

## CHAPTER TWO: DECOLONISATION: A REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

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During her recent visit to Aotearoa, Rigoberto Menchu, U.N. Ambassador for Indigenous Rights, identified the major problem of indigenous peoples as being that of development. The central issue being struggled for, by indigenous peoples worldwide, is simply this; the right to determine one's own development as a people. Whilst struggles for self-determination take many forms, because of cultural and historical differences and the differing locations of these struggles, the central issue remains: who is determining the changes for indigenous peoples? (Conference Centre, 1993: 12 September).

Imperialism was the theory and the practice of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling distant lands. Imperialism has been a global phenomenon. There have been no peoples on the earth who have not been touched by it. Colonialism is an aspect of imperialism and is the relationship between the metropolitan country and the colony. Colonisation involved, in part, the institutionalisation of rule over a subordinate population, so state, legal and economic processes backed up this right to rule and subordinate an indigenous population.

Whilst it was clear that imperialism and colonisation were driven by the desire for profit, there are aspects of colonisation such as the subjugating of populations, the rendering as inferior of indigenous peoples which legitimated the desire for and the realisation of empire. Britain and other European imperialists claimed to be bringing 'civilisation' to distant lands based upon racial, technological and cultural superiority of white races.

This chapter reviews a selection of some of the international literature that has touched on the subject of decolonisation. Together these works form a powerful body of literature that is more than just oppositional discourse to Western thought and forms both counter-hegemonic texts and has created new territory. The themes that are picked up by many of these writers have also been written about by Maori writers. What is said at times has the ring of an echo but the echo is sounding all around the world.

These echoes can be detected in the writings of Franz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Haunani Kay Trask, bell hooks, Edward Said, Paulo Freire, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ashis Nandy, Hussein Bulhan and also includes some writings from those who have crossed to the other side of the imperial divide such as Alfred Crosby who challenges the ideas of imperialism. This chapter looks at what these writers have to say about decolonisation.

The *Fontana Dictionary Of Modern Thought* defines decolonisation as:

*the process of a metropolitan country giving up its authority over its dependent territories and grants them the status of sovereign states*

(Bullock 1988:410)

This sounds very much like the mother country tearfully waving her children off to school on their first day. However, the process of gaining 'independence' is usually violent and bloody. It is not a process of giving up, but a process of the coloniser often being forced to give up.

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The above writers recognised that decolonisation involved more than a physical process of separation. Colonisation did not end 'when the last policeman left and when the last flag came down' as Fanon (1965) has said. Nor has it ended for many indigenous groups worldwide. What Fanon and others argue is that decolonisation is a dynamic process that goes beyond just the physical to seeing the need to 'decolonise the mind'. These writers also agree that decolonisation is not just a process for the colonised but also is a necessary step for the coloniser. Finally, they recognise that decolonisation is more than a theory it is also about action or praxis.

The process of European expansionism took place over several hundred years and it was ideologically bound to Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is a European cultural process which:

*....accumulated experiences, territories, peoples, histories, it studied them, classified them and verified them....it allowed European men of business to scheme grandly but above all it subordinated them by banishing their identities as a lower order of being, from the culture and indeed the very idea of white Christian Europe....*

(Said 1993:267)

Imperialism has been met with resistance wherever it has travelled and this resistance has taken many forms - armed resistance, political and economic opposition. Said (253:1993) calls this the 'culture of resistance'. For many countries, who have gained independence, resistance has taken a form of nationalism. This has been problematic for a number of

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reasons. Many of the leaders in nationalist struggles have usually been trained in a colonial system. Elite groups have in some countries reproduced the class-based inequalities that existed during colonisation and exploitation has not diminished for some groups. Nationalism has consistently been patriarchal and minority rights have been overlooked.

### (2.1) ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM

*As the clover killed the fern, the European dog the Maori dog,  
as the Maori rat was destroyed by the Pakeha rat, so our people  
will gradually be supplanted by the Europeans.<sup>1</sup>*

The first step in the colonisation process to bring the colonies under a world market economy was the taking of land. This subject is examined in depth by Alfred Crosby (1986) who asks the question: why is it that particular countries such as Australia, Canada, the U.S, Argentina and Uruguay remain Europeanised? Other indigenous groups have gained independence yet these countries that are oceans away from Europe remain 'neo-Europes'. Crosby argues that long-term settlement required more than just a suitable climate and geography, there were ecological and biological components to successful long-term occupation. It also required rationalising projects such as the successful 'taming' of the land and the successful 'taming' of the indigenous populations.

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<sup>1</sup>*Maori whakatauki (proverb) from the 1860s, the iwi origin and the words in Maori are unknown to me. However it was cited in the Sunday Times, December 26, 1993:8.*

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What was crucial, was the demoralisation and often the annihilation of indigenous populations. Physical force does not, on its own, explain the domination, although some peoples were annihilated and in fact are still being annihilated in parts of the world. In Brazil the Juma people located in the Amazon have suffered four massacres since 1940, the last in 1973. Estimates suggest there now remain only seven survivors. In Guatemala and other parts of South America the mass slaughter of Mayan Indians by government forces continues (N.Z Herald 1993:Jan 3).

