

**Dramatizing Hegemony and Counter-hegemony in Brian Friel's  
*The Freedom of the City* and Saad al-Din Wahba's *Al-Sibinsa*: A  
Comparative Study**

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**Abstract**

The current study attempts a comparative reading of the Irish dramatist and short-story teller, Brian Friel (1929-2015) and the Egyptian playwright and screenwriter, Saad al-Din Wahba (1925-1997), in the light of Gramsci's theory of "cultural hegemony" and Spivak's view of the "subaltern". Two plays are selected for the study: Friel's *The Freedom of the City* (1970) and Wahba's *Al-Sibinsa* (1968). In the politico-philosophical shades of Gramsci and Spivak, the analysis of these two plays involves four main issues concerning dramatic achievement. Firstly: although Friel and Wahba never voiced an impact of Gramsci or Spivak in their careers, both seem to be professional practitioners in a philosophical, literary school firmly established by such two theorists. Secondly: despite representing a wide variety of conflicting *dramatis personae* that can be divided into two heterogenous camps, the oppressor and oppressed, each dramatist adopts a disparate dramatic vision. Thirdly: while Friel employs the flashback technique to unravel the tragedy of his three 'marchers,' Wahba depicts the pains of five 'subalterns' in terms of a direct plot line. Lastly: a close reading of the selected pieces may probably denote that, despite belonging to two different cultural backgrounds, both playwrights tend to dramatize the struggle for power between the voice of the colonizer and that of the colonized. To achieve such an end, both writers make their plays hinge significantly on the field of semiotics—deictic references and on Austin's and Searle's innovative ideas concerning the functions of speech acts.

**Keywords:** Brian Friel, Saad-al-Din Wahba, Gramsci, Spivak, Subaltern, *The Freedom of the City*, *Al-Sibinsa*.

## **Introduction**

This paper presents a comparative reading of the Irish dramatist and short-story teller, Brian Friel (1929-2015) and the Egyptian playwright and screenwriter, Saad al-Din Wahba (1925-1997), in the light of postcolonial criticism. Despite the fact that the postcolonial theory is a largely broad topic, the current study concentrates on the struggle for power between hegemonic and non-hegemonic groups. The two plays under study are Friel's *The Freedom of the City* (2013) and Wahba's *Al-Sibinsa* (1995, [*The Guard's Van*]). The study aims to examine the socio-political conditions via which Friel and Wahba's dramatic characters become subalterns, but it also seeks to reveal the characters' reaction against colonial oppression. To accomplish this dual objective, the selected plays are deeply analyzed, in the shade of the concept of hegemony and theory of representation, developed by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the Italian eminent Marxist thinker, and Gayatri Spivak (1942), the Indian-American prominent postcolonial theorist and feminist critic. Although such theories were not in the mainstream of criticism at the time of Friel and Wahba, the paper contends that the two playwrights tend to manipulate the assumptions and the tools of Gramsci and Spivak's speculative thoughts, especially those related to the struggle for power and eminence.

It is worthy of note that Friel's and Wahba's dramatic pieces spring from two completely different cultural milieus. However, they are apparently identical in that they both project a theatrical space. This enables each of them to castigate the colonial ideology for bringing in a hierarchy of power that dominates the colonized, transforming them into submissive subalterns. To dramatize such an oppressive practice, Friel and Wahba, alike, represent a wide variety of conflicting characters that can be divided into two heterogenous camps: the oppressors and the oppressed. While the former refers to the European colonizer as "the Subject" (1988, p. 280), in line with Spivak's terms, the latter treats the subaltern as "the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe" (p. 280), that should be subdued. The creation of such incompatible *dramatis personae* helps Friel and Wahba criticize the unjust system of power that, to quote Praveen, depicts the hegemonic groups/colonizer as "superior" and the non-hegemonic ones/colonized as "inferior" (2016, p. 249). Not only does the critique of colonial ideologies provide Friel and Wahba with a theoretical framework for illustrating the hidden conditions of subalternity, but it also helps both of them to show how the unequal power relations infuse into the disempowered classes a burning desire to speak for

their domination and resist the makers of their marginalization. Such an approach denotes that the subalterns/non-hegemonic people are not merely "the paradigmatic victims" (Spivak, 1985, p. 271) of colonial powers, but the dispossessed victims that are so "displaced" to the degree that they "lack political organization and representation" (Green, 2010, p. 18). Thus, Friel and Wahba utilize their theatrical art to endow the subalterns of Ireland and Egypt with a dramatic space via which they can voice their pains and dislocation in terms of linguistic tactics.

The theory of hegemony, as this paper illustrates, is a critical concept that investigates the reasons and conditions that cause not only a state of subalternity, but also "a strategy of power" (Urbinati, 1998, p. 370), practiced by a hegemonic group, to dominate and oppress a non-hegemonic stratum. This power struggle relies greatly on "a relationship of domination" (p. 370), via which the governing classes subdue the subaltern social classes. To resist this subordination, the subaltern subjects should reconsider "their current subordinated identities, situations, and conditions" (Green, 2010, p. 22), by adopting "a hegemonic transformation" agenda. Besides enabling the oppressed to unfold the evil power strategies that led to their marginalization, such an agenda also explains the measure of defying "the relations and systems of power" (p. 22), that result in hegemony and exclusion.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony has paved the way for Spivak to yield a theory of representation that investigates the reasons behind the degradation of the subaltern subjects. The latter's investigation has proved that since the Western cultural production maintains unjust power relationships between "the discourses of the West and the possibility of speaking of (or for) the subaltern" (1988, p. 271), the thinkers of subaltern studies should develop a "theory of representation" (p. 271), in terms of which they should examine the aesthetic interaction between "the domain of ideology" and that of "politics" (p. 271). That is why Friel and Wahba's dramatic art tends to reveal the fake cultural canons invented by Western mentality, to maintain the position of the West as a "Subject" (p. 271), while the dispossessed are represented as a submissive "other" (p. 271). To untangle the hidden ideology behind such network of power, one should consider that power relationships are so paradoxical initiatives that their manipulation as "a coherent narrative" is merely "a counterproductive" pursuit, that can be interpreted in terms of the critics' talent of creative reading, or rather "persistent critique." Armed with

this critical manoeuvre, one can delve too deeply into Friel and Wahba's theatrical portrayals, to unearth the ulterior motives for resisting marginalization.

### **Rationale and Scope of the Study**

This paper adopts a comparative approach, through which Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Wahba's *al-Sibinsa* are deeply examined in the light of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Spivak's representation. Although Friel and Wahba's theatrical outputs are the outcome of two completely different cultural backgrounds, a close reading of only two of such outputs motivates one to infer that they both seem to spring from the same colonial historical oppression. This assessment flows mainly from the fact that both Ireland and Egypt were colonized by the same colonial power: the British Empire. That is why Friel and Wahba tend to pick up a theatrical form that lends each of them a hand to dramatize the unparalleled moments of colonial oppression and miscarriage of justice. In order to theatricalize such a *leitmotif*, they both utilize different theater elements and techniques discussed by the school of semiotics. While the former may lay heavy emphasis on the behavior of language and fast talk, the latter depends on the aesthetic value of symbol and metalanguage.

Nevertheless, both dramatists seem to be identical in offering a wide variety of conflicting dramatic characters that can be divided into two groups. The first stands for the hegemonic group that utilizes its ideology of power to subdue the subalterns while the second refers to the non-hegemonic voices that are managed to hinge on some linguistic tactics, to dismantle the conditions of their oppression. To reflect upon the rationale behind such a fierce power struggle, the study raises several research questions: 1) What are the aesthetic features of Gramsci's hegemony theory and Spivak's representation? 2) How do Friel and Wahba theatricalize power relationships? 3) What is the theatrical form adopted by each playwright? 4) How are Gramsci's and Spivak's thoughts of power struggle translated in Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Wahba's *al-Sibinsa*? 5) What are the theatrical aspects of similarity and dissimilarity between the two plays understudy?

### **Friel's *The Freedom of the City***

Although Friel and Wahba never voiced the aesthetic impact of Gramsci and Spivak's philosophies on their theatre, *The Freedom of the City* and *al-Sibinsa*

seem to be compatible with the concept of hegemony and that of representation. Both plays provide a plot that addresses the massive consequences of colonial oppression and miscarriage of justice. Motivated by the fate of 13 Northern Irish Civil-Right marchers, whom the British armed forces shot dead on the 'Bloody Sunday' of 1972, Friel authors *The Freedom of the City*. Set in Derry, this two-act play opens with the distorted corpses of three helpless marchers: Skinner, a petty criminal, Lilly, a famished mother of eleven children, and Michael, an employed youth. After betaking themselves to the Guildhall, Derry's mayor office, to shun "tear gas and rubber bullets" (McAteer, 2015, p. 47) fired by the British army to quell the Civil Right demonstration, the three innocent victims are shot down. To illustrate the brutal violence of the colonial project, Friel sets up a military tribunal, replete with "a continuous playback" (p. 47) technique, which breathes life into the three dead marchers and gives them a chance to retell their story from A to Z.

