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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Redeploying Semiology:  
Contrapuntalism in Coetzee, Friel, and Darwish**

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Department of  
English and Comparative Literature  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Arts

**Sarah Mahmoud Esmael**  
Under the supervision of  
**Professor William Melaney**

**January 2017**

The American University in Cairo

## **Redeploying Semiology:**

# **Contrapuntalism in Coetzee, Friel, and Darwish**

A Thesis Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
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Has been approved by

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to approach the role of the self as it emerges in three texts that are differently impacted by the end of colonialism. This is done by redeploying Roland Barthes's theory of semiology as a way of looking at the spaces between signs as the clue to what the text suggests as a historical document. The spaces between signs will open up the contrapuntal readings of texts that are sometimes called postcolonial. This thesis examines how identity is unmade in Coetzee's *Foe*, Brian Friel's *Translations*, and Mahmoud Darwish's *Tibaq (A Contrapuntal Reading: On Edward Said)*. Roland Barthes focuses on how the textual signs can form a new image; hence, in a new reading of any text, Edward Said's contrapuntal approach helps contextualize these signs, allowing us to reach a more comprehensive reading. I aim at answering the question of whether these three texts are postcolonial. This study concludes that the three texts, which might fall under the umbrella of postcolonialism, can be classified differently, based on the contrapuntal reading of textual signs.

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## Introduction

J. M. Coetzee, Brian Friel, and Mahmoud Darwish are three canonical writers who have contributed to world literature. The issues each writer discussed in his works directly address social, cultural, and political conflicts their countries/cultures undergo. Despite the fact that Coetzee indirectly addresses controversial issues regarding his social, political status quo, both Friel and Darwish stress the discomforts their societies suffer. The three writers focus on identity in their writings. Some of their texts are inspiring for both common readers and academic researchers who pursue literary study and work on them. However, the first reading of any text cannot give a proper understanding of it, and, accordingly, the text needs to be closely read for its hidden messages. Such close reading involves critical tools in order to enlighten the reader while who examines the text. This thesis uses both Semiology and Contrapuntalism as tools to read the three texts in an attempt to reach a better understanding of them.

According to *The Glossary of Literary Terms*, “Semiology” means “the systematic study of signs, as these function in all areas of human experience” (Abrams 280). Accordingly, any text can be seen as a group of signs that form an image intended by the writer. One of the major literary critics who developed this theory is Roland Barthes. Barthes developed the work first begun by Althusser and applied semiology to the reading of literary texts. For Barthes, “a sign, in this context, refers to something which conveys meaning—for example, a written or spoken word, a symbol or a myth” (Robinson). Robinson further explains that for Barthes, most signs are mediated by language. However, semiology is also a way of looking at *the spaces between signs* as the clue to what a restricted analysis of the text necessarily leaves out. In his later work, Barthes often explores the role of silence, gaps and even non-communication in the reading of texts.

When understood as an interpretative strategy that opens up meaning beyond the text, semiology points to the world of intentions that a more restricted analysis tends to leave out. From this standpoint, the linking of textual signs to historical contexts involves a ‘contrapuntal’ reading of the text. In defining ‘contrapuntalism’, Edward Said states in *Culture and Imperialism* that contrapuntal reading “means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved... which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was forcibly excluded.” (78-79). From this perspective, the text is read in its context(s) in order to reach a multi-levelled analysis of it. When read contrapuntally, the textual signs can lead to a new reading of the text that includes both the text’s omissions and the author’s background.

The aim of this thesis is to approach the role of the self as it emerges in three texts that are differently impacted by the end of colonialism. This will be done by redeploing Roland Barthes’ theory of semiology as a way of looking at the spaces between signs as the clue to what the text suggests as a historical document. The spaces between signs will open up the contrapuntal readings of texts that are sometimes called postcolonial. The movement from semiology to contrapuntalism is crucial to the thesis insofar as the contrapuntal reading will enable a given text to be re-contextualized and given a new historical meaning. In this thesis, I will be examining how identity is unmade in Coetzee’s *Foe*, a novel in which the signs of the self take us beyond the text and allow us to recreate the context of colonizer and colonized. After discussing Coetzee, I will examine how this same redeployment of semiology can be used to decode Brian Friel’s play, *Translations*. Finally, I will be reading Mahmoud Darwish’s “Tibaq” (*A Contrapuntal Reading: On Edward Said*) to explore the degree to which Darwish and Said converge on the question of human identity.



In redeploying Barthes's semiology, this thesis will demonstrate how textual signs can be read contrapuntally in order for the reader to place the literary text in a more complete context that allows major characters to be assessed from a more inclusive standpoint. Contrapuntalism will be introduced as what lies on the horizons of semiology as an approach to the text that intertwines language, politics, history, geography, economics and culture. This key concept, which is less of a method than a style of reading, allows us to reopen the meaning of the postcolonial as a literary category that applies to various texts that explore the question of origins, even when origins are largely effaced as a result of colonial violence.

In the first chapter, I will be reading J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* according to this style of reading. In this novel, Coetzee attempts to demystify the myth of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In his text, Coetzee presents Foe as a normal character who has his flaws. Foe, unlike Crusoe, is a disorganised person who does not have a strong relationship with Friday. The irony emerges when the reader discovers that the narrator responsible for demystifying Foe's character is a British journalist who decides to go on a journey to re-write the story of the island. A semiological analysis of the narrative shows that the textual signs form a new image of the novel—a sketch of Friday's character. This is manifested in Suzan Barton's urge to know Friday's story in Friday's words.

While unable to achieve her goal as a visitor on the island, Suzan Barton faces a moment of crisis in which she is forced to re-define herself. A contrapuntal reading of Coetzee's textual signs reflects a level of conflict that is not readily apparent. The conflict is in Suzan Barton herself. She realises that she is unable to re-tell Foe's story and is unable to define herself as a person as well. Her *inability* to articulate her stance becomes a clue to her character. The conflict turns to be an internal one through which Barton tries to (un)make herself after her return from the island. Her crisis, however, is about being caught in the other—the other's silence and the other's language.

This shift allows Susan Barton to be presented as both a colonial figure who is impacted by those around her and also as someone who is perceived as a colonizer.

In the second chapter, Brian Friel's play is going to be read as an attempt to show how the colonised can alter their relationship to the colonized through the act of reading itself. Being Irish, Friel sets his play historically during the Ordnance Survey of Ireland that took place in the late years of the nineteenth century. This survey aimed at anglicizing Ireland; it eroded all signs of the Gaelic language and changed the Irish map as well. In the play, the characters do not read the survey *prima facie*. The major characters realise, based on their analysis of speech presented by the survey engineers, that this survey is hardly a routine action conducted by the British. In fact, they come to the conclusion that it is an 'eviction of sorts' since it attempts to erode their common identity. Having a physical map on stage is crucial in showing this effect of the survey. Ironically, it is one of the British officers who notices the loss of the Irish identity as a result of this survey.

Reading the play contrapuntally, we come to learn that textual signs reveal how Brian Friel dramatizes the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The source of rejection to the survey is to be found in three characters—Manus, Sarah, and the British officer. Interestingly, Friel portrays Sarah as a silent character who utters only two sentences: her full name and where she is from. This is done in Gaelic, not English. The officer, who is immersed in translation, is able to communicate with Sarah, regardless of the language barrier. Throughout the play, all the characters are seeking a convenient compromise in order to cope with the new status quo. Accepting the change, despite its consequences, the Irish people reinforce the idea behind the survey. "Let's make them our new home" were the last words said by Hugh, the schoolmaster; they mark his decision with regard to learning English. He finally decides to absorb the new language and make it his own in order to survive. The play reveals on a contrapuntal level how colonialism has permeated

the consciousness of the colonized to such a degree that a recovery of native purity becomes problematic.

In the final chapter, Mahmoud Darwish's poem will be read on many levels. While decoding the poem semiologically, we will attempt to cast light on the nature of the poem itself. The poem is an imaginary conversation between Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said that is purported to have taken place in Said's last years. The poem's title is significant as well. The word "tibaq" is translated as "a contrapuntal reading." This translation calls attention to Said's concept of contrapuntal reading. The poem, unlike Darwish's earlier texts, discusses the issue of language and its relation to identity formation. Like Hugh, the headmaster of Brian Friel's Hedge School in *Translations*, Said is lost in translation in Darwish's poem. Said's dilemma stems from being bilingual yet being unable to use both languages fluently.