Crosby looks at what he calls ecological imperialism. Crosby claims that the first thing that Europeans tried to do was to change the land, to transform and overlay the landscape with the images of the motherland. What was required, to achieve that, was the transformation of the relationship between the existing human population and the environment.

If we look at Aotearoa as an example, we find that it is as far from Europe as it is possible to get on the planet, yet parts have been successfully transformed into another England. The flora and fauna were as different as it was possible to get from Europe. 89% of the flora is unique to this land so when Cook and others arrived there would have been little that was familiar. There were just three land mammals: the bat, the dog and the rat (Crosby 1986).

Crosby examines three examples of ecological imperialism, the importation of weeds, animals and pathogens, all of which were to have devastating effects on the indigenous

population. The one-way traffic flow of millions of Europeans, animals and plants was overwhelming, so too was the flow of disease:

*Australasia, as far as science can tell us, has exported not one of its human diseases to the outside world, presuming that it has any uniquely its own.*

(Crosby 1986:215)

In Aotearoa the ecological imperialism began with the first European travellers. During Cook's first visit, a weed was introduced that was noted to have naturalised by the second visit. By 1810 the pig was feral and today the wild pig is still called a Cook after Captain Cook. The dock leaf was noted to have naturalised by 1835. As early as 1870 writers were describing parts of Aotearoa as being very similar to England.

The disruptive effects of colonisation and the change in landscape can be shown by looking at the plant white clover, which was introduced last century but would not seed, so bees were introduced. Bees when introduced, proliferated and competed with nectar-feeding birds. These species of native bird were driven further into the bush to find food. White clover is a primary food source for sheep, sheep feed people, and so there we have it - colonisation by weeds.

Taking over the land was made a lot easier through the diseases that Europeans took with them wherever they journeyed. By 1800, in Aotearoa, there were accounts of influenza, dysentery, measles, whooping cough, T.B and V.D. By the 1850s, the Maori birthrate was way below replacement and so began the preparation to 'smooth the pillow of a dying race'. As Crosby (1986) puts it 'biological convergence was replacing divergence'.

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The process of transforming to become a 'neo-England' required the importation of large numbers of plants, animals, building materials etc. The resultant ecological imbalances and the introduction of diseases caused traumatic dislocations for Maori and, in fact, all indigenous groups. Transformation to a pastoral landscape happened in the second half of the 19th Century when thousands of hectares were cleared of forest in order to grow grass. All of these aspects helped to legitimate rationalising projects for long-term settlement. Crosby's analysis of ecological imperialism in the 'neo-Europes', partly explains why decolonisation in the physical sense has been much more difficult for some indigenous groups such as Maori, to achieve.

Said (1993) says that decolonisation involves, firstly, the reclaiming of rights to name and inhabit the land and secondly, there need to be further assertions, recoveries and identifications. In terms of decolonisation, Said argues there is the need to counteract colonial history with indigenous heroes, myths and religions but the first step is reappropriation of the land. After this comes reclaiming of the language. Perhaps this was true for Algeria, which is Said's native land but for Maori the situation is more complex. The processes that Said names have had to be carried out simultaneously. With no clear recovery of the land, we have engaged in reclaiming ideological territory as well as battling to reclaim some of the physical territories.

Decolonisation also involves re-imagining one's own past. How is this to be done? Said (1993) suggests that there are three ways: firstly, one can become the willing participant in the imperialist tradition, secondly, one can become aware of and accept ones 'mongrel

past' and participate in future development, or thirdly, one can gloss over one's own 'disfigurements' and discover an essential, pre-colonial self. What is important, says Said, is to see that one's own history is:

*....an aspect of the history of all subjugated women and men, and comprehends the complex truth of his (sic) own social and historical situation...*

(Said 1993:258)

Said argues against nativism and essentialism because they have reproduced racial, political and religious divisions. Nativism is the view that the individual is born with innate qualities, such as perception, that are not learnt in social interaction, but are 'natural' rather than learned through interaction with the environment. Essentialism is a similar idea except that there are 'essences' to things, people, culture and so on. Decolonisation has sometimes become the search for an essential cultural purity and has focused around the return to some 'pure' cultural condition (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989). An example of essentialism would be the view that language 'embodies' cultural meanings. But if we look at English, we see that it has taken many forms such as creole. Meanings have not remained fixed, words have changed in meaning over time. The language of power may be 'standard english' but it has also been used to 'construct difference, separation, and absence from the metropolitan norm.' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989:44)

A continuing theme in the works of all these writers is a desire, a yearning to transform social consciousness beyond national consciousness. Acceptance of a 'mongrel past' and

a hybridized nature of colonial experience refutes the colonisers view of a privileged monocentric view of human experience. Writers such as Said point out that control of definitions of 'cultural authenticity' have been one of the key means of retaining privilege by the West (Said 1979). These writings of resistance do not just provide a critique of imperialism, they also call for other ways of reading the world in new ways.

