Postgraduate English
www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english

Issue 24 May 2012

Editors: Kaja Marczewska & Avishek Parui

Linguistic Hybridity in Thomas Hardy's Poetry

Heather Hawkins*

* Nottingham Trent University: heatherhawkins@btinternet

Linguistic Hybridity in Thomas Hardy's Poetry

Heather Hawkins
Nottingham Trent University

Postgraduate English, Issue 24, May 2012

One of the striking features of Thomas Hardy's poetry is its linguistic range. Hardy employs language which is unconfined to any one particular mode of expression and includes standard English words, foreign words, technical terms, archaisms, colloquialisms, dialect and his own coinages, all of which are present in the many poetic forms which he employs. In this essay I intend to focus upon two of Hardy's poems, namely, 'The Lost Pyx' and 'In Front of the Landscape', to establish how the interaction between dialect and standard English, in particular, contributes to our understanding of his poetry and to propose how a post-colonialist reading of his work is enhanced by a willingness to simultaneously employ an inter-disciplinary approach to assist us in reaching this understanding.[1] The disciplines which I combine with my post-colonialist reading are textual criticism, new historicism and linguistics.

The 'Lost Pyx', from Hardy's collection, *Poems of the Past and Present* (1901), is a ballad of nineteen quatrains with an ABCB and ABAB rhyme scheme. The poem tells the Dorset legend of a hapless priest, who reluctantly sets out late at night to administer the last rites to a dying parishioner. The first stanza reads:

[1] Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poem*, ed. James Gibson (London: Macmillan, 2001). Further reference to this volume will be given in parentheses in the text.

Some say the spot is banned; that the pillar Cross-and-Hand
Attests to a deed of hell;
But else then of the bale is the mystic tale
That ancient vale-folk tell.

The second poem under discussion, 'In Front of the Landscape', from Hardy's *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), consists of twelve sestets in the following rhyme schemes:
ABCDB, ABCDEB x 10, ABCDED. The poem begins:

Plunging and labouring on a tide of visions,
Dolorous and dear,
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters
Stretching around
Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape
Yonder and near

Blotted to a feeble mist – And the comb and the upland
Coppice-crowned,
Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass flat
Stroked by the light
Seemed but a ghost-like gauze and no substantial
Meadow or mound.

One of the noticeable characteristics of the above examples is Hardy's employment of standard English and dialect within the same stanza, and often within the same line. For example, in 'The Lost Pyx', 'bale' is derived from the Old Norse 'bol', meaning misery or evil, and occurs in the same line as the standard English 'mystic'.[2] Similarly, in 'In Front of the Landscape', the weighty sounding 'dolorous' is counteracted by 'coppice-crowned' in the following stanza. Hardy adds the suffix 'crowned' to 'coppice', derived from the Latin 'copecia', to describe the trees perched on the hilltops to suggest a movement upwards, in contrast to the sense of bearing down suggested by 'dolorous'.[3] Such linguistic fusion indicates Hardy's willingness to experiment with language to create new and diverse methods of expressing the thematic concerns of his poetry. His use of a hybrid form of language to portray a fictional region, 'Wessex' liberates Hardy from any linguistic constraints of a realist representation of a culture such as his native Dorset. However, the 'Wessex' which Hardy portrays is sufficiently akin to nineteenth century Dorset, to prompt critics to conclude that Hardy found much of the material for his poetry and prose in his local surroundings. Hardy's 'Wessex' and his use of language is sufficiently realistic have received unfavourable responses from his critics. His poetic experimentation has generated much criticism, both during the nineteenth century and in later years. For example, William Archer in his review of Hardy's 1898 *Wessex Poems* asserted:

[2] Joseph Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary* (London and New York: Henry Froude and GP Pulmams and Sons, 1898). Further reference to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.
[3] Walter W. Skeat, *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1882).