The contrapuntal reading of the poem not only focuses on the linguistic dilemma that Darwish highlights but also reveals the dual alienation of Darwish and Said. In this poem, Darwish alienates Said, making him a prototype of the Palestinian-Americans who are lost in translation. Ironically, Darwish alienates himself as well in order to explore another important issue: self-formation. The formation of the self seems to be a process that comes before language and binds the two together in a common heritage, even if the political framework is lacking. The issue of self-formation underlies linguistic identity and argues for the connection between the two. The analysis of this poem will show how Darwish and Said attempt to reach another level of community through contrapuntalism, not on the linguistic level alone but on geographical and historical levels as well.

## Chapter One:

### Coetzee's *Foe* and Ironic Demystification

In *Foe*, J. M. Coetzee attempts to demystify the myth of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In the novel, Coetzee presents Crusoe as a standard character who has his flaws. Coetzee's Crusoe, unlike Defoe's Crusoe, is a disorganized person who does not have a strong relationship with Friday. Yet, Coetzee does not set the scene on the island as a mere contradiction of the original eighteenth-century text. Unlike the dominant voice of Crusoe in Defoe's text, the dominant voice in Coetzee's text is that of a British journalist who decides to re-write the story of the island and to publish it in England as an adventure story. The role of voice in Coetzee's novel is more strongly compromised than it is in Defoe's precursor text. However, the reader only grasps this contrast if the two texts can be placed next to one another.

*Foe* as a text can be divided into two main parts that concern the island and England respectively. The novel bears within it the elements of demystification. In his essay on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Coetzee rejects the idea of presenting Crusoe as a legendary character. He is against the idea that "Crusoe is Everyman" (Coetzee 21). In his novel, Coetzee tries to deconstruct this myth by sketching Crusoe as an ordinary man who is imperfect. In the first part of the novel, centering around the island, the narrative opens with Suzan Barton's first meeting with Friday. In contrast to what occurs in the historical text, Friday is present in the very first lines. However, the diction used to describe Friday is worth noting. Barton uses colonial diction like "Negro" and "cannibal" to describe Friday, although Friday is the one who rescued her. Suzan Barton will read this act of rescue, among other acts, differently in the second and third parts of the text.

“History is time on which meaning has been imposed” (Coetzee quoted in Penner 7). Since Coetzee believes that history is an event that has meaning imposed on it, as a fictional writer, he refuses to be “subservient to history’s incessant voices” (Penner 21). Therefore, *Foe* can be read as an event that re-writes the historical text in an attempt to attain to a better reading of history. In doing so, Coetzee’s characters struggle “in vain to escape their position of dominance/submission, and that at the center of their metaphysical world there seems to be an absence, an emptiness” (Penner 24). In *Foe*, Suzan Barton struggles with her disappointment in Crusoe’s life on the island, and experiences, for the first time, the absence of a human voice, the voice of Friday.

In the island section, Suzan Barton collects aspects of her story. She decides to write the story of her adventure on the island, together with Crusoe and Friday’s history. Suzan’s conversations with Crusoe serve as steps toward demystifying Crusoe and shift the focus of the narrative to Friday. In the island section, Suzan tries to collect the pieces of her image of the island that will be written in her adventure story when she is back in England. Accordingly, the island section can be read as a semiological account in which Suzan Barton examines the surrounding scene for signs; these signs will form a collage image of Crusoe, Friday and the island. In her first encounter with Crusoe, Barton realizes that he does not remember all the details about his life on the island to the extent that he cannot differentiate between truth and fancy:

I would gladly now recount to you the history of this singular Crusoe, as I heard it from his own lips. But the stories he told me were so various, and so hard to reconcile one with another, that I was more and more driven to conclude age and isolation had taken their toll on his memory, and he no longer knew for sure what was truth, what fancy. (Coetzee 12)

Suzan Barton offers this commentary as a reflection on her first encounters with Crusoe. The word “truth” is remarkable in this context. Being perplexed by Crusoe’s different versions of the same story, it becomes clear that “truth is a matter of complete indifference” to him (Penner 115). Crusoe shows that he is reluctant and unable to use his imagination to broaden his horizon in a way that would provide him with deeper insight into his condition: “It was a waste of breath to urge Crusoe to save himself. Growing old on his island kingdom with no one to say him nay had so narrowed his horizon” (Barton in Coetzee 13).

The concept of memory is a crucial in Coetzee’s text. Though existing in the historical narrative that chronicles the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, memory takes a different shape in the modern demystification of the heroic character. Given the fact that Crusoe cannot rely on his memory due to aging, unlike Crusoe, who kept a journal of his daily encounters on the island, Suzan Barton finally reaches a moment of disillusionment, since she will not be able to achieve her aim of writing Crusoe’s story: “Barton observes that he has kept no record of the passing time, and no journal, because, she believes, he lacked the inclination to keep one, or, if he ever possessed the inclination, had lost it” (16). “Crusoe rejects Barton’s suggestion that he keep a journal” (Penner 114), claiming that he forgot nothing. This moment serves as the first shift in Suzan Barton’s writing vocation, when she begins to focus on Friday.

“My first thought was that Friday was like a dog that heeds but one master; yet, it was not so”, claims Suzan Barton (Coetzee 21). Suzan Barton uses various references to Friday that differ throughout the text. In the island section, Barton uses colonial expressions like Negro, black, fishlike, dog, servant in describing Friday. Moreover, she uses the third person to refer to Friday while closely observing him. Barton’s first note communicates that Friday is unable to speak. Rather than in the original text where Crusoe taught Friday English, made him Christian, and had

many conversations with his servant, Coetzee's Friday is silent. Friday's silence is both physical and metaphorical.

When asked for the reason behind Friday's silence, Crusoe states that Friday lost his tongue before he, Crusoe, rescued him from the cannibals. Friday's verbal ability draws Barton's attention as he is only able to understand specific words taught to him by Crusoe, yet unable to understand their derivations. This is due to the fact that Crusoe taught Friday the "needed" words for their communication. Another shift in Susan Barton's interest takes place when she follows Friday to the ocean, where he practices one of his rituals, the petal ritual. Having Friday wade through the white petals on the same place where the ship wrecked alerted Barton that something is missing in Friday's story as told by Crusoe. Only then does Barton realize that Friday is not a cannibal. She begins to read Friday contrapuntally as revealing something basic about the colonial world.

In his definition of "semiology", Roland Barthes states that "[s]emiology aims to take any system of signs, images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification" (Barthes 9). Thus Barthes's system tends to sort or classify the signs into categories that, when combined together, form an understanding of a given situation. However, Barthes' system of signs lacks an important factor: contextualization. In reading the text as semiological, Barthes tends to separate all its components, dismantling them into pieces that can be used to form another image of the same text. Yet, this image is soulless. We might say that Susan Barton in the island section of *Foe* was reading the whole scene à la Barthes. Barton dismantled the scene on the island and fell into the trap of categorizing. This led to her confusion and loss of vision, which resulted in her deep disappointment later in the narrative.

In contrast to her confused condition on the island, Suzan Barton is able to think clearly upon her return to England. In England, Suzan Barton identifies her new burden: Friday's story. In this section, Suzan Barton acts like a Crusoe, but not like the literary figure who was more successful in narrating stories. She wants to create her own myth by giving Friday a voice. This act marks Suzan Barton's first step toward losing her identity. The narration in this section reflects inner conflict as she tries to place herself in history as represented in male myth. Her ambition is frustrated when she realizes that giving a voice to Friday is almost impossible, simply because "he has lost his tongue" (Coetzee 48).

By reconsidering Foe's story, Suzan feels that the basic narrative is little more than a system of lies. It represents a consolidated vision of how the colonizer regards people and places that he has never seen. She reflects on this, reaching the conclusion that the narrative represents her own conflict as well. This interpretation is expressed in one of her letters to Foe as she states that "the story of Cruso's island will go there page by page as you write it, to lie with a heap of other papers . . . also books of voyages to the New World . . . a multitude of castaway narratives, most of them, I would guess, riddled with lies" (Coetzee 50). These remarks suggest the concept of 'truth' that informs most of Coetzee's texts. This concept in *Foe* has postcolonial significance due to the historical content that allows a given narrative to be reinterpreted.

