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Subject

J.M. Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen* and Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*: A Postcolonial Study.

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Dedications:

- To my parents Djamila and Khider, my sisters Nawal, and Wassila, and my brother Lyes.
Thank you all for your love and support. The late nights, the long hours, the breakdowns are behind me now because you were there for me. I am blessed to have you in my life. Especially, I am indebted to my mother for her cheery support that brightened up my days and provided me with motivation during the period of my research.
- To the memory of my grand-father and grand-mother.
- To my grand-mother for whom I wish a long life.
- To all my friends.
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Abstract:

This dissertation sheds light on the study of two plays: *A Dance of the Forest* (1963), and *The Shadow of the Glen*(1903), produced respectively by the Nigerian playwrights Wole Soyinka, and The Irish one J.M Synge, in the light of Post-colonial theory. This work is an analysis of the means adopted by the two dramatists to answer back and correct the colonial discourse, and to dismantle the hegemony of the British ‘centre’. They do so by their reworking of the colonizer’s language, their way of representing women that aims at correcting the colonialist stereotypes, and finally by their rehabilitation and revival of their traditional and native culture that were long misunderstood and misrepresented by the British ‘centre’.

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I) Introduction:

Colonialism is a process of cultural domination and economic dispossession, since the colonized loses his identity, as the colonizers impose not only their culture, language and religion, but also make the natives their slaves. Moreover, colonialism as a historical fact was followed by intellectual attacks on the colonized; such scholarly assaults were known as the colonial discourse. "Discourse" as Michel Foucault theorizes it, is "the system by which dominant groups within society constitute the field of truth through the imposition of specific knowledge, disciplines, and values".¹ Thus, the colonial discourse is a set of practices known as hegemony, whose aim is to make logical the hierarchical power structures of imperialism, which, in turn, defined the colonial relationships between the colonizer and the colonized.

The colonizers attributed to the colonized people dehumanizing traits of backwardness and inferiority to legitimate the imperialist attacks. It seemed almost an ideological necessity for the colonialist power to create a discourse that would justify the colonialist experience and make it appear as a noble mission. Bill Ashcroft argues that: "Rules of inclusion and exclusion operate on the assumption of the superiority of the colonizer's culture, history, language, art, political structures, social conventions, and the assertion of the need for the colonized to be 'raised up' through colonial contact".² Thus, the representation of the colonized cultures and societies in the colonialist discourse and writings tend to spread the colonizer's culture as normative standards, and the literary works that are considered representatives of the colonial discourse present the themes and topics only from the point of view of the colonizer without taking into account the fact that people have been living in the colonised places before and had a culture and a way of life before the arrival of the coloniser.

However, this false representation of the colonized provoked a reaction, that is well embodied in the vast array of fiction called Post colonial Literature. In *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), Bill Ashcroft et.al use the term "to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial

process from the moment of colonization to the present day”.³ In fact, Postcolonialism was characterized by the emergence, in many former colonies, of a counter hegemonic discourse, a new literature aimed at arguing against the imperialist assumptions about the colonized. Postcolonialism stands for the cultures and societies at the margin and struggle to correct their misrepresentation.

Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha make up what Robert Young describes as the Holy Trinity of Postcolonial critics who have achieved the greatest eminence in their field.⁴ The first postcolonial studies started in the 1970s with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) This book’s main contribution was the critique of the western perception of the East or Orient which he claims to be a creation of the western society. In his view, the study of the Orient “was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”)”.⁵ The Westerners attributed characteristics to the colonized like decadence, laziness, cruelty, stupidity, effeminacy...

There is also a related historical movement with regard to the rewriting of history, which is referred to as subaltern history or Subaltern Studies. The term ‘subaltern’ signifies those groups who are not part of the ruling groups, and subaltern history refers to the history of those groups who suffer from subordination. The study of subaltern groups has been particularly influential in India and has played a significant part in the work of another very influential postcolonial scholar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In an essay entitled: “Can the Subaltern speak?” Spivak’s principal concern is whether the Postcolonial Subaltern (term she adapts from Antonio Gramsci, which signifies subordinate or marginalized) can speak for themselves or whether they are condemned only to be known, represented and spoken for in a distorted truth by those who exploit them. She sees the problem in the fact that the subaltern is always the object of discourse, never the subject.⁶