> Mr Hardy seems to lose all sense of local and historical perspective in language, seeing all words in the dictionary on one plane so to speak, and regarding them all as equally available and appropriate for any and every literary response.[4]

Such negative criticism prevailed well into the twentieth century by critics such as Samuel Hynes, who dismisses Hardy's use of language in his poetry to be 'odd quirkish and uncouth'. Hardy's use of dialect seems particularly objectionable to Hynes who writes:

> There is little of it in Hardy's poems - little that is of the literal sort that Barnes affected. Hardy said of [William] Barnes 'He never tampered with dialect himself'. Hardy, on the other hand tampered with it a good deal, made it do his bidding, introducing dialect vocabulary when it suited his aims and omitting it when it didn't.[5]

Similarly, FB Pinion states:

> Hardy's study of English Literature and other languages had equipped him well for the furtherance of his idiosyncratic style in verse, though his linguistic coinages and arbitrary use of words against all common things are not always commendable.[6]

In contrast, Dennis Taylor, in *Thomas Hardy's Use of Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (1993), considers dialect as valid a contribution to Hardy's literary language as standard English and words of French, Greek and Latin derivation.[7] This places Hardy's poetry within the context of mainstream Victorian poetry, but in doing so, the language of the rural periphery is

[4] William Archer, *Daily Chronicle*, 21 December 1898.
[5] Samuel Hynes, *The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), pp. 6-7.
[6] FB Pinion, *Hardy the Writer: Surveys and Assessments* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 305.
[7] Dennis Taylor, *Thomas Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). It must be noted that foreign words are loan words in English that have become so ingrained in vocabulary that we are unsure of their etymology.

assimilated into the literary canon, rather than existing as and being accepted as, an independent cultural entity. The above critical responses omit to consider that the relationship between dialect words and standard English in Hardy's work necessitates new inter-disciplinary methods of interpretation such as post-colonialism, textual criticism and linguistics to emphasize the validity of all language types in his poetry. Such inclusiveness indicates that the examination of both oral and written language is necessary.

Jaap Van Marle argues that well into the nineteenth century only a small section of the population used standard English as part of a written standard; the remainder of those who were literate wrote in dialect. Later in the century, written standard English gradually became the norm in speech also, a process initiated by increased prominence of middle class culture in the urban centre, improvements in print technology, and the introduction of compulsory education at primary level in 1870. The written standard became a point of reference for the spoken standard, leading to an increase in cultivated speech which was further sub-divided into formal and informal modes. Dialect, Van Marle asserts, is more prone to change than standard English as it does not have its point of reference within a fixed, written standard and indicates the evolutionary, heteroglossic nature of oral language.[8]

[8] Jaap Van Marle, 'Dialect versus standard Language: Nature versus Culture', in *Taming the Vernacular: From Dialect to Written Language*, ed. Jenny Cheshire and Deiter Stein (London and New York: Longman, 1997), pp.13-34, Andrew King, *Victorian Print Media A Reader*, eds. Andrew King and John Plunkett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

In his treatise, *Discourse in the Novel* (1955), Mikhail Bakhtin focuses upon the polarity between the macro and micro levels of society and their individual languages. He argues that language is subject to a centripetal force which attempts to centralize and unify meaning. The centripetal force is always determined by the dominant social group, which imposes its own monologic perception of truth upon language and society. Contradictory to this centralizing process is the centrifugal force or heteroglossia. Bakhin defines heteroglossia as a:

> perception of language as ideologically saturated and stratified. The many social languages participating in heteroglossia at any specific moment of its historical existence are all specific points of view on the world of conceptualizing the world in words.[9]

The acknowledgement of heteroglossic language permits dialect to function as an equally valid contributor to language as standard forms and enhances our understanding of competing linguistic voices in Hardy's poetry. Bakhtin's notion of centrafugalism negates the dominant impulses of centripetal languages, including the written standard, a process which is liberating and leads to a:

> radical revolution in the destinies of human discourse : the fundamental liberation of cultural-semantic emotional intentions from the hegemony of a single language [. . .] as an absolute form of thought.[10]

Despite its liberating possibilities, Bakhtin's definition of heteroglossic language exists as a separate cultural entity to centripetal discourse. The

[9] Mikhail Bakhtin, from '*Discourse in the Novel',* cited by Pam Morris in *The Bakhtin Reader Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov,* ed Pam Morris (London, New York, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, 1994), pp. 11, 15-16).
[10] Bakhtin, p.16.

perception of centripetalism and centrifugalism as two distinct forces fails to explain why texts such as Hardy's poetry are written in both centripetal and centrifugal languages, and is of no assistance in understanding linguistic hybridity in his work.