In England, Barton takes up the vocation of giving Friday a voice. Suzan starts to read for Friday and speak to him about several issues and topics. Yet, Friday is unable to understand her since her "speech" is not a lingua franca. "All I lack is light" (Coetzee 65) gives voice to Suzan Barton's final effort to solve her communication problem with Friday. In her continuous trials to document the story of Friday and the island, Suzan Barton gets attached to Friday's silence. She gets lost in translation because she lacks a human voice. The gaps in her speech reflect this



problem. These gaps becomes evident in five unsolved mysteries. First, the terraces built by Crusoe were never planted. Second, Friday has a missing tongue. Third, Suzan is curious to know why Friday's has a submissive nature. Fourth, both Crusoe and Friday lack desire, especially sexual desire. Finally, Suzan is confused by Friday's ritual of scattering white petals over the site of the shipwreck. It is what is excluded in all instances that always draws her attention, and in what is missing, we discern through contrapuntal reading the hidden meaning of the narrative.

“In practical terms, ‘contrapuntal reading’, as I have called it means reading a text with an understanding of what it involves . . . [and this can be done] by extending our reading of the texts to include what was forcibly excluded” (Said, *C&I* 78-79). In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said deconstructs commonly held theories of the other. He clearly states that when reading a text, with ‘text’ as a general metaphor, we should pay attention to what lies beneath its apparent image, to notice what was excluded, intentionally or non-intentionally, and use this information to re-read the text for a better understanding of its meaning. In doubting Crusoe's story of how Friday's tongue was cut, Suzan Barton starts to build her own hypotheses based on certain signs that come from her life on the island. Crusoe insists to keep the knife away from the equipment that was on board before the wreck. Suzan uses this as evidence to conclude that Crusoe and not the cannibals might be the one who cut Friday's tongue. These suspicions keep Suzan puzzled; she still sees Friday as ‘Other’. Suddenly, Suzan Barton use ‘plural form’ pronouns to refer to herself and Friday in representing the conflicts that “both” of them face in writing about the island. Barton was prevented from having a clear understanding of the story only because she is unable to communicate with Friday. Suzan eventually recalls that Friday's ritual included music and that “as long as I have music in common with Friday, perhaps he and I will need no language” (Coetzee 97). However, music does not serve the purpose that she has in mind.

“The story of Friday’s tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable to be told by me. That is to say, many stories can be told of Friday’s tongue, but the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday” (Coetzee 118). This moment of disappointment implies a paradigm shift in Friday’s life, Foe decides to have Suzan teach Friday how to write. In the act of writing, Friday performs his only act of resistance in the novel. Friday’s double writing attempts reflect his dilemma. In the first attempt, he is said to have “eyes with legs” because he is always being monitored. Friday initially rejects Suzan Barton’s attempt to see and understand what he writes/draws. He erases all that he composes in order to keep the board empty. This reaction confuses both Suzan and Foe since both of them become perplexed regarding Friday’s true story.

The second act of writing more completely reflects Friday’s dilemma. In this scene in the novel, the reader sees Friday, dressed in Foe’s robe and wig, sitting on Foe’s desk and beginning to write. However, Friday writes nothing but a set of letter “Os”. Friday’s production is interpreted differently by Suzan and Foe. This is the only time in a text that colonialism is brought into focus. Here the speech of the other becomes the major concern of other characters in the novel. However, the “O” in this passage is problematic. Both Barton and Foe cannot interpret it appropriately. Are they witness to the “O” of joy, pain, excitement, or does this letter represent something else? Dick Penner comments that “one explanation is that Friday’s “O” is also a zero, leaving Friday balanced on a pinpoint of time” (123). Thus, this “O”, being a zero, can be linked to Foe’s interpretation of it as a “tabula”. Viewing Friday as a *tabula rasa*—a white sheet—is another colonial description to which Coetzee objects but it does epitomize the violence of colonialism.

Despite the multiple interpretations of Friday’s written production, the mystery of Friday’s silence remains unresolved. Toward the end of the novel Coetzee creates his own version of the

eighteenth-century text: the legend of Friday. Throughout the novel, Coetzee employs semiology to dismantle the historic image of Friday as it is set up through the reason of the colonizer, Suzan Barton and Foe. Contrapuntally speaking, Coetzee creates his own myth as represented in Friday. The legend of the native and the truth behind it emerge as the core of Coetzee's text. This myth, however, is not pure but is articulated in cultural terms.

In the novel, Coetzee links Friday's myth to music and dance. The presentation of Friday's language as music communicates a civilized dimension in Friday's character.. Although Suzan links Friday's music on the island to a savage practice, she re-reads this act as a possible means of communication when she returns to England. She then starts to pay close attention to Friday's musical composition. The broken six-note melody that used to annoy Barton on the island turned to be a mute sign of speech. Having decided to resort to music as a "lingua franca", Suzan begins to believe that she can escape her dilemma concerning Friday's silence. Contrary to her expectations, this use of music fails, as there was "a discord all the time" in her life on the island. (Penner 124). The third part of the novel closes with another mysterious act that places Friday in a higher rank. Friday is seen dancing, not like a cannibal but a dervish. Dancing in circles in this manner represents "a desire to be liberated" (Penner 124). Finally, this scene marks Suzan as both colonizer and colonized. She is now a colonized colonizer who desires liberation as well.

Ironically, the problem of Coetzee's displacement as a South African writer remains unsolved at the end of the novel. In the conclusion, the anonymous narrator revisits both settings where the narrative has unfolded—land and sea. Coetzee's ending suggests that truth appears in various forms. Dick Penner comments on this ambiguous situation:

In this enigmatic ending . . . the themes of narrative art and colonialism coalesce.

At one point Barton asked herself, if Friday 'was not a slave, was he nevertheless

not the helpless captive of my desire to have our story told?' (150). [Friday is seen as] one of those characters who 'represent bedrock of the individual personality to no novelist, however piercing his intuition, can ever help to tunnel deep enough to reach'. In terms of both the narrative and colonial theses, it is significant that Friday is submerged, unresolved, and that of all the characters, he is the only one still alive.

(Penner 127)

The idea of displacement not only implies Friday, but also Suzan Barton and Coetzee as well. On the one hand, Suzan Barton's story lacks substance. Barton herself feels she lacks an essential element without which her story remains incomplete. This sense of imperfection reflects on how Suzan "feels insubstantial, suspended, incomplete, trapped in a world of things and events without order or meaning" (Gallagher 175). This feeling, however, can be attributed to Suzan Barton's gender. The earlier reference to Suzan as a Crusoe is an attempt to decode a gender dilemma. She feels that she needs to be liberated, thus, the voice of Friday is an entry to her liberation as well. On the other hand, J. M. Coetzee can be seen as a foil of Suzan Barton.

Barton's sense of displacement no doubt originates in the experience of Coetzee. However, in his novels, Coetzee does not represent post-apartheid South Africa directly. Instead, he focuses on the issue of language and the problems that inhere in human communication: "Coetzee's political silence, especially in the context of South Africa, must be recognized as conscious acts of resistance against the kind of realistic representation that is expected in many ways and required of South African artists" (Wright 7). Coetzee's resistance to politicizing his writings resembles Suzan Barton's unconscious resistance to act as a colonizer. The ending of *Foe* adds another dimension to Coetzee's sense of displacement as well. The conclusion to the text, besides forming an analogy to Suzan Barton's story of Friday, bears witness to the world in its dialogical style.

In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Mikhail Bakhtin explains that the dialogic text carries on a continual dialogue with other works and other authors where various registers interact (117). The notion of Foe's "worldliness" can be deepened on the basis of Edward Said's use of the term in his late work, *Culture and Imperialism*. Here Edward Said "extends the idea of the 'worldliness' of texts to provide the 'structure of attitude and reference' through contrapuntal reading" (Poyner 94). The contrapuntal reader must keep track of both the worldly and literary aspects of the text while reading/analyzing it, "to scrutinize the contexts of the work whilst keeping in mind its narrative pleasures" (Poyner 94). The contrapuntal reading of *Foe*'s dialogic ending opens up a path towards clarifying Coetzee's own situation and can be interpreted politically, even when Coetzee cautions us against political criticism.