### **Wahba's *al-Sibinsa***

A close reading of the two dramatic pieces understudy, elucidates that while Friel seems to be obsessed with "key political developments" (Roche, 2011, p. 121) of Ireland in the 1970s, Wahba is firmly engaged with the socio-political oppression of Egypt in the 1950s. Set in al-Kom al-Akhdar [the Green Mount] village, Wahba's *al-Sibinsa*, a three-act play, describes the miscarriage of justice that befalls Egypt before the outbreak of the 1952 Revolution. The play revolves around the pivotal character, Saber, a private at al-Kom al-Akhdar police station, who discovers a bomb near such a station. However, the bomb enigmatically disappears before the arrival of the investigation team. Embarrassed by such a mysterious disappearance, Darwish, a master sergeant, orders Saber to "put a lead of paperweight" (Badawi, 1987, p. 151), instead of the lost shell. On examining such a lead, Amin, a major and explosive disposal expert, confirms that it is one of the most dangerous bombs he ever defused. Consequentially, Saber is rewarded and promoted to become a corporal. That is why the mayor of the village arrests three local men arbitrarily for detonating the shell: Mahfouz, an ice-factory hard worker, Abd-al-Tawab, a student at al-Azhar University, and Salma, a charming, poor whore dancer. This overt injustice makes Saber show a grim determination, to articulate the reality of the false diffusion of the bomb, never taking into account the dreadful fate awaiting him.

## **Power Relationships and Friel's Dramatic Vision**

When comparing Friel's *The Freedom of the City* with Wahba's *al-Sibinsa*, one can discover that both dramatic pieces are probably maneuvered to hinge significantly on one central theme: the power struggle between hegemonic and non-hegemonic groups. To theatricalize such a fierce encounter, each playwright adopts a diverse dramatic vision highlighting the aesthetic value of dramatic language. Although Friel and Wahba never voiced the influence of semiotics on their dramaturgy, they utilize theatre elements and techniques recently considered by the theory of signs. The artistic ingenuity of Friel as a playwright can be traced back to his exceptional dramatic vision, via which he not only depicts truthfully "unparalleled moments" (Abbas, 2021, p. 177) of marginalization experienced by the Irish society, but also articulates "a postcolonial protest against British oppression" (Russell, 2006, p. 60).

To theatricalize such a protest, Friel, as Seamus Deane (2013) observes, represents a wide variety of conflicting voices. That can be divided into two incompatible camps: "the voice of power" (p. 18) and "the voice of powerlessness" (p. 18). While the former mainly flows from the colonial project, which utilizes linguistic tactics to maintain the silencing of the subalterns, the latter stems from that of the colonized people, who strive against the former's power strategy. This indicates that Friel's theatre is a "profoundly political" (p. 12) one, simply because it derives its significance from "analysis of the behavior of language" (p. 12): how the powerful linguistic acts of the colonizer motivate the colonized to resist in terms of semiotic moves or to go silent. That is why he creates a complex series of dramatic personalities that carries one to the root cause of colonial oppression and conditions of subalternity. Not only does such elements pave the way for him to unfold the crucial part played by the theatrical discourse in sustaining the authority of the hegemonic groups over the non-hegemonic strata, but it also helps him show the aesthetic interaction between "the behavior of language" and the "historical circumstances" (p. 13), into which theatrical language is produced. His theatre, thus, is described as a professional political icon, presumably because it reveals linguistic mediums adopted by the dramatic characters with the purpose of illuminating the fatal politics that brings on marginalization.

## **Power Relationships and Wahba's Dramatic Vision**

The sharp theatrical confrontation between the voices of power and those of powerlessness seems to be as much a key feature of Friel's as it is of Wahba's dramaturgy. However, Wahba opts for a different dramatic vision with a view to depicting the painful moments of oppression, threatening the Egyptian subalterns. To provide a critique of colonial subordination, Wahba, like Friel, represents a multiplicity of conflicting dramatic characters, that can be divided into two groups: "non-hegemonic and hegemonic groups" (al-Mursi, 2008, p. 219[trans. mine]). While the former refers to the oppressed, who struggle to gain their freedom and independence, the latter stands for the oppressors, whose ideological power gives privilege to the voice of control at the expense of the subalterns.

Unlike Friel's political theatre, Wahba's is a purely social one. This assessment springs mainly from the notion that Wahba develops a dramatic form, which aims to record the harsh social upheavals, not the political ones, prevalent in Egypt under the British occupation. "His very objective is to criticize the unjust social structures for not only widening the social gap between the downtrodden and the hegemonic groups, but also for bringing in backwardness, corruption and social injustice" (Abd al-Aziz, 2001, p. 131[trans. mine]). That is why Wahba is conceived to be one of the fiercest social critics, whose theatrical portraits, as the producer of *al-Sibinsa*, Saad Ardash (2001) observes, cannot be examined through the mere close reading of history. Rather, they can be best illustrated by "delving too deeply into the metalanguage and linguistic signs produced by the dramatic dialogue that can unfold the unjust relationships responsible for power struggles" (p. 93[trans. mine]). Such an approach denotes that Wahba's theatrical art offers an authentic portrait of the social forces, which empowers the ruling classes' position as hegemonic groups while simultaneously degrading that of the subalterns as non-hegemonic strata.

## **Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony**

To fully comprehend how the critique of oppressive-power relationships is skillfully dramatized in *The Freedom of the City* and *al-Sibinsa*, one should introduce Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Spivak's representation. Imprisoned over 11 years by the Fascist government for opposing Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), Gramsci's philosophical efforts culminate in the birth of a theory of hegemony. His analysis of hegemony is concerned with the relationship between the hegemonic and subaltern groups and "the symbiosis of coercion and consent

as the fundamental mechanics of power" (Hoare & Sperber, 2016, 132). Gramsci (1992) provides "a methodological criteria" (p. 52), or rather a reading strategy, in terms of which a literary critic can understand the sociopolitical and ideological horizons of the subaltern struggle, for achieving an egalitarian society devoid of marginalization and displacement. He contends that any hegemonic social group is weighed down with a burning desire to subjugate and oppress the lower social classes, mainly because such classes are "antagonistic groups" (p. 57) that should be liquidated and subjugated by various means of power tactics. The more such governing class wields power and leadership over the downtrodden, the more the latter have no options but to accept the "hegemonic activity" (p. 58) of its subordinator.

The total supremacy of a dominant social group over the subalterns denotes that cultural discourse is not merely "a privileged site of *political struggles*" (Hoare & Sperber, 2016, p. 29), but an aesthetic medium for generating and resisting power. Gramsci (1992), thus, instigates the theory of cultural hegemony to reveal "ideologies of the dominant" (p. 390), as well as set up a critical framework for examining the root causes of the exclusion of the dispossessed. To determine such causes, he develops six steps, or rather methodological criteria, in terms of which the literary critics can probe too deeply into the hierarchy of power responsible for subduing the disempowered. Firstly, the critics should divulge the hidden socio-political structures of "the subaltern social class" (p. 52)—the economic, historical and ideological changes that widen the gaps between the voices of control and those of the displaced. Secondly, they should elucidate the subaltern effective and non-effective actions in resisting or maintaining "the dominant political formations" (p. 52). To maintain the subalterns' resistance, the critic should concentrate on their relentless pursuit of changing the unjust power tactics responsible for their submissive conditions. Thirdly, the critics should look closely into the crucial historical events into which the new parties of the ruling classes seek not only to dominate the disempowered, but also to cooperate with them with a view to asserting their homogenic authority. Fourthly, the critics should analyze the socio-political project invented by the subalterns to wipe out their unconditional hasty submission. Fifthly, the autonomy of the subaltern indicates that the critics should also study the relationship between the political formations invented by the non-hegemonic groups and the "old framework" (p. 52). Lastly, the critics should look closely into the socio-political conditions to discover whether or not the subaltern groups gain "integral autonomy" (p. 52).

## **Spivak's Theory of Representation**

Motivated by Gramsci's methodological criteria, Spivak (1988) calls for establishing a new theory of representation. Her contribution not only unfolds the socio-political injustice that befalls the subalterns, but also castigates the unjust power relationships. To clarify such relationships, she argues that human reality springs from two forms of representation: "representation and re-representation" (p. 275). Whereas the former reflects the political discourse responsible for privileging the ruling classes over the lower ones, the latter offers an aesthetic depiction of the conditions of the marginalized. However, the artistic representation of reality intends to ignore tackling or speaking for the subaltern groups, mainly because the oppressed subjects are not portrayed directly as "a representative consciousness" (p. 275). To avoid such failure, the critic should search within the layers of the text for the ideological strategies that privilege the voices of power over that of the displaced, the society's other. While the first group of speakers are unmuted, the second of strugglers are muted, or rather coerced into a deafening silence. In order to break such silence, the subalterns should achieve a "transformation of consciousness" (p. 275), by gaining a powerful linguistic position. Such a criterion provides a strategy of reading, via which one can unearth the fake obstacles composed by the colonial project, with the purpose of lapsing the underclass people into total silence.

Although Spivak's two senses of representation aim at revealing the transformation of consciousness, Spivak argues that the critic should record how the subalterns can "know and speak for themselves" (1988, p. 279). In so doing, the critics can reveal the role played by "the workings of power and desire" (p. 279), in maintaining the ruthless exploitation of the "non-represented subject." To accomplish such an objective, the critics should search for what the literary text "refuses to say" (p. 286), by highlighting the silenced centers inherent in the layers of the discourse. The aesthetic importance of elaborating what the literary piece cannot say explains the reasons why the colonial project employs its ideological power, to mute the colonized lower classes by forcing them to lie silent within the domains of subalternity. The only solution to break up the bonds of this silence is to provide the postcolonial critics, with the practice of "the semiosis of the social text" (p. 287). Hence, Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Spivak's representation help one to probe too deeply into the heart of Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Wahba's *al-Sibinsa* with a view to contending how the epistemic violence of the colonizer can be translated into a "text of knowledge" (p. 287). It is not a

traditional dramatic portrayal of reality. Rather, it is a meta-theatrical text resonant with linguistic acts and signs produced by the voices of power and those of the dislocated.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Hegemony and Counter-hegemony in *The Freedom of the City***

Although *The Freedom of the City* rotates around the shattering experience of the 'Bloody Sunday,' a close reading of the play shows that it is not "a dissertation on this history" (Watt, 2006, p. 31). Rather, it is "a dramatized representation" (Kitishat, 2020, p. 68) of the oppressive relationships of domination between the colonizer/British and the colonized/Irish citizens. While the former stands for "the voices of control" (Deane, 2013, 19), i.e. a judge, soldiers and a general, the latter exemplifies the "displaced voices" (p. 18), e.g. Skinner, Lilly, and, Michael, who were shot to death by the British forces for participating in the march. The clash between such two conflicting groups helps one, to quote Spivak, to probe too deeply into "the networks of power/desire/interest" (1988, p. 272), that bring in an oppressive power strategy. This strategy sustains the position of the judge and soldiers as "a sovereign subject" (p. 272), while simultaneously treating the three victims as submissive others.

