of postcolonial studies can be read, perhaps retrospectively, within or through Bourdieu's paradigm of self-reflexive critique, it is more plausible that such criticism has its genesis in more concretely political motives. As Cleary recently noted, 'the emergence and the reception of postcolonial studies in Ireland must ultimately be linked not only to intellectual currents and intersections, however, but to the prevailing political climate on the island as well' (2003 a, 18).

Bourdieu counsels the critical practice of 'epistemological vigilance'; effectively that discursive/theoretical languages and disciplines cannot function adequately, or legitimately, without consistent moments of self-reflexiveness. Postcolonial studies has realized a position of relative prominence within contemporary Irish literary and historiographic studies, and, as such, interventions reflecting upon or interrogating its internal machinations and/or institutional practice are urgent. As I have further demonstrated, there has been recent, and ongoing, work that is evidential of a level of Bourdieuan critical vigilance, or what might be termed metacritical commentary on Irish postcolonial studies.

Relocating Raymond Williams' critique of modernism, Lazarus re-asserts the omnivorous, and myopic, paradigms of postcolonial studies:

For in postcolonial studies, as in modernism on Williams's reading of it, a certain limited optic on the world, a selective tradition, has been imagined as a universal. Like Williams's modernists, postcolonial critics also construe their own particular dispositions-their own particular situations, their own specific locations in the social order, their own specific views onto the world-as cultural universals. (2002 b, 10-11)

Consequently, the licence of 'travelling theory' is revoked, as its templative procedures merely serve impositional and homogenizing ends. The theoretical codes of postcolonial theory are ascribed both transhistorical and transgeographical uniformity; such sentiments have been, and are, consistently articulated with respect to Irish postcolonial studies. As I stated above, the criticisms verbalized by Parry, Dirlik, Ahmad, San Juan Jr., Washbrook and Lazarus against postcolonial studies are echoed, and supplemented, in Irish critical debates.

### **More Martyrs to Abstraction**<sup>194</sup>

Brenda Maddox characterizes the minatory spectre of postcolonial studies in the following, overstated terms, 'Irish studies is riding the crest of the larger more sinister wave known as "post-colonial studies". This is a politically correct vogue for elevating the grievances of newly independent nations to academic status' (1996, 21)<sup>195</sup> Similarly, speaking in interview in 2001, R.F. Foster implicitly targets postcolonial re-presentations of Irish history, memory and literature, urging a rejection of 'the victimhood package that has been responsible for a great deal of fuzzy thinking about Irish history and Irish identity' (2001 b, 20).<sup>196</sup> Between these two statements we see the crystallization of the mindset, and the argumentation, of critics who refute Ireland's postcolonial condition. The recurrent tropes of such critique accent the 'fashionability' of postcolonial studies, its

threatening disciplinary authoritarianism and, as Foster notes, its abstract and ambiguous theoretical resources. Underlying these criticisms, in an Irish context, are deep-seated political divisions, which include identity politics, nationalism, historical 'origins' and questions of cultural representation.

As my discussion of Deane and *Field Day* highlights, many of the critical responses to Irish postcolonial studies have centred on Irish nationalist history. Irish postcolonial studies is keen to interrogate both what Guha calls 'elite nationalism' (1988, 37) and its historiographic legislators. Furthermore, postcolonial studies strives to foreground the unrepresented, subaltern displays of nationalist mobilization and consciousness. Nevertheless, one of the key problems voiced by critics such as Foster, Longley, Tóibín, Kennedy and Mulhern, is the notion that Irish postcolonial studies is merely an alibi for the rehabilitation of narrow-gauge nationalism. The postcolonial 'turn' embodies the respectable repatriation of an attenuated nationalist narrative of oppression and dispossession through the mediations of, what McCormack terms, 'Weetabix theory' (1994, 19).

Reviewing Longley's *The Living Stream*, Peter McDonald elaborates on the politicizing influence of postcolonial studies on Irish literature. He endorses Longley's disparagement of the field, and *Field Day*, arguing:

In the case of Irish literature, such pre-determined political meanings are hardly in short supply, and much contemporary criticism concerns itself with finding them, however, the political elements of such criticism often resemble very closely the orthodoxies of an Irish nationalism from the museum, enshrining old grudges and prejudices in the name of an ideological purity and a venerated narrative of oppression and struggle. (1995, 27)

In other words, a necessary politics precedes, but does not proceed from, postcolonial critical engagements with Irish literature and Irish history. Following Mulhern's argument, the nation and its successful realization are the political loci of postcolonial reading. This macro-political urge, then, is serviced and legitimated by, as the dissertation title suggests, the dissimulating cultural politics of 'Fanon's One Big Idea' (Foster, 2001, 20).

As my discussion of *Field Day* illuminates, Longley is a long-time antagonist of the 'colonial model' of Irish criticism. Her own critical output is underwritten by an insistence on the mutual autonomy of poetry and politics; she practices a New Critical method of 'close' reading of literary texts. As McCarthy summarizes, her work is indicative of 'the stress on (New Critical) technocracy, on the separation of fields, the refusal of a narrative projection of intellectual activity, the refusal of utopian thought, the resistance to totalising thought or theory' (2000, 211). In effect, her critical methodology embodies much of what postcolonial practice works against, specifically in terms of its redemption of tradition and memory; its readings of discursive imbrication; its sustenance of an ethical, utopian criticism and its navigation of the interfaces and interactions of totalities and localities.

Confronting Ireland's *colonial* pretensions, Longley writes, '[a]lthough the term 'colonial' may fit some aspects of Irish experience, most historians would qualify or specify its uses, and dispute the one-size-fits-all zeal of most theorists' (1994, 30). With such a conclusion she explicitly questions Ireland's colonial status, but simultaneously Longley implicitly forecloses any suggestion of Ireland's *postcolonial* pretensions. Her terminology perpetuates the disingenuous implication that postcolonial critics operate

under the rubric of an undifferentiated theoretical paradigm, a point that ventriloquizes the arguments of Dirlik, Ahmad, San Juan Jr. and Lazarus. It is a misconception that Foster also promotes, '[f]aced with the complications and confrontations of Irish history, where axes and whetstones lie conveniently to every hand, there is an understandable temptation to simplify the story by adherence to one big idea' (2001, xviii). In such dialectics the 'postcolonial paradigm' is construed as a unifying narrative of dispossession and disempowerment, which can, and does, sanitize and legitimate a reconstituted, but still traditional and militant, nationalist politics. Just as Dirlik, Lazarus and Ahmad diagnose a neo-conservative political impulse behind postcolonial 'chic', critics of Irish postcolonial studies divine a similar political conservatism, in the guise of atavistic nationalism. Theoretically replenished/recharged in the afterglow of 'intellectual holiday romances in a post-colonial never-never land' (Longley, 1994, 28), Foster argues that, '[t]he old form of narrative continues to exert a compelling attraction' (2001, 20).

The faultlines/lacunae of these critiques are apparent; there is an oversimplification of postcolonial theory and an evident reduction of its politics. In a recent editorial Lloyd repudiates any sense that Ireland is emblematically or paradigmatically colonial or postcolonial. His comments persuasively dispel the assertions of both Longley and Foster. He argues:

The distinctiveness of Ireland's colonial history of colonial domination precludes any so direct an application of generalizing or 'transferable' theories...Ireland has always been both a template and an anomaly...That uneasy contiguity of subalternity with modernity, of the subaltern *in* the modern, is an as yet uneradicated phenomenon in Irish society, and often offers crucial means to defying the uncomprehending forces of modernization. (2003 d, 318-319)

In referring to Ireland's templative role, Lloyd is not canvassing any prescriptive or modular paradigm nor is he arrogating any degree of idealized exemplarity for Ireland's colonial experience. Rather, as Kiberd, Young and Said all attest, Ireland's colonial and anti-colonial experiences have been, and are, accessible and instructive to subsequent international anti-colonial movements. Indeed Denis Donoghue is both historically and ethically incorrect in stating, '[i]t is improbable that a critical or theoretical vocabulary designed to meet certain political conditions in Algeria, Germany, France, India, or Palestine can usefully be transferred to Ireland and enforced upon Irish literature' (1998, 365).<sup>197</sup> Donoghue misses, or elides, the salient fact that Ireland has occupied, and still retains, a position within a protracted historical continuum of anti-colonial ideational transaction. As Carol Coulter argues, '[f]ar from being ashamed of our colonial past, we should be happy to acknowledge and even embrace Ireland's status as a post-colonial society...[our] fellow former colonies [are] the centre of fresh thinking about politics in the world' (1990, 22). It is a philosophical nexus that is both nurtured by, and generative of, ethical political and cultural languages, languages that are not rooted in the correspondences of sameness, but as Gibbons outlines, 'address cultural difference' (2003 b, 236).

Gibbons elaborates, at length, the ethical trajectory so deficient in Donoghue's, as well as Foster's and Longley's, polemic appraisals of postcolonial studies. Taking Burke as exemplar, he concludes:

In bringing his aesthetics to bear on the politics of sympathy, Burke is tracing the lineaments of what might be seen in contemporary debates as a post-colonial ethics, one that relates to the universalism of human rights not through a process of

abstraction from one's own culture but rather by means of a shared solidarity and a history of oppression, however variegated. (2003 b, 235-236)

Rather than demarcate the discrete 'spaces' of literature, politics, history and theory, in the manner of Longley's New Critical methodology, postcolonial studies urges an ethical cross-disciplinary dialogue; critical exchanges that promote 'cross-cultural communication and solidarity' (Gibbons, 2003 b, 236). It is neither a question of diluting one's own identity with the demands of universalist ideals nor is it a case of 'ethnic solipsism' (Gibbons, 2003 b, 237). Extracting ethical examples from Burke and the United Irishmen, Gibbons, in Benjaminian fashion, redeems a discourse of the past for employment in the present and towards the future. Postcolonial ethics cannot sacrifice the local to the global, but neither can critics hermetically ignore the global agents of oppression or resistance. As Gibbons reflects:

For Burke, as for the radical cultural currents in the United Irishmen, international solidarity did not consist in the relation of one abstract human being to another, divested of their cultural differences, but in the affiliations between individuals who saw in their own histories and attachments ways of reaching out to others. (2003 b, 236)

### **'Telling Tales' in Postcolonial Ireland**

Concluding his 1988 *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, Foster serves notice on the colonial locus of Irish historical writing. Foster surmizes:

And this highlights a theme that is evident from the seventeenth century, and recurs in this book: the concept of being 'more' or 'less' Irish than one's neighbour; Irishness as a scale or spectrum rather than a simple national, or residential,



qualification; at worst, Irishness as a matter of aggressively displayed credentials.  
(596)

In Foster's terms, to be Irish is to exist in a constant state of agitation. Evacuating the Anglo-Irish colonial relation of identitarian import, Foster argues for 'a less constricted view of Irish history' (1988, 596). Such a re-configured historical landscape is not, however, unspoilt by new borders or enclosures. Myth, the centrality of Britain's protracted colonial occupation and the reading strategies of 'theoretical euphemisms' (Longley, 1994, 31) are either inadmissible or heavily qualified. Foster fails to see the irony in calling for a more liberated, or liberal, Irish historical narrative, and the notion of Irishness as 'a simple national, or residential qualification'. Irishness, in Foster's preferred modality of a supposedly inclusive historical narrative, is rooted in stability, *residence* and ultimately liberal political inertia. Foster rightly indicts the 'narrow' version of Irish history, but to reduce all colonial and postcolonial readings of Irish history to this 'version' is reductive and disingenuous. Equally, Foster's idea of 'residence' ignores the historical tensions, usurpations and collusions that predicate the attainment of so-called 'residency'; it is a signally dehistoricizing term. Foster's argument is that the past belongs to history, both in epistemological and ontological terms. His narrative is cast, as McCarthy argues, in the idiom of modernization; it is implanted in the present, but compelled forward by Benjamin's 'storm of progress'.

Coalescing with Foster's revision of Irish history, Howe, firstly, absolves colonialism of *intentionality*, effectively denying the will of colonial expansion. Howe argues, '[i]n the more rigid kinds of colonial discourse analysis, colonialism is not only often homogenized and endowed with agency, rationality, ubiquity; it is granted a kind of

trans-historical intentionality' (2000, 110). Once more the homogenizing motives and effects of colonial discourse analyses are accented. In such critique both Foster and Howe echo the critical interventions of Dirlik, Parry and Lazarus. However these critics fail to recognize the traceable intentionality of colonial discourse; as Bryce's epigram at the beginning of the thesis indicates, there was undoubtedly a programmatic colonial gaze. Furthermore, and as I have mentioned, the writings of nineteenth century intellectuals such as Whateley<sup>198</sup> and Merivale<sup>199</sup> provide concrete evidence of the civilizational zeal of the colonial mission.

Howe adds that concentrating on the instrumentality of colonialism as a political and cultural force:

Fails to consider the extent to which colonial rule in general, and the British Empire in particular, was a patchwork quilt, an enormously varied set of forms of rule and domination, largely the product of improvisation and full of internal contradictions and strains, rather than a deliberately constructed global system. (2000, 110)

This latter point raises several serious issues, both with respect to Howe's own historical reading of colonialism and his understanding of postcolonial studies. As Cleary argues, invoking Fieldhouse and Fredrickson, there is a consciousness of the variegated incarnations/species of colonialism. And the internationally differentiated projects of postcolonial studies do not elide such historical, geographical and cultural disparities in facile or analogous models/paradigms. As Fieldhouse asserts in his consideration of 'non-European' colonialism:

Despite the obvious explanation, colonization was more the product of political ambitions, international rivalries and complex situations in the non-European world than of simple and universal economic forces...imperialism was not the simple

product of advanced capitalism...no single theory or explanation of imperialism is satisfactory. (1967, 192-193)

Likewise the ethical fabric of postcolonial studies, as Gibbons outlines through Burke, is not woven from a universalist language or philosophy, but rather is based on the *shared* suffering of differentiated communities and individuals. Indeed Howe's ironic re-situation of Kiberd's metaphoric 'patchwork quilt' raises concerns about his own ethical framework. Highlighting the strenuous, contradictory, variegated and improvised nature of colonial 'rule and domination' does not absolve the excesses, exploitation or deracination of such authority. Matching Washbrook's skewed apprehension of the colonial mission, Howe fails to appreciate that however multifaceted colonial rule may have been, domination remains domination.<sup>200</sup>

Such a failure to recognize domination in the tropes of colonial civility, education and modernization is given extreme expression by the imperial historian, Rudolf von Albertini. Although published as recently as 1982, the same year as the first edition of *Subaltern Studies*, von Albertini's *European Colonial Rule, 1880-1940*, betrays the rational idealism of both colonial discourse and imperial history. He fulminates against the radical, denigratory criticism of the history of colonialism, believing that it is:

equally mistaken...that Asian and African peoples could have brought off modernization *à la japonaise* and without colonialism would today be developed countries. Despite the risk of appearing an imperialist and colonialist lackey, I remain committed to the view that the colonial period was a period of modernization for the colonized. (1982, 513-514)

Clearly the manner of colonial administration and the pursuit of modernization were differentiated between colonial contexts, but the civilizing, modernizing animus is

comparable across these contextual boundaries. Von Albertini's conclusion is symptomatic of this impulse; the very idea of modernization is adjudged unequivocally desirable, but not only desirable, imposable. As McCarthy, Deane, Kiberd, Whelan, Lloyd and Gibbons, all argue, and without conflating Irish historiography and imperial history, there are parallels between these assertions and those of Irish revisionist historians. As Foster urges, Ireland must develop a sense 'of cultural maturity' (1988, 596), or in Howe's view we must 'attempt to broaden the definition of the nation, to qualify, or to liberalise it' (2000, 84).<sup>201</sup> Both ideas are indicative of a modernizing teleology, and it is only partly facetious to juxtapose their comments with von Albertini's closing remarks:

[the colonial period brought] [t]he imposition of peace, meaning putting an end to tribal warfare...the creation of larger territorial units, establishment of modern administrations and communications systems, and economic development were part of this modernization, as were expansion of education and health services. (1982, 513-514)

Again we see the repetition of a chronological, and ultimately developmental narrative. Postcolonial Studies is not trained on the retention of petrified traditions nor is it averse to 'cultural maturity', but it is committed to the examination of the terms of modernization. As we have discussed, alternative modernities are located and celebrated, it is simply that the diffuse ideological impositions of either European colonial modernization or global industrialization are freighted, respectively, with the legacies and prospects of political disenfranchisement and cultural erasure.<sup>202</sup>

## Postcolonial: Does Ireland add up?

As an economic historian, Liam Kennedy adopts a more empirical strategy in declaiming Ireland's 'postcolonial pretensions' (1992/93, 107). Taking the theoretical comparativism of postcolonial studies as his statistical target, Kennedy attempts to debunk Ireland's postcolonial status. Through an aggregation of economic and demographic figures, he concludes that far from allying itself with other postcolonial societies, as a resolutely First World country, Ireland 'defends its own interests *against* Third World countries' (1992/93, 119).

