

Hegemony, Orientalism and scare mongering stories about the cost of dual signage: the Gordian knots that bind the language activists of Cornwall.

by Mike Tresidder

Once outside the close knit circles of mutual interest anybody who wants to talk about Cornwall in terms other than the clichéd '... it's such a nice part of the country' will struggle to find an audience. A distinct history, culture and language appear to count for little and rarely feature in the narratives of the main stream institutions and quangos concerned with representing and regulating life in Cornwall. Critical discourse such as 'cultural hegemony' and the process of 'othering' suggest explanations as to why this might be so. However, they seem to have little offer by way of bringing about a change in attitude. This presentation seeks to look at the frequently cited reasons for not engaging with Cornish history and language in such contexts and suggest the time may be right for a more socially political aware understanding. With post-colonial academics keen to move their discipline into a wider social sphere might the Cornish language community benefit from looking at how activists from beyond Europe 'answer back' to those in control?