The death of the female narrator in the end, together with Coetzee's insistence on fictionalizing history in his "quest for truth; the truth of identity, truth of silence, truth of speech" (Wright 64) as political in themselves, despite the fact that Coetzee resists employing overt political readings of his novels. A dialogic style of writing makes Coetzee's text "semi-postcolonial, contrapuntal" (Wright 10). *Foe*, therefore, provokes an answer, "anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction" (Wright 12). Accordingly, Coetzee's text can be read as an attempt to answer the question of colonial and postcolonial identity, an answer that can be read contrapuntally in Brian Friel's work as well.

## Chapter Two: Friel's *Translations* and Cultural Conflict

Brian Friel's *Translations* (1981) is indirectly concerned with the act of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and its consequences. The play's setting is in a Hedge School, a traditional Irish Academic institution where Gaelic (Irish), Mathematics and classical languages are taught. The play is set in the year 1833, nine years after the launch of the Ordnance Survey in Britain. The Ordnance Survey of Ireland took place between 1834 and 1846, according to the Ordnance Survey's official website. The apparent goal of the survey, as indicated in the play by the survey's engineers, is to create new maps for Ireland for taxation purposes. However, the survey resulted in changing the whole Irish identity significantly. Friel's play resents this change in its use of language.

With *Translations* (1981), Friel's exploration of the transforming and deforming potencies of words shifts from a personal to a communal/historical perspective. *Translations* deals with the ways in which the consciousness of an entire culture is fractured by the transcription of one linguistic landscape (Gaelic and classical) into another (Anglo-Saxon and positivist) (Kearney 25). Friel's text does not only present the change that took place in Ireland, but sheds light on the deformation and "eviction" that the Irish experienced. Throughout the play, Friel tries to find a common voice in order to survive the change, a defense mechanism to overcome the trauma of the survey. Friel's play presents different attitudes toward the survey, different views regarding the learning of languages, especially English, and, indirectly, presents Brian Friel's point of view regarding the Anglicization of Ireland.

The play opens with the stage directions describing the Hedge School. The diction used in the description is important since the academic institution represents the fading Gaelic society and culture. The furniture of the school is described as broken, old and inconsistent with the school's atmosphere. The opening of the act sheds light on the different types of the students: the infant

prodigy Jimmy, Maire who wants to learn English, the Doalty twins, Manus, the school master's son, and Sarah, the silent character who is being trained by Manus to speak. The location of the school is of importance. It is in the county of Donegal, a small county in Baile Baeg, which represents the Gaelic society of Ireland.

The atmosphere Friel tries to create throughout the play is one of survival. Its first mark is with Manus trying to teach Sarah to say her name in full. Sarah's deformed speech and her acceptance of it reflects a historical conflict Ireland went through during the survey period. The perplexed state of holding onto the Gaelic is represented through Sarah and Manus, in opposition to the coping strategy adopted by other members of the Gaelic community, represented by Maire and Hugh. In fact, the act of 'naming' is a major theme in the play, either place names or Friel's choice of the names of his characters. "My name is Sarah" (Friel 12) is a clear act of holding on to an identity that is endangered by eroding it in order to make it more comprehensible, not to its own people, but rather to the people of a different culture. "Fit me better if I had even that much English" (Friel 15) is Marie's reaction to a sentence uttered in Greek. Although she does not speak English well, she opts to use it as an escape from a city that is falling apart. In Act One, Maire's attitude toward anything that is English is being highlighted. She is the one who helps the English soldiers with directions while working on the land, and who is lost in her effort to communicate because she cannot speak English.

Friel, then, shifts to the major change that will take place in the near future. A new English school is to be opened soon and the Hedge School headmaster had already applied to work there. The imagery Friel associates with this news is significant. The "sweet smell of the potato famine" and the "black and limb" stalks suggest that something is falling apart and dying, which matches the Irish/Gaelic status at that time. Maire thinks that there will be evictions (Friel 21). Her comment

can be related to the new school and its system that only has English as its language of instruction. In her conversation with Hugh, Maire underscores the practical value of learning English: “The old language is a barrier to modern progress . . . I don’t want Greek. I don’t want Latin. I want English” (Friel 25). This encounter between Hugh and Maire is one of Friel’s textual signs that foreground the linguistic conflict that parades the drama. Knowing that English is not their language, Hugh believes that Gaelic comes closer to express who they are, while, on the contrary, Maire views Gaelic as a barrier that prevents her from achieving her goal of immigration to America.

Friel, then, introduces the idea of the Ordnance Survey. This is done through another Irish character, Owen, who is the schoolmaster’s second son. Owen, as presented, works for the British government and is the translator accompanying the survey engineers in order to help them not only in translation, but with their mission of creating the new maps as well. Owen’s role as a translator is a double one as he violates his role in his introduction of the engineers and the process of the survey. The diction used in introducing the survey engineers is especially revealing. Owen introduces the survey engineers, who are British soldiers, as his ‘friends’ who will be conducting an important operation in Ireland. Their jobs are precise: Lancey is the cartographer who is responsible for making the new maps, and Yolland is the orthographer who is responsible for the ‘correct’ spelling of the names.

The introduction of the mapping process shows how translation can be misleading. In his introduction to the mission, Lancey says: “his Majesty’s government has ordered the first ever comprehensive survey of this entire country-- a general triangulation which will embrace detailed hydrographic and topographic information and which will be executed to a scale of six inches to the English mile” (Friel 31). This long introduction is translated by Owen to the school community simply as “a new map is being made of the whole country” (Friel 31). With this, Owen wants to



“avoid conflict by softening the political edge and the real meanings of the English captain’s speech” (Bertha 215).

In flouting the linguistic maxim of honesty, Owen perplexes both Lancey and the school community. The moment that Lancey clearly declares that the survey process is a military one, Owen simplifies this by saying “the job is to be done by soldiers because they are skilled in this work” (Friel 31). Contrary to Lancey’s strict tone, Yolland is introduced as a civilized character who accepts differences and who is willing to work to bridge the gap between himself and the school community. Yet, Yolland’s role as ‘a corrector’ of names signifies the tendency toward anglicizing Ireland. Yolland’s mal-utterance of Owen’s name represents an act of correctness. Owen does not sound English, unlike Roland. Ironically, Owen does not realize that the new pronunciation is a symbolic eviction. He comments, “It’s only a name. It’s the same me, isn’t it?” (Friel 33).

Act Two opens with Owen and Yolland working on the new names on the map. Friel’s stage has two physical maps, an empty one that should have the new anglicized names of Ireland, and an old Gaelic one that is rich with details and names. The process of translation is the central concern in this act. Owen, being indulged in his task as a translator, makes Owen unable to realize the result of what he is proceeding to do. Yolland, on the contrary, is lost in translation and feels that the new names do not fully reflect the Gaelic ones, either in meaning or in history. “The place names translated into English words, lose all their associations, all the knowledge personal and collective memory preserved in them” (Bertha 213). This loss is evident in the translation process as both Owen and Yolland try to describe the meaning of the name or choose similar sounds to mimic the Gaelic ones. This results in a deformed anglicized name that totally changes the original Gaelic one. This action marks the steady steps toward eroding Irish/Gaelic linguistic identity. The fact that the Name Book includes only names and numbers indicates that the human factor is not included and,

accordingly, is of no significance. The whole process of Anglicization reveals itself to be a military manoeuvre that intends to erase Irish/Gaelic culture.

The encounter between Owen, Yolland, and Hugh signals the difference between Gaelic and English cultures. “I’m afraid we’re not familiar with your literature, Lieutenant . . . . We tend to overlook your island” (Friel 41). Hugh’s remark sheds light on the gap between both cultures. The first step toward closing this gap is made when Owen’s name is anglicized as Oland, a mixture of Owen and Roland that reflects the emptiness of the anglicized Gaelic names. This emptiness becomes clear in Yolland’s comment after his conversation with Hugh; “It’s an eviction of sorts . . . something is being eroded” (Friel 43).

“Words are signals” is Hugh’s description of language, and this description is accurate to some degree. Friel’s text is full of signals/signs that form his view of language as an expression of identity. Despite the fact that the first section of his text leads to the conclusion that this is a resistance play, Friel’s diction during certain moments in the text suggests the opposite. By placing the English school in the center of the city while locating the new Hedge School (where Manus will be working) on an isolated island suggests that Friel is displacing Gaelic existence. As of this moment, the process of partition starts. Act Two ends with the romantic scene between Maire and Yolland, which isolates Yolland linguistically by having him utter all the Gaelic place names correctly while Maire utters all their English equivalents together with the other English words she knows. Although this might be considered as a step toward bridging the gap between both cultures, it shows on the contrary how Gaelic is demoted as it is rejected by Maire, its native speaker.