In order to dramatize such a power strategy, the play deals with a tragic scene into which a policeman examines the corpses of three victims to report back their data. Hardly does an unnamed judge responsible for running the military tribunal ask the policeman about the reality of the victims when the latter quickly replies that they are three persons: Michael, Lilly, and Skinner. Although the judge pretends to be very fussy about seeking justice for the victims, he provides the policemen and soldiers with a legal license to give their testimony "under pseudonym", to help them shun "the danger of reprisal." Still, he insists that "this tribunal of inquiry" is but "a court of justice", organized by "her Majesty's Government", to reveal the suspicious circumstances surrounding the murder victims during a Civil Right march. In it, the British security personnel is accused of opening fire on the marchers. That is why the court ought to carefully scrutinize "that period of time", in the hope of uncovering the hidden motives, that force the three demonstrators to seize possession of the mayor's parlor and defy the security forces. The pieces of evidence analyzed by the court should guide the judge to conclude whether or not the three deceased were armed "callous terrorists":

JUDGE: I should explain that I have permitted soldiers and policemen to give evidence under pseudonym so that they may not expose themselves to the danger of reprisal. And before we adjourn for lunch, may I repeat once more and make abundantly clear once more my words of the first day: that this tribunal of inquiry, appointed by her Majesty's Government, is in no sense a court of justice. (Friel, 2013, p. 109)

Since the judge represents the voice of power, he produces a long-form of speech that belongs to what Elaine Aston and George Savona call "a self-contained statement" (2013, p. 58). It is a linguistic structure that requires no reaction or response from the absent addressee, the three deceased victims, intending to justify the British colonizer's unprovoked military aggression. To accomplish such an objective, the judge's dramatic world is actualized by using indices: "I" referring to the judge himself, "we" standing for the cooperation between the legislative and executive authority, and "this" indicating "tribunal of inquiry." While the index "I" is utilized thrice, the pronoun "we" is mentioned once and the determiner "this," the main topic of the judge's discourse, is also used once. The repetitive use of the pronoun "I" enables the judge, to borrow John Austin's terms, to yield commissive "illocutionary forces" (2020, p. 149) of utterances, viz. "I should explain that," "may I repeat once more and make abundantly clear once more my words," "this tribunal of inquiry . . . is in no sense a court of justice," and "Our only function is to form an objective view of the events." These speech events commit the judge to "a certain course of action" (p. 156) inherent in creating "vague things" (p. 151), or rather fake "declarations or announcements of intention" (p. 151), via which victims of colonialization are beguiled into believing in the justice of their oppressors. In short, the judge's commissives, to quote Gramsci, are but semiotic initiatives via which Friel illustrates the "coercive power" (1992, p. 12) of the dominant fundamental group that employs the law to "legally" enforce domination on the subalterns.

Since the play deals with the notion that its three pivotal characters are "already dead" (Watt, 2006, p. 33), Friel employs "occasional flashbacks" (Russell, 2006, p. 47). His objective is to unfold the massive consequences of the colonial coercive power on the three victims. Horrified by the unprovoked aggression of the British forces, Skinner, Lilly and Michael seek refuge in Guildhall, Derry's civic office, where they get acquainted with each other. To get rid of the horror of the British security personnel, Skinner organizes a power game in which he acts the role of the director. He enters the mayor's dressing-room and

appears wearing a “splendid mayoral robe and chain,” putting a “ceremonial hat” on his head. Not only does he distribute imperial gowns and “headgear” to Lilly and Michael, but he also asks them to dress in the clothes, in the hope of achieving the freedom of the city. Astonished though they are, both characters obey Skinner so as to reach a position of power never felt before. Scarcely do Lilly and Michael put on the robes and Skinner gets “the Union Jack” and “the ceremonial sword”, when they start to “taste real power” via which the “three gutties” are transformed into “freemen.” What is strange is that Skinner’s speech is accompanied by a high military band played on the mayor’s radio, so that they might shout at each other to be heard:

SKINNER: Mayor’s robes, alderman’s robes, councillor’s robes. Put them on and I’ll give you both the freedom of the city. . . . Three gutties become freemen.’ Apologies, Mr Hegarty! ‘Two gutties.’ What happened to the Orphans’ Orchestra? (*He switches on the radio. A military band. They have to shout to be heard above it.*) . . . Don the robes, ladies and gentlemen, and taste real power. (Friel, 2013, p. 135)

By providing Skinner with an ecstasy to make free with Lord Mayor’s ceremonial robes, chain, hat, sword and the Union flag, Friel offers “undoubtedly subversive” (McAteer, 2016, p. 49) moments. Skinner’s behavior to such a ceremonial garb denotes that his game of power is not merely an expression of the subaltern’s firing desire to challenge the makers of their dislocation but a linguistic move that reflects the subaltern’s “lack of respect” (Roche, 2011, p. 120) for the colonial authority. That is why his context of utterance, to use John Searle’s terms, is replete with “directive” (1999, p. 27) speech acts— illocutionary points, exerted by the speaker/Skinner to “get the hearer,” (p. 13) Lilly and Michael, to obey his conditional imperatives. No sooner does he hold the sword than he produces two central directive speech events: “Put them on and I’ll give you both the freedom of the city” and “Don the robes, ladies and gentlemen, and taste real power.” Besides, Friel’s theatrical maturity reaches the fore when he represents the character’s dialogue, incorporated with the loud music of the military band, which forces them to communicate with each other by shouting. This semiotic act, along with the iterative use of directives, motivates one, to quote Spivak, to figure out that the speech points produced by Skinner are incomplete because the high music of the band prevents them from being heard. Even if the three victims exert themselves to speak, they are not "able to be heard" (1996, p. 292). Neither does the inability of speaking nor being heard hinder them from

joining the resistance program, via which they can certainly annihilate the unjust power relationships responsible for their marginalization.

Nevertheless, the three victims' road to hegemony is interrupted by the sudden appearance of Johnson-Hansbury, a British brigadier, responsible for quelling the demonstration. His appearance denotes that the play depicts "a heightened and stylized confrontation" (Winkler, 1981, p. 16) between "the physical power" (p. 16) of the colonizer and the sympathetic helplessness of the colonized demonstrators. It is a power relationship through which the former tries to evince the false clue that the latter is armed, thereby deserving to be shot dead. This is best illustrated when he uses a loudhailer to beat the three victims into surrendering. He declares, more than once, that the British army is confident that they carry weapons, advising the marchers to put them down, otherwise, the British forces will shoot at them. To eschew the harsh attack of the colonizer, the three characters are intended not only to "lay down" their nonexistent arms but also to come out of the civic office with their hands above their heads, for the mayor's office is completely surrounded. The more the brigadier repeats the call, the more the characters are filled with a sense of wonder, mainly because they possess no arms:

BRIGADIER: This is Brigadier Johnson-Hansbury. We know exactly where you are and we know that you are armed. I advise you to surrender now before there is loss of life. So lay down your arms and proceed to the front entrance with your hands above your head. . . . I urge you to follow this advice before there is loss of life. (Friel, 2013, p.147)

If the brigadier's warning is scratched, one can discover that language seems to be the most effective tool of "colonial authority" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 2002, p. 164). This critical estimation stems mainly from the notion that the brigadier's utterance draws greatly on what Elam called an I/we "addressing a you here and now" (2002, p. 124). The index "I" refers to the British commander himself; the pronoun "we" stands for the British authority; the index "you" signifies Lilly, Skinner and Michael. While the pronouns "I" and "we" are used twice each, the index "you" is employed fourfold. The repetition of such indexical points, to quote Austin, enables Friel to create an oppressive communicative context, in terms of which he shows how the voice of power, the brigadier/I and the British authority/we, yields "execrative" (2020, p. 155) speech events with a view to subduing the three subalterns. Such linguistic forces are but an "exercising

of powers” (p. 150), practiced by the colonizer’s aggressive force in the hope of starving the three marchers into submission. In this regard, the Brigadier’s statements that “proceed to the front entrance with your hands above your head” is not merely an execrative speech event but “a decision” (p. 154), made by the hegemonic groups in order that the three marchers may be “compelled or allowed or not allowed to do certain acts” (p. 154). By revisiting Gramsci’s methodological criteria for studying the history of the subalterns, one can estimate that the brigadier’s attitude hinges on the execrative illocutionary utterances, mainly because he holds that the three marchers are merely “antagonistic” figures that ought to be liquidated, or rather subjugated “perhaps even by armed force” (1992, p. 57).

