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Reclaiming National and Cultural Identity in Selected Irish and Palestinian Literary Works

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Abstract:

Richness and variety are two key concepts that come to one's mind when considering Arabic and Irish literature, a literature that has been affected by a long painful history of European colonialism. Through that literature, Arabic (Palestinian in particular) and Irish authors present the story of colonialism and its consequences from their perspective. As examples of settler colonialism, the claim of 'the white man's burden' is a theme that both British and Zionist colonialists in Ireland and Palestine had in common. The Irish cultural renaissance was influenced by comparisons with other nationalist literary movements and in turn became a significant model for postcolonial writers. In his seminal book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Edward Said associates a major strand in W.B. Yeats's poetry with the poetry of decolonization and resistance. He notes the resemblance between the poetry of Yeats of the early 1920s to the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish (232). In fact the centrality of the question of identity to Irish and Palestinian writing shows how the two experiences illuminate each other. Working within the paradigm of cultural, memory and postcolonial studies, the proposed paper aims to conduct a comparative study of selected Irish and Palestinian literary works in order to examine the reclaiming of national and cultural identities within them. Brian Friel's *Translations* (1980) and some selected poems by Seamus Heaney on the one hand and Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* (1969), and some selected poems by Mahmoud Darwish on the other, will be examined to show how they construct a counter discourse of national and cultural identity against British and Israeli colonial discourses respectively.

Key Words:

Ireland –Palestine- Colonial Discourse- Counter Discourse- History- Memory-Language- National identity- Cultural identity

In the first decades of the 20th century, European states governed more than 80% of the world's territories and people. To a greater or lesser degree, all these territories shared a history of cultural colonialism, including the imposition of European life styles and languages, educational systems, in addition to political and religious institutions. One major consequence of European colonialism has been a flourishing of literature written by postcolonial authors presenting the story of colonialism and its consequences from their own perspective, and reclaiming their cultural, national and land identity through their works.

Given their turbulent histories, the national and cultural struggles in Ireland and Palestine have their origins in long histories of colonial settlement under British imperial enterprise. Comparisons have been drawn between Ireland and Palestine. In his significant book *Literature, Partition and the Nation State, Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine*, Joe Cleary considers some links between Unionists and Zionists. He rightly notes that both Unionists and Zionists perceived themselves as frontier peoples of empire. They considered themselves as superior chosen peoples who had already made or who would make the wilderness regions they inherited bloom (2002, 6). Cleary demonstrates that the heartland of modern Unionism in Ireland was in Ulster, a region planted and settled in the early modern period by Scottish and English Protestants loyal to the British crown. Unionism as an ideology was designed to keep Ireland within the United Kingdom and Empire and was strongly pro-imperialist. With regard to Palestine, Zionist settlers, who viewed themselves as an extension of Europe, depended on the British Mandate to secure their place in the country before 1948, claiming that a Jewish state in Palestine would serve the Western imperial enterprise in the region (2002, 7).

Harping on the tone of 'the white man's burden', both Unionists and Zionists as settler colonialists thought of themselves as creating a post of civilization in 'the heart of darkness'. Lord Balfour, an actor in the Irish as well as the Palestinian context, described the process of settler colonialism as being an expression of "the great rights and privileges of the races of Europe, and the inequality of the races as the plain historic truth of the situation" (qtd in Elmisseri 1976, 7). In Ireland, as Cleary notes, racial theories were deployed in ways that continued to construct the Catholic Irish as culturally and racially inferior with "attributes of sloth, wildness, rudeness, incivility and treacherousness" (2012, 541). Theodor Hertzl, reflecting the idea of racial superiority, wrote in *The Jewish State* (1886) that the Jewish community could serve as "part of a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism ... Jews returning to their historic fatherland would do so as representatives of

Western civilization, bringing cleanliness, order and the well-established customs of the occident to this plague-ridden, blighted corner of the orient" (qtd in Prior 28).

Cleary suggests other links between the two racist ideologies. He rightly believes that Unionism and Zionism were also consistently anxious about "their demographic insufficiency vis-à-vis what they deemed the civilisationally backward majority communities that inhabited the same territory as they" (2002, 6). Moving to Irish and Palestinian nationalisms, the experience of diaspora is central to both nationalisms. In each case, the diaspora communities are associated with major historical traumas: the Great Famine in Ireland in the 1840s; the Palestinian *nakbah* or 'catastrophe' of 1948. Other similar important historical events include the Irish 'Easter Uprising' in 1916 and the Palestinian '*Intifada*' (Uprising) in 1987. Furthermore, Cleary rightly believes that the political weight exercised by the Irish communities in America, and by the Palestinian exiles in the Arab and Islamic world represents a "significant versions of what Benedict Anderson has termed 'long-distance nationalism'" (Cleary 2002, 7).

Within the academic world, the associations between Ireland and Palestine often take the form of "specialized counter-insurgency discourses on 'terrorism'" (Cleary 2002, 6). Association has been disseminated in mass culture works such as Tom Clancy's novel *Patriot Games* (1987) later a 1997 movie starring Harrison Ford, in which Irish Republican and Middle Eastern 'terrorisms' are closely identified. In the movie, the Prince and Princess of Wales are saved from a radical Irish 'terrorist' group affiliated to the Provisional Irish Republican Army that receives support from Libya and is known as the Ulster Liberation Army. Such discourse on terrorism is a typical colonial discourse through which meanings and identities are constructed in the frame of "truth". Regarding the term terrorism, Joseph Massad states that "terrorist identities remain contested terrains, controlled by an enemy who is in power and who controls the means of representation" (2006, 1). However, not all of the identifications between the two regions are negative stereotypes. Republican wall murals in Northern Ireland during the time of Troubles (1960-1998), have shown Irish and Palestinian guerrillas as comrades in arms. These murals have attempted to "counter more hostile discourses by representing Irish and Palestinian armed struggles not as kindred 'terrorisms' but as parallel anti-imperialist struggles" (Cleary 2002, 7).

Ireland achieved independence from Britain in 1922 after centuries of British colonial and imperialist intervention marked by wars, rebellions, uprisings and armed protests. It was a nation fallen apart by colonial and religious struggles. The island was partitioned between Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland by the Act of 1920. Unlike Southern Ireland, which would become the Irish Free State in 1922, the majority of Northern Ireland's

population were Unionists, who wanted to remain within the United Kingdom. Most of this majority were the Protestant descendants of colonists from Great Britain. But a significant minority, mostly Catholics, were Nationalists who wanted a united Ireland independent of British rule. This situation erupted in 30 years of bloody troubles (1960-1990) that were brought to an end in 1998. Reflecting on such a situation David Lloyd believes that ‘the anomalous’ character of recent Irish history derives from the fact that the moment of nationalist victory did not “constitute a moment of apparent national unification, but rather institutionalized certain racial and sectarian divisions” (160).

In relation to Palestine, with the establishment of Israel in 1948, 80% of Palestine was taken by Zionists through crimes of ethnic cleansing and expulsion of the original population, “making it a community of victims” (Prior 15). As a community of victims, Palestinians were forced into exile or became internal exiles within Israel or live in the diaspora of the refugee camps. The violent birth of Israel was represented by Zionist discourse as a war of independence to achieve a homeland for the Jews, while for the Palestinians it was a catastrophe (*nakba*) that signaled the loss of their homeland and caused an identity wound for all Palestinians.

Building on what has been said above, one can deduce that the political, cultural and literary struggles resulting from British and Israeli colonialism and the colonial partition of Ireland and Palestine illuminate each other. The Irish cultural renaissance was influenced by comparisons with other nationalist literary movements and in turn became a significant model for postcolonial writers (Innes 15). Said associates a major strand in W.B. Yeats’s poetry with the poetry of decolonization and resistance (232). Phrases and lines from Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming” have been used in many postcolonial works, such as Chinua Achebe’s 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*. Linking the Irish and Palestinian contexts, Said notes the resemblance between the poetry of Yeats of the early 1920s to the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, “in its renderings of violence, of the overwhelming suddenness and surprises of historical events, of politics and poetry as opposed to violence and guns” (1993, 232). Building on this, some literary works of Irish writers such as Brian Friel and Seamus Heaney, and the Palestinian writers Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani will be considered for this paper in order to examine how the selected writers construct a counter discourse to the deconstruction of their national and cultural identities in British and Israeli colonial discourse. The paper will analyze the selected literary works to see how they reclaim the national and cultural identities of the Irish and Palestinian people respectively.

But before starting such an examination of the selected literary works, it is important to give a theoretical framework for the study. The study works within the paradigms of cultural, memory and postcolonial studies. Starting with culture studies, it is noteworthy to indicate that since the advent of Marxism in the nineteenth century, according to Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, “people have come to think of culture as being political. Culture is both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination, a way of articulating oppositional points of view to those in dominance” (1234). In the 1960s in England, as Rivkin and Ryan argue, the concept of culture as resistance proved to be the foundation of a new discipline called "Cultural Studies." (1234). Since then cultural studies has become a major academic institution that began at the University of Birmingham, England, in 1963 where Richard Hoggart established the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies(CCCS).

According to Tony Bennett, cultural studies is “an interdisciplinary field in which perspectives from different disciplines can be selectively drawn on to examine the relations of culture and power” (qtd in Baker, 7). For Stuart Hall, cultural studies is connected to matters of power and politics, “to the need for change and to representations of and ‘for’ marginalized social groups, particularly those of class, gender and race” (278). Hence, cultural studies is “a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice. Here knowledge is never a neutral or objective phenomenon but a matter of positionality, of the place from which one speaks, to whom, and for what purposes” (Barker, 5).