While the tenor of Kennedy's article is ostensibly that of detached, empirical refutation through a measured presentation of data, his exasperation at postcolonial theory intrudes on his statistical report. Replaying familiar critical tropes, Kennedy invokes Bourdieu, as he candidly dismisses postcolonial studies a 'nonsense strutting on theoretical stilts' (1992/93, 115). It is a commonplace in polemical pieces on postcolonial studies to expose its aggrandizing and cynical opportunism, but Kennedy's characterization is particularly emphatic:

Like jackdaws to shiny objects, literary and cultural critics seem to be drawn to labels and packaging. Assertion becomes a low-cost substitute for evidence. Metaphors masquerade as theory. And theory is a good thing, particularly for *homo academicus* on the make. (1992/93, 118-119)

Just as Lazarus enlists Bourdieu's educational sociology, Kennedy accents the careerist strategies of what might be called 'theory groupies'. But what both fail to do is to recognize their *own* location within 'the academic game' (Kennedy, 1992/93, 119); it is a singular irony that these alarmist reactions to postcolonial studies are actually

indicative of equivalent 'professional' aspirations or concerns of their own. As Baumann and Bourdieu outline, disparagement is the most frequent and effective form of self-preservation in 'the academic game'. The notion of a postcolonial society residing within the borders of Western Europe does not seem palatable to many critics, and it is on the basis of skin colour, relative economic prosperity, colonial complicity, and geographical proximity that Ireland is often excluded from postcolonial debates. He concludes that it is grossly tendentious to pursue international parallels within the discourse of postcolonial theory for the sake of comparative studies and theses:

[t]here are a number of reasons why, when subjected to empirical inquiry, the colonial and post-colonial notions fit the experience so poorly. Partly it is a matter of indulging superficial parallels too readily. But mainly it is due to a failure of historical interpretation, in relation to Ireland and other societies. (Kennedy, 1992/93, 119)

Kennedy is highlighting what he views as a type of 'vogue' in the current academic domain: postcolonial theory is simply the latest, most fashionable vehicle through which cultural commentators can facilitate their own academic aggrandizement, within which '[a]ssertion becomes a cheap substitute for evidence' (1992/93, 118). Kennedy vilifies the ambiguities that are characteristic of post-colonial theory, as the concrete issues of cultural inquiry are jeopardized with 'metaphors masquerading [sic] as theory' (1992/93, 118). Neither the theorists nor the theories are tolerated by Kennedy and in conclusion the entire postcolonial culture of 'image-making' and 'labels and packaging' within Ireland. In fact, Kennedy cynically concludes, 'the academic game is a status-driven and competitive one, in which a variety of strategies may be deployed in pursuit of reputation and preferment' (1992/93, 119). In Kennedy's view, then, the

current trend towards examining Ireland through the post-colonial lens is simply the re-institution of another academic hegemony.<sup>203</sup> Kennedy is concerned with the refutation of ideology through the utilization of empirical fact and refuses to countenance the 'modernization... of the threadbare quality of traditional rhetoric' (1992/93, 118).

Lloyd pinpoints the basic methodological flaw in Kennedy's empirical argument, he notes:

In their undialectical abstraction, Kennedy's figures ultimately conceal more than they reveal, not on account of any attempt to deceive, but as an index of the intrinsic inadequacy of empirical method deployed in abstraction from the social relations as a whole. (1999, 12)

Kennedy's figures are excised from the political and cultural realities that they ostensibly claim to represent. Rather than clarifying Ireland's cultural, political or economic historical or contemporary conditions, these abstracted statistics recall Gasset's thesis on the obfuscatory nature, and function, of 'factual presentation'. Much like the hieroglyphic markings of Gasset's discussion, which claim a revelatory function but conversely defer or obscure reality, the empiricist method deployed by Kennedy operates on the basis of the assertion of self-evidence. Furthermore, as both Lloyd and McCarthy argue,<sup>204</sup> the preferred empirical method is unselfconscious in its collusive service of domination. Contrary to Kennedy's statistical practice and his caricatured portrait of postcolonial studies, Lloyd re-affirms the purpose of postcolonial projects, 'the critique of empirical method [which] has always been at one with the political nature of the intervention, acknowledging that the apparent self-evidence of empiricism is itself an effect of domination' (1999, 13).

Kennedy does not unequivocally eschew the value of comparative theoretical approaches; he re-capitulates the consistent injunction of postcolonial theory's antagonists, urging:

The condition of Ireland prior to its partial breakaway from Britain bore little relationship to that of African and Asian societies at the historic moment of decolonization in these continents. A *West European comparative framework* fits the Irish case far more effectively [my emphasis]. (1993, 111)

On the evidence of statistical data, Ireland fits the 'league tables' or quantitative standards of Western European society. Kennedy is not alone in such a conviction, Longley<sup>205</sup>, Howe and Michael Gallagher<sup>206</sup> endorse his empirical argument, and indeed the idea was proposed slightly earlier by J.J. Lee in *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society*.<sup>207</sup> Howe concludes:

By every indicator of public opinion, Ireland has become virtually the most enthusiastically integrationist of all European member states... Social and cultural aspirations, like social and cultural problems in Ireland today are those shared by all advanced industrial states. In this context, notions of an all-determining colonial legacy, let alone a persisting neocolonial 'Third World' status, verge on the meaningless. (2000, 167-168)

Significantly, Howe's references to the social and cultural dimensions of Irish society relate exclusively to 'aspirations' and 'today'. Not only, then, does Kennedy's statistical analysis cleave empirical research from its ideological context, but Howe elides the social and cultural dimensions of Ireland's *past* as indices of identity. Even in Kennedy's rendition of nineteenth century Irish history, political reform, cultural initiative and religious practice are extracted from their colonial context. Typically Kennedy relates,



'[t]he Gaelic revival, in its sporting, linguistic, dancing and literary forms, added a further layer of indigenous cultural institutions' (1993, 116). The political and cultural impact of these variegated agents of resistant, alternative modernities are starkly dehistoricized under Kennedy's rational and abstracted optic. Again Lloyd rightly concludes:

In order to grasp the particularity of Ireland's or any other country's experience within the larger economics of colonialism, economic or other data need to be posed in relation to the specific forms of rule or modes of cultural differentiation and so forth that have determined the actual *texture* of the society [my emphasis]. (1999, 11)

Reminding us of Carter's spatial history of Australian colonization, the veneration of empirical data like the modalities of imperial history, accents the 'what' of events, it telescopes the 'who' of history. In other words, it quantifies, lists, categorizes and, through linear narration, it asserts its own self-evident truths without realizing the innate contingency of such assertion. Conversely postcolonial readings, including Carter's spatial history, explore intention, ideology and *a priori* claims to power, possession and domination. As Lloyd's search for the determinants of social textures suggests, these discourses emphasize depth of understanding rather than breadth of information as epistemological representation.

### **Questioning the Dutch Schoolmaster**

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman provides a signally dour reflection on the ambition, and the intentions, of contemporary intellectuals. Baumann characterizes an

almost Social Darwinist milieu in which intellectual elites [and aspirants presumably] compete for evolutionary supremacy. He notes:

discreditation of other experts is seen as the surest way to elevate one's own prestige, the collegial critique is on the whole soaked with malice and envy, and the prospects of professions uniting to assume collectively the responsibility of the 'intellectuals' are slim and remote. (Baumann, 1995, 234)<sup>208</sup>

While I have no intention of caricaturing the internecine disputes, rivalries, and tensions of both inter- and cross-disciplinary academia, it is notable that frequent reviews and/or reaction pieces to postcolonial theory never venture far from the facile/insidious discreditation cited by Baumann. As the material under scrutiny in this chapter demonstrates, Irish postcolonial studies has been interrogated from a variety of perspectives and under the remit of diverse agendas; such interventions have ranged from single reviews, journal articles, to entire chapter-length essays. Significantly despite the strength of the anti-theory invective, only a single book-length engagement, which deals explicitly at any length with the material under scrutiny in this dissertation, has emerged thus far: Howe's *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History*.

One of the overriding preoccupations of postcolonial studies is the state's ability and ambition to censure and mediate the narrative representation of its own history. A process of political editorship, as we have seen, characterizes the struggle for verbal representation. Thus the power of selectivity, or the facility of authorship is a central component in the manufacture of any narrative thread. It is a truism to say that narratives must be closely scrutinized and monitored for wilful, strategic inclusions and elisions. Such a caveat is relevant to communal and national discourses of historical

representation, but my present focus is a recent 'narrative' of Irish postcolonial studies: Howe's *Ireland and Empire: Colonial legacies in Irish History*.<sup>209</sup> Howe provides what is, to date, the most representative overview of recent and contemporary Irish postcolonial studies, and my intention is to expose the grave and insidious narrative elisions and strategies of *Ireland and Empire*. In a sense Howe's intervention responds to a contemporary 'Dutch school master' and is symptomatic of a school of thought that 'eats heartily without postcolonial theory'.<sup>210</sup>

Howe's work is not exclusively dedicated to the interrogation of postcolonial tropes and methodology but is designed as an exploration of the genealogy of 'colonial legacies in Irish history' as the subtitle states. *Ireland and Empire* treats of many of the issues at stake in the present dissertation including nationalist and revisionist historiography; colonialism and postcolonial theory; Ireland and the European mainland, and the *Field Day* enterprise. It may prove instructive therefore to consider some of the misgivings articulated by Howe in his scathing critique of Irish postcolonial studies. Howe rightly contends, 'Irish cultural and literary history has become a major site for the elaboration of ideas about colonialism and postcoloniality' (2000, 107). He feels that rather than initiating a unique or in any way original engagement with international cultural studies, 'this Irish work has formed a part – indeed a rather derivative offshoot – of a wider colonial discourse and postcolonial trend in recent years' (2000, 108).

Howe's discussion is thereby initiated in a distinctly prejudicial manner; the pre-emptive conclusion is that Irish postcolonial theory is but a pale imitation of a broader international critical discourse. While there has undoubtedly been proliferation in the appropriation and employment of postcolonial paradigms within Irish cultural studies,

Howe's characterization is fundamentally simplistic, myopic, and reductive. Howe commits two essential errors of commission and omission. In the first instance he argues, '[s]uch theories tend to see colonial power as an all-embracing, trans-historical force, controlling and transforming every aspect, every tiny detail of colonised societies' the level of simplification in such a characterization needs no emphasis (2000, 108). Furthermore, as we have discussed above, Irish postcolonial critics are entirely sensitive to the contextual disparity between and within colonized societies, in both temporal and spatial terms. Howe's abiding problems vis-à-vis postcolonial theory are, its assumption of an ideologically and geographically homogenous entity called colonialism, the over-dependence of its practitioners on literary theory and texts, and its acquiescence with and rehabilitation of Irish political nationalism.

Not only, then, do Kiberd's critical interventions embody a sanitized recalibration, or perhaps more accurately, a recrudescence of 'old-fashioned politics' (Howe, 2000, 128). Similarly, Gibbons writings, in Howe's dismal conclusion:

enlist a combination of postcolonialism, poststructuralism and more traditional cultural nationalism against 'revisionism'...to rehabilitate the nationalist legacy by demolishing hostile 'revisionist' views of it, and to press the case that Ireland's position remains essentially a colonial one. (2000, 125)

The 'nation' persists as the fulcrum of postcolonial theoretical debates; despite the resources of a newly configured theoretical matrix, postcolonial critics such as Deane, Kiberd and Gibbons remain enchanted by their attenuated nationalist politics. As my discussion of Irish postcolonial studies demonstrates, its ethical codes are not in thrall to any singular political, economic or cultural entity or abstraction, recalling Gibbons on the

United Irishmen, Irish postcolonial studies is, and must remain, committed to the negotiation of innovative ways of thinking about the future.

Equally, Howe contradicts his entire argument against the homogenizing tactics of postcolonial theory by basing his own critique on the three fundamental tenets cited above, thus performing an act of theoretical/critical universalism. The material employed in his critical offensive is selectively chosen and is subsequently utilized in a self-serving and obviously imbalanced manner. A close reading of its grammatical structure betrays Howe's generalized characterization; the argument is constructed on the basis of unconvincing assertions that rely on 'often', 'characteristically', 'very widely assumed', 'sometimes', and 'either/or' for critical gravity. While Howe does then proceed to engage with specific critics, the introduction has set the terms and the tone of the subsequent discussion as one in which the rhetoric of polemic and single-mindedness will prevail. In his discussion of Deane, Kiberd, and Gibbons, Howe concludes, '[t]hus invocations of a literary-critical avant-garde serve mainly to underpin a return to a somewhat old-fashioned politics' (2000, 128). In other words, Howe subscribes to the modernizing impulse of revisionist discourse, which views the textualization of history or the historicization of texts as little more than nationalistic accretions of anachronistic politics.

Echoing the imprecision of Howe's interrogation of Irish postcolonial studies, Foster relies on the dubious art of the pithy dismissal for rhetorical force; the cursory designation 'Fanon's One Big Idea' simply does not represent a critical engagement with postcolonial theorization as a nuanced and disparate body of critical work. Again, it is the unabashed chutzpah and the self-certainty of the wry remark that is designed to contain the argumentative import. It is the downright refusal to engage with postcolonial theory at

any meaningful level that is the real slight; effectively it is intellectual snobbery on straw-legs.

## Revising Postcolonialism

The postcolonial debate in Irish studies involves both established scholars together with what have been recently ordained 'New Voices in Irish Criticism.'<sup>211</sup> In particular I want to focus on one specific intervention by a 'new voice' in Irish postcolonial criticism; Stephanie Bachorz's article, 'Revising Postcolonialism: Irish Literary Criticism, Irish National Identity and the Protestant Poet.'<sup>212</sup> Bachorz's 'revision' of postcolonialism is not so much a revision as a flawed deconstruction; emphatically situated within the dialectic of so-called revisionist literary and historical study, her methodology and agenda are consonant with Howe's lengthier critique discussed above. At the outset of her discussion she notes suggestively, 'the idea of Ireland as the perfect antithesis to rationalism, capitalism and the British Empire...has become the predominant *ideology* in books and articles by Declan Kiberd or Seamus Deane [my emphasis]' (Bachorz, 1999, 1).

The initiators of an Irish postcolonial conversation, then, are further reproached for a wilful dissemination of a theoretical 'ideology' and Bachorz's critique is characteristic of an interrogative complacency. Just as Gibbons' points to the tactics of 'modern historical method' in constructing a critical strawman in the form of 'traditional nationalism', Bachorz's delineation of postcolonial Irish studies reveals a similar strain of critical projection. She concludes her introductory essay by remarking:

it will be argued that there are ways in which the overused binary oppositions which form the basis of most postcolonial approaches in Ireland, can be overcome in a way that still pays attention to the socio-political reality that created them. (1)

Listed in Bachorz's bibliographic material are Gibbons' *Transformations in Irish culture* and Lloyd's *Anomalous States*, both of which, as I have demonstrated, are emblematic of larger philosophical/historical projects, projects that actually redress such binary thinking/models. Bachorz constructs a necessary fiction in order to legitimize what she dubiously terms, a revision of postcolonialism. As I have outlined, Gibbons, Lloyd or Whelan neither perpetuate nor subscribe to such 'binary oppositions', but circumvent such simplicity in their location and interrogation of counter-modern alternatives; discourses which are co-terminous with, and not necessarily antagonistic to, rationality or modernity.

Bachorz's intervention is a conscious, and disingenuous, manoeuvre animated by a vested interest in simplifying, and thereby discrediting, postcolonial Irish studies. She concludes, 'modernity *could have* been experienced in Ireland 'before its time', but that a nationalist ideology is still doing anything to prevent it' (1999, 14). As my reading of Lloyd, Deane, Kiberd, Whelan and Gibbons illustrates, Ireland did emphatically experience what Kiberd terms a 'masked modernity' or in Lloyd's terms a process of coeval modernization. In a sense, and to employ her own dichotomous developmental paradigm, her qualified conclusions are anachronistic in comparison to the radical theorization and historicization of much recent Irish postcolonial criticism. Anticipating Howe, and regurgitating the presiding criticisms of postcolonial theory, Bachorz notes at length:

The postcolonial framework is mainly used to further justify Irish nationalism not only as a natural result of British colonisation but, at the same time, as a sign of having truly overcome British rule. However, nationalism itself is difficult to be seen as something other than part of an originally European bourgeois and imperialist ideology. (1999, 4)

Prior to rendering such a myopic dismissal of postcolonialism and nationalism, the critic ought to investigate the danger of attaching monolithic labels to highly differentiated politico-cultural discourses. Again prefiguring Howe's more recent polemic, Bachorz delights in outlining a reductive and complacent portrait of postcolonial theory and its discursive relation to nationalism. Her final imputation that nationalism is a metropolitan, European 'invention' is one that is well traversed in postcolonial studies. Indeed Whelan, Lloyd and Gibbons all interrogate the modalities of nationalist, anti-colonial representation as well as the mechanisms of postcolonial state consolidation. Bachorz's critique lapses into a delayed response to issues that have exercised and continue to exercise debates within postcolonial Irish studies. While she can legitimately aver to 'Field Day's manoeuvres' (1999, 4), it is the tactical deployments of her own critique that are most obvious and ultimately debilitating.