Hardly does the Brigadier make a death threat against the three demonstrators when the growing heterogeneity among them is best illustrated through three dramatic situations. First, since Lilly is a true subaltern who leads a gloomy life of poverty and wretchedness, she perceives “the world as patently unfair” (McGrath, 1999, 102). Upon the brigadier’s menace, she realizes that she is fated to die, complaining to Jesus about the injustice of the colonial authority that leaves her no options but to experience the bitterness of eternal marginalization and panic. Propelled by such a deep sense of despair, she realizes that her life is not only finished but also “seeped away” gradually as if she never felt existence before. The more she discovers that she will be shot down, the more she contends that life has “somehow eluded” her – for she is never given a chance to articulate her agonies, whether they are trifle or not. Her inability to express her displacement drives her to confirm that she will be killed by the absence of an egalitarian society, not by the bullets of the British forces:

LILY: The moment we stepped outside the front door I knew I was going to die, instinctively, the way an animal knows. . . . Because it was succeeded, overtaken, overwhelmed by a tidal wave of regret, not for myself nor my family, but that life had somehow eluded me. And now it was finished; it had all seeped away; and I had never experienced it. And in the silence before my body disintegrated in a purple convulsion, I thought I glimpsed . . . I died of grief. (Friel, 2013, p.150)

Lilly’s speculations about her brutal murder represent what Susan Wittig (2006) calls “the conative function” (p. 447) of dramatic language. It is a semiotic device through which Lilly tries to create an emotional communicative context with the receiver of theatrical signs. To achieve such a communication, she

depends on the semiotic tool of deixis: “we”, referring to the three victims, “I” standing for Lilly herself, and “it”, exemplifying Lilly’s subordinated gloomy life. The pronoun “we” is used once, whereas the person-deixis “I” is repeated seven times and the dummy “it” is utilized fourfold. The repetitive use of such indexical expressions, particularly the index “it”, which refers to the topic of discourse, Lilly’s deep sadness over the colonizer’s dogged determination on killing her, as if she were an animal, helps Friel produce what Searle labelled “assertive class” (1999, p. 12) of speech acts. Such speech linguistic events, to quote Searle, enable Lilly to bring into prominence “determinables rather than determinates” illocutionary forces. Not only do such events pave the way for her to delve too deeply into her psychological state by yielding theatrical utterances from “beyond death” (Winkler, 1981, p. 19), but they also lend her a hand to shatter the chains of oppression imposed by the colonial ideology. In short, Lilly’s assertiveness denotes that the subalterns, to borrow Spivak’s words, can “know and speak for themselves” (1988, p. 279) even if they seem to be on the threshold of death, not to say they are already dead.

The second essential theatrical schema, reflecting the diverse resistance tactics adopted by the three murdered victims is best dramatized through Skinner’s character. Unlike Lilly who is directed by “her instincts as a mother” (Winkler, 1981, p. 18), Skinner is a pragmatic person, simply because he grasps that from the very moments he has seized the civic office “a price would be exacted” (Friel, 2013, p. 150): the poor should always be “overcharged” (p. 151). Motivated by the despair and injustice brought on by the British colonizer, he decides to assume the role of a judge, who thoroughly interrogates Lilly about the reasons why she demonstrates against the authorities. Lilly states that she has aimed to secure the right to vote and fair civil rights for all the Irish downtrodden and stop “gerrymandering.” However, the former does not believe in the reality of her statements, presumably because he suspects that something may belie her testimony. Lilly’s fake answer urges Skinner to cite the ulterior motives that force her take part in the protest. He, thus, contends that she is involved in the demonstration for four reasons: 1) She lives with eleven kids and a disabled husband in a warehouse suitable only for animals. 2) She exists on “a state subsistence,” or rather the condition of abject poverty. 3) She plans to save her children from the massive consequences of unjust socio-political system. 4) Demonstration endows her with a chance to grumble as well as listen to the severe

pains of other subalterns who have no choice but to ranting on about their marginalization:

SKINNER: Why do you march? . . . Why did you march today? . . . Why were you out? . . . I'll tell you why you march. . . . Because you live with eleven kids and a sick husband . . . . Because you exist on a state subsistence. . . . Because you know your children are caught in the same morass. Because for the first time in your life you grumbled and . . . became aware that there were hundreds, thousands, millions of us all over the world. (Friel, 2013, pp. 153-154)

The semiotic approach to Skinner's dialogue with Lilly implies that the former attains a linguistic position that makes him a voice of power. His highly inquisitive interrogation, along with the repetition of the conjunction "because" fourfold, provides him with what Emile Benveniste (1971) called "a very specific linguistic quality" (p. 61). His style hinges greatly on the interrogation form in addressing Lilly: "Why do you march? Why did you march today? Why were you out?" Not only does the iteration of such central questions transform the murdered Skinner from being a helpless subaltern into a dominant voice that seeks to reveal the root cause, behind the deprivation and dislocation resulting from the imperial power, but it also shows that his context of utterance belongs to what Catherine Belsey (2002) named "*interrogative text*" (p. 75). His interrogative statements, to quote Belsey, are but speech acts produced by Skinner to "obtain information" from his addressee/Lilly by calling upon her to give answers to the questions he "implicitly or explicitly" (p. 75) posed. When she fails to provide definitive answers, Skinner makes up his mind to be the spokesperson for the downtrodden all over the world. To achieve such an objective, he shows a sense of linguistic superiority. His linguistic tactic paves the way for him to replace Lilly in highlighting the main reasons behind the civil rights demonstration by bringing out four causative speech events. In so doing, Friel enables Skinner to express the unspeakable suffering of the dispossessed as well as bring out a dynamic context, in terms of which the marginalized speaking "I"/Skinner is conceived to be "as both subject and object" (p. 72) of dramatic discourse.

The third crucial *leitmotif* that articulates the heterogeneous individualization of the three demonstrators seems to be best represented through Michael. Unlike Lilly and Skinner, the humorless Michael "trusts and identifies with established authority" (McGrath, 1999, 102) which dehumanizes him. No sooner does he receive the brigadier's call for surrender than he scolds Skinner

for his game of power that not only unnerves the British forces, but also makes them betray a fierce determination to shoot at them: “some bloody hooligans! Some like you, Skinner” (Friel, 2013, p. 128). Upon Michael’s insistence that they ought to follow the brigadier’s advice, Skinner asks him about the main reasons why he marches. Angry though he is, Michael spells out that he demonstrates mainly because, like any Irish citizen, he dreams of a “decent job,” housing, and an egalitarian society, where he can bring up his children peacefully. He also demands a “fair play,” a just socio-political system in which the false barriers enlarging the gap between the rich and poor, the Catholics and protestants, and colonizer and colonized, are not only eliminated but also replaced with ethics of equality. Such is not an illusion nor an impossible mission. Rather, it is one of the fundamental essential rights of humanity all over the world:

SKINNER: . . . Come on, Mr Hegarty. . . . Speak up, man, speak up. . . .

MICHAEL: What I want, Skinner . . . a decent job, a decent place to live, a decent town to bring up our children in – that’s what we want.

SKINNER: Go on – go on.

MICHAEL: And we want fair play, too, so that no matter what our religion is, no matter what our politics is, we have the same chances and the same opportunities as the next fella. It’s not very much, Skinner, and we’ll get it. (Friel, 2013, p.161)

The dialogue between Skinner and Michael asserts the existence of the former as a voice of control. This critical view stems mainly from the fact that Skinner’s context of utterance is resonant with what Benvensite called “imperative statements” (1971, p. 110): “Come on, Mr Hegarty,” “Speak up, man, speak up,” and “Go on – go on.” His imperative locutions force his interlocutor/Michael to follow up an expected prediction—stating the major causes of demonstrating against the British forces. Inspired by such imperatives, Michael relies on the index “we” repeated six times, and the pronoun “I” used only once. The iteration of the “we” along with the verb “want” indicates that he lays heavy emphasis on producing what Austin described as “expositive performatives” (2020, p. 80). To employ Austin, such speech acts are but linguistic expressions produced by Michael not only to make his theatrical locutions “fit into the course” (p. 151) of his argument with Skinner, but also to make them reflect on the subalterns’ burning desire for an egalitarian society. Marginalized as he is, his attitude hinges on performative speech events, not constative ones, mainly because he has much confidence in the efficacy of

“nonviolent protest” (McGrath, 1999, p. 101) against the colonizers responsible for the birth of dislocation. Still, the conversion of the “I” into a “we” enable the three marchers to accomplish a sense of what Gramsci called a sense of “integral autonomy” (1992, p. 52), or rather a sense of historical unity, mainly because they almost certainly suffered the same fate whether they are vandals or not.