The play ends with several turns. The term ‘turn’ as a form of change was originally used by Daniel Vitkus in describing the changes in Shakespeare’s *Othello*. Act Three of *Translations* witnesses crucial turns that reveal the core of the drama. “Do your job. Translate.” (Friel 61). This

is Lancey's first military order to Owen and marks the first turn toward revealing the true nature of the survey. The second turn occurs when Owen starts to repeat the anglicized place names Lancey uses, not in English but in Gaelic, which marks Owen's sense of responsibility toward pressuring his own cultural identity. "But the idea is that retaining 'original' names is romantic and a form of self-deception" (Pilkington 288). So the third turn in the text occurs when Hugh decides to surrender to the status quo and teach Maire English. "Let's make them our new home" were Hugh's last words suggesting that English is being adopted as the new language to help people survive. The final turn in the text occurs when Sarah loses her ability to speak and becomes silent again. This marks her loss of "physical identity" no less than her linguistic one (Pilkington 285).

Hugh's decision to teach English and learn the new anglicized names represents his attempt to resolve a historical conflict. However, this ceases to work as cultural identity becomes deformed and eventually lost. This resolution is not clearly recognized as it does not reveal the ambiguous nature of Gaelic identity as represented in Sarah and, ironically, Yolland. Contrapuntally speaking, the play does not resolve the issue it raises. On the contrary, it silences the voices that might threaten the imperial mandate. It is a play of resistance, not in suggesting how change might be produced but in enacting the suppression of Gaelic.

In the work of criticism, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Edward Said raises the issue of how literature can support human agency. He states that "the paradox is that something as impersonal as a text, or a record, can nevertheless deliver an imprint or a trace of something as lively, immediate, and transitory as a 'voice'" (33). In Said's view, texts "do not speak in the ordinary sense of the word", but they give a new life to the author, who may or may not be living; and this view is somewhat at odds with Barthes' theory of the death of the author (33). Thus, it is true that the author in some way becomes present in the text, and this is evident in Brian Friel's play.

The semiology of Friel's text suggests that *Translations* is a play of resistance, a postcolonial text that presents the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized. At the same time, according to Said, texts "impose constraints upon their interpretations" in a metaphorical way (*WTC* 39). Such constraints, in Said's view, are due to the fact that the text is read by a specific audience and needs to be historically contextualized in order to be deeply read.

In its own historical context, *Translations* suggests a reading that is formed by Friel's diction and imagery. Friel silences voices in order to deliver his message. Sarah's and Yolland's isolation and disappearance prevent Friel's text from becoming an unambiguous site of resistance. However, these voices become, in Edward Said's terms, "out of place but very much of that place, standing consciously against the prevailing orthodoxy" (*WTC* 15). Moreover, Friel's play can be read as a historical one that uses language as a tool, that dictates the "fate of the mother tongue" (Bertha 210). This fate goes through five phases in the text that indicate strong and weak resistance. Sarah's utterance of her name and place of birth in Gaelic in the presence of the survey engineers constitutes the first phase and a sign of strength.

The description of the survey by Lancey rebuts this strong existence as it imposes a new system that will change the status quo. The third phase occurs in the mapping of the anglicized names and the disturbing of Yolland that results in having him silenced by Friel, there supporting the proposed view of the survey and the Anglicization process. The fourth phase occurs in (de)naming Owen. This results in a denial of his cultural identity which he vainly tries to restore by insisting on the use of Gaelic. The final phase is represented in Hugh's/Friel's adoption of the imposed culture of the colonizer.

A deeper reading of Friel's text would allow us to foreground the background on which he relied while writing *Translations*. In his article, "Brian Friel's *Translations* and George Steiner's

*After Babel*”, F. C. McGrath draws an analogy between Friel’s text and Steiner’s. Steiner, like Friel, is concerned with the relation between translation and the effect of language on identity formation. Ironically, according to McGrath, Friel directly quotes from Steiner in an attempt to deliver his message through Hugh’s role in the play. “The corollaries that Steiner derives from this thesis and that Friel deploys in his play include lying and concealment as central to language, the relation of language to eros, the nature and difficulty of translating between culture, and history as translation from the past to the present” (McGrath 33). This suggests that Friel has consolidated the colonizer’s vision to express his view, and that he also exploits it rather than deconstructing it hermeneutically. But the linguistic context in Friel’s play allows him to rewrite history, figuratively speaking. A contrapuntal reading responds to a text that has historical meanings. The textual history that is read contrapuntally challenges a system of hegemony that depends on a specific use of language.

Edward Said has argued that ideas travel through time by different means. One form of travel is textual reproduction. Accordingly, reproduction becomes less opaque if we can link it to specific cultural contexts (Said, *WTC* 230). However, the past cannot be viewed in isolation from the present. Hence, historical context is important to examine, not only through Said, but through Hayden White’s notion of cultural transmission. White believes that “a given historical event is a fulfillment of an earlier age”, so that the present is prefigured in the past (89). Viewing the event as a historical sign allows us to interpret its meaning through the writer’s own culture.

In Friel’s text, the historical figure is not only the survey, but the physical maps and the acts of translation that confirm the whole attitude toward the survey and Gaelic culture as well. “Friel himself subordinates the cultural and political materials to the large concern with language that the play is not ‘about Irish peasants being surrounded by English sappers’, nor is it ‘a threnody on the death of the Irish language’. ‘The play’, he insists, ‘has to do with language and only language. And

if it becomes overwhelmed by the political element, it is lost” (Friel qtd. in McGrath 33). Thus, Friel’s play cannot be read solely in terms of the relation between colonizer and colonized as predicated on positions of power and authority.

The play thus turns out to be a record of the clash in translations. The first clash takes place between Manus and Owen in Act One, after Owen mal-translation of Lancey’s words. Manus translates Lance’s words differently, grasping the military notion of the whole operation and its consequences. Despite the fact that Manus, and the reader, see Owen’s translation as an act of violence, Owen’s mal-translation can be read differently. In his text, Brian Friel uses the word ‘escape’ to indicate a state of confusion rather than denial. Jimmy Jack ‘escapes’ to Greek and Latin literature because this is his ideal world. Similarly, Owen’s translations in Acts One and Two can be read as an act of ‘escapism’ that denies the brutal results of the Ordnance Survey. However, Owen not only escapes through translation in Act Three, but to Gaelic in an attempt to preserve an original identity that is being eroded. Yet, Owen is not unique in this respect. Hugh’s escape into English translation marks his desire to survive in order not to “fossilize” while Yolland’s escape into Gaelic marks his attempt to co-exist with the natives and an attempt to reserve this culture from its eviction.

All these struggles reflect Friel’s own struggles as an Irish writer. “Friel comes from a tradition of writers who have elevated blarney to aesthetic and philosophical distinction . . . [he] had developed a post-modern orientation toward fact, fiction, memory, and experience, and he applied that orientation consistently to the individual, society, and to history” (McGrath 38). Friel’s background, unlike J. M. Coetzee’s, led him to raise questions about important social issues. Friel brings these issues to a battlefield where all the clashes are presented in an attempt to resolve them. Yet, in *Translations* and other texts, the end is open to multiple interpretations due to the fact that

the issue is not fully resolved nor adequately presented. Friel conceals the other voices that might contradict his, like Coetzee who silenced both Suzan Barton and Friday in *Foe*.

In his text, Friel sends confusing signals through Hugh's words. He stands at the crossroads. He looks back over Ireland's history, trying to preserve his linguistic identity, and yet he adopts the English language in order to survive and manipulate the colonial language to serve his cause. Perhaps this struggle represents a perplexed Friel who is lost in translation, like his characters. This is another reason for concealing the voices of the perplexed ones—Yolland and Owen—so that Friel's confused, conflicting views do not appear on the surface. This linguistic struggle between two languages, a language of origins and a language of practice, will be examined in the next chapter with regard to both Darwish and Said. "Which language can fully express us?" is a critical question that confuses not only Brian Friel, but Mahmoud Darwish as well.