## 2.2 DEHUMANISATION AND TRANSFORMATION

The writings of Aime Cesaire's *Return to My Native Land* (1938), Franz Fanon's *Studies In A Dying Colonialism* (1959), *The Wretched of The Earth* (1961), *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967) and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of The Oppressed* (1972) are narratives of liberation that explore the possibility of transforming the world of the oppressed. Aime Cesaire and Franz Fanon were from Martinique. Both went to France to study and wrote in French. Fanon studied psychiatry and returned to Algeria, where he was involved in the struggles for Algerian independence. He died in 1961 at the age of 36 before liberation. Both Fanon and Cesaire provide some of the early writings on the subject of decolonisation. Fragments of Cesaire's poetry were found in 1938 and both Fanon and Cesaire were writing in the 1950s.

Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educationalist/philosopher who wrote *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed* in 1972. He has influenced educationalists throughout the world in the articulation of a narrative of liberation and also transformed teaching practises for those involved in emancipatory education. Paulo Freire has been and still continues to be very

influential in the development of Maori political and church discourses and his analyses have had a strong influence on 'Maori discourses'(Smith L, 1993:3).

Fewer Maori writers have drawn on Fanon and Cesaire, who focus on colonisation and the psyche of the Black man. Consequently their work reveals much about racial oppression through the colonisation process. Freire, however, provides an analysis of class and cultural oppression. His own background, in Brazil, and his childhood, in the peasant classes, provided the basis of his analysis of oppression. Critical pedagogy, was for Freire, the means of emancipation for the oppressed - education for liberation.

But for Fanon and Cesaire emancipation involved the gaining of independence from colonised rule. Education was important in this process but they were chiefly concerned with the gaining of independence by Algeria. Perhaps the attraction by some Maori to Freire, instead of Fanon and Cesaire, is because of this distinction. These writers are not unconnected, Fanon had read Cesaire and Freire had read Fanon.

Cesaire and Fanon look at the de-humanising effects of oppression and the implications on the psyche of the colonised and the coloniser. They explore the mentality of the coloniser and the way that the coloniser reshapes the reality of the colonised to become willing participants in their own colonisation. In exploring the colonial mentality, they challenge the superiority of whites and argue for the development of a humane and civilised being. In essence, they look at how the violence of oppression is a process that dehumanizes all those involved.

It was Césaire who established the concept of Negritude. This concept, which was later used by Fanon, was a response to slavery and colonial subjugation, that Blacks had experienced for centuries. Basically the notion of negritude espoused:

*...the black man as a man with his own culture his own civilisation and his own culture.*

(Césaire 1969:20)

Whilst this, perhaps, seems obvious in today's light it was radical critique in the 1930s. Here is the insight of a people as prisoners in their own land. There was a major shift here because the West, which sees itself as central, and the colonised as 'the other', was under challenge. Negritude argued that there must be an understanding of the coloniser-colonised duality and a transformation for both - to instill the values that could lead to the creation of the 'new man', as Fanon put it.

Negritude was a philosophy that informed the Black protest movements in the 1960s. The 'Black is beautiful', 'proud to be Black' campaigns derive from negritude. It created a type of nationalism and universalised the struggle. But there are limitations to Negritude because whilst asserting the distinctiveness of Black culture, it did so as a binary opposition to white culture:

*Black culture it claimed, was emotional rather than rational; it stressed integration and wholeness over analysis and dissection; it operated by distinctive rhythmic and temporal principles and so forth.*

(Ashworth, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989:21)

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In other words, it asserted Black culture as being the very thing that white culture had asserted it was. Negritude was argued as 'the antithesis of white supremacy' (Ibid). This meant that it was easy to capture as a white discourse, Black culture could still be viewed as being a reflection of white culture.

In *Black Skins White Masks*, Fanon explores the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The world is divided up into these two camps, the black and the white, separated by wealth. Fanon believed that only psychoanalytic interpretations could expose the relations between black and white. The Black man<sup>2</sup> he says lives in a 'zone of non-being' (Fanon 1967). The Black man wants to be white and the white man struggles to become more fully human.

The Black man's desire to be white causes an inferiority complex. This inferiority complex was caused by a dual process, the economic reality - white people have and Black people do not have - and secondly through internalisation of inferiority by the Black man. Fanon was clearly articulating the hegemonic power relations that exist in the process of colonisation. Fanon saw schooling as part of the process where Black men were to become white.

Further to this, Fanon also explored the representations and discourses of the Negro as being constructed by white society:

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<sup>2</sup>Fanon uses the terms *he, man etc* to refer to people in general and I have used the same because that is how he writes it. Fanon was writing in the 1950s when this was standard practice.

*White civilisation and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro. I shall demonstrate that what is often called the black soul is a white mans artifact.*

(Fanon 1967:16)

The Black man is imprisoned by the white, because the white man has made an object of him. The Black man wants to be a man, not a projection of all the racial stereotypes. Fanon says that this internal conflict creates a third person consciousness, by forcing the Black man to stand outside himself.