For all the linguistic tactics adopted by the three characters, Friel seems to be bent on clarifying the complicity of colonial power in devoicing the colonized groups. This attempt is best disclosed by the end of the play—when the judge represents one of the crucial “discourses of power” (McGrath, 1999, p. 104). In it, the fictional judge states his unjust conclusions regarding the events of the Bloody Sunday. His account is built on four false pieces of evidence for proving that the three deceased victims are guilty of shooting first at the security forces, thus deserving death. Firstly, the demonstrators themselves are in charge of the violent clashes, mainly because they do not respect “the ban on the march.” Secondly, the investigations and interrogations of witnesses confirmed that the armed forces act logically in terms of the law, never resorting to heavy violence or arbitrary arrest of the protestors. Thirdly, the soldier’s shooting at the marchers is but a returning fire exerted by the British forces to defend themselves against the victims’ heavy fire. Fourthly, the technical experts assert that the three victims “were armed” when they proceeded from the civic office. Such conditions of attack and counter-attack prevent the security personnel from effecting “an arrest operation” safely:

1. There would have been no deaths in Londonderry on February 10 had the ban on the march and the meeting been respected. . . 2. There is no evidence to support the accusation that the security forces acted without restraint. . . 3. There is no reason to suppose that the soldiers would have opened fire if they had not been fired on first. . . 4. I must accept the evidence of eye-witnesses and various technical experts that the three deceased were armed when they emerged from the Guildhall. (Friel, 2013, p.168)

The semiotic analysis of the judge’s findings on the events of the Bloody Sunday unearths the hidden destructive ideology of colonial power. It is an oppressive strategy that provides the colonizers with both a legal and linguistic pretext for dehumanizing the colonized people. That is why the judge’s context-of-utterance brings about what Elam called “an indexical zero-point” (2002, p. 127), between the I-speaker/the judge and the you-listener/three dead victims. The index “I” is utilized twice, while the addressee-you is never mentioned. The

absence of the receiver-you from the judge's conclusion denotes that he wields language of power in the hope of justifying the death of the three demonstrators. In order to launch such a scheme, the judge, to quote Austin, intends to depend significantly on the linguistic structures of performative speech acts known as "verdictives" (2020, p. 42). His verdictives, viz. "there would have been no deaths in Londonderry," "there is no evidence to support the accusation," "there is no reason to suppose that," and "I must accept the evidence of eye-witnesses," are nothing but "judicial acts" (2020, p. 152). Such events, along with the three noes, are final statements engineered by the judge, with the purpose of "giving a finding" (2020, p. 150) to the topic of discourse—convicting the three marchers of being armed hooligans—that he firmly believes to be absolute fact, even if it is a mere pack of lies. This miscarriage of justice implies that law, to cite Gramsci, is enacted by the hegemonic groups as "the apparatus of state coercive power" (1992, p. 12). That destructive power aims to legally impose strict "discipline" on the subaltern classes as well as warn them of thinking of revolting against their oppressors. Otherwise, they will be killed like Skinner, Lilly and Michael.

By the end of the play, Friel's ingenuity as an innovative dramatist reaches its peak. This estimation flows mainly from the fact that he shows an ingenious theatrical talent in producing the last scene. There, he solves the riddle of how and why Skinner, Lilly and Michael are dead by combining seamlessly "the two major plot lines" (Winkler, 1981, p. 27) of the play. While the dramatic actions within the Guildhall are depicted in terms of flashbacks, those of the official investigations take place in the present. Not only does such a theatre technique help him reveal why the deceased bodies of the three characters "are exhibited so grotesquely" (Watt, 2006, p. 37) at the very beginning of the play, but it also gives him the chance to reflect upon the massive consequences of the colonial power. The more the three victims decide to obey the brigadier's final warning of surrender, the more they are "estranged from the dominant society" bent on victimizing them. No sooner do they leave the parlor than they move slowly in a desperate row, presumably because they are confident that they are about to die. Upon their ritualistic silent movement towards the heart of the stage, the judge absolves the British troops of any wrongdoing. His unjust sentence transforms the stage into a state of total darkness, mixed with "spotlights beaming" on the faces of the three demonstrators. Simultaneously, the security forces open fire on Skinner, Lilly and Michael, leaving them no options but to stare at such cruelty, putting their hands above their heads:

## **Dramatizing Hegemony and Counter-hegemony in Brian Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Saad al-Din Wahba's *Al-Sibinsa*: A Comparative Study**

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*All three have their hands above their heads. They begin to move very slowly downstage in ritualistic procession. . . . The entire stage is now black, except for a battery of spotlights beaming on the faces of the three. Pause. Then the air is filled with a fifteen-second burst of automatic fire. It stops. The three stand as before, staring out, their hands above their heads.* (Friel, 2013, p.168)

Commenting on Friel's final stage directions, one can safely contend that they underlie the sweeping victory of the illocutionary acts initiated by the voices of power. In moving "very slowly downstage in ritualistic procession" without any resistance, Skinner, Lilly and Michael unearth their crushing defeat by the colonial power strategy, which treats them as the scapegoat of the imperial project. The more the three deceased persons move towards the heart of the stage, the more the stage directions are plunged into a vivid, dark "frozen tableau" (Russell, 2006, p. 56). It is a semiotic icon that accentuates the marginalization and displacement, felt by the three characters before breathing their last. The darkness that permeates the stage may indicate that the colonizer's epistemic violence turns human existence into "a tragic waste" (Andrews, 1995, p. 36). In it, the three protestors "are effectively martyred" (Russell, 2006, p. 57) by the voices of hegemonic groups: the judge and the British army. This critical maneuver denotes that Friel employs aesthetically the language body of the three characters and dramatic space, i.e. "triumphant organ music," blackness of the stage," "burst of automatic fire," and above all, the character's muteness, to criticize the brutality of the hegemonic groups for denying the colonized subjects' right to speak even if they are on the threshold of death.

### **Hegemony and Counter-hegemony in *al-Sibinsa***

If Friel's *The Freedom of the City* takes place in Derry during the 1970s, Wahba's *al-Sibinsa* revolves around a small Egyptian village called al-Kom al-Akhdar in the 1950s. By choosing a real dramatic context, both playwrights deliberately show how the British colonial project transforms the existence of the Egyptian/Irish subalterns into a wasteland of injustice. Still, Wahba, unlike Friel, marvelously reflects upon "the harsh realities that prevailed in Egypt before the birth of the 1952 revolution—the absence of freedom and social justice" (Hassan, 2014, p. 14[trans. mine]). To hammer such an idea home, he represents a violent power struggle between two conflicting social classes. The former stands for "the oppressed downtrodden" (al-Mursi, 2008, p. 132[trans. mine]), who are fated to

strive for social equality, while the latter refers to “the oppressive antiheroes” (p. 123), or rather the voice of control.

Like *The Freedom of the City*, *al-Sibinsa* illustrates how the power struggle is exerted between the two aforementioned heterogenous camps. To theatricalize such a motif, Wahba’s play deals with Darwish, a master sergeant of al-Kom al-Akhdar police station, receiving a phone call from the police commissioner. In it, the latter inquires about the arrival of the committee established by the authority of Cairo to examine a bomb that was detonated in the village. No sooner is the call ended than Saber, a private who discovers the shell, enters the station calmly. When asked why he abandons the duty of watching the explosive, he states that he has left the site because the shell was stolen: when he went to urinate. Not only does his shattering answer infuriate Darwish, but it also leads him to assert that they should both face a court-martial for negligence. To avoid such an accusation, Darwish recommends that it is better to put a lead of paperweight instead of the lost explosive. Although Saber opposes such a recommendation at first, he later supports and welcomes it. His accidental acceptance results mainly from Darwish’s proposal that it is optimal for them to be blamed for their inability to distinguish between the explosive and metal rather than being condemned for laxity. Not only does Darwish warn Saber of disclosing such a plot, but he also asks him to vow never to reveal such a secret until death:

Darwish: Listen, boy . . . Lend me your ears. (*He picks up a lead of paperweight from the office and gives it to Saber.*) Put it instead of the lost bomb. . . . Obey me blindly, do take such a lead and place it instead of the stolen explosive, but . . . remember if you blab to anyone, we both will be imprisoned. . . . Listen carefully, never ever try to disclose such a secret until you breathe your last. Do remember.

Saber: I do.

Darwish: Swear.

Saber: Yes, I do swear. (Wahba, 1995, pp. 206-207[trans. mine])

Like Friel’s brigadier, Darwish wields a language of power. While the former utilizes exercitive speech acts, the latter tends to employ what Benveniste called “imperative statements” (1971, p. 110). To fully grasp the semiotic significance of Darwish’s utterance, one should consider Benveniste’s aphorism that any sentence, whether imperative or not, reflects the hidden ideology of a “man speaking and acting through discourse upon his interlocutor” (p. 110). This explains why Darwish's dialogue with Saber is replete with imperative locutions

which is repeated nine times: “Listen, boy,” “lend me your ears,” “put it,” “obey me blindly,” “do take such a lead,” “remember if you blab to anyone,” “listen carefully,” “never ever try to disclose” the secret and “swear.” Such speech events are but an exercise of power produced by the speaking-I/ Darwish to force the addressee-you/Saber into holding that the “it,” the “lead of paperweight,” which stands for the topic of discourse, is the theft bomb. That is why Darwish’s locutions are resonant with contradictory indexical expressions. While the dummy “it,” the lost explosive, is mentioned twice, the addressee you/Saber seems absent from the discourse. His absence, to quote Louis Althusser, implies the hegemonic groups convert the subaltern Saber into “a subjected being” (Althusser, 2001, p. 75), who ought to blindly comply with Darwish’s scheme of turning the piece of metal into a destructive bombshell: “I do,” and “Yes, I do swear.”

Darwish’s tactics of power dominates the dramatic fabric of the play. They give rise to the birth of five crucial theatrical *leitmotifs*, each of which, to borrow Gramsci’s words, unfolds how the hegemonic group employs its “governmental-coercive apparatus” (1988, p. 265) to predominate the consciousness of the underclass people. To dramatize such technique, Wahba portrays five pivotal characters: Saber, Salma, a charming famished whore dancer, Mahfouz, an ice factory hard worker, and Abd-al-Tawab, a student at al-Azhar University. The concentration on the marginalization of such subalterns enables Wahba to unearth the miscarriage of justice that befalls the downtrodden of Egypt.