For language in Hardy's poetry to be considered fully heteroglossic and indirect conflict with centripetal language it would need to have been written mainly in dialect, like the poetry of William Barnes, with a consistent attempt to replicate the phonology of the Dorset dialect, its spelling and grammatical forms. Although Hardy's poetry was influenced by Barnes's literary techniques such as his use of non-standard poetic diction, Hardy's reluctance to employ dialect in the self-conscious manner found in Barnes's work does not render his poetry heteroglossic in Bakhtinian terms.[11]

Hardy says of Barnes's poetry:

> The effect, indeed, of his recitations upon an audience well acquainted with the *nuances* of the dialect – impossible to impart to outsiders by any kind of translation – can hardly be imagined by readers of his lines acquainted only with English as its customary form.[12]

Although this quotation indicates Hardy's admiration for Barnes's decision to write in dialect, it also suggests the risks taken by the regionalist poet of a limited readership when opting to write entirely in dialect. The regionalist poet finds himself in a paradoxical position – forced to write either in dialect and thus

[11] For example, Barnes employs techniques such as *comharda*, *rudeef* and *tujis-i-zaiad* to enhance thematic concerns in his work. See William Barnes, *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect with a Dissertation and Glossary* (London and Dorchester: John Russell Smith and George Simmonds, 1844).

[12] Thomas Hardy, 'The Revd. William Barnes', The Athenaeum, October 16 1886, 501-02.

restrict his readership to the margins, or to abandon his native dialect in preference to standard English to render his poetry accessible to standard English speakers in the urban centre. In contrast to Barnes's work, Hardy's poetry is hybrid in nature, suggesting a resolution to this cultural and linguistic impasse. Hardy's own cultural identity can also be viewed as hybrid in nature, and offers some explanation as to how he achieved a balance between two competing cultures in his work. A son of a self-employed stone mason, Hardy and his family belonged to the 'artisan' sub-group of the working-class, which were marginally socially superior to the labourers or 'work-folk', which his father employed. Thus Hardy belonged fully to neither the lower or middle classes, but was in the fortunate position of being in regular contact with dialect speakers, but also distanced enough to enable an objective assessment as to their use of dialect, to code switch between both dialect and standard English in his poetry.[13]

The hybrid nature of Hardy's work also indicates a post-colonial critical stance alongside linguistic, textual and socio-historic approaches is necessary to fully appreciate the complex subtleties of his poetic language. Although there is a certain amount of overlap between these theoretical stances, a post-colonial approach to an understanding of linguistic hybridity helps explain the ways in which language is employed in Hardy's work which are also reflected in nineteenth century society , particularly in relation to class. Bill Ashcroft *et al* identify, in their work, *The Empire Writes Back Theory and Practice in Post –*

[13] See Michael Millgate, 'Bockhampton', in *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 28-50.

Colonialist Literatures (1994), the three stages of the reclamation of the language of the colonized periphery from the colonizer. They argue:

> The critical function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonialist writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.[14]

Ashcroft identifies two processes in the seizure and replacement of the language of the centre by the periphery:

1) The denial of the presence of 'English'.
2) The appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre.

The first process involves the rejection of metropolitan power over the dominant means of communication, whilst the second constitutes an appropriation and reconstruction of the language of the centre which seizes and re-moulds the language into new uses (*Ashcroft*, p.38). The denial of the presence of 'English', the language of the colonizer, initiates a resurgence of and renewed awareness of the pre-colonial culture of the subjugated people, and involves a reversion to the pre-colonial dialect of the periphery. However, such resurgence leads to an increase in regionalism and the paradoxical position of reversion to a culture which the colonizer defined as its inferior 'other' as justification for the act of colonization. The act of cultural reclamation relegates once more post-colonial literature to the local and marginal status designated to it by the colonizer.