The Black man can try to escape his 'jungle status' by adopting the coloniser's language and culture, that is, becomes whiter. But, if he then gets an education, he is considered uppity and above his station. So the Black man who constantly seeks permission in the white man's eyes is abandoned or deserted by white society and it is this that causes self-devaluation.

*To be the other is to feel that one is always in a shaky position, to be always on guard ready to be rejected and ....unconsciously doing everything needed to bring about this catastrophe.*

(Fanon 1967:76)

In his early work, Fanon argues that change can occur for the Black man who desires to be white. Change must occur at the individual and the societal level. Although the real source of the conflict is in the social structures, the individual, once discovering their motivations, can then choose what to do or not to do about social structures.

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A continuing theme of Fanon's work is the notion of alienation. Both Blacks and whites are alienated and both are enslaved, the Black to inferiority and the white to superiority. In discussing racism, Fanon points to structures as well as individuals being racist, Europe itself has a racist structure. Colour should not be regarded as a flaw with the attendant desire to be white, the desire to be white does not have to exist:

*It is the racist who creates his inferior*  
(Fanon 1967:93)

Suffering for not being white occurs with the arrival of the white men and the discrimination that follows:

*niggers-are-all-the-same, I tell you they-have-every-conceivable-vice,*  
*I'm telling you that nigger-smell-makes-the-cane-grow*  
*it's like the old saying: beat-a-nigger-and-you-feed-a-nigger*  
(Cesaire 1961:64)

The Negro must then put himself in two frames of reference. The Black man must be Black but he must be Black in relation to the white man. The traditions and customs, the ways of explaining the world of the Black man are wiped out. In this process the Black man is made an object and the Black man makes himself an object. At the same time the Black man wants to become a man.

Fanon pursues this relationship of the 'subject' and the 'other'. The Negro exists by comparison with the other. Is he less intelligent, is he blacker etc? The white man sees himself as the subject. The subject is the hero of life and the other exists merely to furnish

the stage. The other is an object. If the other wants value, they can merely be banished. Like Narcissus, the other validates the subject in his search for self-validation.

In his earlier work, *Studies In A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon assumes that social change can come about through appealing to reason. He argues that human behaviour can be demanded from the other, that there can be 'reciprocal recognition' brought about by a reasoning process. But when he wrote *The Wretched Of The Earth*, Fanon was to say:

*Decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon.*

(Fanon 1967:27)

In *Wretched Of The Earth*, Fanon no longer viewed decolonisation as a process of negotiated change, nor as a process that might occur naturally. Fanon still agreed that decolonisation was the creation of a new man, with a new language and a new humanity. The European model is the track of a culture that negates man, therefore is inadequate for providing solutions. The human condition instead requires true inventions to tackle the problems of humanity. In this book, the colonisers are called the other and Fanon has centred himself alongside the colonised.

Ashis Nandy (1983) agreed with Fanon, saying that one must choose the slave's viewpoint, not just because the slave is oppressed but because the slave sees the master as human, whereas the master has to exclude the slave except as a thing. Liberation, therefore begins with the colonised and follows on to the coloniser.

Fanon saw oppression as the practice and institutionalisation of violence. Why does the process have to be violent? Because the coloniser's very existence depends on a colonial system which the coloniser will not relinquish without a fight. The oppressor is no longer open to reason; counterviolence is all he understands. It seems that freedom must be seized.

There are different expressions of violence. Domination of the colonised is achieved through the overt forms of domination such as torture, police and army but social control is also maintained through 'harmonious' relations such as schooling and through praise of good behaviour. When there is more submission, less police and less forced colonisation is necessary. These relations are relations of violence that pervade both society and the psyche, and are played out in overt and covert means. This violence is often deliberately obscured and mystified, or it is presented as another reality, for example the death of a Black person is not seen as being a serious matter.

Freire has called this type of violence 'cultural invasion'. Cultural invasion is carried out within a whole range of institutions such as childrearing and education. These institutions reproduce patterns of dominance by transmitting the myths of domination because, in part, institutions reflect the broader socio-economic context.

Fanon argued against blaming the present generations for past injustices. People are born into, and socialised into, either the coloniser or colonised group. Oppression and violence are universal as the propensity to be human is universal. No culture is inherently better

than another but what does occur is a socialisation process that engenders particular qualities in each. European imperialism was clearly driven by ideologies, discourses and beliefs.

Fanon does not offer a critique of his own paradigm which is a psychoanalytic one. Hussein Bulhan (1989) takes this up and asks the question: is it possible to have a psychology of oppression when psychology as a discipline is based on notions of individuality? The well-off can expound the ethic of individuality because their freedom as a collective is not an issue, they already have it. Also, the well-off do not have the same blocks and barriers when it comes to imposing 'their will and interest on others'. The collective liberty of the coloniser is obtained through social violence, says Bulhan.