What is most incongruous about Bachorz's revision of Irish postcolonialism is her selection of a philosophical alternative. Bachorz views Adorno's negative dialectics as 'one means by which one can point out the problem in current 'postcolonial' practice and at the same time overcome it: the binary oppositions of colonial Ireland can thus be truly questioned instead of simply reversing their hierarchy' (1999, 14). Besides perpetuating a dichotomous conceptual framework, Bachorz defaults to Adornian dialectics; does such a manoeuvre not maintain a level Euro-American philosophical dependence? In such a



formulation are we not prolonging or even ratifying the hegemony of European philosophical principles? Is there a contradiction in espousing Adorno's negative dialectics as a postcolonial framework yet deriding postcolonialism's concern with political and cultural nationalism? If one wishes to effect an international or transnational theoretical transfusion, surely it requires the input of other formerly colonized societies, not simply the activation of a single philosophical resource. Essentially, the differentiated corpus of Euro-American philosophical and theoretical discourses can be enabling in a postcolonial context, but what Bachorz overlooks/elides are the latent possibilities of engaging with alternative postcolonial societies at political, cultural and theoretical levels. As Gibbons and Mallon demonstrate, postcolonial critique does not drift on vertical vectors or binary oppositions; there are imaginative, alternative or 'unapproved' roads to ethical understandings and readings of disparate postcolonial experiences.

Postcolonial theory, then, is an ephemeral discursive practice within Irish cultural and political studies; it is willed into transience in the hope of convincing those critics, already converted to its inherent malignance, that what they already believed to be true is in fact true! If postcolonial theory is merely an academic fad or trend, then why bother with such impassioned and empirical defensiveness? Precisely because postcolonial methodology involves the mechanics of the local/the material, such a theoretical 'vogue' transfuses cultural criticism with a 'rootedness' that is strategically capable of destabilizing the discursive certainties of Irish modernization. Postcolonial theory exposes the contradictions and elisions of the individual's relationship to the state; by valorizing discourses such as memory-formation, historiography, gender relations, and

class distinctions, postcolonial theory scrutinizes the very foundations of economic and political authority within the postcolonial nation-state.

In Norman Vance's opinion, as the epigraphic quotation reveals, the jury may still be out on postcolonial theory in Ireland, but while we await a conclusive verdict on its illuminative progress, and potential, my aim is to furnish a contextual genealogy of these critical deliberations. It is not so much an interim report as an interactive commentary on the evidence as it currently presents itself. Indeed, Vance's legal parlance implies that postcolonial theory is on critical 'probation' lest it transgress the sensibilities of contemporary Irish academia. Pursuant to such idiomatic critique, several questions arise as to the nature of this sequestered judicial caucus, and when shall a conclusive verdict be provided? With suitable irony, then, the very contextual specificity of divergent and fractious communities canvassed within postcolonial analyses is elided by the convergence of a dogmatic theoretical judgment.

### **Time heals all wounds?**

The poet Thomas Kinsella makes the point that 'it is one of the findings of Ireland's dual tradition that an empire is a passing thing, but that a colony is not' (1995, 111). Kinsella's remark serves as a pithy riposte to the logicians of temporal progress and revisionist modernization, who emphatically preclude/deny any sense of 'legacy' to colonialism. Rebarbative imperialism and its traumas are cauterized in an unsullied postcolonial vista or more accurately a post-Independence consciousness. Irish economic historians, literary historians and literary critics, as we have seen, repeatedly challenge the legitimacy of a long-term postcolonial memory. In a recent essay, Bruce Robbins

specifically interrogates Gibbons' contention that 'while the past may be a distant country, it is not so distant for those cultures engaged in centuries-old struggle against western colonialism....But can wounds afflicted by a social catastrophe be so easily cauterized' (1996, 172). Robbins' argument is based on the ethical assumption that historical guilt or crime cannot be continually replayed or re-ascribed to contemporary and erstwhile imperial societies.<sup>213</sup> He asks:

Faced with the moral absoluteness of atrocity, is the passage of time relevant at all? If so, how? If there can be no statute of limitations on accusations of colonial crimes, is there at any rate a temporal scale, an implicit deviation from moral absoluteness, that helps us decide what or how to remember, what or how to forget? (2003, 108)

In posing such potentially explosive questions, Robbins intersects with Mulhern and Kennedy, whom he references, in suspecting the legitimacy of 'postcolonial melancholy' (Mulhern, 1998, 158). Robbins, however, commits a grave form of temporal universalism. While Gibbons' delineation of cross-periphery solidarity is a mode of comparative ethics, Robbins poses questions that signally fail to particularize or offer any exemplary comparisons. The longevity/duration of, the scale, the severity and the differential processes of liberation in multifarious colonial locations surely dictate the 'statute of limitations.' The articulation of 'radical memory', as conceptualized by Gibbons and Whelan, is signally more progressive than any form of regressive or archaic nostalgia.

As I have discussed, both Gibbons and Mallon articulate a novel form of postcolonial ethics; rather than perpetuating the horizontal vectors of colonialism/anticolonialism, they further destabilize the gravitational force of colonialism

by re-directing cultural and theoretical energy to networks of lateral mobility. Again Robbins commits two fundamental errors in his reconceptualization of historicizing colonialism. Firstly, by focusing on how European colonialism is not solely responsible for long-term social ills, Robbins instances the legacies of Ottoman imperialism as well as the development of capitalism as equally culpable of historical oppression and disenfranchisement. His dialectic persists with historical frameworks that are dependent on dichotomous relationships of oppressor and oppressed. In trying to remove European colonialism from a position of central historical significance and thus from memorial importance, Robbins does not make the necessary imaginative leap from his dichotomous framework. The step taken by Gibbons' and Mallon's ethical remembrance is to vacate Robbins' dichotomy in favour of a horizontal or equivalent solidarity. Robbins' system of ethical remembrance remains sequestered in an attenuated and binary structure.

But perhaps most compromising is Robbins' deployment of a generic 'colonialism'; even though he cites Ottoman colonialism, it reads as merely as the attachment of an adjective rather than any definitional alteration to the concept of colonialism. Postcolonial theory has long been preoccupied with the structural and qualitative differentials of colonial and postcolonial societies. Just as the qualitative nature of postcolonial theory cannot be reduced to a templative or taxonomical standard, there was and is no yardstick of what constitutes a colony. There are temporally and spatially morphous and contested concepts, experiences and processes. As we have noted, Cleary offers a useful insight on the diverse forms of colony, reading through Fieldhouse and Fredrickson he cites: administrative, plantation, mixed settlement and pure settlement.<sup>214</sup> While no two colonial societies were exactly congruent, neither is it

reasonable to suggest that all were 'isolated singularities' (Cleary, 2003 a, 29). In effect, Cleary urges that more attention should be devoted 'to the task of generating a serviceable historicized typology of colonies' (2003 a, 29). Consequently in order to adjudicate the relative trauma experienced by a colonized society, Robbins would firstly have to jettison the universal idea of 'colonialism' and sensitize his judgments by understanding the diversity of colonial experiences. The 'statute of limitations', then, might be dictated by the legacies of settlement, plantation or administration.

While the formulation of such a typology is clearly not definitive and is eminently exposed to dispute and qualification, it is assuredly a progression from the bald assertion or designations of 'colonialism' or 'imperialism.' The merits of such a typological framework rest in its articulation of difference and complexity, and in the recognition of the varying degrees of colonial penetration. Just as we can try to distinguish between temporal periods of 'high' or 'late' imperialism, we also require a corollary spatial specification. As Michael Sprinker argues '[b]ut one aspect of it that is perhaps surprising, given all one hears these days about a 'return to history' in literary and cultural studies, is the comparative neglect of any, even provisional, periodization of imperialism itself' (1995, 1-4). But again, in the act of denoting a typology of colonialism, just as I have discussed with respect to Graham's and Kirkland's meta-theoretical interventions, one must be alive to the dangerous possibility of definitive theoretical labels. Indeed Cleary recognizes just such a risk, he writes:

While I have suggested that typologies of colonialism can serve as a useful heuristic device for the analysis of colonial situations, any taxonomy that loses sight of the

fact that colonialism is a historically changing process will also be reductive. (2003 a, 44)

In effect, any taxonomy that sees itself as the *telos* rather than a function of critical interrogation is inherently compromised and ultimately tendentious. Cleary contends:

the economic and political subordination of the colony to the imperial metropole, the dominant class, gender and sectarian systems established during the colonial period, and the intellectual and cultural forms institutionalized in both metropole and colony under colonial rule cannot instantly be abolished by the mere fact of independence...colonialism, in brief, has both short- and long- term consequences and effects. (2003 b, 7)

These short- and long-term consequences and effects are not merely isolated economic, geographical or political repercussions but permeate and structure the forms and contents of individual and communal memory.

Robbins quotes further from Gibbons' *Transformations in Irish Culture*:

Would anyone seriously suggest that the traumatic lessons of the Holocaust shouldn't be as pertinent in a hundred years time as they are today? Or – to take an example that touches directly on colonialism and the displacement of the diaspora – that novels such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* are valuable merely for their re-creation of slavery as it was endured 150 years ago but have little to do with the lived experience of the African-American population in the contemporary United States. (Robbins, 106)

By way of reply to Gibbons, Robbins argues:

Against this conventional wisdom, one must pose an opposite but perhaps equal argument about the nation's need to forget...a forgetting of mortal wounds to his [Gabriel Conroy] and his desire – the sort of forgetting without which both nations and marriages would have a harder time. (106)

Robbins later cites the example of Kosovo, in which the historical memory of ethnic tribalism precipitated murderous intercommunal aggression. For Robbins, then, it seems that forgetting offers a suitable exit from the only options sanctioned by remembrance: melancholia or ethnic tribalism. In such a dialectic Robbins institutes a dichotomous relation between remembrance and forgetting: it seems that Robbins offers one or the other without the realization that memory is forgetting and vice versa. What Robbins fails to appreciate is that Gibbons' larger postcolonial project, together with similar efforts by Lloyd, Deane, Whelan and Kiberd, is precisely to interrogate the mechanisms of nationalist and imperial remembrance.

In articulating the forgotten voices/traces of historical nationalism or in representing republican history in reconceived modalities, Irish postcolonial critics, including Gibbons, are undoing the institutional forms of legitimate memory that buttress the self-image of the state, as well as that of tribal cleavage. In a postcolonial context it is not as simple as merely 'forgetting' in order to forge stable unities, rather we must be alive to the concatenations of historical nationalist memory and expression, much of which was sacrificed within an hegemonic nationalist narrative. The mining of alternative memory is as much about forgetting as it is about a celebratory remembrance; all identities are forged through an oscillation between remembrances and forgetting; processes of compromise, elision and rebirth. Robbins overlooks the complex, even laminated, texture of both memory and forgetting; he notes the unifying capacities of memory and forgetting, but postcolonial projects investigate and unstitch the vertiginous lines of narrative selection. Robbins notes the real institutional possibilities of memory and forgetting without querying what is historically edited out and why?

## **'Lucrative' Theory**

Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become the 'past', once decolonization had set in motion the dismantling of the classical empires. (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 341)

One of the most enabling features of recent postcolonial criticism is the recognition that there is not and cannot be a singular postcolonial experience, theory or location. While such theoretical parsing has often, correctly, been dismissed or derided as little more than idiomatic 'cento', splitting the terms 'postcolonialism' or 'postcolonial' promises the possibility of materializing debates on colonial history and postcolonial legacies. The discussions of radicalizing or 'localizing' postcolonial experience and representation are predominantly enacted within academic contexts, [journals, seminars, conferences], however the metacritical recognition of these limitations is a gesture towards a more constructive praxis.

The irony of many of the polemical interventions against postcolonial studies is that their critiques are couched in archaic critical idioms. Instancing such a practice, one recent critic notes, '[t]he postcolonial model claims its greatest relevance in relation to culture. It contends that colonialism proves most effective 'in colonizing the mind'' (Peillon, 2003, 72). Of necessity, Peillon invokes a unitary target for his critical inquiry: the identifiably modular postcolonial experience. Peillon emphatically simplifies the nature of postcolonial studies as an integrated, organic critical paradigm. But significantly, as this chapter illuminates, Peillon's argument is not unique. It is symptomatic of a broader economy of disingenuous critical practice. Engagements with



postcolonial studies, in an Irish context and elsewhere, deploy a strategy of deliberate reductionism; it is remarkable that the level of interaction is predominantly antagonistic, cynical and cursory. McCormack ultimately resolves that:

All of this *lucrative* activity has generated a suitably impressive series of theoretical covering positions – post-colonialism, post-contemporary interventionism, post-modernism, post-structuralism. All of these come under the general heading Theory, though it might be more theoretically acute to note the tenorial continuity inscribed with longing in the iterated *posts*, each of them a certificate of professional survival in the American academy...[Theory] is an Althusserian gesture, originally deployed to neutralize the historical method, and now appropriated as a career move [my emphasis]. (1994, 22)

## CONCLUSION

### Postcolonial Studies: Academic and/or Activist?

A century looked at a landscape furious with vegetation in the wrong light and with the wrong eye. It is such pictures that are saddening rather than the tropics itself. These delicate engravings of sugar mills and harbours, and native women in costume, are seen as part of History, that History which looked over the shoulder of the engraver and later the photographer. History can alter the eye and the moving hand to conform a view of itself; it can rename places for the nostalgia in an echo; it can temper the glare of the tropical light to elegiac monotony in prose. (Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says: Essays*, 75.)

Enlightened histories claimed to be replacing error with truth, but they were in reality trading new myths for old – their own mentalities were mythopoeic too. Yet, however, blind to their own myth-making, the enlightened were energetic anatomists of myth, going beyond accounts of individual fables to shape grand anthropologies - or pathologies – of the myth-making imagination itself. (Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, 233)

We must consider the irony that there has probably never before been such an accumulated mass of scholarship showing in intricate detail the workings of oppression, both subtle and crude, at every level of society and culture; yet this accumulated critique has been more successful as a new growth industry within academia than as an effective intervention to change the very conditions that prompt us to make the critique in the first place. In other words, maybe the time has come for us to consider the question of our accountability. (Joe Sartelle, 'Public Intellectuals')<sup>215</sup>

## Political Responsibility

Young diagnoses a characteristic flaw in operation within current postcolonial studies, when he notes, ‘the field of postcolonial studies has already tended to become limited to the invocation of orthodoxies and the impasse of self-referential critiques’ (1999, 33-34). It is imperative, then, according to this logic, to curtail the proliferative, yet characteristically insular, rhetoric of postcolonial studies, and there must an assumption of political and critical responsibility by those with access to political and cultural discourses. Young continues, ‘we [the editors of *Interventions*] seek to reinvoke the politics, political objectives and commitment through which, historically, postcolonial critique was originally generated’ (Young, 1999, 33-34); it is an injunction that is echoed in an Irish context most explicitly by Kirkland. The politics of the ‘local space’ and the dynamics of material circumstances, then, have been elided from the gilded, academic forms of postcolonial critique. Therefore, it is incumbent on postcolonial theory, firstly, to remain sensitive to its own fractious conception and gestation, and subsequently to adequately represent identitarian diversity rather than simply *assert* or cosmetically fetishize specific marginal identities.

Much cultural theory is distinguished, even defined, by the urge to assimilate, to stabilize and, most evidently, to know. It is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the linguistic basis, and medium, of critical theory, that a form of knowledge or a critical trope is both confined to, and confining within, the parameters of a linguistic process of ‘naming’; an objective process of imposition that can effectively negate the particularities of the individual subject or community. In the editorial cited above, Young echoes Paul De Man on the nature of criticism in moments of crisis. Young underlines the fractious

genesis of colonial discourse analysis and he furnishes postcolonial scholars with a salutary reminder of the ‘material’ circumstances under which the discipline emerged.

