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**‘Neither fish nor flesh.’ Translations in
Brian Friel’s *Translations***

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Abstract

This paper analyses issues of language and cultural translation in Brian Friel’s play *Translations* within the context of postcolonial theory and Irish history. As an overly discussed term in academia, “postcolonial” attaches great importance to Friel criticism, for Friel’s drama is often concerned with issues relating to identity, nation, language and memory, each of which is significant in their way of informing postcolonial consciousness. Among the various definitions of the term “postcolonial,” Elleke Boehmer’s statement persists: “experiences of exclusion, denigration, and resistance,” asserting itself in the engagement, usually and in its simplest sense, between the West and the non-West. However, for Brian Friel’s characters in *Translations*, postcolonialism refers to a certain renaming and remapping process which is both beyond the limits of geographical intention and within their reach. This conundrum-like situation has actually much more to do with the characters’ distressing experience of facing a desire to construct their broken identities in the shadow of improbabilities, which the present study aims to explore. In this sense, Friel’s *Translations* provides the reader with a panorama of the Irish town Bally Beag in its process of transition, of being renamed and remapped, and of its townspeople in their moments of translation, either moving from one plane to another or resisting *translation*.

Keywords: *Irish Drama, Brian Friel, identity, language, post-colonialism, Homi Bhabha*