### Chapter Three: Self-Formation in Mahmoud Darwish's *Tibaq*

In this chapter, the final step toward the making/unmaking of the self is going to be discussed. Mahmoud Darwish's *Tibaq* demonstrates how the self, in becoming an object of its own examination, can decode itself and reach a new understanding of its identity. Edward Said (1934-2003) is a Palestinian-American critic and academic whose works are considered canonical and are read all over the world. Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) is a renowned Palestinian poet whose works have been translated into more than twenty-five languages. Both writers share a passion towards writing, the Palestinian diaspora and the exilic spirit of a perplexed identity that is in search of its origin.

*Tibaq* is an imaginary conversation that takes place between Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish. In this poem, Darwish and Said discuss issues of identity, memory, exile and writing. *Tibaq* can be read initially as *Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading*, an elegy lamenting the death of Edward Said, especially since it was written two years after his death. However, the circumstances in which the poem was written do not cast light on the true core of the poem. Poetry, as Darwish believes, is a state of exile where the poet can encounter experiences that make him rediscover, redefine and view past experiences differently. This notion of exilic writing is evident in *Tibaq* and will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

*Tibaq*'s title, as translated by Mona Anis, suggests that the poem discusses differences between Said and Darwish. However, the poem represents parallels and paradoxes in various disciplines. Contrary to the general title, the poem meticulously traces the development of Darwish's earlier poems as presented in this volume, rewriting them in terms of general paradoxes and then narrowing them down to the different representations of the exilic character. Like *Almond Blossoms and Beyond*, Ka-Zahr al-lawz aw 'Ab'ad is divided into sections. Each section has a title



that reflects its content. All of the Exile titles have paradoxical meanings. In “Exile I: Tuesday and the Weather is Clear” [“Manfa 1: Nahar al-Thulathawa-al-jawwsafin”], the poet walks aimlessly around an unnamed city . . . looking for his double” (Nassar 206). In this poem, the poet is in search of another self to help him identify himself. This search, however, occurs in an unnamed city and in an unidentified country, which reflects the paradox involving the specific title and the general, unidentified aimless wanderings that the poem describes.

In *Exile II*, the scene is different. In this poem, “the poet is no longer in search of his double or his language” (Nassar 208). It becomes clear that the poet has found a friend with whom he will share his journey. The place, contrary to the previous poem, can be inferred from the text; the poem takes place in London. The poem introduces the poet and his friend as strangers in exile; both are out of place. With the subtitle, “Thick Fog on The Bridge” [“DababKathif ‘ala al-Jisr”] (Nassar 208), the poem calls attention to a connection between two states of being: “The bridge here symbolizes the connection between home and exile, between exile and language, and between the self and its other, and between the two opponents striving for peace and reconciliation” (Nassar 209). Darwish here takes a second step toward narrowing the gap between the conflicts he is discussing throughout the volume. While in Exile I, the poet is searching for the problem, in Exile II the problem is directly addressed and reconciliation is reached.

*Exile III*, on the other hand, presents “a form of a dialogue with the shadow or the double for the sake of mutual recognition and reconciliation” (Nassar 210). Moreover, this poem is personal and in some respects autobiographical. In this poem, Darwish alludes to personal accidents and experiences that occurred during his life. Darwish refers to his own “exodus in 1948” and his move to other countries where he was forced to live (Nassar 210). In addition, Darwish reflects on exile, both as a place and as a state. He introduces his conceptions of writing about

home when in exile and relates this to his own perplexed thought of belonging: he is “of place, yet out of place”. “Although it seems in the course of ‘Exile no.3’ that the poet’s search for his double is finally at an end . . . reconciliation does not [fully] take place” (Nassar 212).

In *Exile IV: Tibaq*, Mahmoud Darwish draws on an imaginary conversation between himself and Edward Said. Contrary to the earlier ‘exile’ poems, *Tibaq* has a general title, yet it directly discusses specific issues. In this poem “Darwish recollects his encounters with Edward Said over the span of thirty years. The central theme of the poem is familiar, as the poet describes Said finding a home, an identity and a meaning, even while living in perpetual exile” (Nassar 212). *Tibaq*, however, has three published translations, and ironically each translation refers to one of the meanings of the term ‘tibaq’ in Arabic. ‘Tibaq’ in the Arabic Lexicon bears the meanings of equivalence, layers and compilation. On the figurative level, ‘tibaq’ means difference, contradictions and counterpoints. In his elaboration on the multiple figurative definitions of the word ‘tibaq’, Mostafa Dabh indicates that the referential status of the term ‘tibaq’ not only embraces antonyms but also the antonymous references of the terms being analyzed (32).

Moreover, the word ‘tibaq’ has a more sophisticated reference as there are ‘negative counterpoints’ where affirmatives and negatives are being compared in an attempt to decode or reveal another level of reading the text (Dabh 39). This reading methodology is close to ‘contrapuntalism’, as it refers to what is in the text, and what its author excluded. Compared to these levels of analyzing the word ‘Tibaq’, the translations of Darwish’s poem have ‘Counterpoint’ and ‘Contrapuntal’ as titles. The translation referred to in this thesis is Mona Anis’s *Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading*, which stresses perplexes and oppositional dualities present in the original text and carefully utilizes them through its translator’s appropriate diction.

In *Tibaq: On Edward Said* [*Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading*], Darwish presents clear characters, themes and questions. The poem opens with a place, set time and Biblical reference:

New York/ November/ Fifth Avenue  
The sun a plate of shredded metal  
I asked myself, estranged in the shadow  
Is it Babel or Sodom? (1-4)

In the opening lines, Darwish specifies the time of his imaginary conversation with Edward Said. November, however, can be a sign of birth since Said was born on November 1. Ironically, this image is contrasted to the Biblical reference of Babel and Sodom, as both are cities that were destroyed due to the moral imperfections of humans. Contrary to Darwish's poetic style that relates the Biblical references to the core theme of the poem, these references only comprise a general metaphor for change, re-structuring and renovation.

Darwish, then, takes the analogy to another level. He compares his vision to Said's at an early stage of the poem:

We both said:  
If the past is only an experience,  
Make of the future a meaning and a vision.  
Let us go,  
Let us go into tomorrow trusting  
The candor of imagination and the miracle of grass (9-14)

These lines, describing both Darwish and Said, emphasize the major differences between their vocations, that of a poet and that of a critic respectively. The paradoxes are clearly presented as

the poet (Darwish) discusses the past (history) in an attempt to educate his readers and to refine the present, and hence, the future. On the other hand, the diction identified with Said in these lines is associated with vision. The word 'vision' is used by Said in various contexts, particularly in *Culture and Imperialism*, Chapter Two, where the author discusses the mechanisms of 'contrapuntalism' and how to utilize it in order to decode eighteenth-century texts in the light of postcolonialism. The opposition between "the candor of imagination" and "the miracle of grass" frames a paradox involving the abstract and concrete, the real and the imagined. Darwish shifts then to the oppositional relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in the course of postcolonialism, a relationship that is based on hegemony, power and a kind of mirroring.

After that, Darwish shifts back to Said. In his description of Said and his daily routine, Darwish resorts to short sentences, swift metrical patterns and verb phrases. "New York" is used in this description not only as a geographical reference but as a time reference as well. The swift rhythms that Darwish uses represents the New York life style, and having Said presented as a multi-tasker refers to his will of fulfilling his role since his end is approaching. Ironically, setting the date as 2002 is significant since this was the year that preceded Said's death.

On wind he walks, and in wind  
He knows himself. There is no ceiling for the wind,  
No home for the wind. The wind is the compass  
Of the stranger's North. (52-54)

In another shift, Darwish draws an analogy between Said and the wind. Both, in Darwish's view, are limitless, free and guiding. The description, then, is voiced in Said's own words:

He says: I am from there, I am from here.  
But I am neither there nor here.