As for memory studies (a field that flourished by the end of the 20th century) memory is considered as a key area of study and debate. Memory maybe defined, according to *Oxford Dictionary*, as “the capacity of a body or substance for manifesting effects of, or exhibiting behavior dependent on, its previous state, behavior or treatment.” Micaheal Rossington and Anne Whitehead believe that the emergence of memory as an influential area of study resulted from a complex intersection of academic discourses and disciplines(10). They assume that there were contributing factors to the ‘memory boom’ of the 1990s, among these factors is a concern with how, as the century drew to close, to remember the traumatic instances that marked its history (especially after the opening of archives that revealed memories unavailable before) such as wars and genocides(5). Other factors include: the emergence of key publications such as Yosef Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) and Pierre Nora’s “ Between Memory and History” in *Le Lieux de Memoire* (1984). Also the developments in the academic fields of Holocaust studies, post colonialism and post structuralism have been among the contributing factors (Rossington et al, 6).

For Post colonialism (which had enjoyed its “boom” during the 1980s), with its interest in studying the effects of colonialism on the past and present of colonized people, memory is very central. In the last chapter of his seminal book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon, drawing on his work as a psychiatrist, elaborates on how memories of colonialism are causes of mental illness (249). Rossington et al, state that memory is central to post colonialism because of the ways in which personal and cultural memory can be used to analyze and undermine the structures of empire (9). Memory studies represents a significant contribution to research in the humanities. Rossington et al, interestingly maintain that memory studies penetrates into the field of literature, in cultural and historical discourses; they also refer to the link between the rise of memory studies and identity politics(10). Within the field of memory studies, memory has its significant function in “humans’ consciousness of themselves as having distinct identities over time” (Rossington and Whitehead 2). For David Wiggins, memory is relevant to personal identity, it is an important element in the account of what it is for the person to be still there, alive, “it plays its part in determining the continuity principle for persons” (qtd in Warnock, 74).

Memory, with its significant role in defining subjectivities, is also vital for nation building, and here it is noteworthy to refer to the intersection of individual and collective memory in nation building. Rossington points out that collective memory proposes that “practices of remembrance are shaped and reinforced by the societies and cultures in which they occur” (134). That is why he rightly affirms that collective memory plays an important functioning role, distinct from history, in conceiving a society’s past. Paul Ricour believes in a strong relation between history and memory, for him memory, in the form of testimony, is the foundation of history, “we must not forget that everything starts not from the archives, but from testimony and that . . . we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past” (147). Memory can also subvert the hegemony of history by offering alternative versions of established hegemonic archives. For Rossington et al, memory serves as a “therapeutic alternative to historical discourse” (10).

Moving to post colonialism, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin maintain that post colonialism as it has been employed in most recent accounts has been “primarily concerned to examine the processes and effects of, and reaction to, European colonialism from the sixteenth century up to and including the neo-colonialism of the present day (1995, 188). According to Ashcroft et al, postcolonial theory has been produced in all societies into which the imperial force of Europe has intruded. They state

that postcolonial studies are based in the historical fact of European colonialism, and the diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise. Post colonialism involves discussion about experiences of various kinds: “migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being” (1995, 2).

Identity is a major issue in cultural, memory and postcolonial studies. It is a personal, political and cultural construct. The struggles for and around identity raise the question: what is identity? According to Chris Barker, the concept of subjectivity and identity are closely related together.

Subjectivity refers to the condition of being a person and the process by which we become a person, that is, how we are constituted as subjects. As subjects, that is as persons, we are ‘subject to’ social processes which bring us into being as ‘subject for’ ourselves and others. The conceptions we hold of ourselves we may call self-identity, while the expectations and opinions of others form our social identity. Both take narrative or story-like form. To ask about subjectivity is to pose the question: what is a person? To explore identity is to enquire: how do we see ourselves and how do others see us? (165)

The paper will try to answer Barker’s question in relation to the Irish and Palestinian postcolonial situations. Actually the question might be rephrased to be how identities are deconstructed by others and how are they reconstructed and reclaimed by oneself? How colonial powers in the two situations constructed native’s identities in derogatory stereotypes of colonial discourse and how natives reconstruct their national and cultural identities in a counter discourse of literary production. Identity crisis is one of the immediate painful consequences of colonialism. According to Eugene O’Brien, identity is “precisely the bond between a people and a place, a bond whose constituents are historical, cultural, religious and social” (3). When this relation is fractured by colonialism, identity becomes problematic, and it becomes an arena of struggle between colonizer and colonized, a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. Barker assumes that “Identities are discursive-performative constructions” (193) and that a “national identity is a discursive action” (197). Accordingly one can say that identity battles in the postcolonial world are battles of discourse between colonized and colonizers.

From the later sixteenth century, Declan Kiberd clarifies, when Edmund Spenser walked the plantations of Munster, the English have presented themselves to the world as controlled, refined and rooted; and so it suited them to find the Irish hot-headed, rude and nomadic, the perfect foil to set off their own virtues (9). Spencer’s views about the Irish are actually

among the first prototypes of colonial discourse and its derogatory stereotypes of natives

out of every corner of the woods and glens they come creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them; they looked like anatomies of death; they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat the dead carrions, happy where they could find them; and if they found a plot of watercresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue their withal; that in a short space there were none almost left. (qtd in Watson, 25)

Clery elaborates that attributes of “sloth, lasciviousness, wildness, rudeness, incivility, inertia, superstition and treacherousness, cannibalism, blood drinking and murderous depravity that occur in colonialist discourses appear in fertile abundance in English writing on Ireland in this era” (2012, 547). As it is the case with all colonial discourses such views were the excuse through which Gaelic culture was destroyed and replaced by English culture, “we must change their course of government, clothing, customs, manner of holding land, language and habit of life”, wrote Sir William Parsons, “it will otherwise be impossible to set up in them obedience ” (qtd in Kiberd, 9). In his *View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) Spenser outlined this program. The Gaels must be redeemed from their wildness: they must, “cut their glibs of overhanging hair; they must convert their mantles into conventional cloaks; above all, they must speak the English tongue. “The speech being Irish”, he wrote, “the heart must needs be Irish” (Kiberd, 10). Within such program for cultural cleansing, Conor McCarthy highlights, Henry viii introduced policies “in favor of English speech and civility and the Irish language and culture, as expressed by the bards, poets were forbidden and their use punishable. Ireland in effect was to be made a second England.... No provision was made for the recognition or legitimacy of Irish and Gaelic tradition” (243).

Harping on a similar colonial tone, Zionists also constructed their colonial discourse in relation to Palestine. Their first myth in relation to Palestine was that Palestine was a land without a people for a people without a land and that it was a waste land sparsely populated by lazy uncivilized Bedouins who did not know the value of the land. Furthermore we find that the oppression and expulsion of Palestinians by Zionists depend on a chain of misrepresentations of Palestinians from the time of Herzl onwards to Netanyahu. Herzl introduced Zionists as carriers of civilization into the heart of darkness (the white man’s burden). He saw Arabs, Massad elaborates as “dirty” people who looked like “brigands”, while Menachem Begin saw them as “two-legged beasts” (2006,15).

Edward Said clarifies how through Zionists' colonial discourse and its misrepresentations of Palestinians, Israel's

miraculous transformation of 'an arid and empty land' gained universal admiration. In all this, Palestinians were either "Arabs" or anonymous creatures of the sort that could only disrupt and disfigure a wonderfully idyllic narrative. Still more important, Israel represented a nation in search of peace, while the Arabs were warlike, rootless, mindless, gratuitous trouble, bloodthirsty, bent on extermination, and prey to irrational violence, more or less forever. (1992, xiv)

Massad similarly notes that the Zionist movement presented its project of creating a Jewish state through colonization as part of the European colonizing world. Hertzal himself saw his proposed state as "the portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism" (qtd in Massad 2006, 15). Here Massad interestingly elaborates that ambivalence was characteristic of Zionist thinking in relation to Palestine. On the one hand, Zionists claimed Jews were a Semitic people who originated in Palestine, while on the other hand, they viewed Jews as modern Europeans participating in colonial endeavors. Then after the 1948 Israeli colonial discourse succeeded in veiling the colonial nature of Zionism through presenting the settler project as anti-colonial and of struggling for independence. The Israeli victory in the 1948 war which gave the Israelis control over 77 % of Palestine resulted in the Zionist expulsion of close to a million Palestinians and the subsequent destruction of 418 Palestinian villages. This war became known in Israeli ideological pronouncement as a "war of independence" and the officially named "Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel" was to be renamed in popular discourse as the "Declaration of Independence" (2006, 16).

In an ironic twisting of facts, Massad observes, Israeli propaganda argued that Palestinians had emigrated to Palestine in the mid-to-late nineteenth century seeking a better economic climate which was brought about by European Jewish colonization (2006, 25). Here Michael Prior, interestingly clarifies that Israeli public relations and propaganda in collaboration with Zionist ideologues and historiographers, succeeded also in masking the fact that "the creation of Israel resulted in the dispossession and dispersion of another people, and that dispossession was the result of formal planning and ruthless execution" (14).

Within the field of cultural studies, the modern nation-state, Chris Barker notes, is "a relatively recent invention, a political concept which refers to an administrative apparatus deemed to have sovereignty over a specific space or territory within the nation-state system" (197). He goes on to say that nations are not simply political formations but systems of cultural representation through which national identity is continually reproduced as discursive action. For Barker a national identity, is a form of imaginative identification with the nation-state as expressed through symbols and

discourses; an identification with representations of shared experiences and history told through stories, literature, popular culture and the media. Barker adds that the symbolic and discursive dimensions of national identity narrates and creates the idea of origins, continuity and tradition. Moreover, Barker affirms that the nation-state, nationalism and national identity as collective forms of organization and identification are not naturally occurring phenomena but “contingent historical-cultural social constructions” (197). In this connection, Edward Said clarifies that nationalism “is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs” (2000, 176). In this regard, Laura Chrisman notes that the culturalist turn of social literary theory encouraged postcolonial studies to view nationalism as primarily cultural and epistemological, “rather than socio-political formation” (2004, 183).