[14] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back Theory and Practice in Post– Colonialist Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 38. Further reference to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

The overtly dialectal stance of Barnes's poetry can be viewed as part of this process of regionalist resurgence, and locates his poetry firmly within peripheral culture. In contrast, the use of language in Hardy's poetry is suggestive of the second phase of cultural reclamation identified by Ashcroft. The appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the colonizer involves the process of abrogation, in which a refusal of the imperial culture, including its aesthetic, and its perception of itself as normative occurs. Ashcroft asserts that the appropriation of the colonizer's language by the subjugated people is also required to enable abrogation to extend 'beyond a reversal of the assumption of privilege', or in other words, to bring about social change (*Ashcroft*, pp. 38-39). Thus post-colonial literature arises from the tension between the abrogation of the standard English of the centre and the vernacular found in the periphery. The creative impulses, which initiate and respond to this act of abrogation and appropriation, produce a literature which is hybrid in nature. Hardy's use of language especially reflects this process.

In 'The Lost Pyx', Hardy fuses together both standard English and dialect to articulate a legend specific to Dorset, but which simultaneously draws upon nineteenth-century mainstream perceptions of Christianity and myth, such as the crucifixion of Christ and Arthurian legend. However, the hapless priest of Hardy's poem inadvertently drops the Pyx whilst on his way to administer the last rites to a dying parishioner:

> When he would have unstrung the vessels uphung
> To his arm in the steep ascent,

He made a loud moan: the Pyx was gone
Of the Blessed Sacrament.

Then in dolorous dread he bent his head:
'No earthly prize or pelf
Is the thing I've lost in the tempest tossed',
But the body of Christ Himself!'

The comic presentation of the priest's predicament debunks standard forms of religious belief and also assimilates standard myth into peripheral culture.[15] Such cultural assimilation is further reflected in Hardy's use of standard English and dialect to describe the Dorset version of the Pyx legend. For example, in stanzas 13–15 the animals of the vale gather round and protect the lost Pyx:

And gathered around the illumined ground
Were common beasts and rare,
All kneeling at gaze, and in pause profound
Attent on an object there.

Twas the Pyx, unharmed 'mid the circling cows
Of Blackmore's hairy throng,
Whereof were oxen, sheep and does,
And hares from the brakes among;

[15] Victorian poets drew upon Arthurian legend in their work, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, in his *Idylls of the King* (London: Macmillan, 1894).

And badgers grey, and conies keen,
And squirrels of the tree,
And many a member seldom seen
Of Nature's family.

These stanzas recall Dorset mythology, in which animals pay religious homage. This theme which is the subject of Hardy's poem, 'The Oxen', in which the animals worship the infant Christ. In 'The Lost Pyx', the protection of the Pyx by the animals renders them custodians of a religious relic, sacred to Christianity, thereby indicating an encompassment of the centre by the periphery, which in turn, produces a literature which is hybrid in nature. Hardy's use of language in stanzas 13-15 is especially reflective of this process. Stanza 13 is written in standard English. The use of the Latin derived 'illumined' and 'profound' describes, from the outside, the gravity of the gaze of the animals upon the holy relic. Once inside the circle however, the language used to describe the animals becomes much less formal and a dialectal tone is assumed. Stanza 14 links the religious relic, the animals and a specific location within the periphery, Blackmore, suggesting the periphery constitutes the new centre of cultural reference. By the end of the stanza, 'brakes' is used to describe the copses scattered across the vale, derived from old English 'brack', found in the southern counties of England, and by stanza 15 the dialect conies', (rabbits), appear.[16] In these three stanzas a gradual linguistic shift from emphasis upon Latinate words towards dialect occurs. The description of the animals from inside the circle, in dialect, implies dialect is

[16] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986). Further reference to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

equipped to fully express peripheral culture and excludes standard English from the new cultural centre of the periphery. Thus abrogation and appropriation involves a shift in the perception of the centre by the previously colonized. A paradox arises from this position - the necessity of a cultural shift in the first place. The movement from the perspective of the colonist culture as the normative centre to the periphery as centre, ensures the earlier centre remains the touchstone for reclaimed peripheral culture. As Frantz Fanon asserts:

> The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national [pre-colonial] culture its previous value and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized man.[17]

This paradox is exacerbated as there is no identifiable moment of colonization of the periphery by the urban centre during the nineteenth century from which to reclaim peripheral culture.