In Young’s terms, then, it is incumbent upon postcolonial theorists to transfuse their criticism with material, political import, and to recognize the socio-economic contexts of contemporary postcolonialism. The interrogation of ideological apparatuses did not end with the death of Althusser; therefore it is exigent that the concept of ideology as an analytical category is resuscitated. Both McCarthy and Graham are remarkably consonant with Young’s thesis, and indeed Smyth’s recognition of a homology of political and cultural discourse points to the same theoretical injunction. McCarthy echoes Smyth in his critique of modernization theory, he notes, ‘[it] tends to de-politicize social and economic issues, insofar as it does not see ideology as a useful analytical category’ (2000, 22). By reneging a critique of prevailing ideologies, such critics (largely revisionist in McCarthy’s view), effectively refuse to engage with the possibility of their own ideological constitution; a matter that is directly related to the necessity of auto-critique within postcolonial studies itself.

## **Postcolonial Studies and Contemporary Politics**

In November 2003 *Salon* magazine published an extended article with the provocative title, ‘Osama University’.<sup>216</sup> The clear inference of the title, and as the article subsequently outlined, was that certain modules, courses and/or professors at American universities were constitutively ‘anti-American’ in their focus. Specifically, the work of the late Edward Said, Islamic Studies and postcolonial studies were cited as fomenting such derogatory impressions of America, contradicting the received view of the nation as

a benign, liberal democracy. The author, Michelle Goldberg, while not canvassing these sentiments herself, catalogues in detail the alarmingly advanced political and intellectual steps already undertaken to circumscribe the effectiveness and/or proliferation of such educational, academic discourse.<sup>217</sup>

Goldberg details the testimony of Stanley Kurtz, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, a right-wing think tank, before the Congressional Subcommittee on Select Education in June 2003. Goldberg writes:

Kurtz, nodded to Kramer<sup>218</sup>, calling his book “the most comprehensive and authoritative account of the extremist bias against American foreign policy that pervades contemporary Middle Eastern studies.” Much of the blame for its bias, he said, is a result of the malign influence of Edward Said and post-colonial theory, which he called the “ruling intellectual paradigm in academic area studies.” (Goldberg, 2003)<sup>219</sup>

But, as Goldberg catalogues, there is a widely held, and increasingly acted upon, suspicion that ‘Area Studies’ whose agenda conflict with the dominative trajectories of U.S. foreign policy are legitimate targets of legislative censure and financial sanction. Goldberg continues:

Emboldened by its dominance of Washington, the right is trying to enlist government on its side in the campus culture wars. “Since they are the mainstream in Washington think tanks and the right-wing corridors of Congress, they figure, ‘Let’s translate that political capital into education’, says Rashid Khalidi, who was recently appointed to the Edward Said Chair of Arab Studies at Columbia University. (Goldberg, 2003)

While such measures may ostensibly give the impression that postcolonial studies has finally exercised itself as a concrete, political praxis, to my mind it is a success for

postcolonial studies despite itself. Certainly the political activity and commentary of Said over the course of three decades is an exemplary instance of theory-as-practice, provoked by a vested interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What is most instructive about the political and intellectual measures pursued against such radical anti-imperial dialogue is the extent to which they reveal a paranoiac insecurity within neo-imperial political circles. The pursuit of censorious legislation illustrates the alarmed and alarmist mind set of these political classes. One of the signal responsibilities, and future projects, of global and local postcolonial studies, in all its forms, is the continuance and intensification of political theory and action. It is the ethical duty of postcolonial studies as a battery of ‘thinking tools’ to consistently interrogate and re-imagine the political, cultural and economic ideologies of neo-imperialism. Through a lateral explication of the historical episodes and legacies of imperialisms/modernities and their antagonists, we can formulate ethical and critical languages capable of understanding and mediating historical and contemporary experiences of (neo)-colonialism and marginalization.

In a recent article in the conservative, political journal, *Foreign Affairs*, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, concludes:

*Our enlightened self-interest puts us at odds with terrorists, tyrants, and others who wish us ill. From them we seek no advice or comity, and to whom we will give no quarter. But our enlightened self-interest makes us partners with all those who cherish freedom, human dignity, and peace. We know the side on which the human spirit truly abides, and we take encouragement from this as our strategy unfolds. In the end, it is the only encouragement we really need [my emphasis]. (2004, 34)*

Powell’s is a declarative manifesto that is not only draped in Huntingtonian<sup>220</sup> rhetoric, but which, as the added emphasis highlights, invokes the triadic legislators of reason,

difference and self-instituted authority. It is striking in both Irish and international contexts that the interrogative devices of postcolonial theory, which diagnose, expose and deconstruct authoritarian, prejudicial and exploitative discourses, are decried because of the perceived anachronism of the imperial or colonial model. Powell's rhetoric recapitulates the ideational, philosophical and idiomatic forms of colonial discourse and Enlightenment thought; the persistent invocation of 'we', 'us', 'our', re-establishes the dichotomous civilizational and political imagination of the contemporary world. Returning to Gibbons, and Adorno, Powell's rhetoric, with its self-evident authority, evidences the insidious 'consoling fictions' of imperialism's civilized tradition. The seamless explanatory logic consolidates authority through the consolation of a continuous narrative. It is in this context that postcolonial studies can provide challenging re-readings and re-presentations of historical and contemporary political and cultural discourses.

Eve Stoddard and Grant Cornwell address the recrudescing imperial idiom in a recent essay simply entitled 'Unity'. Stoddard and Cornwell detect a minatory vacuity at the core of what they term 'unity as moral imperative' (2002, 175). Political and cultural choices and sympathies are now insidiously charged with the voltage of moral decisions; we see the conflation of political and moral idioms. Referring to the atmosphere of 'manufactured consent', and unity, Stoddard and Cornwell note, 'the call for unity is being heralded with images and icons. Words are not needed' (2002, 179). Of course words are needed, but in just the fashion that Stoddard and Cornwell highlight, as further images and icons. In the context of the dissertation, there is a striking symmetry to the moral imperative of political idioms in times of crisis, whether we consider Powell's and Huntington's rhetoric, or note Deane's explication of civility and barbarism in Irish

colonial history.<sup>221</sup> Both the moribund binaries of political oppression and conservatism, and the vacuous patois of moral relativism prize unity over freedom. As Kirby, Cronin and Gibbons outline, freedom depends on interaction and dissent; the interrogative strategies of postcolonial studies are capable of contributing to the problematization of ‘unity without opposition’ (Stoddard and Cornwell, 2002, 183).

In the conclusion to their co-edited volume, Kirby, Cronin and Gibbons propose a critical project that ‘liberates the potential *within* particular cultures, a potential that remains buried if it is impervious to diversity, and to an encounter with other cultures’ (2002, 196-197). They continue by ‘arguing for a form of modernity which contests exploitative forms of modernization, the aim is not to substitute a reified past for an uncertain present but to provide a space of utopian possibility for the radical forces in Irish society’ (207). The dynamics of Irish postcolonial studies effectively cohere in this editorial conclusion. The Benjaminian prospect of amelioration through rupture, or the imagination of a liminal realm of possibility is a thematic that subtends *Field Day*’s fifth province; it is the futurology traced by Kiberd and it is the alternative representational spaces of Irish history’s occluded modernities. This ‘space of utopian possibility’ eschews the structural integers of rationalism, modernization or liberalism. Alternatively, it facilitates the imagination of ethical critical, political and artistic languages remote from the iconoclastic, enlightened rhetoric of Huntington or Powell. In conclusion, and confining ourselves to the immediate Irish context, Irish postcolonial studies converges with the ‘cultural politics of *dynamic rootedness*’ (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002, 206). Such a cultural politics enables:



a political engagement with cultural possibility that looks to radical, transformative energies in the Irish past and present. In linking radical, dissenting, alternative traditions in the Irish past to individuals and groups and movements which contest the present neo-liberal orthodoxy in Ireland, a critical culture can emerge that allows people to situate themselves not only in place and time but in a shared community of liberation. (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002, 206)

## **Postcolonial Studies as Interdiscipline**

The monoglot traffic of literary/cultural reading has been transfused with a *voix nouveau*: the interdiscipline of postcolonial studies. Disregarding the horizontal sequestration of disciplinary boundaries and concurrently embracing the vertiginous modalities of an interdisciplinary methodology, postcolonialism interrogates and effectively points to/underscores the ideological functionalism of culture within profoundly politicized colonial and postcolonial contexts. Through Quayson, Huggan contends, '[t]he synoptic and instrumental dimensions of postcolonial interdisciplinarity thus exist for Quayson in constant tension', with 'postcolonial interdisciplinarity' itself being understood as a collaborative, practically oriented attempt, operating across disciplinary boundaries, to come to terms with the historical legacies of colonialism and 'to struggle to transcend the effects of colonialism through an engaged and situated [critical/theoretical] practice' (Huggan, 2002, 262).

Thus the actualization of postcolonial interdisciplinarity is collaborative at a discursive *niveau*, but equally a pragmatic conversation and/or series of critical initiatives, which foster/interrogate or modifies the practice of postcolonial studies, must operate. In effect, it is a matter of urgency that a corpus of theoretical mechanisms is

produced, but also that such a body of discourse must be employed within interdisciplinary/dialogic initiatives; the Institute of Postcolonial Studies at the University of Melbourne, University Notre Dame/Keough Irish Studies Centre seminars, and Galway conferences are salient examples.<sup>222</sup> The development of a theoretical resource is not about the issue of defensive or consolidatory manifestos, but is concerned with political, cultural, narrative re-enfranchisement. For some critics the very interdisciplinary architecture of postcolonial studies is grounds for its curt dismissal; as we have seen, it is perceived as both theoretically and institutionally aggrandizing. Postcolonialism, then, constitutes an insidious re-affiliation of a retrograde nationalist heritage to an ostensibly respectable discourse; thus it is institutionally and theoretically imperialist but ironically, in Ireland, qualitatively nationalist and anti-imperial.

Huggan offers an insightful caveat for any proto-modular interdisciplinary postcolonial studies when he notes:

Postcolonial studies is only beginning to come to terms with its own complex disciplinarity; but perhaps reversing Foster – it can learn to be ‘interdisciplinary’ first, allowing collective practice to inflect and shape its individually produced theoretical models, and playing its part in the creation of a critically minded, non-hierarchically structured working environment well equipped to address issues of common concern, as well as to pursue a variety of disparate personal goals. (Huggan, 2002, 271)

Following Foucault, we might assert that disciplinarity, then, is of necessity an exercise in power; the structuration of the academic discipline is a mechanics of authoritarianism. Implicit within any breed of power, and its successful perpetration, is a level (varying levels) of personal and professional vanity and self-regard. Similarly Huggan argues:

the anxiety of interdisciplinarity [manifests]...in the concern that the erosion of traditional disciplinary boundaries might also entail a compromise of hard-won disciplinary knowledge; in the threat posed to institutional identity and the spectre of an irrecoverable loss of intellectual autonomy. (Huggan, 2002, 245)

Huggan continues, 'the acknowledgement that 'culture' and its diverse representations require multidisciplinary modes of critical analysis, with the traditional disciplines colliding and, ideally, collaborating in an effort to unravel multiply-encoded subjectivities and complex global cultural flows' (2002, 251). Graham signals such an ideologically constituted cultural domain in his assessment of recent Irish postcolonial studies. While the literary may have been operative as the vanguard of postcolonial studies, and admittedly retains a distinguished position within the postcolonial conversation, the polyglot/multifarious systems of ideological subjugation and resistance demand an interdisciplinary postcolonial reading. 'Reading' again implies the universality of a textualized culture; it suggests, as Smyth does, the reduction of history to a matter of reading and writing skills. However a refined ability to read is more adequately embodied in an awareness/sensitivity to/appreciation of the hydra of ideological structures.

Culture as mediation/source/resource of power demands a political reading; the development of the university, of recognizable systems of learning and pedagogical instruction, knowledge dissemination was and is symptomatic of political expansionism and consolidation, for example the necessity of a literature appropriate to the legal/moral temperature of the nation-state; the necessity for historical legitimacy. These facts have, firstly, nourished the evolution/delineation of disciplinary educational structures and

secondly they warrant a political reading of the cultural artefacts/accretions of colonial societies.

One of the originary questions, then, that arises about postcolonial theory, or indeed about any theoretical paradigm, is what is its function within a larger institutional structure? The literary, historical and historiographical readings that circulate within postcolonial studies cannot be severed from the fundamental institutional locations within which they operate and from which they originate. Equally, given the organizational, hierarchical and professional nature of this institutional field, operations within it are profoundly informed by intra- and inter-departmental, disciplinary and collegiate political cleavage. Indeed the antagonistic discursive relations exposed in this dissertation are not merely informative of acute theoretical arguments, but also reveal the insipid presence of political affiliations within and around academic Irish studies. As we have seen, rarely are choices of disciplinary or methodological resource assailed solely on the basis of theoretical or methodological dispute; politics suffuse the contours of Irish academic debates.

In their 1998 publication, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, Grenfell and James provide a summative comment on Bourdieu's research methodology.

They hold:

However, to research in this way, is not discover or apply laws of causality or rules of practice, which presupposes a detached observer and a higher epistemological authority. Rather it is to engage in the social world in theory and practice in ways which implicate the researched and the researcher in the same theory of practice. (1998, 157)

Such a methodological premise does not merely require an adequate awareness of one's academically/institutionally contingent position as a critic or reader of postcolonial societies/cultures. Bourdieu's theory-as-practice axis exhibits an inherent ethical dimension when read through the 'postcolonial.' As we I have outlined one of the principal/foundational crises in contemporary postcolonial studies is its ethical legitimacy/genesis. By questioning or disposing of the freight of 'higher epistemological authority', Bourdieu effectively challenges the tropic strategies of 'high' theory. Instead of buttressing academic or epistemological authority by means of a vocabulary or arsenal of dense theoretical reading and writing, Bourdieu opens up a social continuum that implicates the 'detached' critic in the same social, historical world as the 'object' of theoretical enquiry. Similarly, rather than assemble a cast of typologies, variously incarnated as hybrid, subaltern, liminal or syncretic and following Kirkland, Graham and Gibbons, Irish postcolonial studies must be resolutely cognizant of its authoritative/hegemonic or exclusionary possibilities and/or capacity.

## **Ireland, History and Postcolonial Studies**

The urgency, and potency, of ethical historical remembrance and representation is consummately expressed by the historian, Sir Lewis Bernstein Namier:

One would expect people to remember the past and to imagine the future. But in fact, when discovering or writing about history, they imagine it in terms of their own experience, and when trying to gauge the future they suppose analogies from the past: till, by a double process of repetition, they imagine the past and remember the future. (1942, 69-70)<sup>223</sup>

In this dissertation I have attempted to delineate the principal critical and historiographic debates that have proceeded, and continue to unfold, within Irish postcolonial studies. The presiding, and recurrent, concerns of these debates are questions of ethics, in the writing of Irish colonial history, the use of critical languages and the modes in which the Irish past is imagined and potential futures are remembered. Irish postcolonial studies is neither unique, nor is it reducible to a consolidated corpus of global postcolonial theoretical practice. As I have shown, just as Irish anti-colonial and nationalist initiatives were instructive to commensurate international political and cultural projects, Irish postcolonial studies both imports and exports, with necessary contextual modifications, postcolonial theoretical strategies. Adding further complexity to Irish colonial histories and postcolonial studies was and is Ireland's spatial proximity to the imperial metropole; a location that, contradictorily, operated within a distancing temporal or stadial economy in the nineteenth century. Likewise, the conscious participation of Irish people in the execution of empire is often suggested as a convincing disqualification of Ireland from postcolonial debates. Contrarily, as my discussion elaborates, postcoloniality, colonialism, or imperialism cannot be treated of in uniformly paradigmatic ways. Rather than viewing participation or proximity as potential disqualifiers, it is more instructive to read them as indices of the complexity of colonial histories themselves.

Primary among the complicating factors of Ireland's experiences of colonialism and imperialism are the condition of modernity and the attendant processes of modernization. As the critics discussed above suggest, doing justice to the variety of Irish histories is not a matter of fetishizing oppositional or 'traditional' practices or discourses against a monolithic, oppressive modernity. Rather, such critics seize political, historical

and cultural agency in exposing the countervailing agents of Ireland's alternative historical spaces and its counter-modern social constituencies. In proposing the retrieval of alternative modernities, or, in Gibbons' and Whelan's cases, alternative Enlightenments, Irish postcolonial studies services the radical re-imagination of the past and remembrance of alternative futures.