Paulo Freire says that restraints and prevention of oppressors from restoring an oppressive regime is not oppression. Yet in these circumstances the oppressors often feel oppressed. This is caused by considering that their individual rights have been violated if they cannot live as they see fit - despite the inequalities that exist.

The oppressed do not have the luxury of considering 'individual rights'. Collective liberty has been denied. Basic human needs are missing and the right to exist as a culture has been denied. Individualism, in fact, can be antagonistic to the struggle for freedom - because the group can be left divided. Individualism is culture bound. Why is it that individualism is perceived as the natural order when it would make more sense to view human experience as an experience of social interaction - we are born of another.

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Individual rights clearly benefit some groups over others. The middle class have elaborate legal and social safeguards that safeguard property and person, they benefit from tax loopholes, good income etc. The home is like a castle. But if you are poor, then the home is not like a castle, the poor are constantly interacting with others: social workers, landlords, state agencies and the home is often under scrutiny.

Bulhan argues that imperialism was a vision of domination and exploitation. Implicit within that vision was the mastering of nature and when coupled to the view that humans were central led to the division of the world into masters and slaves. Any psychology of liberation he says must have as its starting point human interdependence and intersubjectivity. Further to this must be added a planetary and human interdependence. For imperialism was also the creation of the land and sea as a commodity paradigm as we saw in the section on ecological imperialism. Imperialism and colonisation were, at their most basic, a contestation over geography.

Fanon (1967) raises the point that if every colonised person was prepared to oppose colonisation to the death, it would not exist. What he is saying is, that in order for colonisation to exist, there has to be consent or collaboration. Collaboration with the system therefore requires, in part, ideological acceptance of that system.

Freire's analysis in *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed* is centred around an understanding of oppression. Oppression and poverty, says Freire, create a 'culture of silence'. Economic, social and political oppression cause people to contribute to the 'culture of silence'. Freire

does not use the term decolonisation but he does examine the need to develop critical consciousness and the need for the oppressed to become 'conscientised' which he saw as:

*...learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.*

(Freire 1972:15)

Decolonising in, Freire's terms, involves not only the development of critical consciousness but also praxis, that is, reflecting on and then acting upon the world in order to transform it. By developing critical consciousness, the oppressed can confront reality critically whilst simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality. Similarly to Fanon, Freire talks about the nature of objectification as a central part of the colonisation process:

*The oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination: the earth, property, production, the creations of men, men themselves, time - everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal...the oppressors develop the conviction that it is possible to transform everything into objects of their purchasing power.*

(Freire 1972:34)

So the first critical point of liberation is when the oppressed realise that the struggle for humanisation is more than a struggle to be free from hunger, it also involves regaining humanity:

*They cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects.*

(Freire 1972:44)

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A strong challenge is made throughout these narratives against the liberal, humanist ideologies that underlie imperialism and colonisation, for they clearly reformulate what 'human' is and how the processes of de-humanisation are operating.

Latter day writers have extended and deepened these earlier analyses. Ashis Nandy (1983) who views colonisation as a 'shared culture' says that it has two forms of expression:

Firstly there are codes that the coloniser and colonised share, there is the changing of cultural priorities for both groups and a bringing to the fore of formerly subordinate priorities. This helps to explain the fact that some colonisers were committed to ideologies of liberalism and other 'participatory' models such as pluralism. Secondly, colonialism 'manages dissent' by creating consent in the colonised. This is done socio-economically but is also done in the psychological sphere where psychological rewards and punishments can constitute gains and losses under colonialism. This causes very strong inner resistance to recognising the violence done to the colonised, but it also causes the colonised to stay within the limits set by the coloniser when engaged in battling colonisation.

The idea of colonisation as a 'shared culture' has begun to emerge in many of the writings that this chapter looks at. The construction and maintenance of white discourses in the context of colonial relations has meant that there are effects on both the coloniser and the colonised. Colonisation, despite being a site of contested dominant/subordinate group power struggles has not been a one way process<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Toni Morrison's book, *Playing In The Dark*, 1993 for an analysis of the impact of racism on the perpetrators. Ashis Nandy's writings (1982, 1983) also look at the construction of British colonial identities in India.

### (2.3) LANGUAGE AND DECOLONISATION

Writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o writes about language revival, in his book *Decolonising The Mind* (1986). Writing of the Kenyan context where the colonisers have moved out, he points out that in many ways the imperialist tradition remains. He coins the term the 'cultural bomb' which he says was the greatest weapon of the imperialist tradition:

*The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a peoples belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland....Amidst this wasteland which it has created imperialism presents itself as the cure and demands that the dependent sing hymns of praise with the constant refrain 'Theft is Holy'*

(Ngugi 1986:3)

Ngugi argues that reclaiming language and literature is one of the most powerful ways of decolonising the mind. For language contains the social values, attitudes and norms of a people; it is the viewing of the world using one's cultural referents. Haunani Kay Trask (1993) says that reclaiming the language causes politicisation in itself for it causes disagreement with and opposition to dominant groups. She says that the very act of:

*...thinking and acting as a native under colonial conditions is a highly politicised reality, one filled with intimate oppositions and powerful psychological tensions.*

(Trask 1993:55)

Politicisation is a process that has gone hand in hand with colonisation, it was not Native people who caused politicisation, rather it began when colonisation began.