An examination of socio-historic factors which may have contributed to Hardy's choice of language in his poetry further supports an inter-disciplinary reading of Hardy's work. The increase in literacy brought about by the 1870 Education Acts led to a decrease in the use of dialect and imposition of standard English upon school children. Hardy laments the loss of this rural cultural and linguistic identity in his essay, *The Dorsetshire Labourer* (1883). Hardy blames

[17] Frantz Fanon, 'On national culture' in *Colonialist Discourse and post-Colonial Theory A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Harlow, New York: Longman, 1994), pp. 36 - 52, (pp. 50 – 51).

the loss of rural identity upon factors such as the increase in rural migration from the periphery to the urban centre due to rural poverty, alongside the decrease in dialect due to a standardized education. He asserts:

> Having attended the National School they would mix the printed tongue as taught therein with the unwritten, dying Wessex English that they had learnt of their parents, the result of this transitional state of affairs being a composite language without rule or harmony.[18]

Matthew Arnold, in his work, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), says of the education of the lower classes:

> Plenty of people will try to give the masses, as they call them, an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the cultural condition of the masses.[19]

Despite the negative tone of Hardy's and Arnold's observations on social change, both quotations open up the possibility of the articulation of an emerging culture, hybrid in nature, with the potential for a balancing out of class inequality. Arnold continues:

> But culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes [. . .] it serves to do away with classes.[20]

This emerging social order is reflected in Hardy's use of language, and indicates an emerging linguistic continuum in nineteenth-century English culture, similar to the Creole continuum identified by Ashcroft, in which a complex of 'lects' or

[18] Thomas Hardy, The Dorsetshire Labourer', *Longmans Magazine* July 1896, pp. 252 – 69.
[19] Matthew Arnold, 'Sweetness and Light', in *Culnnture and Anarchy with Friendships and Some Literary Essays*, ed RH Super (Ann Arbour:University of Michigan Press, 1965), pp.90- 114, (p.112).
[20] Arnold, p.112.

overlapping forms of dialect merge in the development of a local variety of English. Ashcroft argues:

> Writers in this continuum employ highly developed strategies of code switching and vernacular transcription, which achieve the dual result of abrogating the standard English and appropriating english as a culturally significant discourse. (*Ashcroft*, pp.45-46, 51).[21]

However, this process of abrogation and appropriation involves an Adamic concern with the origins of language, which is firmly located in past peripheral culture and does not automatically render dialect a suitable mode of expression for a post-colonialist appropriation of peripheral language.

Hardy's poem, 'In Front of the Landscape', articulates the formation of a post-colonial linguistic continuum. The poem begins:

> Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,
> Dolorous and dear,
> Forward I pushed my way as amid waste water
> Stretching around,
> Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape
> Yonder and near
>
> Blotted to a feeble mist. And the coomb and the upland
> Coppice – crowned,
> Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat
> Stroked by the light,

[21] Note that the lower case 'english' refers here to language as spoken in the periphery by the lower class.

Seemed but a ghost-like gauze and no substantial
Meadow or mound.

(stanzas 1 and 2).

'Tide of visions' in 1.1, suggests a thematic concern in the poem with multiple cultural perspectives. However stanzas 1 and 2 suggest that upon his return to his native landscape, the poet speaker encounters a 'feeble mist' shrouding a ghost-like landscape which is metaphoric of a rapidly disappearing rural culture in stanza 2, lines 3-6. The inability to distinguish any particular landmark upon the landscape indicates the lack of a defining moment of either colonization or emancipation of the periphery in nineteenth- century England. This lack of definition further exacerbates the poet speaker's sense of displacement and cultural alienation:

What were the infinite spectacles featuring foremost
Under my sight,
Hindering me to discern my paced advancement
Lengthening to miles?
What were the re-creations killing the daytime
As by the night?