Lloyd again accents the counter-revolutionary aspect of the newly independent, postcolonial nation-state:

That is, at the moment of formal independence, the project of decolonization is arrested. And what happens of course is what Benedict Anderson talks of, when the people take over the mansion and flick the switch and all the electric lights go on in the right places. You take over the whole apparatus of the imperial state, and ultimately except for the bourgeois elite within the anti-colonial struggle, nothing very much changes. (1995)<sup>224</sup>

Lloyd's edificial conceit observes the limits of anti-colonial bourgeois nationalist projects. The absolute space of the architecturally integrated state-nationalist narrative precludes the registration of discordant or alternative nationalisms. Such discourse is one of the signal preoccupations of Irish postcolonial studies. Its rigid configuration of the histories of nationalist space and time, to invert Namier, structures attenuated remembrances of the past and consequently the delimited imagination of the future. The spirit of postcolonial ethics is not advanced through mutual abstraction, intemperate antagonism or forms of *nouveau* orthodoxy, whether these relate to critical theory, historiography, political history, political philosophy, gender studies, class, race, economics or literature. Guha convincingly convenes an ethical animus that embraces the progressive postcolonial ethical critiques adumbrated in this dissertation, when, in talking

about the projects of subaltern and elite historiography in India, he encourages ‘the recognition of...co-existence and interaction’ (1988, 43). Such a recognition concerns the relations between the internally differentiated experiences of colonizer/colonized, but is also germane to the dynamics of past, present and future; history and memory, and tradition, modernity and counter-modernities.

Critical surveys can never be laterally inclusive or objective in their delineation of academic or disciplinary fields. Just as my argument within the dissertation concerns the politics of selectivity that suffuse memory, history, myth, and canonization, so too there are necessary limitations of selectivity that afflict the corpus of criticism broached within the thesis. I have not sought to compose a story, a narrative of Irish postcolonial studies, although there is a discernible sense of chronological development within the field. Clearly there are critics who some will feel warranted more extended critique in relation to others who have; again such criticisms only strengthen my overriding argument with respect to the political texture of literary and historical discourses.

I do not propose, as Bourdieu has done in *Homo Academicus*, a ‘Hit Parade’ of Irish postcolonial studies; the survey offered constitutes a subjective, yet self-reflective reading of Irish postcolonial studies. The discipline is refracted through the broader disciplinary initiative of global postcolonial theory and equally interrogated under the general theoretical sociology of Bourdieu. Importantly, however, I am not striving to fetishize the notion of self-reflective criticism; the function of such a methodology is not narcissistic or definitive but is motivated by the need to produce further moments of self-reflection within Irish studies, including literary and historical studies. Following Bourdieu:



Thus reflexivity is not at all a form of ‘art for art’s sake.’ Its end-goal is not to contemplate my private backyard; it is to find out what is in my backyard in order to look at what lies behind its fence. But as long as I do not know what goes on in my own backyard, I cannot see anything; I do nothing but project my blindness. (Wacquant, 1989, 23)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a strongly Saidian, and Foucauldian, inflection of Irish literary criticism see Shaun Richards and David Cairns' *Writing Ireland*.

<sup>2</sup> On the exemplarity of Said's *Orientalism*, Robert Young writes:

Colonial discourse analysis was initiated as an academic sub-discipline within literary and cultural theory by Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978. This is not to suggest that colonialism had not been studied before then, but it was Said who shifted the study of colonialism among cultural critics towards its discursive operations, showing the intimate connection between language and forms of knowledge developed for the study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism...*Orientalism* thus challenged the traditional self-devaluation in deference to the economic orthodoxy of Marxist cultural criticism. And though doubtless the Western expansion into the East was determined by economic factors, Said argued that the enabling cultural construction of Orientalism was not simply determined by them, and thus established a certain autonomy of the cultural sphere. (*Colonial Desire*, 159)

<sup>3</sup> For a concise introductory replay of the principal developments in Irish postcolonial studies see Glenn Hooper's 'Introduction' to *Irish and Postcolonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice*.

<sup>4</sup> The sociologist Linda Connolly has an article forthcoming in *Irish Studies Review* entitled 'The Limits of "Irish Studies": Historicism, Culturalism, Paternalism.' The essay offers a cursory rehearsal of Irish postcolonial criticism and its relation to Irish women's studies and women's history. I would like to thank Dr. Connolly for providing me with a version of the paper prior to publication.

<sup>5</sup> In a lecture delivered at the 34<sup>th</sup> Yeats International Summer School in 1993, entitled 'Multiculturalism: Some Irish and Indian Comparisons', Kiberd asserted, 'Ireland is, for me, a supreme postcolonial instance [my emphasis].'

<sup>6</sup> Bryce also wrote a history of Ireland; see his *Two Centuries of Irish History, 1691-1870*.

<sup>7</sup> From an interview with Said conducted by Kevin Whelan and Andy Pollak in Dublin in 1999; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Said, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* Catherine Morland remarks, 'I often think it odd that it [history] should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention' (1994 [1818], 97).

<sup>9</sup> For a brief summary of recent and current trends in Irish Studies, see Eamonn Hughes' 'Forgetting the Future: An Outline History of Irish Literary Studies.'

<sup>10</sup> In particular see David Beers-Quinn's *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* and his *England's Sea Empire, 1550-1642*. See Nicholas Canny's *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* and his *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*.

<sup>11</sup> Canny continues by arguing:

Scholars must emphasize in their writing and in the design of their courses that the questions they raise are with the purpose of shedding light on European (and for that matter global) experiences, since these are the perspectives of students of the twenty-first century...I believe that scholars and students will benefit from an exposure to a plurality of historiographies, methods, and perspectives so that we may look confidently to the histories of the peoples of Ireland and Britain, at home and overseas, during the early modern centuries, recovering the plurality they once enjoyed while retaining their academic credibility. ('Writing Early Modern History', 746-747)

<sup>12</sup> See Crotty's *Ireland in Crisis: a study in capitalist colonial underdevelopment* and MacLaughlin's *Ireland: The Emigrant Nursery and the World Economy*.

<sup>13</sup> On this point Mary Jean Corbett writes:

Within this frame, attending to the local in the nineteenth-century English-Irish context means acknowledging that the history of colonial Ireland in the nineteenth-century can no longer be written in the sweeping terms of a simple opposition between colonized and colonizers...[b]ut acknowledging that nineteenth-century Irish people participated in the domination of others...need not mean that we relinquish the interpretive perspective that postcolonial theories of discourse and representation can provide. Instead, we should push towards the kind of specific and local analysis that attends precisely to the multiple positions available within a given formation. (*Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790-1870*, 9)

<sup>14</sup> Prakash elaborates on these forms of historiography:

they reveal the politics of knowledge involved in the construction of these binary oppositions and trace their canonization as seminal historical events not just because they were so regarded in the past but in order to interrogate the past as the history of the present...the postcolonial perspective of the emerging historiography seeks to disclose the archaeology of knowledge and analyze the sedimentation of academic disciplines and institutions in power.' ('Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World, 375)

Prakash's 1992 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Indian Historiography Is Good to Think' was originally published as 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' 1990, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 32, 383-408. All my references are to the later 1992 version.

<sup>15</sup> On this theme see Keith Jeffery's *'An Irish Empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*.

<sup>16</sup> F.C. McGrath notes:

Friel and his Field Day colleagues are concerned particularly with the images and myths that have shaped the national consciousness, especially those that have helped form the prejudices that divide the country today...Central to Friel and the Field Day enterprise is a contemporary epistemological orientation that governs the different writers' images of Ireland, especially the way those images are *created through language* [my emphasis]. ('Language, Myth and History in the Later Plays of Brian Friel', 535)

17 Spivak argues:

If the 'third world' is used as a mobilizing slogan for the developing nations, that's fine, but that is rather different from essentialism. That is in response to specific policies of exploitation. In the arenas where this language is seriously used, each country comes asserting its difference. They really do know it's strategic. That is a strategy that changes moment to moment, and they in fact come asserting their differences as they use the mobilized unity to do something specific. (*Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 13)

Spivak's argument anticipates the 'differential' projects of recent, and current, Irish postcolonial theory, as advocated by Lloyd, see chapter four of the current dissertation. Also see Peter Childs and Patrick Williams' *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, 158-164, for a helpful discussion of 'strategic essentialism'.

18 On the representational bifurcation of the colonial milieu, admittedly in an African context, see Abdul JanMohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics: the politics of literature in colonial Africa*.

19 See Fredric Jameson's 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' and for his riposte see Aijaz Ahmad's 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"'.  
20

For representative Scottish Enlightenment writings see David Hume's *Selected Essays*.

21 Or as the English writer and traveler Sir Richard Colt Hoare termed it in his 1807 *Journal of a Tour in Ireland*, 'the neglected shores of Hibernia'.

22 See Deane's 'Irish National Character, 1790-1900.'

23 On the notion of 'vernacular landscape', see J.B. Jackson, 'The Vernacular Landscape.' and also J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, especially 149-154.

24 Deane, *Strange Country*, 181.

25 See White's 'The Historical Text as Literary Artifact.'

26 As the historian Ian McBride usefully notes:

As historians we need to scrutinise collective myths and memories, not just for evidence of their historical accuracy, but as objects of study in their own right. This necessarily brings us into contact with the practitioners of other disciplines where narrative is a key issue, whether cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis or literary criticism. ('Memory and national identity in modern Ireland', 41)

27 In his discussion of Walter Benjamin, Eagleton writes:

Homogenous history-history that has expelled the trace of rupture and revolution- is whorelike both in its instant availability and in its barren emptiness; the ease with which it can be penetrated is the very sign of its sterility. It is also whorelike in its endless penetrability, since for sexist mythology all whores are essentially one: the delusion of difference, of erotic adventure, is reduced by the static enclosure of the bordello to the oldest story in the world. (*Walter Benjamin*, 45)

28 Such 'postal' theory would include, postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism.

29 It is telling that Deane invokes the idea of 'fashionability'; as I discuss below, several critics of postcolonial studies invoke such parlance in their dismal critiques of postcolonial theory as an academic 'vogue'.

30 As Gibbons notes:

Not least of the anomalies in this situation is that it is now revisionist critics who are keen to insulate Irish society against the shock of present-day European and Anglo-American ideas. Exposed to the theoretical voltage of Marxism, psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, they have advocated a new form of intellectual protectionism...It is not just the rearguard but the avant-garde that threatens their critical composure, the fusion of 'Derry with Derrida' which Edna Longley discerns in the work of Seamus Deane, among others. ('Challenging the Canon: Revisionism and Cultural Criticism', 567)

31 Eagleton indicts revisionist historiography as a surreptitious political ideology, he concludes:

Rooted in highly particular social circumstances, some of which it serves to justify, revisionism is among other things quite palpably an ideology. It is the intemperate polemic of its popular commentators, not the carefully neutralized tones of its historians, which lets the ideological cat out of the bag. (*Crazy John and the Bishop*, 321)

32 Emer Nolan's 1995 edition, *James Joyce and Nationalism*, interrogates these twin polarities of Irish political and historical debate. Specifically, her argument rejects the location of Joyce as an exclusive opponent of Irish nationalism. She eschews the binarism of nationalism and modernism/modernity, and as such coalesces with much contemporary Irish postcolonial writing and theorization. Outlining her case, Nolan notes:

These critics' attempt to make sense of what they interpret as Joyce's 'moderate' nationalism avails itself of the fact that there are generally believed to be two traditions in Irish nationalist history: the extremist and radical 'physical force' tradition, and the reasonable, constitutional one. As Joyce, it is felt, cannot be decently aligned with the former tradition, he clearly must find a home with the latter. (*James Joyce and Nationalism*, 21)

33 See Michael Taussig's 'Culture of Terror - Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture', in which he argues:

The truly crucial feature lies in creating an uncertain reality out of fiction, a nightmarish reality in which the unstable interplay of truth and illusion becomes a social force of horrendous and phantasmic dimensions. To an important extent, all societies live by fictions taken as reality. What distinguishes cultures of terror is that the epistemological, ontological, and otherwise purely philosophical problem of reality – and – illusion, certainty – and – doubt, becomes infinitely more than a “merely” philosophical problem. It becomes a high-powered tool for domination and a principal medium of political practice. (161)

Also see his earlier *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*.

34 This reference is taken from an interview with Deane in 1998 published in *The Boston Phoenix*; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Deane, 1998 a).

35 This reference is taken from an interview with Deane by Mary Gray Davidson broadcast on the *Common Ground* programme in 1998; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Deane, 1998 b).

36 Elmer Kennedy-Andrews makes the following point about Deane's novel:

The novel is concerned to penetrate the rational mind and unearth the 'atavistic' layers of Irish experience without which, Deane has claimed, understanding of the Northern conflict remains ineffectual. The child narrator, whose perceptions have been structured within an English, literate, empirical, rationalist educational system undergoes a process of re-education into a deeper understanding of communal values and strategies for survival in the colonial state, even as he interrogates those values and strategies. There is a rupture that has to be healed between the lived and the learned, myth and history, traditionalism and revisionism. The re-mythologisation of the child re-inserts him within the communal codes while his participation in the rationalist drive of modernity gives him critical distance from a mystifying false consciousness. (*De-constructing the North*, 220)

37 See Chinua Achebe's collection of essays, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*.

38 From an interview with Deane and Kearney by Ciaran Carty in *The Sunday Independent*; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Deane and Kearney, 1984).

39 Launched in 1977 under the stewardship of Richard Kearney and Mark Patrick Hederman, *The Crane Bag* was a quarterly critical publication variously edited and guest-edited by such figures as Seamus Deane and Declan Kiberd. It ceased publication in 1985.

40 In a sharply critical review of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* entitled 'Totalising Imperative', Damian Smyth wrote: 'In this context *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, published last year, appears as the most arrogant and challenging example of such neo-Romantic, totalising vision to be produced in Europe' (26).

41 Similar ideas are discussed in Gibbons' *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 17.  
42 For a recent reflection on anthologizing, which makes reference to *The Field Anthology of Irish Writing*, see Margaret Kelleher's 'The Cabinet of Irish Literature: A Historic Perspective on Irish Anthologies'.  
43 Writing on the New Critical school, Jonathan Culler notes:

It focused attention on the unity or integration of literary works...the New Criticism treated poems as aesthetic objects rather than as historical documents and examined the interactions of their verbal features and the ensuing complications of meaning rather than the historical intentions and circumstances of authors. (*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, 122)

44 The postcolonial confrontation with Scottish Enlightenment rationalism is discussed at length in the work of Gibbons and Whelan.  
45 One of the few postcolonial 'readers' that does include Ireland is Gregory Castle's *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*.

46 For a highly critical review of Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* see Bruce Stewart's 'Inside Nationalism: A Meditation upon *Inventing Ireland*.'

47 See Mathews, *Revival*, 11.

48 This is taken from the text of a lecture delivered by Kiberd entitled 'Reinventing Ireland.' delivered to members of the *Danish Association of Teachers of English* in Dublin, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1998; the references are unpaginated and cited as (Kiberd 1998 a).

49 This reference is from an interview with Kiberd conducted by Andrew Morrison and Aidan Fadden at Queen's University Belfast 7<sup>th</sup> May 1998. It is available for consultation as part of the Imperial Archive: Ireland: Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. [www.qub.ac.uk/en/imperial/ireland/kiberd.htm](http://www.qub.ac.uk/en/imperial/ireland/kiberd.htm). Again the references are unpaginated and cited as (Kiberd 1998 b).

50 See Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman's *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, 24-25.

51 From an interview with Kiberd conducted by Susan Shaw Sailor in 1999 for *Jouvert*, which is available for consultation at <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/Jouvert/v4i1/kiberd.htm>. The references are unpaginated and cited as (Kiberd, 1999).

52 For an instructive inflection of Ngugi's criticism in an Irish context, see Gearóid Denvir's 'Decolonizing the Mind: Language and Literature in Ireland.'

53 See Timothy P. Foley and Thomas A. Boylan's *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland: the propagation and ideological function of economic discourse in the nineteenth century*.

54 Joep Leerssen makes a related point, he argues:

The tendency to invoke the past and peasant, not just for exoticist or picturesque purposes, but towards a *revival*, makes the case of Ireland special. There have been other moments in European history when the demotic backbone of national culture was invoked as a counter-narrative against foreign adulteration and sterile, slavish imitation of a mightier neighbour; but in turn-of-the-century Ireland, such a literary 'back to our roots' call was made with a revivalist, rejuvenating resonance. (*Remembrance and Imagination*, 222)

55 Michael Hartnett, 'A Farewell to English', 81.

56 References are to a lecture delivered by Harris at *The Irish Seminar* in 2003 entitled 'Theatre and the Mother's Body'; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Harris, 2003).