Anthony Smith in his work *National Identity* (1991) defines the nation as “a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (14). He lists some fundamental features of national identity such as historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common mass public culture, common economy, common legal rights and duties for all members. Here he clarifies that national identity and the nation are complex constructs, composed of a number of interrelated components, “ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political. They signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions that may or may not find expression in states of their own” (15).

In his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), Benedict Anderson refers to the nation as an imaginative political community, and considers national identity as a construction assembled through symbols and rituals in relation to territorial and administrative categories. Anderson notes that although the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them,

yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. . . . The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. . . . It is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that

makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such imaginings. (5-7)

This idea of nations as ‘imaginings’ is also highlighted by Homi Bhabha in his introduction to his important work *Nation and Narration* (1990) in which he affirms that nations only realize their horizons in the mind’s eye, “such an image of the nation or narration might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west” (1990, 1). The unity of nations is constructed through its narrative by which stories, symbols and rituals represent shared meanings of nationhood (Bhabha 1990, 3). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue that constructions of the nation are sites of control and domination within modern society, in which attempts are made to legitimize an idea of a nation-state as “ the natural expression of a unified national history and culture” (1998, 135).

Moving now to the selected literary works, David Llyod indicates that the centrality of the question of identity to Irish writing and critical discussion of it since the nineteenth century is not due simply to the contingent influence of political preoccupations. Rather, “it indicates the crucial function performed by literature in the articulation of those preoccupations, inasmuch as literary culture is conceived as offering not merely a path towards resolution, but the resolution itself of the problems of subjective and political identity” (13). This important note by Llyod in relation to the Irish context is completely applicable to the Palestinian context. In both contexts literature plays such a crucial role primarily in reclaiming a national and cultural identity by offering a counter discourse to the hegemonic colonial British and Israeli discourses.

The selected literary works represent a production of knowledge through which national and cultural identities are reconstructed and colonial and neocolonial discourses are deconstructed. Within the postcolonial world, natives have suffered an identity crisis. As Eugene O’Brian states, identity is the bond between a people and a place, a bond whose constituents are historical, cultural, religious and social (3). When this bond is fractured by colonialism, native’s identity becomes problematic; it becomes an arena of struggle between colonizer and colonized, a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. The Irish and the Palestinian, like other well studied postcolonial cases (India, African and Caribbean countries) suffered stereotypical colonial misrepresentations of their national identities in the British and Israeli colonial discourses, but unlike these well studied cases, they are overlooked within postcolonial studies. The study will attempt to show how literary narrative reclaims national identities and hence nations: nations are narrations if we may use Bhabha’s famous book title.

The paper will start by examining Brian Friel's *Translations*, and how he reclaims his people's cultural and national identity in this play. Brian Friel (1929-2015) was an Irish dramatist, short story writer and the founder of the Field Day Theater Company which focuses on staging Irish plays that enhance Irish nationalism. Born in Northern Ireland, Friel, like his father, was active in Nationalist affairs. His career as a playwright was greatly affected by political and national issues related to the Troubles in Northern Ireland. According to George O'Brien, Friel's plays show tangled relations among narrative, history and nationality. He produced what might be called "Indigenous Drama" (5). Referred to as the Irish Chekhov, Friel received several honors in recognition of his cultural and national commitment beside his artistic achievements, and was nominated a seat in the Irish parliament in 1986, the first Irish writer to serve in this capacity since Yeats. Friel, Richard Pine elaborates, has become the subject of serious critical attention that concentrates on the relation between playwriting and other writings such as politics and history (1). He has much in common with other postcolonial writers in their concern to tackle in their writings issues related to their nation's identity, language, history and struggle against colonialism.

Brian Friel's *Translations*(1980) is considered by many critics as his best play; it is a three-act play, set in a hedge-school in the town of Baile Beag / Ballybeg, an Irish-speaking community in county Donegal in 19th century Ireland. In this play he tackles language as a marker of identity. Friel himself has said that *Translations* is "a play about language and only about language" (qtd in Pine, 146). But for many critics there is a wide range of issues tackled in the play, most importantly among them is of course language, but there is also identity, culture, history, cultural colonialism. Troubled by Irish Troubles in the 1960s and 1970s, Friel chose to reflect on such troubling events in Northern Ireland through the play; Declan Kiberd maintains that like Seamus Heaney, Friel "was a canny northerner who chose a remote historical event to throw an oblique light on the present" (614). Friel draws on Irish history through retelling of a real event in 1833 in Ireland when the British government attempted to write a new map for Ireland by translating the local Gaelic place names of the Irish towns and cities into English. And at the same time, the British government established 'national schools' to replace indigenous Irish hedge-schools. It was an attempt to erase Irish cultural identity. The time is very important as the events of the play precede the famous Potato Famine of 1840. It was a time of transition in every sense, in which the British government replaced the local hedge school by state-sponsored schools providing free education in English. Before writing the play, Pine points out that Friel was

considering writing a play about the 19th century, somewhere between the Act of Union and the Great Famine, a play about Daniel O'Connell and Catholic emancipation; a play about the death of Irish language and the acquisition of English and the profound effect that that change-over would have on people. (qtd in Pine, 152)

Then these notions crystalized around hedge-schools and map-making. Kiberd notes that Friel's concern with language is an investigation "into the depth of the political unconscious... one of the first policies formulated by the Norman occupiers was to erase Gaelic culture" (615).

In the play there are many characters, but most importantly among them we have Hugh, the hedge-school master, his son Manus who teaches at the school, Owen: Hugh's other son, the school's students: Sarah, Maire, Jimmy Jack Cassie, Doalty and Bridget. This is in addition to the British Captain Lancey and lieutenant Yoland. Building the play around Hugh, the drunken hedge-school master is related by many critics to the fact that Friel's maternal grandparent was a hedge-school headmaster.

The action begins with Owen returning home after six years away in Dublin. With him are Captain Lancey, a cartographer and Lieutenant Yolland, both working on the map survey of Ireland for the Ordnance Survey. Owen acts as a translator and go-between for the English and Irish. Yolland and Owen work to translate local place names into English for purposes of the map. While Owen has no concerns about Anglicizing the names of places that form part of his heritage, Yolland, who has fallen in love with Ireland, is unhappy with what he believes as a destruction of Irish culture and language. Yolland and Máire fall in love and they manage to show their feelings for each other despite the fact that Yolland speaks only English and Máire only Irish. Manus, who had been hoping to marry Máire, learns about such an affair and goes mad. Yolland goes missing overnight (it is hinted that he has been attacked by Irish armed resistance in the form of the Donnelly twins), and Manus flees because his heart has been broken but it is made obvious that the English soldiers will see his disappearance as guilt. Captain Lancey threatens first to shoot all livestock if Yolland is not found within twenty-four hours, then evict the villagers and destroy their homes if he is not found within forty-eight hours. Owen then realizes what he should do and leaves, seemingly to join the resistance.

Within such plot, Friel brilliantly reclaims Irish history and national identity. Early in the play, Friel highlights the importance of names in the affirmation of identity. So the play opens by Manus helping Sarah to pronounce her name in Irish properly:

Manus: Get your tongue and your lips working. 'My name—' come on. One more try. ' My name is---' Good girl.

Sarah: My. . .

Manus: Raise your head. Shout it out. (*Trans.* 7)

So here Manus is asking Sarah (for many critics she represents Ireland) to assert her identity through saying her name in Irish strongly while raising her head. Naming, Pine affirms, is central to the theme of identity and is the key to language (145).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his seminal book *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, brilliantly tackles the intrinsic relation among language, culture and identity. For Ngugi, when a community loses its language it loses its culture and identity. People over time develop distinctive culture and history; culture embodies all those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, through which people come to view themselves and their place in the world. Values in turn, Ngugi goes on elaborating, are the basis of a people's particular identity, and all this is carried by language. Language as culture is "the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to another" (441). Language as culture has three aspects; first it is a product of the history which it in turn reflects, second, it is an image-forming agent; people's conception of themselves whether individually or collectively is based on these images formed by language which in its third aspect as culture transmits these images to the world (Ngugi 441).

So what happens when the language of colonized people is dominated and replaced by the colonizer's language? Of course they will lose the tie that connects them to their culture and history; they will lose their identity. Here Ngugi elaborates on this saying that "the domination of a people's language by the language of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (442). Actually the mental universe of the colonized is the most important area of domination; economic and political domination can never be complete without mental control. The inauguration of such mental control is the control of language: how people perceive themselves, others, the places where they live, in brief controlling their tools of self-definition in relation to others. So this is what we have in *Translations*. The British implement their project of mental colonialism by replacing local hedge-schools by state-sponsored National schools providing free education in English for all. It was a typical colonial project of language and hence identity erosion. Doalty and Bridget refer to the new schools early in the play:

Bridget: And every child from every house has to go all day, every day, summer or winter. That's the law.

Doalty: I'll tell you something--- nobody's going to go near them---they're not going to take on---law or no law.

Bridget: And from the very first day you go, you'll not hear one word of Irish spoken. You'll be taught to speak English and every subject will be taught through English and everyone'll end up as cute as the Buncrana people. (*Trans.* 23)

Cheikh Hamidou Kane rightly notes that colonialism's power was not only residing in the cannons, but in what followed the cannon, "therefore behind the cannons was the new school. The new school had the nature of both the cannon and the magnet . . . The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul" (qtd in Ngugi, 436). Maire in the play represents those who are fascinated by English and the new school:

Maire: We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my mother says.

That's what I say. That's what Dan O'Connell said last month in Ennis. He said the sooner we all learn to speak English the better.

Hugh: Does she mean that little Kerry politician?

Maire: I am talking about the liberator Master, as you will know. And what he said was this: 'the old language is a barrier to modern progress.' And he is right.