O they were specific faces, gazing insistent
Some as with smiles,
Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled
Over the wrecked
Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ask now with anguish

Harrowed with wiles.

(stanzas 3 and 4).

The peripheral culture the poet speaker has returned to is unrecognizable to him and described in terms of degeneration and decay to contrast sharply with the vibrancy of a previously thriving rural culture:

Then there would breast me shining sights, sweet seasons
Further in date;
Instruments of strings with the tenderest passion
Vibrant, beside
Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth's crust
Now corporate.

(stanza 6).

However the accuracy of the reclamation of culture through memory is questioned in stanza 9, when the poet speaker articulates on objective view of cultural reclamation. The cultural scenes he recalls are 'miscalled of the bygone', indicating the inherent flaws in an idealized reclamation of cultural identity. He acknowledges his own contribution to the decline of his native culture, but contends that his cultural alienation enables him to objectively perceive the decline of rural culture as part of an evolutionary process of social movement in which one culture is ultimately subsumed by another:

For, their last revisiting manifestations
In their live time
Much had I slighted, caring not for their purport,

Seeing behind
Things more coveted, reckoned the better worth calling
Sweet, sad, sublime.

Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser
Stare of the mind
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast
Body –borne eyes,
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them
As living kind.

(stanzas 10 –11).

It would seem that these stanzas suggest the inevitability of cultural decline and the futility of reliance upon the Adamic language proposed by a linguistic continuum. However, a linguistic balancing out, or a fusion of standard English and dialect occurs throughout the poem, which overrides the dangers of the continuum but which also undermines the role of the colonial culture as the touchstone for the subjugated people even after colonization. This linguistic balancing out focuses upon the oral nature of Hardy's poetry, and the post-Sassurean concern with an ideal speaker and listener, involves an ongoing reassessment and readjustment of speech forms which are not fixed by a written standard.

The inability of critics, such as Hynes and Pinion, to fully appreciate the presence of an oral continuum in Hardy's poetry leads to their imposition of a

written standard upon Hardy's poetry which erroneously assumes the fixation of dialect. Hynes and Pinion fail to account for the mutability of dialect as equal contributor to oral language, indicated by Hardy's fusion of dialect and standard English. Such a fusion of languages also avoids the necessity of a fixed definition of a new post-colonialist centre. Throughout 'In Front of the Landscape' Hardy switches between standard English and dialect to express the poet speaker's anxieties regarding post-colonial identity. For example, in stanza 1, the use of the weighty phrase 'dolorous and dear', derived from the French 'doloeur', meaning lowness of spirits or the moaning of the wind before an approaching storm (*Wright*), is counterbalanced by the description of the rural landscape as 'yonder and near', derived from old Saxon 'gendra' (*Oxford*). The combination of phrases describe the distance of the disappearing rural culture as it slips away from modern society, but its simultaneous nearness, suggests a foundation of a new post-colonial expression of the rural self. This new hybrid culture is heralded by the image of the approaching storm. This image is described using standard English. The storm rolls upon the landscape, and as it does so mist and landscape merge, rendering neither distinguishable from the other. Hardy's image of the storm subsuming the landscape is metaphoric of the assimilation of rural culture by the dominant middle class of the urban centre. However the subsumation of rural landscape by the storm also indicates new hybrid cultures are created alongside the act of colonization. For example, in stanza 5, multiple linguistic voices are employed to articulate the poet speaker's position in the inside and outside of rural culture; 'Yes I could see them, feel them, hear them, address them

- / Halo –bedecked' (lines 1-2). However, his ability to communicate with members of peripheral culture is undercut by the rest of the stanza:

> And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason
> Rigid in hate,
> Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,
> Dreaded, suspect.
>
> (stanza 5, lines 3-6).