Resistance began with the first European explorers, what has changed is the position of indigenous groups.

Ngugi locates schooling as being one of the key elements in the removal of the native language. This removal, he argues, forced children to stand outside themselves to look at themselves. By taking away the language, a split is caused, an enforced separation between the language of the school and the language of the home. This split must be healed by creating harmony between oneself, the language and the environment. From this base other languages can be learnt.

Kenya, since becoming independent in the 1950s, has been left with a British colonial education system. Ngugi sees two major strands of intellectuals in the post independent Kenya: those that oppose the imperialist tradition and those that view development as becoming modernised in the Western image. Again there is a struggle over what is meant by development. The intellectuals, who oppose the imperialist tradition, view neo-colonialism as the antithesis of development. Ngugi traces some of the struggles that have ensued between these two groups, but clearly argues for an African-centred education system, which views Africa as central, and Europe as peripheral.

Reclaiming language is in itself an act of decolonisation because it sets up powerful tensions between the coloniser and the colonised. Reclaiming the language usually involves the creation of new vocabulary as well as recovery of words that are no longer used. Getting back some ground usually reveals what further work is needed in the

business of decolonising. What is more difficult to recover, is the depth of meaning and the variety and complexity of the language, the imagery that was known and indicated in early writings.

Reclamation of the language does not automatically mean a return to a golden age however because the language has changed and has begun to reflect colonial changes such as patriarchal interpretations. Today some Maori men argue, for example, that rangatira is a male only term, or that mana of women is manifested solely through childbirth. Women, such as Te Puea, by this argument, would have no mana. Power struggles over who are the arbiters of traditional knowledge ensue.

#### **(2.4) WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE**

Women writers on decolonisation shed new light on the struggle. For whilst the men writers focus on decolonisation as a psychological and social process, women writers add to the analyses in the area of gender and family power relations as well as exploring broader social aspects. They also critique the male-centred theories put forth by the male narratives of liberation.

Badran (1990) is an Algerian woman who has examined the liberation struggle in Algeria; particularly the way that Algerian women have been portrayed as freedom fighters, standing on an equal footing alongside their brothers in the struggle. Critical of writers, such as Fanon, who portrayed women as being on an equal footing with Algerian men, she argues that this was not the case during the revolution.

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She claims that women were not equally recognised during the fighting and following independence there was a drive to position women back in the home. During the liberation struggle, the part that women played was considered of less value. Consequently, when women carried food to armed fighters they were called 'helpers', when men did the same they were called 'fighters'. After the war very few women were registered as veterans in the official figures. The irony was that the French viewed women on an equal footing and women, along with men, were imprisoned and tortured for these actions.

In the struggle for independence, obedience and conformity were emphasised in the nationalist uprising. Badran (1990) says that the building of a power structure based on the control of private life and of women emerged out of the struggle. In the nationalist struggle, the revolution required that the place of women could not be questioned.

Following the establishment of the Algerian state, after the revolution, a raft of anti-women state policies ensued. The concept of patriotic motherhood forbade contraception.

*Women were to be bound by tradition, whereas men were to have some access to modernity. Yet it is now commonplace that tradition serves the purposes of those in power. Tradition is seen as ahistorical and immutable, modernity draws from the wealthy West.*

(Badran 1987:108)

The oppression of women during and after nationalist struggles has been widely recognised elsewhere, in other parts of Africa and in India, Pakistan, and the Pacific.

Bernice Reagon (1986) attempts to redefine nationalism in her writings. She maintains that Black women have always been nationalistic in the U.S because Black women have had

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to live and struggle to ensure there is another generation that will assure the survival of Black people. They have had to turn around the 'dying recipe of slavery' so that there would be a future generation. She also argues that women play a central role in the survival of cultural traditions and ensure the continuance of culture. This continued struggle of Black women has persisted for hundreds of years:

*We must acknowledge a continuance: that to be a Black woman is to move forward the struggle for the kind of space in this society that will make sense for our people. It is different today. Things have changed. The search for high levels of humanity and space to be who we know we are is the same. And if we can make sense of our people in this society, we will go a long way in making sense for the rest of the peoples who also live and suffer here. From that perspective, nationalism goes outside of what I call cocoon nationalism or isolationist nationalism. It has to have in its view that what we do affects a larger scene. We cannot wrap ourselves in a wall and survive. In some ways a wall threatens survival and makes a clearer target. Being a nationalist may mean a centering in purpose inside oneself and then being sure of being everywhere so that as my nation goes, so will you, my enemy.*

(Reagon 1986:83)

For bell hooks (1992)<sup>4</sup> decolonisation requires challenging and confronting hegemonic systems of thought. All dominant forms and structures have to be confronted, including the discursive, linguistic and ideological terrains. This process is necessary for both coloniser and colonised. It involves liberation from imperialist, racist perceptions and representations for the coloniser and liberation from internalised colonisation of the colonised.