57 See Terence Brown's *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-1985*, especially chapters 1-4.

58 In a more sociological context, Vincent Tucker makes a similar argument:

Cultural analysis is about the critical analysis of processes of meaning construction and deconstruction. The fundamental premise of cultural analysis is that reality is a social construct, it is not natural, given or self-evident. But reality is also multiple. There are diverse versions which converge and conflict with each other in a myriad of ways. Reality is thus not only constructed but contested and negotiated. Some ideas, meanings and ways of seeing predominate and others are submerged or marginalised. In the same way that we can talk of economic and political social cores marginalising or peripheralising other social units so also can we speak of dominant and marginal ways of seeing. ('Introduction: A Cultural Perspective on Development', 10)

59 From a lecture delivered by Kiberd entitled 'Current Irish Cultural Debate'; again references are unpaginated and cited as (Kiberd, 2002).

60 Later in the same essay Kiberd furthers his argument:

If a certain intolerance for our past must become the sign of our current tolerance and modernity, then we will deny ourselves that sense of momentum from the past which points a clear way towards the future...if we deprive ourselves of our own past, as some revisionists seem to desire, we would simply be surrendering to the oldest colonial trick of all-the denial of the native's own history. ('Republicanism and culture in the new millennium', 84)

61 I will be referring to the original 1984 version.

62 Again, perhaps Hartnett captures the crucial disparity between the logic of self-interest apparent in standard Enlightenment thinking, and the sympathetic Enlightenment thinking of the United Irishmen, cited by Gibbons. Hartnett concludes:

Though many live by logic

no one dies for it.

('He'll to the Moors', *Collected Poems*, 229)

63 Expanding on the notion of a sympathetic sublime, Gibbons notes:

The concept of the sublime offers no comforting illusions, but serves to remind us that there is a price for progress, and that only those societies offer hope for the future who settle their debt to the past. (*Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 17)

64 As Trisha Ziff, the curator of the *Distant Relations* exhibition, writes:



The artists, authors, and composers participating in this project come from different sides of the world: Ireland and Mexico; England and the United States. What they share in common is how their work has been marked by the experience of colonialism, whether as members of a dominant culture, whether they emigrated and became part of a minority culture far from home, or whether they were born in a country where the dominant culture was not theirs...[t]his project is about identity, culture, and colonialism, a dialogue relevant to the Irish and Mexican experience. ('Identity/Hybridity: Ideas Behind this Project', 26-27)

The exhibition included work by artists such as John Kindness, the photographer Willie Doherty, Javier de la Garza and Ruben Ortiz Torres. It opened at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1995, moving to London, Dublin, Santa Monica, before ending in Mexico City on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1997.

<sup>65</sup> See Kirby, Peadar, Luke Gibbons and Michael Cronin (eds.), *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*, 89-106.

<sup>66</sup> An historical instance of such an imaginative 'lateral' vista is evidenced in the initial editorial statement of the Paris-based Irish nationalist publication, *L'Irlande Libre*, within which Maud Gonne was a significant editorial and contributory force. It reads:

*Dans ce titre, expression de notre espérance, nous plaçons tout le programme de nos revendications nationales; est c'est à la France, pays si cher aux opprimés, que nous venons jeter ce cri de liberté. D'ailleurs ne sommes nous pas Celtes aussi, fils de la même race, et notre sang n'a-t-il pas coulé maintes fois sur les mêmes champs de batailles, sous nos drapeaux alliés.*

(In this title, which is an expression of our hope, we place the total of our national demands; and it is to France, a country which is rich in oppressed, that we come to launch our liberty cry. Furthermore, are we not all Celts also, brothers of the same race, and has not our blood flowed many times on the same battle-fields, under our united flags.)

Thanks to Carol McInerney for supplementing my much deteriorated French in translating this passage.

The above extract is cited in C.L. Innes's 'A voice in directing the affairs of Ireland': *L'Irlande Libre, The Shan Van Vocht and Bean na h-Eireann*, 149-150.

<sup>67</sup> See Cleary's 'Ireland and Postcolonial Theory.'

<sup>68</sup> See Moane's 'A psychological analysis of colonialism in an Irish context' and her 'Colonialism and the Celtic Tiger: Legacies of History, and the Quest for Visions.'

<sup>69</sup> As Mallon usefully notes, 'This is not to say that 'South-South' dialogue has not occurred before' (1994, 1492). She lists the fields of peasant studies, the field of slavery and African diaspora studies, writing on dependency, world systems and articulation of modes of production.

<sup>70</sup> Clair Wills makes a related point, she contends:

by virtue of its post-colonial status within Europe, Irish culture is in a position to say something unique about the experience of being modern (a position which is similar to, but not identical with, that of post-colonial cultures outside Europe, which are nonetheless linked to the hegemonic project of modernity both economically and politically). Hence my use of the term 'impropriety', by means of which I distinguish the experience of being inside and outside the project of modernity at the same time. (*Improprieties*, 237)

<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere in *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, Gibbons refers to such ethical solidarity as 'clandestine cultural allegiances' (107).

<sup>72</sup> Writing on the mythic in Irish political and cultural history, Richard Kearney registers a similar ethical point to Gibbons. Kearney writes:

What is required is a radical interrogation of those mythic sedimentations from our *past* and those mythic aspirations of our *future* which challenge our *present* sense of ourselves, which disclose other possibilities of being. And this interrogation ultimately rests upon the ethical necessity to distinguish between myth as an *open-ended process* which forces us from the strait-jacket of a fixed identity; and myth as a *closed product* which draws a magic circle around this identity excluding dialogue with all that is other than ourselves. (*Myth and Motherland*, 23-24)

Such a trajectory is not solely applicable, however, to the ethics of 'traditional' or nationalist *mythos*; it must also underwrite interrogations of the *mythos* of fact, empiricism, rationalism, modernization, modernity, and revisionism.

<sup>73</sup> I would like to thank Prof. Kevin Whelan for providing me with an unpublished version of this essay; all references are to this version and will be cited in parenthesis as (Cleary, 2003 b).

<sup>74</sup> On the symbolic heritage and the political roots of both loyalist and nationalist murals see Bill Rolston, Neil Jarman, Colin Coulter, Richard Kirkland, and my forthcoming 'Gable-ends and Che Guevara: Postcolonial ethics and Political murals.' On the broader range of reference apparent in nationalist murals Rolston argues:

Politically articulate murals simultaneously become expressions of and creators of community solidarity. Although it would be far-fetched to argue that the propaganda war is won or lost at local level, there can be no denying the role the murals play as crucial weapons in that war. (*Politics and Painting: Murals and Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 124)

<sup>75</sup> In her most recent work, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag addresses the issue of visual imagery, suffering and the exercise of sympathy. She argues:

The imaginary proximity to the suffering inflicted on others that is granted by images suggests a link between the faraway sufferers-seen in close-up on the television screen-and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue, that is yet one more

mystification of our real relations to power. So far as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence. To that extent, it can be (for all our good intentions) an impertinent-if not inappropriate-response. To set aside the sympathy we extend to others beset by war and murderous politics for a reflection on how privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may-in ways we might prefer not to imagine- be linked to their suffering...is a task for which painful, stirring images supply only an initial spark. (91-92)

Also see Sontag's earlier publication *On Photography*. On matters relating to Bengali history, European Enlightenment and sympathy/compassion see Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*, 124-127 passim; Chakrabarty notes:

There were thus two separate and unconnected theoretical ways of looking at compassion and personhood that jostled together in the Bengali biographies of Vidyasagar and Rammohun Roy. One was the European-derived natural theory of sentiments. The other, derived from Indian aesthetics, was inscribed in the Bengali or Sanskrit words used to describe the capacity for sympathy or compassion. (127)

76 On the radical political economy of the allegorical figure of Thomas Moore's *Captain Rock* and Daniel Maclise's *The Installation of Captain Rock*, see Gibbons' 'Between Captain Rock and a Hard Place: Art and Agrarian Insurgency.'

77 Cited by Gibbons in a lecture delivered in 2002 at NUI Galway entitled 'Therapy on the ropes: *The Quiet Man* and the Myth of the West'; references are unpaginated and cited as (Gibbons, 2002 b).

78 See Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*.

79 See Mulhern's *The Present Lasts a Long Time*.

80 Said notes, '[a]nd what is a critical consciousness at bottom if not *an unstoppable predilection for alternatives* [my emphasis]' (*The World, The Text, The Critic*, 247).

81 See E.P.Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* and Christopher Hill's *Puritanism and Revolution*.

82 Reviewing the first edition of *Subaltern Studies*, Javeed Alam wrote:

The presupposition is as follows: Between the world of politics on the one hand and the economic processes of capitalist transformation on the other, there is a kind of mental space within which the social forms of existence and consciousness of the people are all their own – strong and enduring in their own right and therefore free of manipulations by the dominant groups. However much the ruling classes may control the themes and content of politics or the sources of history, the subalterns, ie, the people will always manage to make themselves heard. In other words, this intermediate space represents the subjectivity; the active source of the political activity of the people and therefore the basis on which they act as subjects of history and not just its objects, being merely acted upon. It is the task of the people's historians, if I have grasped the argument correctly, always to keep their antennae

directed towards the intermediate space from where comes the voice of the people. ('Peasantry, Politics and Historiography: Critique of New Trend in Relation to Marxism', 43)

83 Just as White outlines, the metaphoricity of historical narratives enables a politics of exclusion. The legitimating, and self-affirming, capacities of historical narratives are dependent on the principle of recognition and sameness. Events and persons may differ in time and space, but the regulatory function of the sedimented, and 'cumulative', historical representation reproduces a familiar narrative trajectory in recognizable narrative forms. Or in White's own terms:

This is what leads me to think that historical narratives are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements which suggest a relation of similitude between such events and processes and the story-types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings. Viewed in a purely formal way, a historical narrative is not only a *reproduction* of the events reported in it, it is also a *complex of symbols* which gives us directions for finding an *icon* of the structure of those events in our literary tradition. ('The Historical Text as Literary Artifact', 286-287)

84 Again this is a discourse that is explicitly addressed in Mathews' *Revival*. Furthermore, see Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 187-223.  
85 Writing on Lloyd's critical practice, Smyth notes:

For Lloyd, in fact, identitarian discourse is not the solution to colonial violence, but the precise location of the problem; this is because he imagines effective resistance to imperial domination residing more in haphazard, fragmentary and adulterated discourses than in full rational politico-cultural initiative which are always already undone by constituting themselves in response to (and therefore in collusion with) the oppositional logic of imperialism. 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', 29-30.

86 I refer the reader to the historiographical debate with respect to the legacy and location of Roger Casement. See the ongoing work of the historian Angus Mitchell.

87 See Foley and Boylan's highly influential publications, the four volume *Irish Political Economy*, and *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland: the propagation and ideological function of economic discourse in the nineteenth century*.

88 See Herman Merivale's *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*.

89 For a cursory introduction to Lloyd's theses on Ireland's alternative modernities see his recent editorial commentary in *Interventions* entitled, 'Ireland's Modernities'.

90 Saree Makdisi notes, '[m]odernity can never exist in pure form or "as such" [since]...there can be no such thing as the modern unless there is an anti-modern against which it can be dialectically defined' (*Romantic Imperialism*, 190). Lloyd's counter-modernities exist outside this dialectical relation.

<sup>91</sup> Angela Bourke calls this ‘the process by which the nineteenth-century ideology of rationality, with its linear and colonial thought-patterns, gained ascendancy over a vernacular cognitive system in Ireland’ (‘The Baby and The Bathwater: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, 79).

<sup>92</sup> From a lecture delivered by Lloyd at *The Irish Seminar* in Dublin in 2003 entitled, ‘Disciplining the Irish Body in the nineteenth century’. All references are unpaginated and cited as (Lloyd, 2003 b).

<sup>93</sup> See Paul Ricoeur’s ‘Memory and Forgetting’.

<sup>94</sup> See Kundera’s *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

<sup>95</sup> See Whelan’s *Fellowship of Freedom*.

<sup>96</sup> For critiques of Whelan’s historiographic practice, especially his involvement with the commemoration initiatives of 1798, see Stephen Howe, ‘Speaking of ’98: History, Politics and Memory in the Bicentenary of the 1798 United Irish Uprising’ and Tom Dunne’s *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798*.

<sup>97</sup> It is a conceit employed recently by Gibbons; he writes:

To the extent that history can be lost, it is also ‘something we strive to retain’, and in this, Burke’s extraordinary eloquence often comes across as an echo-chamber, carrying the voices of the endangered and the oppressed that would otherwise be consigned to oblivion. (*Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 17)

Again, herein, there is a clear allusion to the historical impetus of the Scottish Enlightenment.

<sup>98</sup> In argument that is strikingly akin to Bourdieu, Merod makes the point that:

Critical awareness has achieved sufficient intellectual sophistication to undo its professional self-encasement by constructing both the conceptual and institutional means for evaluating the ways in which research of every kind gains legitimacy, mainly in the university, to enforce its technical or professional authority within society as a whole. Our own research as literary specialists and theorists is not excluded. (*The Political Responsibility of the Critic*, 25)

<sup>99</sup> Bourke’s work, again, intersects with Whelan’s elucidation of radical memory; she writes:

In oral storytelling, however, while much is forgotten, nothing is felt to be irretrievable. Certain kinds of knowledge are consigned to long-term storage, but the storytelling tradition always marks the spot, as fishermen mark their nets and lobster-pots with brightly-coloured buoys. Profoundly ecological in its thinking, the oral tradition recognises recurring connections of kinds to which the linear ideology of the nineteenth century was blind. (‘The Baby and The Bathwater: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, 92)

<sup>100</sup> Gibbons makes a similar argument, he notes:

Under theories of progress adumbrated by the Scottish Enlightenment, this myth of origins was elaborated into a stages theory of history, with justice and natural rights being transferred gradually from their primordial 'natural' state to those societies at the highest stage of civilization' ('The return of the native': The United Irishmen, culture and colonialism', 55).

<sup>101</sup> See Whelan's 'Between Filiation and Affiliation: The Politics of Postcolonial Memory', 98.

<sup>102</sup> Mustafa accords with both Deane's and Whelan's conclusions that revisionist historians have been averse, or exactingly slow, in receiving 'theory'. Mustafa writes:

Certain revisionist writers' and scholars' unreceptivity to the application of postcolonial approaches to Irish culture, however, might be symptomatic of the traditional resistance to 'theory' that has hampered the field itself for decades. ('Demythologising Ireland: Revisionism and the Irish Colonial Experience', 80-81).

<sup>103</sup> See Conor McCarthy's *Modernisation, Crisis and Culture in Ireland 1969-1992*.

<sup>104</sup> Founded in 1938 by Robin Dudley-Edwards and T.W. Moody. Again see McCarthy's *Modernisation, Crisis and Culture in Ireland 1969-1992* for a protracted discussion of its history.

<sup>105</sup> The first issue of *The Bell* appeared in October 1940 under the editorship of both Seán O Faoláin and Peadar O'Donnell; it ran until December 1954. It did not appear continuously, with a significant gap in publication from April 1948 to November 1950. For a selection of articles from *The Bell*, see Sean McMahon's edition *The Best from The Bell: Great Irish Writing*.

<sup>106</sup> Lecture delivered by Whelan at *The Irish Seminar* in 2003 entitled 'Sources in Irish Studies IV'; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Whelan, 2003 f).

<sup>107</sup> Willy Maley writes:

Too often, revisionist criticism of nationalism has chosen to represent it as a flat homogenous whole. Writers, artists and intellectuals would have found it hard to attach themselves to the caricature of nationalism constructed by revisionism...[n]ationalism is, after all, a complex range of discourses, often contradictory and confused.' ('Varieties of Nationalism: Post-Revisionist Irish Studies', 266)

<sup>108</sup> W.E.B Du Bois fully appreciated the ethical and liberatory functions, and responsibilities, of historical writing and remembrance:

If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with that accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be some standards of ethics in research and interpretation...[i]f on the other hand, we are going to use history for our pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us

a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history either as a science or as an art using the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish. ('The Propaganda of History', 1029)

This essay was originally published under the same title in *Black Reconstruction*; I refer to the later collected version.