I do not want Greek. I do not want Latin I want English. I want to be able

to speak English because I am going to America as soon as the harvest's all

saved. (*Trans.* 28)

Kiberd rightly indicates that British colonialism associated the Irish language in the popular mind with poverty, backwardness and defeat (614). Similarly, Ngugi wa Thiongo points out to the devastating effect of self-contempt and colonized people's hate of their own language, "where his own native languages were associated in his impressionable mind with low status, humiliation, corporate punishment, slow-footed intelligence and stupidity" (443). This is quite clear in the play through Owen, who works with the British in the erosion of his native language, he says to Manus (his brother)

Owen: I'm employed as a part-time, underpaid civilian interpreter.

My job is

to translate the quaint archaic tongue you persist in speaking into the King's

good English. (*Trans.* 32)

Thiongo also significantly refers to the alienation caused by the imposition of colonial language and how it was worse when the colonized was exposed to images of his world as mirrored in the written languages of his colonizer (443). This is very clear in the play when the Irish place names are replaced by English:

Owen: Do you know where the priest lives?

Hugh: At Lisa na Muc, over near...

Owen: No he doen't. lis na Muc, the fort of the pigs, has become Swinefort... And to get to Swinefort you pass through Greencastle and Fair Head and Strandhill and Gort and Whiteplains. And the new school isn't at poll na gCaorach- it's at the sheepsrock.

Will you be able to find your way? (*Trans.* 50)

The loss of language is a loss of direction; it is a loss of one's perception of his world and his place in that world and this is what colonialism is after. And this is what Friel is denouncing in the play, and through this he is reflecting on the situation in Northern Ireland at the time of troubles. Friel believes that "the only merit in looking back is to understand how you are and where you are at the moment" (qtd I Kiberd, 616). Kiberd interestingly reflects that Friel believes that culture can be 'causative', can have political outcomes: "so, when he discusses language, he sees it as a specific basis for all politics which might ensue" (616). Here it is noteworthy to refer to the fact that northern Irish writers, Kiberd notes, are more conscious than southern Irish writers of this fact, as they grew up in a state where the speaking of Irish was a political act, "where a person who gave a Gaelic version of name to a policeman might expect a cuff on the ear or worse... writers were aware of a cultural deprivation from birth and sought to repair it as best as they could" (616).

Naming for Friel is the key to identity. He is fully aware of the cultural significance of names (whether a person's name or a place's name) in the construction of identity. Here it is relevant to mention that although he is known as Brian Friel, his birth certificates bear the names Bernard Patrick Friel. At the time of Friel's birth the Protestant Bureaucracy discouraged the registration of Gaelic names so the Anglicization 'Bernard' was adopted for the purpose of registration in place of 'Brian'. Even his place of birth Derry was known to the Nationalists as Derry and to the Unionists as Londonderry (Pine, 15). In the play we feel Friel's response to the nationalist context of his birth place in west Ulster with its cultural and political history that was inflicted on Friel's identity. Through the memory of the hedge-school and the British colonial map-making project, Friel is stressing that a society in search of identity must know the "pathways and holy places of the mind as surely as it knows its streets, hedgerows and sheep tracks" (Pine, 3).

Throughout the play we have important memories of crucial moments in the history of the Irish people, most prominently among them is the memory of the Great Famine of 1845-51 when the potato, the country's important staple food failed. During that catastrophic famine the Irish population was halved; almost a million people died from starvation and associated diseases and, in the same decade, one and a half million

emigrated (in a massive exodus) mainly to the United States. Irish-speaking areas were among the hardest hit, with the result that only a quarter of the population was recorded as speaking the language after 1851. In the play, Bridget connects the sweet smell of the potato to the soldiers making the maps:

Bridget: And wait till you hear this- I forgot to tell you this. He said that as soon as he crossed over the gap at Conc na Mona- just beyond where the soldiers are making the map- the sweet smell was everywhere.

It is very telling that Maire is the one who refuses to admit and realize the coming disaster:

Maire: Sweet smell! Sweet smell! Every year at this time somebody comes back

with stories of the sweet smell. Sweet God, did the potatoes ever fail in Baile Beag? Well, did they ever-ever? Never. (*Trans.* 22)

As it is well known, memory imposes a truth of its own; through the memory of the famine, Friel is reclaiming an important moment in the history of the Irish people and through this he is reclaiming his people's culture and identity. The Irish food culture which is associated with potato and a national catastrophic moment associated with a famine caused a nation to fall apart, and of course Friel is alluding to the fact that such disaster was caused by British presence in Ireland as Kiberd notes there was "a pervading sense that this was "the final betrayal" by England(21). Also the memory of Daniel O'Connell and how as Maire said, he said that " the old language is a barrier to modern progress" (*Trans.* 28). Here Friel is denouncing native intellectuals and liberators who adopt colonizers' language, and this is clear in Hugh's, Doalty's and Bridget's reaction to what Maire was saying:

Jimmy: what's she saying? What? What?

Doalty: it's Irish he uses when he's travelling around scrounging votes.

Bridget: And sleeping with married women. Sure no woman's safe from that fella.

Hugh: Silentium! (Pause.) Who is she talking about?

Maire: I am talking about Daneil O'connell

Hugh: Does she mean that little Kerry politician?

Friel in relation to Ireland holds similar convictions like Ngugi who in relation to Africa laments the fact that Africa was made to believe that it needs Europe to rescue it from poverty and how Africa even produced intellectuals who rationalized this upside down way of looking at Africa. Ngugi inquires " what is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European language?" (450). He defiantly boasts that African languages refused to die, these languages, these national heritages of Africa were kept alive by the peasantry who saw no contradiction between speaking their own mother tongues and belonging to a larger continental or

international geography (447). Friel in the play harps on a similar tone through many characters who represent Irish peasantry that refused the death of the Irish language: we have Manus, Doalty, Bridget, Hugh and Jimmy. Manus while he knows English insists on speaking Irish in the presence of Captain Lancey and Yolland.

Owen: can't you speak English before your man?

Manus: Why?

Owen: Out of courtesy.

Manus: Doesn't he want to learn Irish? (to Yolland) Don't you want to learn Irish?

Yolland: Sorry-sorry? I- I- (*Trans.* 42)

Manus' insistence to speak Irish is an insistence on his identity; it is not only Manus' we have other simple native Irish peasants who even spat at the British soldiers as Yolland tells Owen, "some people here resent us . . . I was passing a little girl yesterday and spat at me" (*Trans.* 43). So it's the local people who resist such an identity erosion and are aware of its danger. We also have the recurrent mention of the Donnelly twins, they do not appear on the stage, but they are very important as they represent resistance against the British colonial project of map-making and national schools. Captain Lancey wants them for questioning as they are suspected of stealing the equipment of the British soldiers, even later on they will abduct Yolland himself. Manus defiantly reproaches Owen defending the Irish language when Owen mistranslates to the locals what the arrogant Captain Lancey was saying about the British colonial project and wonders how Owen accepts Lancey's calling him Roland:

Manus: what sort of translation was that, Owen?

Owen: Did I make a mess of it?

Manus: you weren't saying what Lancey was saying!

Owen: 'Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry'- who said that?

Manus: there was nothing uncertain about what Lancey said: it's a bloody military operation, Owen! And Yolland's function? What's incorrect about the place-names we have here?

Owen: Nothing at all. They're just going to be standardized.

Manus: You mean changed into English?

...

Manus: And they call you Roland! They both call you Roland.

Owen: Easy, man, easy. Owen- Roland- what the hell. It's only a name. it's the same me, isn't it? Well, isn't it? (*Trans.* 38)

Of course it is not the same, it is an identity theft, when someone willingly sacrifices his language, his name, he is willingly sacrificing his identity. Owen (the go between) and Maire represent the rotten potatoes inside the Irish people, the catalyst of their own language and identity destruction if we might say this.

However, Friel gives pride to his Irish people and reclaim their culture and identity through simple hints to the fact that Irish could speak Greek, Latin, Irish and some can speak English as well, so they are even civilized and cultured more than their British oppressors who stereotype them in derogatory misrepresentations of barbarism and primitivism. Hugh exclaims how Captain Lancey does not know Greek or Irish: “ he explained that he does not know Irish. Latin? I asked none Greek. He speaks –on his own admission- only English” (Trans. 26). For Pine this is part of Friel subversion in the play denying English Sappers a capacity to “ discourse in Latin, to suggest that the otherwise inferior society of Ballybeg might have some cultural values unavailable to colonists” (154).

Seamus Heaney 1939-2013, is another ‘canny northerner’ who had the same mission like Friel of reclaiming his people’s culture and identity. Heaney was born into an Irish Catholic milieu that shaped his worldview. Catholics in Northern Ireland were united by virtue of their being in the minority of the new state of Northern Ireland, in which Protestants dominated every aspect of life (Russel 10). For Oliver Rafferty, the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, was “ bereft of political power and economic security, and with a gradual erosion of the cultural mores dependent on these factors, the community had only Catholicism left to preserve its identity (1). It is no surprise to find a strong emphasis on Irish roots and Catholic identity in most of Heaney’s poetry. For Russel, Heaney’s poetry “links with Gaelic literary tradition and the wider literary and cultural history of the island as a whole” (14). Heaney and Friel worked Field Day Theatre Company and its Field Day Publishing. Heaney received major award for poets and writers, on the top of them is the Nobel Prize in 1993 for literature “ for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past” (qtd in Russel, 19). Writing on the 75th anniversary of Yeats’ death, only a few months after Heaney’s death, Terence Brown reflected “ both were truly national figures . . . Yeats lived throughout and wrote about the civil war. Heaney lived throughout and wrote about the Troubles. Both showed how poetry enables, helps us to comprehend and survive” (qtd in Russel, 22).