I have two names which meet and part...  
I have two languages, but I have forgotten  
Which is the language of my dreams.  
I have an English language, for writing,  
With yielding phrases,  
And a language in which Heaven and  
Jerusalem converse, with a silver cadence,  
But it does not yield my imagination. (56-65)

These lines mark the first note on the issue of identity in this poem. Said, like Hugh in the previous chapter, is partially lost between two languages. Said's inner conflict is clearly stated, although the conflict is linguistic. Said's dilemma of being torn between Palestine and America, is both geographical and linguistic. The reference to his two names alludes to Said's words in his memoir where he mocks the strange combination of Edward as a European name and Wadie as an Arabic one. Said is caught in a postcolonial dilemma as well. His linguistic conflict lies in his mastery of the language of the colonizer, his acquired language, as he finds it more expressive and universal. On the contrary, his 'original' language, though sublime, is deformed through the hegemony of English:

What about identity? I asked.  
He said: It's self-defense.  
Identity is the child of birth, but  
At the end, it's self-invention, and not  
An inheritance of the past. I am multiple  
Within me an ever new exterior. And

I belong to the question of the victim. (66-72)

Identity here assumes a more general shape. Darwish relates identity to humanity, making it a created concept, not a dogmatic idea that is resistant to change. Moreover, Said/Darwish give identity a more comprehensive definition: it is a form of existence; it is liable to plurality and universality and it holds both past and present as a foreground of the future

Said, then, links identity to exile. For Said, exile is a state of being, not only a geographical context. Said empathizes with Darwish by accepting alienation: he does not speak of himself as a critic, but as a poet. Ironically, it is Darwish who alienates himself by othering himself more overtly:

I am my other, a duality

Gaining resonance in between speech and gesture.

Were I to write poetry I would have said

I am two in one,

Like wings of a swallow,

Content with bringing good omen

When spring is late. (82-88)

Darwish identifies himself with Said. He is a 'duality', like Said, where he is lost in reconstructing himself through another medium. In this passage, Darwish is attempting to moderate this sharp distinction in order to merge with his other self, following Said's example. Here, Said is viewed as Darwish's other, the hope of change that will transform Darwish's identity into a secular, universal one.

The description continues and the shifts keep occurring. This turn enables Darwish to describe Said from a different angle. Said is described as a “different” person. His formed identity, contrary to Darwish’s, is a secular/universal one:

He loves travelling to things unknown.  
By travelling freely across cultures  
Those in search of human essence  
May find a space for everybody to sit..  
Here a margin advances. Or a centre  
Retreats. Where East is not strictly east,  
And West is not strictly west,  
Where identity is open onto plurality,  
Not a fort or a trench (92-99)

The paradoxes in these lines intertwine several issues. The allusion to Said’s vocation of deconstructing the colonial vision is clear. However, this description can be interpreted in the light of another poem by Darwish that was published a year earlier. In *Don’t Apologize for What You Have Done* (2004) [La Ta’tazer ‘Ammaf’aalt], Darwish writes on the relationship between the margin and the center. Darwish believes that the relationship between the margin and the center is oppositional, where the margin is at times in a state of non-existence. Contrary to this, in *Tibaq*, Darwish redefines this relationship by stating that all identities and concepts are open to plurality and that the sharp distinction between them does not exist.

Darwish, then, shifts to another analogy involving the writer versus the poet. In this analogy, Darwish distances Said and himself in order to view both of them clearly. In this comparison, Said’s attempt at writing non-fiction is highlighted, which can be related to his

famous memoir. The emphasis on the role of the poet is significant. Darwish, contrary to his previous poems, theorizes the role of the poet through Edward Said. This role, as emphasized first, is to mirror one's self in order to better portray it and explore its hidden paths.

He loves a country and he leaves  
I am what I am and shall be  
I shall choose my place by myself  
And choose my exile. My exile, the backdrop  
To an epic scene. I defend the poet's need for memories and tomorrow  
I defend country and exile  
In three-clad birds,  
And a moon, generous enough  
To allow the writing of a love poem,  
I defend an idea shattered by the frailty  
Of its partisans  
And defend a country hijacked by myths/ (119-30)

The role of the critic (Said) here is to identify himself and defend the othered self (Darwish). Here the vocation of the critic is given a new dimension, that of the defender. In doing so, Said is un-making a consolidated identity (as reliant upon myths) in order to establish his own identity through telling a story. The story is to be written, consolidating memories and future, where the memories (history) are revisited in order to free them from the myths they contain; thus, a more refined image of the self is produced.



Darwish, in his shifts between past, present and future, directs the conversation to early memories and nostalgias. The ‘nostalgia encounters’ fall into two parts. The first part occurs in lines 144-60 where Darwish talks of a general nostalgia:

So, nostalgia can hit you?  
Nostalgia for a higher, more distant tomorrow,  
Far more distant. My dream leads my steps  
And my vision places my dream  
On my knees  
Like a pet cat. It’s the imaginary  
Real,  
The child of will: We can  
Change the inevitability of the abyss. (144-53)

These lines mark part one of the nostalgia encounters. This encounter comprises oppositional dualities that fall under the ‘personal’ side of Edward Said. The paradoxes of dream versus vision, the imaginary versus the real, and the present versus the future, are in a constant struggle that reflects the inner struggle of Said in his attempt to identify himself in a universal manner. The second nostalgia encounter is short:

And nostalgia for yesterday?  
A sentiment not fit for an intellectual, unless  
It is used to spell out the stranger’s favour  
For that which negates him. (154-58)

This short encounter reflects the nature of the critic/intellectual who uses economic words to deliver his message. Nostalgia fits for Said on the personal level but does not fit his intellectual

vocation, since the personal can too strongly engage sentiments, rather than reason.. This stanza ends with Said's confession that his nostalgia is a struggle, a struggle that is both internal and external as manifested in the final nostalgia encounter.

The final nostalgia encounter is a specific one and involves nostalgia of place. In lines 161-86, Darwish recalls Said's 1992 visit to Palestine. On this visit, Said passed by his old house in Talbiya, but he could not dwell in it. This scene represents diasporic nostalgia where the citizen becomes a stranger: he is out of place, yet in place as the new inhabitants of his old house are Palestinians as well. The word "loss" in Said's encounter with diasporic nostalgia refers to the earlier analogy drawn between the writer and the poet: the writer cannot handle loss, whereas the poet can as the poem can change loss into hope.

This writer/poet analogy is brought into focus again, yet on an aesthetic level. Darwish writes:

He says: The poem could host  
Loss, a thread of light shining  
At the heart of a guitar,  
.....

For the aesthetic is but the presence of the real  
In form/  
.....

Do not describe what the camera can see  
Of your wounds. And scream that you may hear yourself,  
And scream that you may know you're still alive,  
.....

Invent a hope for speech,

Invent a direction, a mirage to extend hope.

And sing, for the aesthetic is freedom/ (215-31)

The analogy here is detailed. The key word associated with the poet is “voice”. Poetry, in Said’s opinion, is able to change loss into hope. It gives the silenced a voice to re-tell their story. Poetry, moreover, gives the geography, history and memory a voice so that aesthetics arises in an image that forms the identity of the speaker. The writer, on the other hand, plays the role of the camera. The reference to the camera recalls Said’s *After the Last Sky* (1992) where he and Jean Mohr documented vivid moments in the lives of Palestinians through photographs. The aesthetic presentation of the camera, however, cannot work solely in the absence of words, since words and images complement each other: “By the end of this stanza it seems we have already left the scream behind or, rather, the scream is now suddenly crafted into song, and we enter into the aesthetic. The scream is carried forward into the song that takes its place” (Butler 46).

The poem then ends with Said’s will:

He also said: If I die before you,

My will is the impossible.

I asked: Is the impossible far off?

He said: a generation away.

I asked: and if I die before you?

He said: I shall pay condolences to Mount Galilee,

And write, “The aesthetic is to reach

Poise.” And now, don’t forget:

If I die before you, my will is the impossible. (237-45)

Said's will is the impossible. Though this is unidentified, the reference to Mount Galilee can be of historical significance. Here Said clearly points to Darwish's own roots, even when they are threatened with the demolition of his home village, Birwa. The impossible, in Said's writings, is to recreate the colonized image through the narrative of the colonized, not that of the colonizer.

Near the end of the poem, Said is portrayed as a Trojan hero who is fighting two battles, that of cancer and that of colonization. This image contradicts the eagle image that Darwish uses to describe Said. Since the date was specified in the final lines of the poem (2002), a year before Said's death, Darwish wished this battle to be a re-birth rather than a defeat. The eagle, mythologically speaking, has the option of either giving himself a re-birth or submitting to death at the age of forty. However, Said was defeated in his battle against cancer.