Like Said and Spivak, Homi Bhabha theorizes postcolonial discourse in his books *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (1994). By coining terms like *mimicry* and *hybridity*, Bhabha advocates the plurality of postcolonial cultures as they embrace the European and indigenous traditions. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha states that: “The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority”.⁷ Thus the ‘mimicry’ of the colonizers by colonized subjects can deconstruct the difference (‘them’ and ‘us’) which forms the basis of colonialist ideologies and hegemony. Bhabha celebrates also the ‘hybridity’ of postcolonial cultures, seeing their embrace of European as well as indigenous traditions as a positive advantage which allows their writers and critics to understand and criticize the West as both insiders and outsiders.⁸ In this sense Bhabha states: “the social articulation of differences, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridity that emerges in moment of historical transformation”.⁹

Postcolonial literature is concerned above all with the issue of *self representation* in two sense of the word, the artistic and the political. Postcolonial writers wish to speak for themselves, to tell their own stories, including the story of the colonial encounter and its consequences, and so “to create the psychological base and historical understanding which will encourage wise choices in self-government”.¹⁰ As a matter of fact, Postcolonial Literature reflects not only the experience of those previously colonized countries, but also the relationships between the colonizer and colonized. All this results in literary texts that are characterized by a desire to challenge and struggle against the colonialist notions of power by giving the marginalized ‘other’ the opportunity to speak, to tell the truth about the consequences of the colonial experience.

The notion that the postcolonial text stands in direct opposition to the canonical European text, and thus acts as a kind of counter-discourse, is generally accepted in

postcolonial theory. In fact, this concept is so popular that Salman Rushdie's assertion that 'the Empire writes back to the Centre' has been adopted as a maxim within postcolonial studies, and it summarizes the main tenets of this field. Postcolonial writers generally deal with many subjects in their work such as cultural identity in colonized societies, the dilemmas of developing a national identity after the colonial rule, and the ways to articulate and celebrate identity. What gives this counter literature its interest and importance is the fact that it is the colonized who is now speaking about himself and his society, to assert himself and his existence. The importance of the counter-discourse can be seen from the beginning of the African novels in English, when for instance in 1958, Achebe wrote back to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1961).

Drama is one of the most important arts in Postcolonial literature since it has played a crucial role in the development of national cultures and audiences, as the "dramatic performance raises so many issues that are central to postcolonial cultures: questions of identity, language, myth and history".¹¹ In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), Frantz Fanon supports the idea that drama can act as an effective tool for those who are engaged in an anti-colonial movement, to make people more conscious about their situation, and that it is time for change. C. L. Innes affirms:

In cultures where literacy has been confined mainly to a small elite group, and where there is a continuing oral culture with roots in pre-colonial traditions, drama and performance provide a means of reaching a much wider indigenous audience and tapping into forms and conventions which are already familiar to them.¹²

In fact, drama based on festivals and rituals plays an important role in postcolonial theatre since "by stressing local experience, the audience is positioned within a distinctive local history"¹³

The expansion of Postcolonial theatre has introduced many African Playwrights notably Wole Soyinka, as well as European ones like the Irish Playwright J.M Synge. Their

respective plays *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Shadow of the Glen* have been studied and received a wide range of literary criticism.

To start with Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*, Oona Frawley, in '*The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea* (2009) affirms that Synge, through his play, "inaugurates an Irish national theatre that not only attempted to diminish the stage Irishman, but also initiated the Irish woman into the drama in a new and significantly vocal way".¹⁴ According to Frawley, through his female character, Synge criticizes not only modern Irish culture and the results of considering woman as the symbol of a nation, but also the Irish valorization of female chastity since in the play, a husband plays dead to catch his young wife with another man.¹⁵ On the other hand, Frawley states that the fact that the female protagonist leaves her husband, can be Synge's suggestion that that the liberation of Ireland will be meaningless for women unless it also involves liberation from an "oppressively patriarchal society in which, for economic reasons, women are imprisoned by loveless and sexless marriages to older men".¹⁶

In addition to Frawley, Sanjeev Kumar Mishra, in an article entitled: "Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*: A Study in Themes and Techniques", affirms that the play is without doubt a feminist work, and he focuses on the institution of marriage to make valid his argument. The author asserts that the female protagonist Nora Burk and her husband Dan live in security; they do have a farm and money, but this does not prevent Nora from being unhappy, and feel lonely. Loneliness which is a prominent theme in the play and which is, according to Kumar Mishra, one of the consequences of marriage on the life of women, since: "Nora has learned that one can be with someone and still be very much alone".¹⁷ Thus the constraint of marriage pushed Nora to search for freedom, and this explains her decision to follow the tramp, rather than to preserve her familial sphere. This makes the play a direct attack on the institution of marriage "as an arrangement by which a woman may live securely, provided she is willing to relinquish her freedom and her self".¹⁸

Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* had also been the subject of several critics, Brian Crow and Chris Benfield's *An Introduction to Postcolonial theatre* (1996), argue that Soyinka, in his play, insists on the fact that to achieve a truly Post-independent nation, there must be a solidarity among its citizens, and the latter have to be aware of their historical legacies, to envision a better future.¹⁹ In the play, "the livings want the Gathering of the Tribes to be a glorification of the past, and they are angry when their guests from the ancestor world turn out to be reminders of the inheritance of brutality and evil".²⁰

Adebisi Ademakinwa, in "A Dance of the Forests as the Inflection of Wole Soyinka's Socio- Political Concern" (2007) comments that the Play's characters and plot symbolize Soyinka's pessimistic view on the Post-independent Nigeria, and the socio-political situation in the country. According to Ademakinwa, *A Dance of the Forests* offers a less than euphoric welcome to the new postcolonial social formation, highlighting the skeptical view of the future, and looking back to the past.²¹ Moreover, the play can be considered as Soyinka's attempt in classical tragedy, by means of African situation, and this is symbolized by the plot: "we see the livings as the protagonists, and the gods, both major and minor, as the antagonists".²²

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

To my knowledge, there are no previous works that compared *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Shadow of the Glen* in the light of Postcolonial theory. Although J.M.Synge and Wole Soyinka are from different continents, and societies, their countries have the same colonial background. In fact, both Synge's Ireland and Soyinka's Nigeria were part of the British Empire, and both were victims of the same colonial hegemony and discourse. The colonial representation of the Irish and the blacks was almost the same, the African was seen as 'savage' and 'primitive'; the Irish as a 'buffoon' and a 'drunkard'.

As a matter of fact, this present proposes a postcolonial study of the plays *The Shadow of the Glen* and *A Dance of the Forests* by focusing on the strategies applied by the two dramatists J.M. Synge, and Wole Soyinka, to challenge the hegemony and legacies of colonialism, as well as the colonial discourse. I will try to show that though these dramatists reflect different cultures and histories, they share the same desire to assert their respective identity, to correct the colonialist representation of their countries, to revalorize their traditions and get rid of the imperialist hegemony and assumptions, and this is mainly through the celebration of their respective languages, nations, and cultures.

II) Method and Materials:

A. Method:

Many postcolonial texts implicitly and/or explicitly engage with and ‘write back’ to colonial novels and histories, the concept of ‘writing back’ is central to one of the most influential postcolonial literary studies, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, three Australian critics who have been leading academics in Commonwealth literary studies. The title of their book refers to Rushdie’s comment, ‘The Empire writes back to the centre’:

Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie’s phrase, the ‘Empire writes back’ to the imperial ‘centre’, not only through nationalists’ assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place.²³

In their book, Ashcroft et.al argue that the Postcolonial text seeks to expose the ways in which the western literary tradition has marginalized, misrepresented and silenced its other. Moreover, the Empire places itself in direct opposition to the imperial centre, to assert difference and autonomy, and to undermine the colonialist assumptions, and hegemony that relegated the colonized ‘other’ to a marginal position.²⁴

English language was one of the most effective tools through which the colonizer tried to exercise his hegemony over the colonized countries. The colonizer has often considered English as the language of science and civilization that is necessarily superior to the native languages and dialects of the colonized. English has been considered as the language of oppressors. Therefore, some writers from the first generation of postcolonial writers refused to write in it, and preferred the use of their native languages. However, most of the postcolonial literary works are mainly written in the language of the colonizer. Thus, the language of postcolonial literature has always been subject to polemics. Critics and authors, for example, often questioned whether writing in the language of the colonizer would produce

a pure national literature. This is what pushed novelists like Ngugi Wa Thiongo to abandon English as a means of expression, to start writing in his native language (Gikuyu).