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<sup>4</sup>As pointed out in Chapter One, bell hooks uses lower case letters.

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Resistance involves a battle over identity, for the identity of the colonised is constantly being re-inscribed and defined by the dominant group. hooks argues that decolonisation requires the continual opposition to the re-inscribing of notions of 'authentic' Blackness. There is a need to recognise that there is a multiplicity of Black experience and it is not as simple as dividing Black people into those who are assimilationist and those who are not. This is an important point for the division into coloniser and colonised that Fanon speaks of causes a polarisation. It overlooks the fact that many people move between these two camps; sometimes strategically and sometimes unconsciously. The notions of collaborators, auxiliaries, sell-outs and so forth, are not always clear for this reason.

hooks sees colonisation and patriarchy as linked, and in her book *Race and Representation* (1992) she examines some of the areas that decolonisation needs to occur. 'Loving blackness', she claims, is a necessary step and a powerful form of political resistance. There also must be a recognition of the ways in which the images, discourses and texts commodify Blacks. These portrayals need to be deconstructed, as Annette Kuhn argues in her book *The Power Of The Image* (1985):

*....the acts of analysis, of deconstruction and of reading 'against the grain' offer an additional pleasure - the pleasure of resistance, of saying 'no' to unsophisticated enjoyment, by ourselves and others of culturally dominant images but to the structures of power which ask us to consume them uncritically and in highly circumscribed ways.*

(cited in hooks 1992:172)

One must also make oneself the 'subject,' rather than accepting the ascribed 'other' position imposed by the dominant society. It is imperative that there is awareness and

deconstruction of the ways that Black women have been commodified through sexual and social constructions. Also necessary is a reconstruction of Black masculinity which opposes male domination and eradicates sexism. hooks makes the point that representations of whiteness must also be deconstructed.

hooks analyses the notion of 'homeplace'. Homeplace has been deconstructed by white feminists, as an area of oppression. For Blacks homeplace has, in part, been an area of cultural resistance. Homeplace has been a political site of resistance where Black women fulfil a political role and can find space to tell their own stories. Homeplace for Black women, then, is not always a site of oppression because they have been able to control particular spheres of power within these spaces.

She is critical of the way that money has become the life ethic adopted by many middle class Blacks. She argues that a more simple life style needs to be adopted by all and notes that many Blacks who have entered the middle class, do not remain in touch with what the majority of poor Blacks want.

In the book *Yearning: Race, Gender And Cultural Politics* (1990), bell hooks and Cornel West, another Black academic, engage in a conversation which examines the relations between Black men and Black women. During this dialogue Cornel West argues that the history of Blacks has resulted in present day difficulties in the relationships between Black women and men:

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*The very notion that Black people are human beings is a new notion in western civilisation and is still not widely accepted in practice. And one of the consequences of this idea is that it is very difficult for Black men and women to stay attuned to each other's humanity.....this refusal to acknowledge one another's humanity is a reflection of the way we are seen and treated in larger society. And it's certainly not true that white folks have a monopoly on human relationships. When we talk about a crisis in western civilisation, Black people are part of that civilisation even though we have been beneath it, our backs serving as a foundation for the building of that civilisation. We need to affirm one another, support one another, help, enable, equip and empower one another but it can't be uncritical, because if it's uncritical then we are again refusing to acknowledge one another's humanity.*

(West cited in hooks 1990:208)

bell hooks has added to this saying, that Black communities must examine the role of critique, for often it does not serve as a constructive force. She also points out that when Black women achieve in a larger societal context, such as in the current popularity of Black women novelists, there is a myth that Black women who succeed are taking something away from Black men.

Both Cornel West and bell hooks point to the need for gender relations to be examined in Black communities, because the tensions within obstruct the potential of what is possible for Black struggle. The economic struggle over crumbs forces a competitive edge, between many groups, such as Black men, Black women, indigenous and immigrant groups.

### (2.5) MEN AND DECOLONISATION

When reading the works of Fanon, Cesaire and Freire, the use of the terms such as 'he', 'Blackman', creating a 'new man' render women invisible in the process of colonisation. There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, it can be explained by looking at the period that they were writing in: feminist analyses had not yet made men aware of their androcentric assumptions. These writers were largely assuming that colonisation was a similar process for both women and men. Fanon did not really see the differences in the oppression of women and men.

The only area where Fanon made a distinction was in examining cross-cultural marriages. In that case, he says that cross-cultural marriages were about the attempt by Black people to become white, and gain ascendancy through marrying whites. This process of becoming white through intermarriage, he saw as being different for women and men. Otherwise he was blind to the oppression of women, as Badran reminds us during the Algerian revolution. Rather, it seems, when it came to gender issues he believed the myth of equality.