- 109 See L.P.Hartley, *The Go-Between*, 7.  
110 See the discussion of Cleary's work in chapter 6.  
111 Professor Whelan provided me with an unpublished advance copy of this essay; all references are to this version.  
112 See Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory*, 193-235.  
113 See Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*.  
114 Marc Bloch *The Historian's Craft*.  
115 Representative *Annales* publications include: Lucien Febvre's *The problem of unbelief in the sixteenth century: The religion of Rabelais*; Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. On the *Annales* school see, Peter R. Campbell's 'The new history: the *Annales* school of history and modern historiography'.  
116 See Thompson's *The Making of The English Working Class*. Thompson's seminal text assumes Bloch's invocation in tracing, what he calls, 'the working people's consciousness of their interests and of their predicament as a class', 781. However, Thompson's historical perspective departs from Bloch and *Annales* in its resolutely Marxist trajectory. On Thompson's work see Eileen James Yeo's 'E.P. Thompson: witness against the beast' and Gregor McLennan's 'E.P. Thompson and the discipline of historical context'.  
117 See Mathews' *Revival*.  
118 Gibbons refers to Willemen's 'The National'  
119 See Arnold's *The Study of Celtic Literature*; Arnold's delineation of the constitution of the Celtic character is predicated on a belief in the existence of a heart/mind, Irish/English union, '[n]o doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy' (85), the underlying message here is that the temperamentally unstable Celt requires the stability provided by the more cerebral English character.  
120 Ailbhe Smyth refers to such idealized versions of Irish femininity in her article, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', *The Irish Review*, Number 6, 7-24. Smyth's point presents an equivalent metatheoretical caveat to those discussed in chapter 7.  
121 Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd, 'An Agenda for women's history, 1500-1800: Part 1' and Maria Luddy, 'An Agenda for women's history, 1800-1900: Part 2.'  
122 See Gerda Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: A 1995 Perspective.'  
123 In a sense, Lerner's point validates the harsh criticism directed against the gender biases and/or oversights of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*.  
124 Cited in Beiner's *To Speak of '98: The Social Memory and Vernacular Historiography of Bliain na bhFrancach-The Year of the French*, 29.

125 For instructive recent comments see Guy Beiner and Anna Bryson's 'Listening to the  
Past and Talking to Each Other: Problems and Possibilities facing Oral History in  
Ireland.'

126 Mohanty's essay, 'Under Western Eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses'  
was originally published in the *Feminist Review*, Volume 30, Autumn 1988, 61-88. I will  
be referring to the later 1997 publication of the same title.

127 See Clíona Murphy's 'Women's History, Feminist History, or Gender History?'

128 For an insightful essay on visual representation and the construction of gender in Ireland  
see Suzanna Chan's 'Representing Nation, Gender and 'Race' in Irish Visual Art'.

129 Cited in Louise Ryan 'Furies and 'Die-Hards': Women and Irish Republican in the Early  
Twentieth Century', 257.

130 Whelan notes a similar historiographical elision in post-1798 narratives; women were, he  
argues, 'relegated below the horizon of historical visibility' ('Introduction to Section VI,  
470).

For a further discussion of related issues see, Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong, *The  
Women of 1798*.

131 Taking his lead from Margaret MacCurtain, Lloyd re-iterates the delimited political and  
cultural structures of post-Independence, Free State Ireland. He concludes that:

a dynamic of convergence was superseded almost entirely by the subordination of a  
narrow version of the nationalist project, by the establishment of a conservative  
national state, to the detriment of both the feminist and the labour movements.  
(*Ireland after History*, 39)

But, as we discussed above, such narrative elision does not denote silence, extinction or  
passivity, Lloyd continues:

Yet I would want to suggest that in fact at no moment in the longer course of Irish  
history...are such moments merely arrested. They are, rather, occluded, and fall  
under the shadow of the new state for, we might say, a moment of hesitation within  
the course of the struggle. (*Ireland after History*, 39)

132 For a consideration of nationalism, postcolonial theory and gender see Megan M.  
Sullivan's *Gendered State: Literature, Film and Theatre in Northern Ireland*.

133 In his 1984 *Field Day* pamphlet, *Myth and Motherland*, Richard Kearney's argument is  
closer to Innes' than it is to Howes' when he concludes:

Yeats offered the myth of Mother Ireland as spiritual or symbolic compensation for  
the colonial calamities of historical reality. The mythological Mother would restore  
the lost national identity by calling her sons to the sacred rite of blood-sacrifice  
whereby they would re-enter the sacred time which transcends historical time – and  
thus undo the wrongs of history. In short, since reality told a story of division and  
dispossession, Yeats replied with answering symbols of unity and self-possession.  
(14)



- 134 Also see *Myth and Motherland*, 20-22.  
In *Women and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* Innes argues:
- Repeatedly in their works, the gendered discourse of colonialism and anti-colonialism explicitly or implicitly influences the characterization of the women and the structuring of plots in which the contestation of patriarchal authority is marked by the struggle to claim authority over Ireland...When the women who had been constructed as representing Ireland turned to hear different speakers or, worse still, spoke up for their own version of the Irish conscience, they were ridiculed, reviled, or ignored. (178-179)
- 135 Referring to her contemporary sociological survey of Irish emigrant women, Breda Gray writes:
- Women are actively interpellated as national subjects through identification with territory, soil, land and landscape. Yet, their relations to the place of the nation is a feminised one that excludes for most of the women relationships of possession and re-signification...If Irish women are to claim their Irishness...then the gendered exclusions upon which formations of Irish national identity rely have to be faced...In most cases, the women's connection to the national territory were mediated by discourses of nationalism, colonialism and familialism. ('Longings and Belongings-Gendered Spatialities of Irishness', 205)
- 136 Mathews argues that the gender politics of the national revival initiatives in Ireland were instrumental in the 'feminisation of the domestic space and the concomitant restriction of female possibility' (*Revival*, 143). He concludes that such initiatives were 'responsible for the social and familial restriction of women from the turn of the century onwards' (*Revival*, 143). See also, Joanna Bourke's *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland 1890-1914*.
- 137 On this issue see Breda Gray, 'Longings and Belongings-Gendered Spatialities of Irishness', 1999. Gray invokes the work of Catherine Nash, arguing:
- Catherine Nash argues that nationalists in the newly independent state, while excluding women from the body politic, conceived of the landscape as female, facilitating 'a masculinist relationship to place'. In a postcolonial context, she suggests, the emphasis is on recovering 'an effective relationship with place' and overcoming 'displacement and crisis of identity'. This is achieved through the symbolic use of 'woman' as in 'Mother Ireland' and feminization of land and landscape which is constructed as bearing the opposite characteristics to the land of the colonizer. The concern with cultural purity and preservation of identity in the early post-independence years was projected onto the West of Ireland landscape which was seen as providing 'the greatest contrast to the landscape of Englishness.' ('Longings and Belongings-Gendered Spatialities of Irishness', 201)

See also, Catherine Nash, “‘Embodying the Nation’- The West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity’ and, her ‘Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland’.

138 Bourdieu argues:

Sexuality as we understand it is indeed an historical invention, but one which has developed progressively as the various fields and their specific logics became differentiated...the emergence of sexuality as such is also indissociable from the appearance of a set of fields and agents competing for the monopoly of the legitimate definition of sexual practices and discourses – the religious field, the legal field, the bureaucratic field – and capable of imposing that definition in practices, in particular through families and the familialist vision. (*Masculine Domination*, 104)

139 *Anne Devlin*, Pat Murphy, 1984, British Film Institute.  
140 Elsewhere Bourke notes:

Fairy abduction and fairy changelings are a commonplace of the legends told in Irish and English which are still to be heard in many parts of Ireland. They are told more often as tall tales than as factual accounts, but behind any of them the idea may linger that something true is being expressed...[t]hey could be used in a variety of ways: as cautions to children or adults against departures from society’s norms, as euphemisms from anything from tuberculosis to drunkenness to marital infidelity, or simply as entertainment. They provided narrative maps of the physical and social landscape, marking the boundaries of the known and comprehensible world. They served as charters for action in the routines of daily life, explaining why butter was salted; why lone thorn trees were left undisturbed; why a piece of red flannel was sewn to babies’ clothing; why certain places and people were best avoided. (‘The Baby and The Bathwater: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, 87)

141 The text relates the story of the gruesome burning of Bridget Cleary, a twenty six year old, married woman at her home in Ballyvadlea, Co.Tipperary. The significance of the case, as the multi-layered text conveys, is the imbrication and competing freights of literate, urban justice and the oral, folk-based practices of fairy-legend and superstition. Thinking his wife’s illness was due to her kidnapping by fairies and replacement with a changeling, Michael Cleary fell back on the mores of a traditional belief system that, ultimately, resulted in his burning of his wife in the mistaken belief that the ‘real’ Bridget Cleary would be thus returned. For an extended discussion of the significance of Bourke’s text, and further issues relating to gender and postcolonialism, see my forthcoming ‘Immolation, gender and postcolonialism.’

142 1850 saw a Catholic Church Synod held at Thurles, convened under the auspices of Paul Cullen, then Archbishop of Armagh, the Synod was designed to restore the vigour of church and ecclesiastical discipline in Ireland.

143 Lionel Pilkington notes, ‘what this study reveals is not the existence of a civilized modernity against which the Cleary atrocity is some maverick exception, but rather the

extent to which a competing vernacular ethics was convulsed into violence because of the modern' ('The Future of Irish Studies', 45).  
144 Referring to Lawrence McBride in his discussion of the imbrication of formal and informal education, popular culture and historical learning, Beiner asserts:

He [Lawrence McBride] regarded the various manifestations of history dispersed throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular culture (including those circulated by popular print) as agencies of informal education. In this light, historical education can be understood as a form of public commemoration that facilitates remembrance of the past. This calls attention to the important role of formal education in the re-negotiation of social memory. (*To Speak of '98: The Social Memory and Vernacular Historiography of Bliain na bhFrancach-The Year of the French*, 475)

Bourke adds:

In the three-dimensional structures of fairy belief legend, highly-charged and memorable images like that of Bidy Early, *Gearóid Iarla*, or Bridget Cleary emerging from a fairy dwelling on a white horse are the retrieval codes for a whole complex of stored information about land and landscape, community relations, gender roles, medicine, and work in all its aspects: tools, materials and techniques. The storyteller may spend less time at physical work than many of his or her listeners, and may be branded by the unsympathetic as a dealer in mumbo-jumbo, but as Walter Benjamin remarked, 'an orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers. ('The Baby and The Bathwater: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', 91)

145 Citing Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Bourke notes:

Oral cultures have therefore developed elaborate verbal art-forms through which to arrange knowledge and ideas in patterns, partly in order to conserve and transmit them with maximum efficiency; partly for the intellectual and aesthetic pleasure of such patterning. Much of what an oral culture has to teach is packaged and conveyed in stories. ('The Baby and The Bathwater: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', 81)

146 Jan Vansina makes the point, 'oral traditions are sources of exceptional value since they convey not only the interpretation of the witnesses to an event but those of the minds who have transmitted it' 'Memory and Oral Tradition', 276.

147 See Gasset's *Man and History*.

148 These representational and cultural arenas are not, of course individually autonomous, each is firstly a site of ideological contestation, and secondly all belong to larger streams of ideological contestation. Writing from a Neo-Marxist perspective, Rosemary Hennessy and Rajeswari Mohan legitimately argue:

From a post-Althusserian understanding of the social, popular culture can be seen as not just a reflection of economic and political forces, but as a site where ideological work is continuously produced out of diverse political and economic interests to disrupt or to re-secure existing social arrangements. In this sense popular culture is a terrain of contestation. (1993, 466)

149 Linking the Cleary case to prevailing tropes of colonized femininity, elsewhere Bourke writes:

The same paradigm of colonial femininity which could more easily imagine Johanna Burke as helpless witness than as engaged participant or complacent accessory influenced the media view of Bridget Cleary as victim. Here, however, another set of discourses comes into play, for it was not enough that the colonized female should be helpless. She must also, in order to be marked positive, be erotically appealing and exotically mysterious. ('Reading a Woman's Death: Colonial Text and Oral Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', 563-564)

On Bourke's work, postcolonialism and subalternity see my forthcoming, 'Immolation, Gender and Postcolonial History.'

150 Cited in Peadar Kirby's 'Contested Pedigrees of the Celtic Tiger', 23.

151 Francis Mulhern, *The Present Lasts a Long Time*, 28.

152 For further comments on modernity, modernization and globalization see Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

153 Anthony Giddens emphasizes the organizational zeal of modernity; he argues that under modernity's spate both time and space must be regularized in order to convene a stable social world (*The Consequences of Modernity*, 91). The motive forces of modernization must also institute their own representational modalities of temporal and spatial fixity. Giddens notes, '[t]he dynamism of modernity derives from the *separation of time and space* and their recombination in forms which permit the precise time-space 'zoning' of social life; the *disembedding* of social systems' (*The Consequences of Modernity*, 16-17). See Foster's *Modern Ireland*, 596.

154 From a lecture delivered by Cleary at the 'Moving On' research seminar at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra in 2002 entitled 'Ireland and Postcolonial Theory'; all references are unpaginated and cited as (Cleary, 2002 b).

156 Again see Merivale's *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies* and Richard Whateley's *Introductory lectures on political economy*.

157 On the relationship of modernization and colonialism, Mulhern notes, '[t]he discourse of modernization is itself no longer new. Forming as a theory of historical process in the European centres, it duly expanded into the colonized world, to offer a model account of the future there' (*The Present Lasts a Long Time*, 22).

158 David Fitzpatrick argues, 'the strength of Irish influence in Imperial policing remains incontestable.' 'Ireland and The Empire', 517. See Also *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control 1830-1940*. David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds.)

159 See Lefebvre's *The Production Space*, where he outlines differing, socially produced spaces: representational space or 'lived' space; spatial practice or 'perceived' space and representations of space or 'conceived'/'abstract' space.

160 See Kearney's *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* and Hume's 'Europe of the Regions.'

161 For a longer discussion of banal nationalism see Umut Ozkirimli's *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 199-203.

162 Writing on the politics of spatial negotiation, Lefebvre's Marxist reading nevertheless has a resonance in postcolonial readings of spatial control and contestation; he notes:

The dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there. (*The Production of Space*, 49)

163 Conor McCarthy argues:

one productive way of reconstituting Irish Studies in Ireland would be through an engagement with the rich resources of the Marxist tradition. This will help us to recognize the material – political and economic- locations and grounds of possibility of our discipline. One example of how this might work is the study of the imbrication of culture and space...the extraordinarily spatial nature of Irish experience – immigration, colonization, emigration, the struggle for land, partition, and globalization – has yet to be fully explored. ('Scattered Speculations on the Future of Irish Studies', 42)

164 On Lefebvre's use of the everyday as an alternative, disruptive force to the homogeneity of the modern, see Joe Moran's 'History, Memory and the Everyday.'

165 Cited in Patrick Duffy's 'Change and Renewal in Issues of Place, Identity and the Local', 16.

166 Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 222.

167 For more on Hartnett's disdain for literary critics see his 'The Critic as Carnivore' in *A Book of Strays*, 15. He writes:

Critics wanted: please apply  
with hate as your credential;  
competence is not required  
but hindsight is essential.

168 The references are to an unpublished version of this paper, kindly supplied by Professor Neil Lazarus in August 2002. See also Lazarus' *Nationalism, Cultural Practice and the Postcolonial World*.

169 In discussing the nature of individual, human memory, the philosopher A. J. Ayers concludes:

It seems to me more likely that the understanding of what is for an event to be past develops *pari passu* with the understanding of the use of the past tense...[b]ut psychologically it may be that we first acquire the habit of saying 'it was so' in a certain class of present situations, and only later identify such phrases with events which are earlier than this. (*The Problem of Knowledge*, 153)

Ayers' explication of memory, and its experiential constitution, provides an instructive *caveat* to the meta-critic of Irish postcolonial theory in the sense that it signals the pre-eminence of the verbal assertion.

<sup>170</sup> See Daniel Cotton's 'Discipline and Punish', 463; Cotton ridicules the increasing terminological impenetrability of contemporary cultural studies.

<sup>171</sup> See Frank Shulze-Engler's 'Universalism with a Difference: The Politics of Postcolonial Theory'.