The poem ends with the earlier metaphor of Sodom and Gomorrah: "And Abraham went early in the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis. 19. 27-28). These verses conclude the story of the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah as presented in the *Holy Bible*. The reference to Sodom in *Tibaq* is a metaphor of destruction and despair. Linking the Biblical reference to the year 2002 is of significance for two reasons. First, it is the year prior to Said's death, a year that was full of despair and pain. Second, it is a year after the launch of the War on Iraq and the fall of Baghdad, another image of despair that affected both Said and Darwish on many levels.

*Tibaq* draws on paradoxical textual dualities under which lie the intended message Darwish meant to deliver. Coetzee's *Foe* focused on re-narrating Friday's story from a different perspective, that of Suzan Barton, who is silenced due to being a female, and Friday's voice was not heard. In Friel's *Translations*, the colonized tells the story from his own point of view. The story in this case

was not of resistance to the colonizer, but of reconciliation that aims reaching a common ground. However, the role of the narrator is different in Darwish's poem. The major image the poem draws upon is that of both Darwish and Said, the writer and the poet, and it shows us how their resistance became a survival tool.

The voice performs a prominent role in this poem. Darwish voices every image in this poem in an attempt to reshape his identity, thus making the voice a moment of departure where the story is narrated from a singular perspective. The idea of the voice as a moment of departure was discussed in an article written by Professor Radwa Ashour. In this article, Ashour traces Said's moment of departure as the paradoxical result of a defeat and a revolution. Ashour mentions that Said's voice, as a critic, started to be clearly heard after the 1967 defeat, and that it became clearer two decades later after the post-structuralist revolution was accompanied by the hegemony of right-wing parties and ideologies in many countries, which signaled a huge change in world politics during the 1980s (Ashour 80).

On the other hand, Darwish's voice is viewed aesthetically. In his article "On Mahmoud Darwish", Edward Said states that Darwish's writings, involving voice, combine both the personal and the public (Said 113). Unlike Darwish's self-description in *Tibaq*, Said refers to Darwish as a "technician":

Darwish is also a wonderful technician, using the incomparably rich Arabic prosodic tradition in innovative, constantly new ways. This allows him something quite rare in modern Arabic poetry: a great stylistic virtuosity combined with a chiseled and finally simple (because so refined) sense of poetic statement. (114)

The aesthetic reference in Said's article points to an important term associated to Darwish's writings: virtuosity. Virtuosity, first coined by Theodor Adorno in his writings on Late Style,

comprehensively describes Darwish's role as a poet and an intellectual, according to the Saidian description of the term. According to Said's frame of who is an intellectual, Darwish's poetry is read as a resistance tool to the status quo and speaks truth to power as a narrative of the colonized not the colonizer:

This strained and deliberately unresolved quality in Darwish's recent poetry makes it an instance of what Adorno called Late Style, in which the conventional and the ethereal, the historical and the transcendently aesthetic combine to provide an astonishingly concrete sense of going beyond what anyone has lived through in reality. (Said 115)

Said's description of Darwish's poetry, written in 1994, matches Said's concept of Late Style that was published in 2005. In *Late Style*, Said refers to the intellectual as a "virtuoso". By definition, the virtuoso is a very skillful performer, especially in music, which is a form of production and a precise reaction to the world (Said, *Late Style* 128). From a similar perspective, Darwish's poetry, especially his late works, is product and a reaction to the status quo. It is a reaction to the continual efforts to erode his identity. To resist this effort, Darwish contrapuntally voices his own identity in *Tibaq* to present his side of the story in a universal tone that directs the colonizer to reconsider both the history and future of the Palestinian people.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to read three semi-postcolonial texts in the light of two critical theories, namely, semiology and contrapuntalism. This study has examined how identity is formed in each text and how its presentation allows the reader to approach the text as an expression of the author's culture and as a historical document that reveals the social and political world in which it is situated. Thus, while the two theories were sometimes used as complementary, we more often moved from semiology to contrapuntalism in order to underscore how marginal and previously undisclosed aspects of texts could be used to challenge standard ways of reading.

The first extended discussion involves a contrapuntal reading of Coetzee's *Foe*. The figure of Cruso is not presented as a legendary figure but as an ordinary character with unexceptional flaws. My analysis divides the novel into the island section and the section that primarily concerns England. The actions discussed in my analysis are explored in terms of Said's notion of contrapuntalism. In the island section, Suzan Barton, the narrator, uses colonial diction and perspectives to describe Friday and his actions. I propose a re-reading of the historical text and focus on the marginalized figures of Barton as a female and Friday as a colonial. The island section, however, is full of signs that Barton collects, reads and uses to form and write her own story of Cruso, Friday and the island. In England, Barton's vision is clearer and her focus shifts to Friday's story. Unconsciously, Barton develops solidarity with Friday to the extent that she tries to teach him to read and write so that he can write his own side of the story. However, all of her efforts fail.

Friel's play, *Translations*, is read as his manifestation of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and its consequences. 'His' is intentional in this context as the play, eventually, represents the author's point of view regarding the whole process. The play opens with the Hedge School, giving the impression that it is being demolished, and the owners and students attempt to stop this. The

analysis focuses on how the Survey foregrounds the erosion of the Gaelic language and how this erosion allows us to better understand the country and its citizens. My analysis reveals that the conflict is largely of a linguistic nature involving Gaelic versus English. The conflict is demonstrated in several encounters where the characters are lost in translation under the impact of presenting this conflict as an act of resistance. Contrapuntally speaking, the representation of a physical map in Act Two elevates the conflict to another level. During the Anglicization process, the conflict shifts from being an act of resistance to a matter of cultural hegemony. Ironically, Yolland, one of the Survey engineers, is the one who rejects the process as it is “an eviction of sorts” (Friel 46). The author’s reliance on George Steiner’s *After Babel* suggests that Friel, like Hugh—his spokesman in the play—was interested in reconciliation, not resistance. Nonetheless, a contrapuntal reading of the play remained possible due to the way that the discrepancy between two points of view—that of the colonized Irish and the engineers—was crucial to the construction of the play as a whole.

The redeployment of the textual signs is complete in my contrapuntal reading of *Tibaq*. In this poem, Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish indicate the importance of memory to both language and history. My analysis of this poem sheds light on the parallels and paradoxes of the writer and the poet through the linguistic context that is presented technically and historically. Torn between two languages, two places, two cultures, Edward Said’s conflict is brought back to its roots: memory and nostalgia. The nostalgia sections, as elaborated in the thesis, reflect the contradiction and confusion experienced by Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish. The contrapuntal reading of the poem, however, reveals that the writer, in order to preserve memory, hence history, should take up a vocation through which he can deliver his message in his own voice and in his own language; thus, his identity will not be lost in translation.



The late reading of the texts offers new classifications. Contrary to Barthes's theory of the death of the author, the author's culture is basic in determining the text's meaning. Edward Said's Contrapuntalism, since it combines New Historicism and Cultural Materialism with socio-linguistic concerns, offers the possibility of rereading any literary text. The three texts can be read as resistance literature when considered in postcolonial terms. But the contrapuntal reading supports the hypothesis that the three texts are semi-postcolonial and brings about new classifications of literature. Thus, *Foe* can be considered through New Historicism when it is examined on the basis of the periods with which it is concerned. On the other hand, since it presents a conflict over land and cultural hegemony, *Translations* can be read as a Cultural Materialist text. *Tibaq*, on a more sophisticated level, can be read as a philosophical text that clearly examines the relationship between identity and language through the historical context that is influenced by the cultures of both Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish.

The role of the memory is evident in the three texts as well. In Coetzee's *Foe*, memory is blurred and part of the textual memory is lost and silenced. In Brian Friel's *Translations*, memory is at the crossroads. It partially rejects the Survey, yet it creates a transition between the colonizer and the colonized through language. In Mahmoud Darwish's *Tibaq*, the conflict is more focused. It is a constant struggle to redefine the self and recursively recreate the story, revealing its hidden aspects. In short, Contrapuntalism is an approach to reading that can be used to decode literary texts on a more advanced level, hardly excluding minute details but also permitting broader patterns to be revealed on the basis of cultural understanding. By allowing the reader to analyze the writer's exclusions, gaps and silences, this unique approach to reading becomes a comprehensive tool.

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