Llyod regards Heaney’s work as “articulating important intuitions of Irish identity, and as uttering and re- claiming that identity beyond the divisive label of Anglo-Irishness” (156). Eugene o’Brian also assumes that Heaney always probes the nature of selfhood and of self-identity as well as the relation between that selfhood and different forms of otherness, “ his work sets up a dialectical interaction between these positions that is

ultimately transformative...Heaney uses his own personal history of dislocation in order to examine the pre-constructed nature of identity as well as the process whereby the individual is expected to “fit in” to these templates as he or she matures within a culture”(3).

As it was mentioned earlier, when the relation between people and place is fractured by colonialism, identity becomes a problematic issue and this is the case in Heaney’s poetry. O’Brian brilliantly clarifies that the nationalist tradition in Northern Ireland sees its relationship with place as prior to that of the unionists tradition, a perspective which is an instance of broader postcolonial debate between the colonizer and colonized, from this complicated spatial and cultural identity in Northern Ireland, the poetry of Heaney sets out (3). In one of his earliest poems *Among School Children*, Heaney writes “Ireland as she ought to be/ Great glorious and free/ First flower of the earth/ First gem of the sea” (qtd in O’Brian, 10). The study will consider some selected poems of Heaney’s poetry in which he draws upon issues of national and cultural identity, among them: *Death of a naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969), *wintering out* (1972) *North* (1976), *An Open Letter* (1983).

For example in his first two volumes *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *Door into the Dark* (1969). Heaney touches upon his local, native background, his father and childhood memories, family farm and Irish landscape, customs, crafts and historical incidents. Lloyd points out that since his earlier volumes, Heaney’s writings “have rehearsed all the figures of the family romance of identity” (162). In the well-known poem “Digging” (from *Death of a Naturalist*) he affirms his father’s and grandfather’s strong relation to the land through their hard work as diggers of potatoes and peat. He refers to the Irish crafts of farming and digging, the act of digging with its cultural and historical implications, the memory of his father and ancestors and most interestingly the analogy Heaney suggests between holding a pen and holding a gun. Here it might be suggested that Heaney here refers to the fact that if he cannot hold a spade to dig like his father, he is holding his pen which is as important as a spade as it writes about and digs the Irish people’s memories. It is an analogy between physical and cultural labor.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun
Under my window a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground
My father, digging. I look down
Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; I’ll dig with it (DN, 1)

Russell argues that the evocation of the gun implies the power of the pen which is associated with creative writing in inspiring people and stirring strong emotions (33). Heaney with his pen is digging his people's past, is digging out their identity. Lloyd elaborates that Heaney here shares the same concerns like 19th century nationalists, so digging holds out the prospect of a return to origins and "the consolatory myth of a knowledge . . . composing the identity of the subject in the knowing of objects the very knowing of which is an act of self-production" (164). Considering the intrinsic relation between writing and the affirmation and restoration of identity, Heaney himself says "poetry as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity, with the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds. . . poetry as a dig, a dig for finds that end up being plants" (qtd in Pine, 165).

The memory of his father and even his grandfather emphasize the cultural heritage of the Irish people as peasants and asserts the identity and the presence of the Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. Friel once said, "we are still a peasant society . . . to understand anything about the history or present health of Irish drama, one must first acknowledge the peasant mind" (qtd in Pine, 7). It is a peasant society which is passionate for the land, "by God, the old man could handle a spade/just like his old man/ my grandfather cut more turf in a day/than any other man on Toner's bog/. . . he straightened up/to drink it, then fell to right away/nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods/over his shoulder, going down and down/for the good turf. Digging".

In another poem from the same volume, "At a potato Digging"
 Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble towards the black
 Mother. Processional stopping through the turf
 Recurs mindlessly as autumn. Centuries
 Of fear and homage to the famine god (DN, 31)

Potato is a marker of the Irish food culture and at the same time it is a reminder of a disastrous historical event in the memory of the Irish people, namely the Great Famine. Russel points out that Heaney is concerned to explore historical wounds that had been inflicted upon the Irish psyche, mainly the Great Famine of 1845 (39).

In another volume *Wintering Out* (1972) Heaney, Russel assumes, signals both the Catholic and Gaelic presence in Northern Ireland through his land and language poems (16). In poems such as "Mossbawn", "Broagh", "Anahorish" Heaney creates a cultural significance of these names, in an attempt to reclaim the Irish identity of these places after the British colonial encroachment on the Irish land and language. He in a sense invades the English language with his use of Irish language in his poems that are written in English. Here Heaney, like Friel is referring to the map-making project and the erosion of the Irish language through the

establishment of English national schools. In “The Tollund Man” the first of his ‘bog poems’ Heaney writes

Something of his sad freedom
As he rode the tumbril
Should come to me, driving,
Saying the names
Tollund, Grabaulle, Nebelgard,
Watching the pointing hands
Of country people,
Not knowing their tongue.

The bog poems are also poems of digging in which Heaney digs out some hidden memories as a reflection on present current painful events of the troubles at the time of writing. Russel indicates that for Heaney the bog is an open wound and features victims of both ancient fertility rites and modern sectarian practices in Northern Ireland where people have been wounded, cut open and beheaded (40). In Heaney’s account, in the bogs of Jutland, preserved bodies of men were found naked, strangled or with their throats cut, disposed under the peat since early Iron Age times a number of these, and in particular the Tollund Man, whose head is now preserved in the museum near Silkeborg, were ritual sacrifices to the Mother Goddess . . . this is more than an archaic barbarous rite: it is an archetypal pattern. And the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles. (qtd in Lloyd, 170).

Lloyd significantly notes that since early poems as “Digging”, Heaney has been driven towards “ Cultural reterritorialization and the suturing of identity” (170). In “*North*”, Heaney further explores the frightening widespread violence in Northern Ireland through ancient Scandinavian and other remote tribal atrocities (Russel, 17). In “ Act of Union” Heaney remembers this important historical event and writes:

I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder
That you would neither cajole nor ignore.
Conquest is a lie. I grow older
Conceding your half-independent shore
Within whose borders now my legacy
Culminates inexorably.
And I am still imperially
Male, leaving you with the pain
The rendering process in the colony

In the place-names poems in *Wintering out*, Heaney further reclaims his people’s identity through grabbing the attention of the reader to Gaelic

names and this adds a nationalistic sense to those poems. He depends on Irish language, Molino explains, to awaken a sense of identity and belonging to Ireland to convey a visual and audio image of the place (79).

My "place of clear water"

The first hill in the world
Where springs washed into
The shiny grass.

And darkened cobbles

In the bed of the lane

Anahorish, soft gradient

Of consonant, vowel-meadow, (6)

Andrew Murphey interestingly points out that the language of local naming carries within itself a kind of compressed narrative of local history so that "the etymological investigation of a local name can reveal the greater history of the named place" (23). O'Brian believes that such poems have been read "as protonationalist enunciations of the prior linguistic and cultural relationships that predated the Anglicisation process that was coterminous with colonization"(4). O'Brian brilliantly clarifies how in these poems, Heaney creates a notion of place which grants the plurality of identity which is a fact of life in all contemporary cultures, "but which ideologically motivated notions of history have managed to elide and silence. In short, his place-name poems, harking back to the Gaelic inheritance of *dinnseanchas*, initiate a type of linguistic archaeology which makes the absences in language become present with consequent transformational effects on notions of place and identity" (4).

An Open Letter (1983) was written in response to Heaney's inclusion in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* objecting such an identity and literary theft, Heaney writes

To Blake and Andrew, Editors

Contemporary British Verse,

Penguin Books, Middlesex. Dear Sirs,

My anxious muse

Roused on her bed among the furze,

Has to refuse

The adjective. It makes me blush (7)

In the closing lines he defiantly affirms his identity and his name as "Seamus" which is not for sure British

Need I go on? I hate to bite

Hands that led me to the limelight

In the Penguin book. I regret

The awkwardness.

But British, no, the name's not right.

Yours truly, Seamus. (13)

Moving now to the Palestinian writers considered for this paper, and as long as we have been talking about Heaney, the Irish Poet, let's start by talking about the Palestinian poet considered for this paper Mahmoud Darwish. Darwish is part of the third generation of 20th century Palestinian poets whose careers were sparked by the British and then Zionist occupation of their land. Darwish (1941- 2008) generally referred to as Palestine's national poet, was born in al-Birwih, a village east of Acre that was to be wiped out by the new Zionist state in 1949. Darwish returned to Israel with his family after its creation where he grew up as 'a present-absentee'. Palestine, his homeland, is a central motif in his poetry, in which he expresses Palestinians deep attachment to their land and their national identity.

Before considering some of Darwish's poems in which he reclaims his people's national and cultural identity, it is noteworthy to refer to some common grounds between Darwish and Heaney. Darwish and Heaney share an experience of being an oppressed minority (Darwish a Palestinian internal exile in Israel, Heaney an Irish catholic in protestant Northern Ireland) amidst a colonial oppressive majority. There are some other interesting semantic similarities related to both poets' use of the past and memory to confirm the cultural and national identity of their land and their people, in other situations they endeavor to reveal their people's identity crisis through offering some traumatic incidents that were inflicted on their peoples' psyche. Both are also aware of the importance and urgency of language in the formation of a national identity. In other cases they use mythology and ancient history to refer to current issues. And by this they reclaim their people's national and cultural identities in a way that deconstructs colonial hegemonic discourses in the two contexts, the British and Israeli respectively. Both were also caught in a struggle to reconcile their poetic and artistic aspirations with the urgency of their people's national struggle.