<sup>172</sup> Daniel James suggests:

In the field of labour history and the study of subaltern memories, E.P. Thompson's, albeit resolutely non-postmodernist, call for historians, to rescue the oppressed from the overwhelming condescension of history might still serve as a usable ethical framework for historical practice. ('Meatpackers, Peronists and Collective Memory: A View from the South', 1412)

Thompson's relation to the practices of Subaltern Studies is apparent in his historiographic statement:

It is our own involvement which makes judgement difficult. And yet we are helped towards a certain detachment, both by the 'romantic' critique of industrialism which stems from one part of experience, and by the record of tenacious resistance by which hand-loom weaver, artisan or village craftsman confronted this experience and held fast to an alternative culture. As we see them change, so we see how we became what we are. We understand more clearly what was lost, what was driven 'underground', what is still unresolved. Any evaluation of the quality of life must entail an assessment of the total life-experience, the manifold satisfactions or deprivation, cultural as well as material, of the people concerned. (*The Making of the English Working Class*, 486)

<sup>173</sup> Bourke cites a relevant case in point:

As studies of her continuing fame make clear, Bidy Early was not simply a charlatan or quack, nor were 'herb-doctors' simply amateur botanists. Certainly Bidy Early possessed knowledge of illnesses, as herb-doctors did of plants, but their moral authority had political, social and imaginative dimensions too. Crucially, the paradigms of their knowledge were radically different from those of the dominant culture. ('The Baby and The Bathwater: Cultural Loss in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', 83)

174 Acknowledging the initiatives of Indian subaltern scholars in regaining ‘the lost voices of the oppressed’ (*To Speak of '98*, 32), Beiner gestures towards the democratizing possibilities of oral history in retrieving elided subaltern experience. He argues:

Oral history, having preceded these progressive trends, offers tools for advancing this direction. Since the 1960s, oral history in different regions has spearheaded the effort to democratise history and liberate it from focusing on hegemonic narratives. Oral history lends an ear to the alternative histories of the disinherited who, being oppressed and vanquished, are often not able to document their story but may have cultivated and preserved oral tradition. (*To Speak of '98*, 32)

175 Schulze-Engler rejects the interventions of Spivak, Bhabha and the Subaltern collective, he maintains that they overlook the reality that ‘it is the interaction of communicating people that constitutes the world of language’.

176 For a similar argument see, Smyth’s ‘Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse’, 43.

177 The authoritative linguistic structures interrogated by postcolonial critics at the level of ideology and culture repeat in the theoretical and idiomatic discourse of postcolonial analysis itself. Bourdieu comments: ‘We learn that the efficacy of a discourse, its power to convince, depends on the power of the person who utters it, or, what amounts to the same thing, on his ‘accent’ functioning as an index of authority’ (‘The economy of linguistic exchanges’, 653). Language ‘as a media of institutional authority, index of class cleavage and constraint on pedagogical innovation’ (James Collins, ‘Determination and Contradiction: An Appreciation and Critique of the work of Pierre Bourdieu on Language and Education’, 118), is not exclusively operative within Bourdieu’s academic field or contemporary socio-economic fields, but is tangibly evident in the cultural and political material/mechanisms/tropes of colonial subjection.

178 As I point out on page 121, Gibbons explicitly employs White’s terminology ‘historical method’.

179 As I discuss in my conclusion, however, the binary idioms of conquest are not entirely disregarded in contemporary international politics.

180 See Kwame Anthony Appiah’s ‘Is the “Post” in “Postcolonial” the “Post” in “Postmodern”?’

181 Since postcolonial theory is so frequently dismissed as an academic fashion or fad, it seems appropriate to invoke William Hazlitt’s diatribe against ‘fashion’. Hazlitt writes:

Fashion is an odd jumble of contradictions, of sympathies and antipathies. It exists only by its being participated among a certain number of persons, and its essence is destroyed by being communicated to a greater number... Thus fashion lives only in a perpetual round of *giddy innovation and restless vanity*. To be old-fashioned is the greatest crime a coat or hat can be guilty of. (*William Hazlitt: Selected Writings*, 148-149)

182 W.J. McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett*, 19. McCormack continues, ‘One is not wearied of theory, but rather of its simulacrum, the schoolboy debater’s recitation of

names, of the big word which make us happy, and the profitable disguise of nationalist rhetoric as cosmopolitan chic' (19-20).

183 In a more recent intervention Parry continues her attack on postcolonial studies:

A turn from a rhetoric disparaging the master narratives of revolution and liberation, and a return to a politics grounded in the material, social, and existential, now appears urgent...When the testimony of history is derived from its modes of writing, this renders redundant explanations of events which call on empirical enquiry and invoke texts which do not yield to the *a priori* theoretical requirements of the critic...Their work has elided the distinctive decolonizing transitions which have overdetermined contemporary conditions in postindependence states...The sanctioned omissions in postcolonial criticism are a debilitating loss to thinking about colonialism and late imperialism. The dismissal of politics and economics which these omissions reflect is a scandal. ('Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies', 77-78)

184 See Bhabha's 'Sly Civility' in *The Location of Culture*, 93-101.

185 See Bhabha's 'Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse' in *The Location of Culture*, 85-92.

186 Epifanio San Juan Jr., *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, 266. In the same edition he also refers to postcolonial studies as a 'carnival of shifting possibilities' (266), or 'this ludic heteroglossia' (266).

187 In another article, also published in 1995, Jacoby adds to his vilification of postcolonial theory; he argues:

Post-colonial theory is all over the map. Of course, it is suppose to be...The field is inchoate and can move in any number of directions. Nevertheless the preliminary report is not positive. While post-colonial studies claims to be subversive and profound, the politics tend to be banal; the language jargonized; the radical on-upmanship infantile; the self-obsession tiresome; and the theory bloated. ('Marginal Returns: The Trouble with Post-colonial theory', 37)

188 For instructive comments on the refusal of imperial historians to engage with postcolonial studies, see Moore-Gilbert's 'Postcolonial Cultural Studies and Imperial Historiography.'

189 I again refer the reader to Mitchell's three book-length publications on Roger Casement.

190 Again see Gasset's *Man and History*.

191 On the need to prepare a fresh agenda for Imperial history see, A.G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History.' Hopkins re-inserts economic history as predominant over the erstwhile centrality of cultural history, he argues that 'a different organizing framework is needed if we are to understand the present, encompass the past and consider the alignment of future loyalties in a world in which the nation-state may no longer be either the dominant political institution or the basis for economic development' (203).

192 See Whelan's 'Reading the Ruins.'



193 See Foster's *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland*, 20  
194 For a recent polemic against all forms of nouveau critical theory see Jonathon Bate's article entitled 'Navigate the circus of fancy with fact'. While not explicit in its engagement with postcolonial theory, the essay does represent an intemperate assault on the interpretive facilities of 'postal' theory. He argues:

In academia, we have become accustomed to the circus-ring of the conference. Thus for plenary lectures, Miss Josephine Sleary will inaugurate the entertainments with her graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower act and Signor Jupe will elucidate the diverting accomplishments of his performing dog, Merrylegs. (23)

Bate effectively discharges literary study from any sense of ethical responsibility; the scientificity of his so-called 'Gradgrindian' aesthetic is a didactic morality in itself. Bate reserves no role for the lateral or comparative reading of literary texts. Bate's dialectic functions at the level of utilitarianism, the congeries of theoretical paradigm and resources that have emerged in the last forty years, Bate maintains, serve only to confound the sanctity of the method, the fact and the integral text.  
195 In a highly sceptical critique of 'theory', Eileen Kane argues:

Critical theory can give us much needed new perspectives: if one holds to a unitary consciousness of the species, whose view represents it? Here is the opportunity for the 'subjugated knowledges', the voices of the formerly silenced, as Foucault calls them, to emerge. This approach has sometimes been used in Ireland in the hope that a uniquely Irish cast of thought will emerge. In the end, however, critical theory is tied to universalism, so the hidden agenda, hidden perhaps even to those who espouse it, is that, because Ireland is uniquely placed in some respects (for some it is at the intersection of First and Third World), *Irish* post-colonial experience can provide the basis for a new, if still universal, model in the move away from imperialism, capitalism and modernism ('The Power of Paradigms: Social Science and Intellectual Contributions to Public Discourse in Ireland', 141).

196 The revisionist dismissal of Irish nationalist history, not histories, was best summed up by Seán O'Faoláin:

Instead, an entirely novel view of Irish history came into being...[a]ccording to this view of history nothing at all needs to be done about old traditions because they were, are and always would be virginal, perennial, omni-present and indestructible, their purity never in the least scathed by any one of those cross-breedings, vicissitudes, or reformations that I have recorded in this book. (*The Irish*, 157)

197 For further comments on Irish Studies and postcolonialism, see Donoghue's 'Fears for Irish Studies in the Age of Identity Politics.'

198 See Boylan and Foley's *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland: the propagation and ideological function of economic discourse in the nineteenth century* and their recent four volume *Irish Political Economy*.

199

See Merivale's *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*.

200

Drawing on Joseph Ruane, Cleary notes the distinctions made by historians between Ireland's putative colonial status pre- and post-1801 and the Act of Union. He writes:

According to his [Ruane's] survey, colonial themes have been paramount in the writings of historians for the late medieval period in Ireland...[w]hen it comes to early modern Ireland colonial themes continue to occupy a central place in the historical literature...[w]hen it comes to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, Ruane contends, the analytical model that governs Irish historical writing alters quite dramatically...[w]hen historians deal with this post-Union period, a colonial conception of Irish history is commonly displaced, Ruane observes, in favour of a modernization perspective that attributes little if any significance to colonialism. ('Misplaced Ideas? Colonialism, Location and Dislocation in Irish Studies', 25)

For further discussion see Ruane's 'Colonialism and the Interpretation of Irish Historical Development.'

201

Both Foster's and Howe's conclusions chime with O'Faoláin's conclusion on the nature of History; drawing on R.G. Collingwood, O'Faoláin writes:

History is not a tale told by the fireside. It is an ever-developing process, and all its events not so much events as thoughts hammered into mortal heads...[i] fear that for Ireland much of our history is made up of endurances, so that for us moderns to make any meaningful historical synthesis out of our past, to abstract the lessons from our experience, is particularly difficult. (*The Irish*, 169)

For a general historiographic expansion of this argument see Collingwood's *The Idea of History*, in which he argues, '[i]n short: the revolutionary can only regard his revolution as a *progress* in so far as he is also a historian, genuinely re-enacting in his own historical thought the life he nevertheless *rejects* [my emphasis]' (326).

Furthermore, Tom Dunne's recent assertions with respect to historical writing and historical record are reflective of O'Faoláin's conclusions; in his response to Whelan's critical review of *Rebellions*, Dunne concludes, '[h]istorical understanding develops through a *cumulative engagement* with sources and with previous arguments [my emphasis].' ('No room for contradictory positions in history writing', 16)

202

Reading through Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Roy Porter writes, '[c]rucial to the British Enlightenment was the Lockean model of the mind maturing through experience from ignorance to knowledge, and the paradigm it suggested for the progress of mankind. (*Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, 70)

203

As Eagleton argues:

it is not that there is no post-colonialism, rather that there is something called postcolonialism and – scare quotes being at the moment much in fashion – something called 'postcolonialism' too. That is to say, there is obviously a lot of the globe which used to be colonized directly and is now colonized by other means...[a]t

the same time, there is a particular theoretical agenda known as ‘postcolonialism’, which has its roots in a highly specific western intellectual history and is a much more controversial phenomenon altogether. (‘Postcolonialism and ‘Postcolonialism’’, 25)

204 See McCarthy’s *Modernisation: Crisis and Culture in Ireland 1969-1992*, 25.

205 See Longley *The Living Stream*, 30; see also her ‘Postcolonial versus European (and Post-ukanian) Frameworks for Irish Literature.’

206 In *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland*, Gallagher argues:

Moreover, the ‘post-colonial’ label can be applied to such a wide variety of states that it is questionable whether those so labeled have anything in common other than that they were once colonies of European powers...it seems that the description retains little power to enable us to separate political systems for analytical purposes. (147)

207 See Lee’s *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, especially: 68-69; 519-520; 527-528 and 663-664.

208 Bourdieu would, perhaps, disagree with Baumann’s characterization; the reality probably lies somewhere between the two perspectives. Strategies of review and critical riposte are not only functions of careerist aspirants, but remain an intrinsic element of the tautological architecture of the academic edifice. Bourdieu notes, ‘It is doubtless because of this that the logic of accumulation of power takes the form of a viciously circular mechanism of obligations which breed obligations, of a progressive accumulation of powers which attract solicitations that generate more power’ (*Homo Academicus*, 97). Both tacit and explicit cross-faculty solidarity is generative of mutually beneficial academic capital and peer *kudos*; publicity or profile remain constituent agents of reputation and therefore power. Bourdieu characterizes the academic field as one that functions resolutely in terms of hierarchies of differentiated power structures:

[t]he functioning of this temporal power in the cultural order...helps to generate all sorts of acts of obligatory recognition and homage (among which, servile references and review are only the most visible) through the effects of authority operated by any legitimate institution, and through the conscious or unconscious deference paid to those people who wield power over coveted positions. (*Homo Academicus*, 104)

The pragmatic necessities of professional advancement impede on the veracity/sincerity/autonomy of critical judgment. Under these conditions, then, there is the birth and development/activation/operation of a corollary culture of professional deference. In Hobbesean terms: ‘Reputation of power, is power; because it draweth with it the adherence of those that need protection’ (*Leviathan*, 150).

209 For a scathing, and generally accurate, review of Howe’s text see Patrick Magee’s ‘Humpty Dumpty and the Despotism of Fact: A Critique of Stephen Howe’s *Ireland and Empire*.’

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- 210 “‘You may easily believe,’ said he, ‘how great a difficulty to persuade my father that all necessary knowledge was not comprised in the noble art of book-keeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last, for his constant answer to my unwearied intreaties was the same as that to *the Dutch schoolmaster in The Vicar of Wakefield*: ‘I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek [my emphasis].’” (Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 61)
- 211 The event was inaugurated in 1999 under the stewardship of Declan Kiberd and PJ Mathews; the initial conference was convened at the Irish Film Centre in Dublin. Five subsequent ‘New Voices’ conferences have been held, at Queens University Belfast, NUI Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork and at the University of Ulster, Derry; the franchise will continue at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick in 2005.
- 212 The piece was published under the same title as part of the *New Voices in Irish Criticism* series in *Critical Ireland: New Essays in Literature and Culture* Aaron Kelly and Alan Gillis (eds.), 6-13. It is also available on-line at <http://www.gradnet.de/pomo2.archives/pomo99.papers/Bachorz99.htm>. I will be referring to the on-line version, as it is a lengthier version.
- 213 See Robbins’ ‘Colonial Discourse: A Paradigm and Its Discontents’.
- 214 See Cleary’s ‘Misplaced Ideas’. See Fieldhouse’s *Colonial Empires: A Comparative Study from the Eighteenth Century and Colonialism 1870-1945*; see Fredrickson’s *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*.
- 215 From an on-line essay by Joe Sartelle published in 1992 entitled ‘Public Intellectuals’.
- 216 My thanks to Noam Chomsky for bringing this article to my attention; also to Agustín Lao Montes who alerted me to the original legislation concerning post-colonial studies in the U.S.
- 217 For an Irish perspective on this issue see Seán Tadhg Ó’Gairbhí’s ‘Monatóireacht SAM ar chúrsaí léinn ina cúis inní’. Addressing the proposed American legislation against postcolonial studies, Ó’Gairbhí includes comments from Professor Timothy P. Foley:

ábhar mór inní é go bhfuil a leithéid de mhonatóireacht beartaithe agus gur cruthúnas é go bhfuil aidhmeanna impiriúlachta ag rialtas reatha na Stát Aontaithe...[i]arracht is ea í seo ag Rialtas Bush agus an eite dheas Mheiriceánach fáil réidh le haon dioscúrsa nach dtagann lena ndearcadh agus is ábhar mór inní é.  
(3)

[it is a great source of concern that such levels of monitoring are sanctioned, and it is proof of the imperial aims of the government of the United States...this is an attempt by the Bush government and by the American right wing to undermine any oppositional discourse which does not conform to their worldview, and this is a great cause of concern]. [my translation]

To my knowledge it is the only feature article in the mainstream Irish press that has addressed this issue.

- 218 Martin Kramer, who is editor of the right-wing journal, *Middle East Quarterly*, and also  
the author of the book cited by Kurtz, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle  
Eastern Studies in America*.
- 219 All references to Goldberg's article are to the on-line version and will cited as (Goldberg,  
2003).
- 220 See Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*.
- 221 In the same edition as Stoddard and Cornwell's essay, Marina A. Llorente's 'Civilization  
versus Barbarism' discusses the historical genealogy and contemporary employment of  
'civilization' and 'barbarism'.
- 222 This year will see the fourth Galway conference on colonialism, entitled, 'Ireland and  
India'; previous conferences have dealt with topics such as 'Defining Colonies' and  
'Gender and Colonialism'. The Institute of Postcolonial Studies is a multidisciplinary  
forum, which produces a quarterly journal entitled *Postcolonial Studies* and which  
convenes regular seminars and reading groups focused on colonial history, imperial  
jurisprudence and postcolonial theory. The Keough Centre runs an annual event, *The  
Irish Seminar*, which is the most significant convocation of contemporary scholars of  
Irish Studies.
- 223 See Deane's 'Remembering the Irish Future.'
- 224 From a lecture delivered by Lloyd at the University of Notre Dame entitled, 'Irish Studies  
in the Post-Colonial Frame'; references are unpaginated and cited as (Lloyd, 1995).