The first theatrical schema crystallizes when Amin, a major and explosives expert, arrives on the scene. Rather than declaring the reality, he claims that the piece of metal is one of the most dangerous explosives he ever defused. He also recommends that Saber ought to be rewarded and promoted for saving the whole village from a major catastrophe. His false conclusion motivates the mayor to search for suspected bombardiers. Thus, he introduces Mahfouz to Mamdouh, the persecutor and the spokesperson for the King of Egypt, stating that he was suspected of detonating the shell because he swears to destroy the ice factory in which he works during a fight with its owner. When asked by Mamdouh about the reality of the mayor’s accusations, Mahfouz confesses that he has quarreled with the owner, presumably because the latter sought to cut the cost of some ice blocks from the workers’ lump sum. They are about fifty blocks presented daily as gifts for the police station, security directorate, and the mayor. Besides, Mahfouz confirms that he never thinks of shattering the place from where he earns

his living. However, Mamdouh concludes that the feelings of class envy hustle Mahfouz into bringing the shell from Cairo in the hope of avenging the owner of the factory. Although Mahfouz negates such an unjust conclusion, Mamdouh insists that he ought to be taken into police custody, mainly because he is charged with detonating the bombshell:

Mamdouh: Have you threatened the haji with destroying the factory?

Mahfouz: Never ever do I dare blow up the place from where I earn my living. I worked there since I was six years old. . . . I may invoke God because of my famished conditions, but I never attempt to blow it up.

Mamdouh: What do you say in your invocation?

Mahfouz: I do not remember, but I pray for God to explode the factory.

Mamdouh: Then, you bring the explosive to achieve your threat! Where do you get it from? . . . Cairo

Mahfouz: Cairo! Oh my God! Never did I visit Cairo before. (Wahba 1995, pp. 230-231[trans. mine])

The dialogue between Mamdouh and Mahfouz belongs to what Wittig christened “the metacommunicative function” (2006, p. 447) of language. It is a discourse that highlights the power relationships between the sender/Mamdouh and receiver/Mahfouz of semiotic codes. To decipher such codes, Wahab purposely lays heavy emphasis on the deictic expressions which presume “the existence of a speaker referred to as ‘I’, a listener addressed as ‘you’, a physically present object indicated as ‘this’” (Elam, 2002, p. 125). While Mamdouh utilizes the pronoun “you” fivefold, and Mahfouz repeats the index “I” nine times, the dummy “it,” standing for the topic of discourse, the bombshell, is uttered thrice. The iteration of such indexical references in terms of interrogative form denotes that Mamdouh resorts to what Benveniste called “interrogative statements” (1971, p. 110). Such locutions prove that his language becomes an instrument of dominance, but they also provide him with a voice of power, in which he seeks to condemn Mahfouz for being the bomber. His context-of-utterance is but a set of questions: “Have you threatened the haji with destroying the factory?” “What do you say in your invocation?” “Where do you get it from?” “Who brings it for you?”

Even though such interrogations provide Mamdouh with a cute voice of control, Mahfouz shows a dogged determination to defy them. His resistance is inherent in producing negative declarative statements: “Never ever do I dare blow

up,” the factory “I never attempt to blow it up,” “I do not remember,” “Never did I visit Cairo before,” and “I do not know anything about your allegations.” Such negative forms imply that Wahba innovates a theatrical space in terms of which Mahfouz becomes a free subject that courageously refuses the conditions of his displacement. His refusal motivates one to infer that Wahba, like Friel, refutes Spivak’s view that “the subaltern cannot speak” (1988, p. 308). Both playwrights tend to show that when the subalterns speak, their speech acts can be heard and recognized within the “dominant political systems” (Morton, 2003, p. 66) of the hegemonic groups.

The second dramaturgic schema is best represented when the security committee sent from Cairo investigates Abd-al-Tawab. Such arbitrary arrest lends Wahba a hand to reflect upon “the oppression and miscarriage of justice that afflicted the downtrodden of Egypt as well as the lower middle class. Thus motivated, they aspire to revolt against the unjust socio-political conditions brought on by the colonial power” (al-Mursi, 2008, p. 150[trans. mine]). When asked by Mamdouh about the place from which the shell is brought, Abd-al-Tawab states openly that he does not know any data about such a topic. His denial urges the inspector to suspect him of insulting His Majesty, King of Egypt while preaching a Friday sermon. Abd-al-Tawab defends himself by declaring that he never intends to scold the king. Rather, he recites a verse from the Qur’an in which the Almighty Allah says: “Kings, when they Enter a country, despoil it, And make the noblest Of its people its meanest: Thus do they behave.”<sup>1</sup> No sooner does he voice such a verse than Mamdouh not only rebukes him for attempting to stage a coup against the king, but also contends that Abd-al-Tawab is the felon who detonates the explosive:

Mamdouh: From where do you get the bombshell?

Abd-al-Tawab: (In a formal style) A bomb! Never do I know anything about it.

...

Mamdouh: Do you want to dethrone the king? Do you dream of mounting a coup? . . . From where did you get the bomb? Speak up.

Abd-al-Tawab: Never ever do I know anything about it. (Wahba 1995, pp. 232-233[trans. mine])

Commenting on the dialogue between Mamdouh and Abd-al-Tawab, one can discover that they both do not speak the language. Rather, they, to borrow Umberto Eco’s terms, are “spoken by the language” (qtd.in Wittig, 2006, p. 445).

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<sup>1</sup> The Qur’an 27:34 (Translated by Yusuf Ali).

This critical maneuver denotes that Wahba yields a theatrical space packed with linguistic tactics, that explain why the unequal power relationships establish binary oppositions between Mamdouh and Abd-al-Tawab. In order to grasp the significance of such oppositions, one should examine the speech acts of both characters. Since Mamdouh represents the voice of control, he hinges greatly on what Searle calls “directive” (1999, p. viii) utterances, in terms of which he seeks to egg on his addressee/Abd-al-Tawab to reply to his directive events in a positive way. The propositional content of his speech acts, viz. “from where do you get the bombshell?” “Do you want to dethrone the king?” “Do you dream of mounting a coup?” and “Speak up,” aims to starve Abd-al-Tawab into confessing that he is the plotter responsible for planting the explosive. For all that, Abd-al-Tawab receives Mamdouh’s interrogative illocutionary points by producing what Searle named “illocutionary negations” (2011, p. 32): “Never do I know anything about it,” and “Never ever do I know anything about it.” His negative speech acts represent not only a sharp refusal to Mamdouh’s directives that try to subdue him but also “a negative assertion” (p. 33), via which he refutes the determinants that bring on the state of subalternity. They are but linguistic devices invented by the displaced voice/Abd-al-Tawab with a view to denying the accusations of the hegemonic group as well as articulating a linguistic resistance to the colonial project.

Another essential aspect of resistance is initiated through the third dramatic motif. Here, Mamdouh and the police commissioner contend that “so long as there is a crime, there ought to be eyewitnesses” (Amar, 2020, p. 2240[trans. mine]). Salma, the prostitute dancer, is summoned to appear before the investigation committee as the only bystander for two reasons: a) she lives by the bomb site; and b) the people of authority desire to have a sexual relationship with her simply because she is an attractive bombshell. When Fardous, Salma’s mother, motivates her to obey the elite by giving a false witness statement to Mahfouz and Abd-al-Tawab, she firmly rejects such a plan. As well as refusing to commit a perjury, she recommends that both of them should take down the tent in which they reside and leave the village. However, Fardous insists that the fake testimony is a must, mainly because they will be punished if they do not carry out it. As soon as Salma nixes such an idea, Fardous attempts to force her into dropping in the police station in the hope of having a big dinner and being rewarded with ten piasters. Although

**Dramatizing Hegemony and Counter-hegemony in Brian Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Saad al-Din Wahba's *Al-Sibinsa*: A Comparative Study**

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Salma is a hooker, she shows a virtuous behavior. Never does she accept making love with the authority figures nor claiming a false witness:

Salma: I do not see anyone detonating bombs.

Fardous: It is not our business. They give orders, and our duty is to obey them.

Salma: Do you want me to make a false testimony? I will never do that . . . even if they shower me with gold. . . I do not know any information. That is because I will never go there. (Wahba 1995, pp. 242-243[trans. mine])

The verbal confrontation between Fardous and Salma may indicate that the former acts as a deputy of a hegemonic group. Although she is one of the downtrodden, she utilizes what Elam called “executive power of language” (2002, p. 142) with the purpose of maintaining a voice of control. To achieve such an objective, she produces a set of illocutionary acts: “they give the orders, and our duty is to obey them,” “why do you refuse?” and “Why?” Her locutions are but a communicative mélange of performative statements and “information-seeking questions” (p. 142), through which she tries to hustle her interlocutor/Salama into accepting to be pimped for the elite, and claiming perjury. Still, Fardous fails to accomplish any perlocutionary desired effect. Such a failure is largely due to the fact that Salma receives Fardous’ speech points by adopting what Searle (2011) named “illocutionary negation” (p. 32). The more Fardous brings out performative and interrogative acts, the more Salma repeats the negative forms: “I do not see anyone detonating bombs,” “I will never do that,” “I do not know any information,” and “I will never go there.” Her negative points, above all, the repetition of “I will never go there” twice, are not a linguistic threat. Instead, they are a strong assertion of her refusal to submit to Fardous’ scheme of plotting against Mahfouz and Abd-al-Tawab. Like Friel's, Wahba’s use of dramatic language helps him not only to novelize the heterogeneity among the subalterns, but also to supply the dislocated with a sense of power. The linguistic conflict between Fardous and Salma, to borrow Spivak’s terms, paved the way for Wahba to produce “a theory of representation” (1988, p. 271), in terms of which Salma brings out a “resistance-talk” (1999, p. 254) that highlights the displacement caused by the colonial epistemic violence.