Edward Said indicates that "Darwish poetry is an epic effort to transform the lyric of loss into the indefinitely postponed drama of return". Khalid Mattawa interestingly also notes that unlike Tagore, Derek Walcott, Aimee Cesaire, and Leopold Senghor, poets whose colonized nations gained independence in the second half of the twentieth century, "Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish had no such fortune to accompany his similarly prodigious literary output and reputation. Darwish's career began and ended under Israeli occupation: the newly formed Israeli Defense Forces razed his home village in the Galilee in 1948, and Israeli settlements now encircle his burial site in Ramallah" (1). Despite such a painful fact, Darwish, reconstructed in his poems the image of his lost homeland by "invigorating

its erased details in his poetry. Thus, he painted the continuity of Palestine through his words” (Rehuma Sazzad 363). Between the publication of his first volume of poetry *Olive Leaves* (1964) and his last volume *I do not want this poem to come to an end* that was published after his death in 2008 lies Darwish’ s testimony and documentation of not only the misery and oppression that his people have been subjected to, but also a documentation of his people’s identity and their land of Palestine.

From his early career as a poet, Darwish is dramatically attached to the land and to nature. Fady Joudah notes that Darwish has “a profound relationship with the earth, where a different “specificity” and “dailiness” is filtered, captured, through presence and absence. He was a “green” poet whose verse was shaped by flowers, trees, and animals the way people see them” (10). Here it is noteworthy to say that such an attachment to nature and land is also present with Heaney. The paper will examine some selected poems, from Darwish’s poetry from the beginning to the end of his poetic career; poetry in which he affirms and reclaims the Palestinian identity against Israeli’s colonial discourse that negate the presence of the Palestinians or represents them as bloody terrorists . The paper will consider some poems from his early volumes such as *Olive Leaves* (1964) , *A Lover from Palestine* (1966) and his later volumes such as *Why did you Leave the Horse Alone* (1995) *A State of Siege* (2002), *Do not Apologize for What you Did* (2004).

In ‘A Poem which is Not Green, from My Country’ from *Olive Leaves* Darwish defiantly asserts that regardless of the expulsion of his people from their land, they would never forget their land; he assures his people that the swallow may be silent but never forgets its song:

It will sing it will cry out
When my country’s olive trees blossom
When the sky’s rains wash away
The spots of consumption the thorns of fate! (*Selected Poems*, 1973)
In another poem from the same volume “A Memo from Prison”
Darwish defiantly writes
Through prison chinks I met the eyes
Of an orange-tree & the sea & wide horizon locked
In embrace. If at night the blackness of grief grows
Deep my comfort is the night’s beauty, the hair of my Beloved.
(*Selected Poems*, 1973)

Memorable details such as the color of the sky, the scent of olive blossoms, the bird song, the orange trees (a reminder or a documentation of Palestine’s pre-1948 status as a major exporter of the world’s oranges), the sea and the horizon, and the long night like the untied hair of the beloved show how the memory of the land of Palestine is implanted within Palestinians. Palestinians, who are not blood thirst terrorists, are a peace-loving nation that has been mercilessly disrupted by the Israeli colonialism.

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These pre-colonial memories of his land are an effective anti-colonial strategy in the face of the Israeli discourse that for many years has represented Palestine as a desert, as a land without a people for a people without a land. Memory here is subverting the hegemony of history by offering alternative versions of established hegemonic archives. For Rossington et al, memory serves as a “therapeutic alternative to historical discourse” (10).

Such poems give Darwish a chance to reclaim his people’s national and cultural identity. He reclaims their existence and their attachment to their land; he voices the existence of the Palestinians in a world that denied and still denies their existence and their rights up to the moment; in his introduction to his translation (2017) of Darwish’s *Mural*, John Berger brilliantly comments on the 2008 war on Gaza, saying

Gaza, the largest prison in the world, is being transformed into an abattoir. The word strip is being drenched with blood, as happened 65 years ago to the word ghetto. Day and night bombs, shells, phosphorous arms, mortars, machine-gun rounds are being fired by Israeli army from air, sea and land against a civilian population. This is what constituted a massacre... but the government of the rich, with their world media and their proud possession of nuclear weapons; reassure Israel that a blind eye will be cast on what its soldiers are perpetrating. (5)

In the face of such ignorance and neglect, Darwish stands defiantly reciting his poems. In his “a lover from Palestine”, he addresses his beloved (country) confirming her identity

I saw you in all the salt & sand of the sea.
You were as beautiful as the earth, as children as jasmine

...

And you are my virgin garden

As long as our songs

Are swords

...

You are

Palestinian by name

Palestinian in your dream and sorrow

Palestinian in your scarf, feet and body

Palestinian in words and silence (my translation)

In another important poem during the same period “My father”, Darwish is told by his father to stay in the homeland and not to go abroad “my father once said:/ whoever has no homeland/has no grave in the soil/...

And forbade me to leave". His epic "an Identity Card" closing the volume *Olive Leaves* has been a fan favorite throughout the Arab world, and it became a rallying cry for the Palestinian masses. In that poem, he touches brilliantly on the affirmation of the national identity of his people and their roots during a confrontation with Israeli soldiers. He talks about his proud father who (similar to Heaney) forms a recurrent image in his poetry, Darwish says:

Write it down!
I am an Arab
and my identity card is number fifty thousand.
I have eight children
and the ninth is due after summer.
Does this anger you?

...
Write it down!
I am an Arab.

...
My roots
were entrenched before the birth of time
and before the opening of the eras,
before the pines and the olive trees
and before the grasses grew.

My father comes from the family of the plow
not from a privileged clan.
And my grandfather, a farmer,
not well-bred or well-born,
taught me to be proud
before he taught me how to read.
And my house is like a watchman's hut
made of branches and cane.

...
Write it down!
I am an Arab.
You have stolen my ancestors' orchards,
the land I farmed
with my children.
You left us nothing
except for these rocks.
Will your State take them too
as it's been said?! (Darwish 1973, 79)

As we can see the angry speaker is telling his story, which is in fact not only his, but it is all the Palestinians' story under occupation, how he has suffered patiently and remained proud despite the misery the occupation

has brought upon him. But now he draws a red line: he will not beg from the one who stole his land, and he will fight his oppressor. “Identity Card” was written within the first decades of the state of Israel, a time when the Israelis did not recognize *Palestinian* as a nationality and the words *Palestine* and *Palestinian* were never mentioned in public. Palestinians who lived within the border of the state of Israel were merely Arabs. According to Mattawa, Darwish’s translation and placement of expressions uttered in Hebrew into a poem written in Arabic made the private moment public and turned humiliation on its head. Palestinians living in Israel, “identified with this reversal as a way to turn *Arab* from a derogatory term into a declaration of dignified humanity before the Israelis, who confiscated their lands and officially designated them third-class citizens” (11). Outside of Palestine/Israel, the refrain of the poem “Write it down, / I am an Arab!” became a battle cry throughout the Arab world, and the poem became an anthem expressing Arab national pride and Palestinians identity.

Trying to relate how Darwish tackles and continues to reclaim and reaffirm the identity of his people in his later volumes, let’s now consider *a state of siege* 2002 that Darwish wrote during a series of lengthy sieges of Ramallah. In it he revisits his earlier poetry and refers to the fact that Palestinians condition as prisoners, refugees and exiles still persists and despite of this they still exist. Their mere existence is resistance through which they fight for their stolen land and assert their identity.

Here, by the downslope of hills, facing the sunset
And time’s muzzle,
Near gardens with served shadows,
We do what the prisoners do,
And what the unemployed do:
We nurture hope (*The Butterfly’s Burden*, 65)

Darwish imagines being interrogated by the people he attempted to portray in his earlier works. Addressing the soldiers besieging him he says: (To a killer :) if you’d contemplated the victim’s face
And thought, you would have remembered your mother in the gas
Chamber, you would have liberated yourself from the rifle’s wisdom
And changed you mind: this isn’t how identity is reclaimed (*The Butterfly’s Burden* 2009, 70)

Facing a new generation of soldiers—the sons of those who had imprisoned him decades before in Haifa, is the central irony of *State of Siege*, as Mattawa elaborates; the poet was compelled forty five years after “Identity Card” to write yet again about a confrontation with Israeli soldiers (2).

Talking about the land and the identity wound in a later poem “To our Land” from the volume (*Do not Apologize for What you Have Done* (2004) to our land

and it is the one near the word of god

....

To our land

And it is the one poor as a grouse’s wings,

Holy books ... and an identity wound (*Butterfly’s Burden*, 109)

Confirming the identity of his people and their land of Palestine in another poem from the same volume “ And we have a land”

And we have a land without borders, like our ideas

...

And everything from the faraway

Returns as a primitive countryside, as if earth

Were still creating itself to meet Adam

....

Then I say:

That’s our land over there pregnant with us (*Butterfly’s Burden* 110)

Here he upholds the Palestinian cause, according to Sazzad, from a planetary perspective, by alluding to the Genesis. He imagines that the land of Palestine is pregnant with her children (368).

Through the memory of his family, his father, his mother, his house, the land’s flowers, salt, rocks, oranges, olives, even in his confrontation with his oppressors, he preserves the identity of the land. Darwish makes present what was absented by the Israeli colonial discourse through creating a discourse of identity, a discourse of existence- even if it is an existence of pain and misery -as a counter discourse to the hegemonic Israeli colonial discourse of the non-existence of the Palestinians.

Moving now to Ghassan Kanafani, one can say that if Darwish is the poet of Palestinian identity; Kanfani is the novelist of Palestinian identity. Kanafani (1932-1972) was a journalist, author and painter who was assassinated by Israeli agents in Beirut in 1972 at the age of 36. From his birth, according to Karen E.Riley, the circumstances of his life were “inextricably enmeshed with the Palestinian cause” (1). His life provides a supreme example of commitment to a cause, and it was for that cause that he lived and died. According to Barbra Harlow and Karen Riley, Kanafani’s fiction presents a Palestinian perspective on a conflict that has “anguished the Middle East and the Arab world for most of the 20th century. It is a perspective that is vital to understand and to acknowledge the product of the experience of decades of dispossession and oppression”(14).