The ambiguity of these last four lines suggests both the poet speaker and the subjugated people are driven onwards towards the development of new social structures, a process initiated by the act of colonization. Even the poet speaker, the returning migrant who rejected peripheral culture, is 'smitten' with a skewed perception of the realities of rural culture which has been inflicted upon him by colonization. He and the subjugated people experience a combined sense of nostalgia and distaste towards the periphery. Once again Hardy employs standard English and dialect to express this sense of social rupture. 'Wryness', old English 'wrigian', meaning twisted or distorted, is combined with 'misprision', old French meaning contempt (*Oxford*). Thus, all interpretations of the subjugated culture have come to be regarded as 'dreaded, suspect' even by its own people.

However, a celebration of the rural landscape emerges in stanza 7 which suggests a more positive form of cultural reclamation is possible:

> Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect,
> Gnawed by the tide
> Frilled by the nimb of the morning as two friends stood there

Guilessly glad –

Wherefore they knew not – touched by the fringe of an ecstasy

Scantily descried.

Hardy combines 'hoary', Old Norse 'harr', meaning old and venerable, with the 'nimb' of the morning, derived from Latin 'nimbus', meaning rain cloud or a cloud-like splendour investing a god (*Oxford*). The combination of both adjectives suggests the majesty and antiquity of the shrouded landscape. The two figures at the sea edge are touched by the 'fringe of an ecstasy', suggesting the joy of the moment of reclamation. It is notable that Hardy choses a Latin derived adjective here, to indicate the moment of abrogation of the colonizer's language and birth of the linguistic and social continuum.

The lack of dialogue glossaries in Hardy's work further contributes to the positive effects of the continuum which pivots upon a hybrid language. Ashcroft asserts that the use of dialect words which have not been translated into standard English is a widely employed device in post-colonialist texts to convey cultural distinctiveness which signifies the difference between cultures and forces the reader into an active engagement with the subjugated culture (*Ashcroft*, pp. 64-65). Thus, the presence of dialect in Hardy's work creates cultural distance and simultaneously bridges the cultural gap between the colonizer and colonized. Paradoxically, the act of translation itself, as Ashcroft argues, privileges the centrality of the colonizing culture as ultimate interpreter of the subjugated culture, (*Ashcroft,* p. 66). Thus the lack of translation of dialect words in Hardy's work constitutes a deliberate political act in which dialect serves as a code of the other,

the meaning of which and the cultural implications of, are only fully accessible to those with native knowledge of the peripheral culture. However, Hardy's use of multiple languages in his texts also produces an 'interlanguage' which neither privileges nor subjugates language through the explanation of the meaning of words (*Ashcroft*, p. 23). If dialect is to be considered as equally valid a language as its standard counterpart, it does not require a glossary to explain its meaning. Following on from the 'ecstasy' of the post-colonialist reclamative moment in stanza 7, Hardy's 'In Front of the Landscape' suggests the ability of post-colonialist cultures to view objectively the social processes which have shaped their emerging identities:

> Thus do they now hourly before the intenser
> State of the mind
> As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast
> Body-bourne eyes,
> Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them
> As living kind.
>
> (stanza 11).

The post-colonialist moment reveals a paradox in which the subjugated culture reaches a 'fuller translation' of self, due to a distancing of itself from its pre-colonialist identity. This is not to imply a literal translation of Hardy's phrase 'fuller translation' in linguistic terms, but to suggest a broadening of the understanding of the location of peripheral culture among all cultures by those native to it. However, such broadening necessarily entails a cultural distancing which involves a paradoxical loss of self. Given the careful balance Hardy

achieves between dialect and standard English in this poem, such broadening has implications for the culture and identity of the colonizing people also. Thus, all identities become decentralized and avoid the cultural impasse of the fixation of selves by notions of the absolute and other.

An inter-disciplinary reading of Hardy's poetry reveals the oral nature of his work and refutes the conclusions of critics such as Hynes and Pinion, who insist upon subjugating dialect to a written standard. In turn, concentration upon the presence of oral language within written texts destabilizes fixed notions of identity and meaning. Despite the apparent rootlessness which this non-fixation of cultural identity causes, all cultures are rendered equally permissible. Hardy's fusion of oral and written language in his poetry celebrates the presence of all cultures, but ultimately promotes new expressions of being. Due to their hybrid nature, these expressions of self are liberating to both colonizer and colonized.