Since Salma resists the police authorities, she is sent to prison, where Sheikh Sayed, the village idiot joins her. This initiates the fourth theatrical schema inherent in the extreme injustice that befalls Sayed, presumably because he is not accused of planting the bomb. Rather, he is jailed for claiming that sergeant Fathi,

the driver of the police commissioner, has stolen a ten-pound note saved by the former to set up a grocery kiosk. Instead of punishing Fathi for such thievery, the police forces imprison the stolen Sayed. Punched and kicked by Fathi, Sayed implores the former to forgive him for pretending that he has robbed his nest egg, stating that he should suffer torture rather than being imprisoned. Sayed does not revolt against such a humiliation. Instead, he entreats Fathi to accept his apology, and describes himself as a wretched bitch man who can never scrimp ten pounds. The more Sayed apologizes for his accusations against Fathi, the more violent the latter becomes. His cruelty forces Sayed to accuse himself of being a terrible liar, simply because if he has ten pounds, he will never hide them within the vineyard by the police station. For all that, Fathi is bent on jailing Sayed until the latter knows how to respect his masters. Hardly does Fathi leave the scene when Sayed swears loudly on the Quran that Fathi is the real petty thief:

Fathi: Shut up! You must stay here until learning how to respect your masters.

Sayed: I do not only repent of what I have said, but swear on the Holly Quran that I am a rotten liar and you never ever thieved my egg nest. (*Fathi gives a deaf ear to such words, leaving out the cell as well as closing the door.*) Oh, sir Fathi! Listen to my great sorrow for my evil deed. (*Then, he weeps bitter tears of frustration and flops down.*) Listen, I swear on the Holly Quran that you are the real money robber. (Wahba 1995, pp. 251-252[trans. mine])

Since theatrical discourse is “a network of complementary and conflicting illocutions and perlocutions” (Elam, 2002, p. 142), the dialogue between Fathi and Sayed represents two completely different linguistic attitudes. The former stands for the voice of control, whereas the latter refers to that of the marginalized. As a member of the hegemonic group, Fathi, like Friel’s brigadier, adopts a language of power to beat Sayed into negating the existence of the theft of ten-pounds. To achieve such an objective, Fathi depends on what Austin calls “exercitives” (2020, p. 150): Fathi’s good kicking and obligatory imperative statement that “Shut up! You must stay here until learning how to respect your masters.” Such acts bestow on the speaker/Fathi linguistic merit, or rather an “exercising of powers” (p. 150) through which he gains a considerable influence on the addressee/Sayed. Nevertheless, Fathi’s locutions fail to achieve any perlocutionary effect on Sayed. This failure is due primarily to Sayed’s insistence on employing what Elam christened “performative act of defiance” (2002, pp. 143-144) via which he challenges Fathi’s oppression. His context of utterance is resonant with indexical expressions: while the index “I” referring to Sayed is

repeated fourfold, the pronoun “you” denoting Fathi is used twice. The iteration of such indexes indicates that Sayed becomes a voice of control who utilizes a game of power to motivate his interlocutor/Fathi to accept his apology.

Unlike the power game of Friel’s Skinner, Sayed’s relies on what Searle called “expressives” (1999, p. 15), via which he tries to change “the propositional content” of Fathi’s dogged determination to imprison him. That is why he persistently offers his apology for Fathi more than once: “forgive me,” “I am genuinely sorry for such a claim,” and “I am obviously deeply sorry.” When such expressive points fail to accomplish any perlocutionary consequence on the addressee, Sayed relies on the imperative style twice: “listen to my great sorrow for my evil deed,” and “listen, I swear on the Holly Quran that you are the real money robber.” Such locutions, to quote Spivak, imply that Wahba transforms the subaltern’s insurgency into “a text of knowledge” (1988, p. 287). In it, Sayed shows “a counter-possibility” (p. 287) via which he harps on insurgent speech events to break up “the narrative sanctions” imposed on the downtrodden by “the dominant group” (p. 287).

The arbitrary detention of Mahfouz, Abd-al-Tawab, Salma and Sayed brings the fifth dramaturgic leitmotif into prominence. It is best illustrated when Darwish informs such victims that they ought to be deported to the public prosecution in Cairo, presumably because they are charged with implanting the bomb. His unjust attitude motivates Saber to not only hinder him from achieving such an order but also give up his new police rank as a sergeant, swearing that he will reveal the dirty secret of the bombshell. His behavior spurs Darwish into accusing him of going so mad that he should be taken to the madhouse, or rather a military tribunal. Saber does not respond to such a cheap threat. Instead, he implores Darwish to punish him so that he may efface the stigma of participating in the bomb’s tissue of lie. That is why he contends that if he does not tell the truth, he will be a hardened criminal. To avoid such a fate, he tries hard to prevent the innocent prisoners from being sent to the state prosecutor, declaring that he and Darwish should replace them, mainly because the discovered bomb is but a piece of metal:

Saber: To where do you take them? . . . (*Catching Darwish*) I will never ever let them go. To where do you take them? . . . I have no options except revealing the truth about the fake bomb to the prosecution and the people. . . . If there is a sense of justice, we both should be jailed instead of those famished subalterns who ought to be released (*referring to the victims*). Finally, I should speak the truth.

## Dramatizing Hegemony and Counter-hegemony in Brian Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Saad al-Din Wahba's *Al-Sibinsa*: A Comparative Study

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I should set forth the scheme from A to Z. I will uncover the hidden details. (*He raises his voice*) I do tell and tell. (Wahba 1995, pp. 259-260[trans. mine])

Saber's dialogue with Darwish supplies the former with what Gilbert and Tompkins call "an active place on the stage" (2002, p. 168). Although he was previously involved in the bomb's scheme, his strategic use of language shows that his conscience pricked him when Darwish attempts to send the three victims to the state prosecutor. That is why he places heavy emphasis on what Austin names "verdictives" (2020, p. 150), which can be divided into two forms of locutions: interrogative and performative statements. His context of utterance rotates around one central question: "To where do you take them?" which is repeated twice. The repetition of such a question endows Saber with a voice of power, in terms of which he produces verdictive speech acts: "I have no options except revealing the truth," "If there is a sense of justice, we both should be jailed," "I should speak the truth," "I should set forth the scheme from A to Z," "I will uncover the hidden details." These elocutionary forces, to quote Austin, are but a verdict given by a sergeant who denounces his military rank in the hope of providing "an estimate, reckoning, or appraisal" (p. 150) of the terrible injustice that befalls Mahfouz, Abd-al-Tawab, Salma and Sayed. By producing such verdictives, Saber, to borrow Gramsci's terms, proves that the subaltern is "no longer a thing" (1992, p. 337). Rather, he/she is a "historical person," not to say "a protagonist" (p. 337) who not only resists the hegemonic groups, but defends the downtrodden.

Despite Saber's resistance, the hegemonic group is bent on carrying the deportation order. Such an evil attempt paves the way for the birth of the final dramatic icon via which Wahba ends the play with a master scene. In it, the subalterns of al-Kom al-Akhdar reach the railway station for different reasons: the innocent victims wait for their extradition; "Salma decides to abandon her bawdy life by searching for a new place to live in; Saber wears the straitjacket to join the psychiatric hospital; Sayed makes up his mind to relinquish the village after the theft of his nest egg" (Amar, 2020, p. 2241 [trans. mine]). Upon the arrival of the representatives of authority, the stationmaster organizes the hegemonic and non-hegemonic persons into groups according to their social status. While the first class of wagons is specified for the police commander, Amin and Mamdouh and the second one is fixed for Darwish and Fathi, the third class is designed for the marginalized, headed by Saber. This classy division motivates Saber to

philosophically ponder the situation by contending that if the locomotive changes its direction, the third class will be the first one, and vice versa. However, the position of the second class that carries the supporters of the colonizers will be the same. No sooner does the train arrive than Saber screams out of his heart at Darwish and the police officers, warning them that never can anyone escape the massive explosion of the bomb that will be exploded entirely destroying everything and everybody. He is confident that Egypt is now planted with many destructive explosives, that must erupt accidentally to reform the oppressive social fabric by transforming the dominated into dominator, or, conversely, the upper class into the lower one. As soon as the train whistles, Saber's voice is decreased, not to say, vanished amid the train's choo-choo:

Saber: Neither you, Sir Darwish, nor your masters can evade the massive explosion of the bomb. You have no sanctuary, presumably because the bomb will certainly explode, devastating the whole country. Egypt is no longer the land of surrender: it is detonated with countless destructive bombs that must completely go off. (*No sooner does the station's bell ring out and the train start to move than Saber's voice disappears gradually amid the train's choo-choo.*). (Wahba 1995, p. 273[trans. mine])

Unlike Friel's master scene of silence, Wahba utilizes the illocutionary aspect of Saber's speech to reflect upon the marginalization that inflicts the subalterns of al-Kom al-Akhdar. Since any dramatic character cannot produce "a successful perlocutionary act without performing an illocution" (Elam, 2002, p. 142), Saber brings out several illocutionary forces that revolve around one central propositional content: warning the hegemonic groups of dislocating the underclass people. To achieve such a target, he originates speech events that depend greatly on what Searle calls "assertive declarations" (1999, p. 20), in terms of which he tries to fulfil some decisive changes in the painful realities around him. His declarations, e.g. "neither you, Sir Darwish, nor your masters can evade the massive explosion," "You have no sanctuary," and Egypt is . . . implanted with a countless number of destructive bombs that must completely go off," are but performative statements that seek to alter the unequal power relationships between Mahfouz, Abd-al-Tawab, Salma, and Sayed and the representatives of executive authority. This indicates that Saber's declarations, to borrow Searle, compose a sense of "linguistic competence" (p. 18), which springs from the fact that he and his hearer/Darwish and the police officers belong to the same "extra-linguistic institution," (p. 18) the police forces that invent the plot of the fake bomb. He uses his previous position as a sergeant to caution the hegemonic group and their

supporters against mistreating the disempowered of Egypt. Despite that, his assertive declarations do not have any perlocutionary effects. Such defeat is best represented semiotically through the gradual vanishing of Saber's voice, which, to quote Spivak, denotes that "the subalterns cannot speak" (1996, p. 290) and if they are given a chance to speak, their speech will never be heard because of the epistemic violence of the colonial project symbolized by the train's choo-choo.