Kanafani's ability to illustrate the deprivation and sufferings of his people, Stephan Wild maintains, as well as to transform an ideology and political line into popular literature made him a grave threat to the Zionist entity(12). In 1977, the Israeli occupation authorities banned the performance of a theatrical adaptation of Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* because of its expression of deep attachment to Palestinian identity. He was also the first Arab to interpret Zionist literature and analyze the degrading way in which the Arab was depicted. It was Kanafani, according to Harlow, who in his *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine* (1966) first employed the term 'resistance' (*muqqawamah*) in speaking of Palestinian literature (1987 xi).

Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* (1969) Published two years after the Six Day War of 1967 depicts the return of the Palestinian Said and his wife Safiyyah to Haifa after 20 years of displacement. During the 1948 exodus, the Palestinian parents were forced to leave their five-month-old son, Khaldoun. Following its victory in 1967 Israel opened its 1948 borders to the newly occupied territories, which enabled Said and Safiyya to cross the border in search of their lost son and lost home. In Haifa, they find their house inhabited by a family of Holocaust survivors who have raised their son Khaldoun as a Jew and given him the name Dov.

Early in the novella, Kanafani stresses on the importance of memory in the lives of Palestinians. Once Said reached the edge of Haifa, " then suddenly came the sound of the sea, exactly the way it used to be. Oh no, the memory did not return to him little by little. Instead, it rained down inside his head the way a stone wall collapses. . . this is Haifa then, twenty years later. . . travelling north across the plain which was called Ibn Amar twenty years ago, " this is Haifa Safiyya" (*RTH*, 149-150). Once in Haifa again after twenty years, the painful memory of the Palestinians' panicked exodus returns to Said and Saffiyya,

all at once the past was upon him, sharp as a knife. . . he found himself pushed by an unseen force toward one road only, the road to the coast. . . people were pouring from the side streets into the main street leading down to the port- men and women and children, empty-handed or carrying a few small possessions, crying or being floated along in the paralyzed silence in the midst of the clamor and confusion. He was swallowed up in the rushing wave of humanity and lost the ability to direct his steps. (*RTH* 153-155)

Saffiyaa who was worried and went out their home to search for him, left Khaldoun alone at home, " suddenly she found herself in the middle of a wave of people pushing her as if they themselves were being pushed from all over the city in a massive, unstoppable, powerful stream. She was carried

along like a twig of straw” (*RTH* 156). Harlow and Riley elaborate that there is a certain “dissonance in Kanafani’s imagery that serves to highlight not only the violence of 1948, but also its brutal abruptness and the powerlessness felt by the Palestinians in the face of it”(23). So throughout the novella, the characters “at once”, “suddenly” are aware of something or remember something.

Harlow and Riley rightly indicate that the realist details in the novella lead to ““ something unseen”. The portrayal of the mass exodus from Haifa is gripping and vivid not only because it is grounded in historical fact, but because Kanfani renders it with acute sensitivity” (26). This dramatic painful depiction of the Palestinians panicked exodus is meant to give the reader an idea of what really happened to the Palestinians and how they mercilessly were banished from their homes by Zionists; this is part of Kanafani’s writing back to the Zionist discourse that represented Palestine as an empty desert waiting for Zionists to miraculously make it bloom. Kanafani also through this memory of Haifa exodus is documenting Israeli Army’s war crimes (the Israeli military strategy used during the battle for Haifa, namely, cutting of the downtown area from Halisa and the rest of the Carmel) against peaceful Palestinians and how these events were so compelling, tragic and inevitable to the extent that parents were paralyzed and were not even able to return and get their infant babies. The abruptness and suddenness of the events of Haifa exodus as it changed overnight from British to Jewish control is masterfully woven in Kanafani’s detailed description. According to Harlow and Riley, the dramatic flight of Palestinians forms the central image of the novella and “ the axis around which the protagonists’ lives develop and much of its dialogues revolve” (20). Kanafani depends on juxtaposing 1948 and 1967 events and this helps to clarify the importance of memory for the Palestinians who relive in the present of the novella a past event at the site where it first took place. Edward Said points out that Kanafani’s sentences “ express instability and fluctuation- the present is subject to echoes from the past. . . . in an effort to defend against the harsh present and to protect some particularly cherished fragment of the past” (qtd in Harlow and Riley, 21).

The relation between the memory of loss and personal and collective identity is clear when Said first catches sight of his former house in Haifa. He sees it as he remembers it, “the three cypress trees that hung over the road had new branches. He wanted to stop a moment to read the names carved long ago on their trunks; he could almost remember them one by one. . . Suddenly the house loomed up, the very house he had first lived in, then kept alive in his memory for so long. . . instantly he imagined that Safiyya young again with her hair in a long braid” (*RTH*, 160). Haifa, its streets, the smell of the sea, his house, his neighbors, his trees, his young wife, and above all the memory of the loss of all that constitute the identity

of not only Said, but in fact the identity of all the Palestinians. Yes, loss is part of their identity.

As he used to do twenty years before, he slowed the car down . . . he turned to the right and stopped the car in its old spot. Just like he used to do- exactly- twenty years ago. . . so he made the whole thing appear, to himself and to his wife, perfectly natural as though the past twenty years had been put between two huge presses and crushed until they became a thin piece of transparent paper. . . he took her by the arm and crossed the street with her- the sidewalk, the green iron gate, the stairs. . . the bell and the copper lock and the bullet holes in the wall and the electricity box and the fourth step broken in its center and the smooth carved balustrade which the palm slid over and the unyielding iron grillwork of the *masatib* and the first floor, where Mahjoub es-Saadi lived, where the door was always ajar and the children always playing in front, filling the stairway with their shouts- past all of that and on to the recently painted wooden door, firmly closed. (RTH, 161)

I have chosen to use that long quotation, as through it Kanafani is brilliantly reclaiming the identity of Haifa, of the streets of the houses as belonging to the Palestinians, this “once upon a time Palestine”, with its “green iron gates”, “the fourth step broken in its center”, “balustrade which the palm lid over”, “*the masatib*”. This is Haifa with its cultural identity that belongs to the Palestinians. The reader realizes how it is painful for Palestinians these days to see that place with a new name, people, and identity that deny Palestine altogether. The reader also senses how Kanafani is reclaiming the national and cultural identity of the place. Bhabha rightly contends that nationalist discourses are performative. He points out that “the scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture” (1990, 297).

This pre-colonial memory, despite the pain, is a very effective anti-colonial strategy in the face of the Israeli colonial archives that deny the existence of the Palestinians in their Palestine before 1948. The minute details of Said’s and Saffyya’s house in Haifa and their memories there reclaim their identity as the owners of the house, the true owners of Palestine, as Mariam, the Zionist occupant of their house tells them once she saw them and Said asks her “do you know who we are?” she nodded several times to emphasize certainty and admits “you are the owners of this house. I know that” (RTH, 163). Kanafani even did not forget to document and reclaim Palestinians’ resistance to the Zionists invasion of Haifa, through the memory of the priest’s house, “it started to come back to him when he passed a door he knew where someone from the priest’s family

used to live. The priest's family owned a large building on South Stanton Street, near Halul Street. It was in that building-the day of the flight-that the Arab fighters barricaded themselves and fought to their last bullet and maybe their last man" (RTH, 160). Here Kanafani is reclaiming his people's identity and is writing back to another Zionist myth that represent Palestinians as sellers of their lands.

Here it is significant to remember what Rossington et al, rightly said about memory and how it is central to post colonialism because of the ways in which personal and cultural memory can be used to analyze and undermine the structures of empire. It plays a pivotal role in subverting the hegemony of colonial history by offering alternative versions of established archives (9). Furthermore collective memory plays an important functioning role, distinct from history, in conceiving a society's past. Ricour believes in a strong relation between history and memory. For him memory, in the form of testimony, is the foundation of history, "we must not forget that everything starts not from the archives, but from testimony and that . . . we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past" (147).

Through the Zionist couple Mariam and Iphrat, Kanafani presents the Israeli discourse, "for Iphrat, Palestine was nothing more than a stage set adapted from an old legend and still decorated in the manner of the colorful scene pictured in Christian religious books designed to be used by children in Europe. . . it was a mythical picture" (RTH, 167). Kanafani further elaborates that Iphrat's convictions about Palestine were also formed by Israeli discourse found in such books as Arthur Koestler's book *Thieves in the Night*, "he'd read *Thieves in the Night* by Arther Koestler while in Milan" (RTH, 166). Dov/Khaldoun who has been raised by Iphrat internalized the stereotypes Zionists hold about Arabs as barbarians and Bedouins who know nothing about civilization and later in the novella when he encounters his real father says "we need to talk like civilized people" (RTH, 181).

In the significant encounter between Said and his wife on one side and Mariam and Dov on the other, Kanafani might be considered among the first novelists to give a voice to Jews and Israelis in his fiction. According to Radwa Ashur, Kanafani's representation of Jews and Israelis is the first attempt in Arabic literature to portray Jewish characters as sensitive human beings rather than caricatures of the enemy (145). Through examining the various criteria the two sides use to determine the son's true identity, Kanfani investigates issues related to national identity and the question of what is a home land? What is fatherhood? Is it a natural right? Is it a blood relation? Also he elaborates on cultural identity and the crucial role of acculturation. For Chris Barker, acculturation is "a set of social processes by which we learn how to 'go on' in a culture, including the acquisition of language, values and norms" (381). When Mariam suggested

that they call on Khaldoun/Dov to choose between them, Safiyya agreed naively saying “ I’m certain Khaldoun will choose his real parents. It’s impossible to deny the call of flesh and blood”. . . Said burst out laughing, his laughter filled with a profound bitterness (*RTH*, 172). Said bitterly knows what happened, how Mariam and Iphrate raised him as a Jew, as a Zionist who joined the Israeli Army. Said bitterly asks “ what Khaldoun, Safiyya? What Khaldoun? What flesh and blood are you talking about? They’ve taught him how to be for twenty years, day by day, hour by hour, with his food, his drink, his sleep. . . Khaldoun or Dove, or the devil if you like, doesn’t know us! The matter is finished. They stole him.” (*RTH*, 172).