Whilst decolonisation is part of the process to be self-determining, a necessary part of that struggle requires the breaking down of what hooks calls the 'life threatening choke- hold patriarchal masculinity imposes on black men'. Both hooks (1990, 1992) and Nandy (1982, 1983) have begun to examine the links between patriarchal colonisation and the influence on colonised men.

Nandy (1982) traces how colonisation in India, by the British, caused a redefinition of masculinity and femininity within Indian society. In the context of colonisation, history was re-imagined by the colonised and in the re-imagining 'hypermasculinity' (an exaggerated masculinity) was emphasised. Hindu texts were reinterpreted in this process, to accentuate male figures and to diminish female figures.

Nandy says that the British colonists were preoccupied with controlled aggression. The middle and upper classes, in particular, controlled aggression in areas such as sportsmanship, where physical aggression is governed by sets of rules. An essential part of being a good sport is being able to lose gracefully and uncomplainingly. But also required is uncomplaining participation and the stifling of pain. This ethic has become part of all forms of competition and rivalry. Nandy argues that Gandhi's policies of non-violence were a shrewd political move against the British, given this particular national British preoccupation. The mass imprisonment and deaths of the Indians who participated in passive resistance revealed the oppressive nature of the British.

Nandy argues that during colonisation there was a reconstructing of male-female characteristics, femininity in masculinity was seen as the negation of man's political identity. The traits that became emphasised were: manliness, power-politics, achievement, control, power, competition and so on. Prior to Gandhi, Indian men were largely engaged in an attempt to redeem Indian masculinity. Nandy argues that for men, colonisation was seen as an emasculation, and emasculation was seen as the ultimate evil not colonisation

itself. According to Nandy, this state of affairs has played into the hands of colonisers, for the struggle is not aimed at colonisation itself. hooks agrees with Nandy when she analyses the role of black men in colonisation:

*Many heterosexual black men in white supremacist patriarchal culture have acted as though the primary evil of racism has been the refusal of the dominant culture to allow them full access to patriarchal power, so that in sexist terms they are compelled to inhabit a sphere of powerlessness deemed 'feminine', hence they have perceived themselves as emasculated.*

(hooks 1992:147)

In other words, Black men have taken on some notions of white culture and internalised them. Colonisation has clearly impacted in different ways on men and women. What is necessary in the process of decolonisation is the acceptance of a 'mongrel past'. That means that colonised men must accept that, to some extent, internalisation of patriarchy has occurred, which results in a complicity with the coloniser.

Further analysis is necessary in this area because it is clear that colonisation has positioned colonised men into a different but overlapping margin with colonised women. How this has occurred and in what way it is manifest needs to be examined. For example, there is obviously a difference between colonised men who have chosen to comply with colonisation, and those who have chosen to resist it. There are also differences between middle class men and working class. Is it that those men who are imprisoned are resisting colonisation or complying with it.

## (2.6) IMPLICATIONS FOR IWI DEVELOPMENT

The writers in this chapter articulate numerous implications for iwi development. A number of Maori writers have already written about decolonisation in their work, such as Tuki Nepe (1991), Dr Pare Hopa (1988), Atareta Poananga (1986), Donna Awatere (1984), Merata Mita (cited in Paraha 1992) and Ngannecko Minhinnick (1993). Some have drawn directly from the writers already mentioned and have translated overseas analyses to a local context. Colonisation has been a subject discussed and written about by numerous other Maori. The processes of colonisation may have had similar themes worldwide but its unfoldment in this country was distinct and throughout different iwi, hapu and whanau these processes have been felt differently and have been resisted differently.

Colonisation is clearly a process of inculcating the mores, values and beliefs of a dominant culture. Decolonisation involves grappling with the many layers of colonisation and for the colonised involves resistance, developing a critical consciousness and, above all counter-cultural action. But, as bell hooks says, it is a constant process of challenging hegemonic systems of thought. As Said (1993) points out, in the process of decolonising, one's history has to be re-imagined, identities have to be reclaimed and for Maori this must be done in a land still colonised. Spaces have to be created for this to happen in the 'intertwined histories and overlapping territories' of the coloniser and colonised.

Some of the writings just reviewed are examining a context where there is 'independence' from colonised rule, in other words 'the last policeman has left and the last flag has come

down' in those countries. Where these writings may be particularly valuable to iwi, is in their analysis of colonisation in the spaces that we consider to be 'our' spaces such as marae, Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa and Whare Wananga. One of the key points being made in this chapter is that colonisation does not cease, there are no 'safe havens'. Iwi development is a discourse that sounds as if we have separate spheres, where growth can occur if we are just left to get on with it. The writers just reviewed show that there are legacies of an imperialist tradition within these spaces.

Decolonisation may seem unimportant when one considers that the majority of Maori are worrying about where their next meal is coming from. I think that Freire best answers this concern when he says that the first step to becoming human is the recognition that the struggle is more than the struggle to be free from hunger, it also involves regaining humanity. Decolonisation is about the recognition of human agency, the development of critical consciousness and then the acting upon the structural inequalities of society.