## **Conclusion**

By analyzing Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and Wahba's *al-Sibinsa* in the light of Gramsci and Spivak's thoughts, I intended to make four essential points regarding their theatrical achievements. Firstly, Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Spivak's representation offer a critical practice for examining the ulterior reasons behind the conditions of subalternity and the mechanics of resisting them. This critical maneuver provided by Gramsci's methodological criterion and Spivak's creative reading seem to enable both Friel and Wahba to criticize the coercive ideologies, presumably because they maintain the position of the colonizer as a sovereign subject and simultaneously underprivilege that of the colonized as a submissive other. By considering such a criterion, one can score a twofold critical goal concerning the dramatic accomplishment of both playwrights. First, to reveal the linguistic tactics adopted by the voices of control that try to beat the subalterns into terrible oppression. Second, to illustrate how the underclass people resort to the linguistic mechanism of counter-hegemony in the hope of resisting the oppressive power strategy that dehumanizes them.

Secondly, even though Friel and Wahba are the spokespersons for two completely different cultural milieus, both, alike, tend to depict the unparalleled moments of marginalization that afflicts the downtrodden of Ireland and Egypt. However, each playwright adopts a disparate dramatic vision. In order to theatricalize such moments, Friel represents a fierce struggle between the voices of control and those of the marginalized by concentrating on the behavior of dramatic language—the characters' fast-talking and speech events. Such a skillful approach paved the way for him to create multiple conflicting dramatis personae. Besides unfolding the reasons behind oppression, the dynamics of this conflict evince that Friel's pieces belong to political theater, mainly because they concentrate on the political aspects of the power struggle.

If Friel's theatre hinges on the domains of powerful fast-talking, Wahba develops a theatrical form that depends greatly on the aesthetic value of metalanguage and deep symbolic references. Although Wahba's main dramatic schema, like Friel's, revolves around the vicious power conflict between the hegemonic and nonhegemonic groups, he innovates a dramatic art that can be affiliated with social theatre. This epithet is largely due to the fact that he composes dramaturgic portrayals that castigate the unjust social systems for enlarging the power struggle between the voices of control and those of the dispossessed. While Friel is a political dramatist, Wahba is a social thinker, mainly because he employs his theatricality to bring out a dramatic discourse that elucidates the consequences of the social struggle between the governing classes and underclass people. However, both playwrights may be identical in employing semiotics as a theatre technique in the hope of dramatizing the terrible power struggle, via linguistic strategies that carry the audience to new aesthetic horizons.

Thirdly, though Gramsci and Spivak's aesthetics seems to be translated accurately in *The Freedom of the City* and *al-Sibinsa*, Friel and Wahba tend to opt for a different dramatic structure. Still, both dramatists are at one in showing how the colonizer's epistemic violence transforms the existence of the Irish and Egyptian subalterns into a tragic waste. To accomplish such an aim, Friel's play rotates around a military tribunal replete with flashbacks that bring into prominence the subordination that befalls three marchers: Skinner, Lilly and Michael. Unlike Friel, Wahba adopts a different theatrical structure to dramatize the injustice affecting five Egyptian subalterns: Saber, Mahfouz, Abd-al-Tawab, Salama and Sayed, not civil right marchers. Friel lays heavy emphasis on the playback technique, whereas Wahba depicts the pains of the colonized in terms of a direct plotline.

Finally, the above close reading of *The Freedom of the City* and *al-Sibinsa* has denoted that Friel and Wahba's theatrical project is grounded in theatricalizing the power struggle between the voices of control and those of the marginalized. To fully grasp the ethics of such a project, one had to rely heavily on the school of semiotics—deictic pointers and Austin and Searle's speech acts theory. Friel's hegemonic personae, i.e. the unnamed judge and brigadier, employ a variety of semiotic moves and speech events: the power of indexical expressions, commissives, verdictives, exercitives, and negative locutions. These language forces are but a sophisticated reflection of the coercive power ideology invented

by such a team in the hope of accomplishing twofold mission: to starve the downtrodden into complete submission, and warn them of rebelling against the oppressive strategy, otherwise they will meet the fate of the three demonstrators. Despite that, the terrible injustice of the governing classes motivates the three victims to pick up counter-linguistic moves via which they resist the epistemic violence of their subordinators. While Skinner hinges on the directive speech acts and imperative and interrogative locutions that provide him with a dominant voice, Lilly and Michael utilize the assertive and expositive performative speech points in the hope of shattering the bonds of subalternity that seeks to victimize them.

Like *The Freedom of the City*, *al-Sibinsa* may portray the fatal consequences of the power struggle between the voices of dominance and those of the dislocated. Whereas the former is best represented through Darwish, Mamdouh and Fathi, the latter is marvelously illustrated through Saber, Mahfouz, Abd-al-Tawab, Salama and Sayed. In order to impose its oppressive power strategy on the subalterns, the hegemonic camp lays heavy emphasis on some linguistic tactics: imperative locutions, contradictory indexical references, information-seeking questions, directives and exercitives. Not only do such semiotic devices endow the voices of control with the executive power of language, but they also enable them to transform the subalterns into subjected beings that would receive their marginalization warmly. Still, like Friel, Wahba seems to be bent on privileging the disempowered camp over that of the governing classes. That is why Wahba's displaced characters wield enormous linguistic tactics: negative declarative utterances, negative assertions, performative acts of defiance, expressive, verdictives, and assertive declarations. Such tactics equip Wahba's Subalterns with ecstasy to prevent the hegemonic groups from achieving any perlocutionary effects of their powerful utterances.

Although the disempowered characters depicted by Friel and Wahba tend to rely on verbal acts, Skinner and Saber offer an aesthetic mélange of verbal and nonverbal resistance. Skinner distributes the imperial gowns to Lilly and Michael and keeps the sword for himself, while Saber not only abandons his new military rank, but also tries violently to prevent Darwish from sending the victims to the state persecutor. These semiotic moves are but an attempt to transform the subalterns into freemen. They also remind the colonizers that violent protest will be a must if they do not alter their sociopolitical agenda. By producing a verbal

and nonverbal resistance talk, Friel's and Wahba's subalterns are no longer disempowered. Instead, they are historical heroes who adopt a counter-hegemonic agenda, to defy the unjust coercive project of their colonizers. That is why scholars of comparative literature should investigate the dramatic analogies between Irish and Egyptian dramaturgy, simply because they spring mainly from the same colonial power.

## **Endnotes**

Translations from Arabic are all mine.

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المعالجة الدرامية للهيمنة والهيمنة المضادة (اللاهيمنة) في مسرحيتي حرية المدينة  
لبرايان فرايل والسبنسة لسعد الدين وهبة: دراسة مقارنة

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**المستخلص:**

تقدم الدراسة الحالية قراءة مقارنة لمسرحيتي حرية المدينة (1970) للكاتب المسرحي والقص الأيرلندي برايان فرايل (1929-2015) والسبنسة (1968) للمؤلف المسرحي وكاتب السيناريو المصري سعد الدين وهبة (1925-1997) في ضوء النقد ما بعد الاستعماري، تحديداً نظرية "الهيمنة الثقافية" التي أرساها الفيلسوف الماركسي الإيطالي الجنسية أنطونيو جرامشي (1891-1937)، ونظرية "التابع" للناشطة والناقدة الأمريكية بنغالوية الأصل غاياتري سبيفاك (1942)، وتحليل النصين المسرحيين في ظل المُخرجات الجمالية لغرامشي و سبيفاك يتوصل الدرس إلي أربع نتائج مهمة. أولاً، إن فرايل وهبة لم يعلنوا تأثرهما بجماليات غرامشي و سبيفاك، إلا أن نتاجهم المسرحي يؤكد أنهما ناقدان محترقان في مدرسة أدبية دشنها جرامشي و سبيفاك؛ ثانياً، علي الرغم من أن مسرح فرايل وهبة يجسد مجموعة من الشخصيات المُتصارعة التي ترمز إلى الصراع الاجتماعي والسياسي بين المُستعمر والمستعمر إلا أن كلاهما تبني رؤية درامية مختلفة تماماً في مسرحية الصراع بين الطبقات الحاكمة والمحكومة؛ ثالثاً، اعتمد فرايل علي تقنية الاسترجاع الفني للأحداث (flashback technique) ليس ليوضح تيمة غياب العدالة التي اصابت ثلاثة متظاهرين فحسب بل ليمنحهم الفرصة لمقاومة الهيمنة السياسية التي فرضها المستبد البريطاني، اما وهبة فقد وظّف أسلوب السرد المباشر لمسرحية الظلم والقهر الاجتماعي الذي عاني منه خمسة مهمشين إبان الاحتلال البريطاني لمصر؛ وأخيراً، علي الرغم من أن فرايل وهبة ينتميان لسياق ثقافي مختلف كلياً، فقد اظهرت الدراسة أنهما وظّفا تقنيات علم العلامات ونظرية أفعال الكلام ليس فقط لبلورة الصراع بين تيمة الهيمنة واللاهيمنة بل لخلق فضاء مسرحي أو مسرحية فكرية تهيأ للتابع مقاومة الظلم الاجتماعي والاستبداد السياسي حيثما كانا.

**الكلمات الدالة:** برايان فرايل، سعد الدين وهبة، غرامشي، سبيفاك، التابع، حرية المدينة، السبنسة