The encounter between Dov, who has joined the Israeli army, and his biological Palestinian parents is greatly important. The long-awaited reunion between son and father takes the form of an encounter between the discourse of the colonizer and the counter-discourse of the colonized. Dov, blames Said and Safiyya for abandoning and leaving him behind and Said answers “ I know that one day you’ll realize that the greatest crime any human being can commit is to believe that the mistakes and weakness of others give him the right to exist at their expense and justify his own mistakes and crimes” (*RTH*, 186). Yes Said and Safiyya as we have seen were tragically forced to leave Khaldoun(Palestine) but this does not give the Zionists the excuse to exist at their expense.

This conflict over the identity of Khaldoun/Dov elaborates and to a great extent sums up the Palestinian misery and their identity crisis. Khaldoun who symbolizes Palestine that has been usurped by Zionists (Iphrat and Miriam the Israeli couple) who deny the existence and the right of (Said and Safiyah) the Palestinians in their land (Khaldoun), it is not only a struggle over the identity of Khaldoun/Dov as much as it is a struggle over the identity of Palestine/Israel. But this encounter is very important for Said who realized that “Man is a cause”, now he became aware that for the Palestinians to reclaim and affirm their national identity, they have to resist, to resist is to exist; this is clear through the character of Khalid, who is just a name in the novella, but despite this his presence even by name is very important, as through him Said(who refused Khalid’s wish before to join Palestinian armed resistance and becomes “*fida’i*”) became politically aware that Khalid is the one who will reclaim Palestinian’s identity and their rights in their land through resistance; being *fida’i* is an essential part of Palestinians’ identity. Said says to Safiyyah “ men like Khalid are looking toward the future, so they can put right our mistakes. . . Dov is our shame, but Khalid is our enduring honor” (*RTH*, 187).

Israel indeed stole Dov as it had stolen the Palestinian land; here it is important to refer to how Israel has changed the topography of Palestine:

bulldozarizing cities with its streets, buildings and renaming them. Significantly Said on his way to Haifa spoke to his wife about “the war and about the defeat, about the Mandelbaum Gate, demolished by bulldozers” (RTH, 150). This is similar to what Friel was considering in his play, the power of naming, the power of language as a marker of identity, British or Israeli settler colonialism have been very similar in their plans of cultural erosion of the identity of the land. Israel’s colonialism of Palestine from the beginning has been determined to erase the identity of the land through erasing Palestinian cities and giving them new names, just as it is the case with Khaldoun who became Dove. This is part of cultural politics, for Barker, cultural politics is about the power to name, the power to represent common sense, the power to create ‘official versions’, the power to represent the legitimate social world. . . meaning and truth in the domain of culture are constituted within patterns of power. . . power enables some kinds of knowledge and identities to exist while denying it to others”(350).

However despite the change of the names of places and streets, Said while he was driving the car twenty years later, he memorized the names of the streets, for him nothing has changed,

He was driving the car through Haifa with the feeling that nothing had changed. He used to know Haifa stone by stone, intersection by intersection. How often he had crossed that road in his green 1946 Ford! He was driving his car just as he used to, as though he hadn’t been absent twenty bitter years. The names began to rain down inside his head as though a great layer of dust had been shaken off them: Wadi Nissan, King Faisal Street, Haatir Square, Halsia, Hadar”. (RTH, 152)

Again and again, pre-colonial memory is an anti-colonial strategy through which colonized people reclaim their stolen home land’s identity and hence their own identity. Harlow and Riley rightly maintain that Kanafani’s stories contend with chronology, in telling these stories of the Palestinians, “Kanafani is retelling their history and re-establishing its chronology. . . works of literature, stories and novels, are brought then to participate in the historiographic process” (17). The fictional narrative of Kanfani does not only provide a historical account of Palestine, but a kind of topographical record of the Palestinian land, of the Palestinian cities and villages that were destroyed, rebuilt and renamed by the Israeli colonialism. Harlow and Riley argue that what James Joyce did for Dublin or William Faulkner for the U.S. South, Kanafani in his stories has provided for Palestine. For them “ the intimate connection between history and land is essential to Palestinian political and cultural ideology” (19). They rightly assert that literature can provide the human dimension that the historian’s work alone cannot (13).

To conclude the paper, one can say that history, memory, identity and literature are very interrelated domains. Suzan Sontage relates history and

literature stressing that “literature might be described as the history of human responsiveness to what is alive and what is moribund as cultures evolve and interact with one another” (*brain pickings, web*). Ireland and Palestine have been affected by a long painful history of settler colonialism under the British imperial enterprise. Throughout their national and cultural struggles, Irish and Palestinian authors have produced literature that narrates and writes back to such colonial repressive history. Nations are narrations; for Said, narrative is a method which colonized people can use to “assert their own identity and the existence of their own history”; moreover for him culture is a source of identity... It can even be a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another” (1993, xiii). Making use of this important saying one can say that literature is a source of history; it offers an alternative disruptive version for the hegemonic colonial history. Harping on a similar tone Barbra Halrow has asserted that “resistance literature” is a political activity involved in the struggle against dominant forms of ideological and cultural production and how it articulated a role for literature within the struggle alongside the gun, the pamphlet, and the diplomatic delegation (xvii).

The paper attempted to show how the selected literary works construct a counter archival narrative that reconstructs and reclaims the history and the cultural and national identity of Ireland and Palestine. Sontag brilliantly indicates that literature is a dialogue, a responsiveness. One task of literature is “to formulate questions and construct counterstatements to the reigning pieties” (*brain pickings, web*). The struggle against colonialism, ‘the reigning piety’ in Ireland necessitated and in Palestine necessitates writing back, reclaiming one’s own history, culture and identity. And this is what Friel and Heaney attempted to do for Ireland and Kanafani and Darwish attempted to do for Palestine.

For Frantz Fanon, the struggle against colonialism involves claiming back the history of the colonized people away from the negative and non-existent version of it produced by the colonizer. He notes that colonialism is not satisfied with holding a people in its ‘grip’ and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content, but it moves to the past of the colonized people to distort and destroy it. That is why Fanon calls for “a passionate research... directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others” (1994, 37). Stuart Hall responds to Fanon’s call and affirms that such ‘passionate research’ is a practice that entails “the *production* of identity.... We should not, for a moment, underestimate or neglect the importance of the act of the imaginative

rediscovery which this conception of a rediscovered, essential identity entails. 'Hidden histories' have played a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of our time – feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist" (1994,393). History, for Ashcroft et al, is a discourse that enforces what should be included as standard history and what should be excluded (1995, 356). Ashcroft interestingly affirms that the transformation of history stands as one of the most strategic and powerfully effective modes of cultural resistance. A key strategy in this transformation is the "interpolation of historical discourse. This involves not only the insertion of a contestatory voice, a different version . . . , but an entry into the discourse which disrupts its discursive features and reveals the limitations of the discourse itself . . . , it is in the literary texts that some of the most disruptive and evocative potentialities of historical interpolation may occur" (2001,103).

المخلص:

إستعادة الهوية القومية و الثقافية فى أعمال مختارة من الأدب الأيرلندى و
الفلستينى

نجوى إبراهيم داود

الثراء و التنوع سمتين أساسيتين من سمات الأدب العربى و الأيرلندى. الأدب الذى تأثر كثيراً بتاريخ مؤلم مع الإستعمار الأوروبى. من خلال هذا الأدب، سواء كان العربى(بالتحديد الأدب الفلستينى) أو الأيرلندى يقدم الكتاب قصتهم مع الإستعمار و أثارة من منظورهم و ليس من منظور الإستعمار. و كنماذج للإستعمار الإستيطانى، يعتبر إدعاء" حمل الرجل الأبيض" نقطة الإلتقاء بين الإستعمار البريطانى فى أيرلندا و الإستعمار الصهيونى فى فلسطين. والنهضة الثقافية الأيرلندية تأثرت بحركات أدبية قومية و أثرت و أصبحت نموذجاً هام لكتاب ما بعد الإستعمار. ففى كتابه الهام الثقافة و الإستعمار(1993) يربط إدوارد سعيد بين شعر وليام باتلر بيتس و شعر المقاومة و محاربة الإستعمار و يلاحظ وجود نقاط تشابهة بين شعرة ما قبل (1920) و شعر محمود درويش. هذا و محورية قضية الهوية فى الكتابات الأيرلندية و الفلستينية توضح كيف أن التجريبتين يوضحون بعضهم البعض. و يعمل هذا البحث على إجراء دراسة مقارنة بين أعمال مختارة من الادب الأيرلندى و الفلستينى ليوضح كيف أنها تعمل على إستعادة الهوية القومية و الثقافية للشعبين الأيرلندى و الفلستينى ضد الصورة المشوهة التى يقدمها الخطاب الإستعمارى للبلدين و سكانهم الأصليين. و سنتبنى هذه الدراسة العمل من خلال نظرية مابعد الإستعمار و الدراسات الثقافية و دراسات الذاكرة. و الأعمال المختارة هى: ترجمات (1980) لبراين فريل و قصائد شعرية مختارة لشيمس هينى. أما بالنسبة للأعمال الفلستينية فتحتوي على رواية عائد إلى حيفا (1969) لغسان كنفانى و مجموعة من القصائد الشعرية المختارة لمحمود درويش.

الكلمات الدالة :

أيرلندا- فلسطين – الخطاب الإستعمارى- الخطاب المضاد- التاريخ- الذاكرة- اللغة-
الهوية القومية- الهوية الثقافية

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