However, the trio of *The Empire Writes Back* considers that writing in colonial language can still stand as a challenging act, through which one can question the superiority of the imperialist powers, and dismantle the authority of the English language by transgressing the rules of its grammar, and reworking its syntactic rigid rules. The English that is presented as the language used in many postcolonial texts, is named “english” (with lower-case e), since the latter includes many local variations, and words inserted from native languages. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain the term “english” as follows:

The world language called “english” is a continuum of ‘intersections’ in which the speaking habits in various communities have intervened to reconstruct the language. This ‘reconstruction’ occurs in two ways: on the one hand, regional english varieties may introduce words which become familiar to all English-speakers, and on the other, the varieties themselves produce national and regional peculiarities which distinguish from other forms of English.²⁵

This supports the idea of hybridity that results from the encounter between cultures and languages in the problematic area of colonialism. “Writers in this continuum employ highly developed strategies of code-switching, and vernacular transcription, which achieve the dual result of abrogating the standard English and appropriating an “english” as a culturally significant discourse”.²⁶

Appropriation and *abrogation* are commonly used in Postcolonial theory, when we speak about language and “english” in particular, “The development of independent literatures depended on the abrogation of this constraining power, and the appropriation of language and writing for new usages. Such an appropriation is clearly the most significant feature in the emergence of modern post-colonial literature”.²⁷ Both generally mean a rejection of the hegemony of the imperial standard language, while abrogation attempts to change the meaning of some culturally controversial words that was given to them by the imperial power, appropriation is rather a “remolding of the language to new usages”.²⁸ It

strives to make use of the original language of the imperial centre, but making it fit to the needs of the ex-colonies. This is done through a good number of strategies that include abrogation, appropriation, glossing, code switching, code mixing etc. By this process, postcolonial authors aim to assert and affirm their native culture, to make a kind of distinction between their culture and that of the colonizer.

This process of abrogation and appropriation of English is the site of creating difference in postcolonial writings. The writers of *The Empire Writes Back* believe that Postcolonial literatures are cross-cultural (the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized), and therefore, the processes of abrogation and appropriation take place simultaneously:

This literature is therefore always written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the centre, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterize the local language...etc.²⁹

The most important use of language in postcolonial literature may be “the one in which it also constructs difference, separation, and absence from the metropolitan norm”.³⁰ This is why we can perceive “english” as a language suitable for postcolonial literary works.

Among the main reasons that pushed many postcolonial authors to use “english” is that the English language is an international language, an opportunity for the postcolonial literature to reach a wider audience, and make the voice of postcolonial people heard everywhere. In addition, language is a very flexible and “versatile tool” with which a “world” can be textually constructed.³¹

Moreover, the trio of *The Empire Writes Back* claim that national literatures are the basis of postcolonial studies, and that without the development of national literatures, and their use in comparing and contrasting the cultures on the national level, there would not be any postcolonial discussion possible.³² Another concern for the postcolonial theory has been the necessity to make the representation of the colonized culture come from those who have

been oppressed rather than the oppressors, native culture and traditions were continually challenged by the hegemony of the colonialist's practices, and in order to challenge and eradicate the cultural hegemony of the colonizer, native culture and traditions need to be revalorized. "Thus, one of the first ways in which Post-colonial cultures address the ideological basis of imperial history is by establishing a context for the articulation of a counter discursive versions of the past".³³ To refute and correct the colonialist version on the history, and traditions of the natives, many postcolonial playwrights go back to ancestral customs and practices, to assert and re-affirm their civilization.

What gave importance to postcolonial works is their use of native cultural aspects like mythology, orality, folktales... The latter represent the patrimony of the colonized, a legacy transmitted from one generation to another. Through their commitment to these aspects, postcolonial authors want to challenge the different myths constructed by the colonizer to represent the colonized culture and way of life. Postcolonial authors deal with ancestral and pre-colonial customs to prove that the colonized people have a civilization of their own long before the coming of the imperialist powers.

B-Materials:

1- Summary of Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*:

The play is about an African ritual that gathers the humans with their ancestors. To celebrate the gathering of the tribes, and to know what tomorrow hides for them, the humans request the presence of their illustrious forefathers who are able to foresee the future. However, the expected gathering turned into a tribunal. The play opens with the arrival of a dead couple, who had been summoned by Aroni, the spirit of wisdom and Forest Head's assistant, to attend the ceremony.

The story of the dead couple goes back to the pre- colonial period. At that time, the king Mata Kharibu took Madame Tortoise (reincarnated as Rola), the neighboring King's wife, to push her husband to declare war. However, the latter refused, then King Mata Kharibu ordered his army's general (Dead Man) to do it. But once again, the latter is against, arguing that it was an unjust war. Even when Madam Tortoise tried to persuade him by offering her body and throne to him, he refused. As a punishment for his disobedience, the dead man was sold to slavery, and his pregnant wife (dead woman) was killed.

The King Mata Kharibu and Madam Tortoise were not the only criminals. There were others, among whom the Historian of Mata Kharibu reincarnated as Adenebi, who justified the war of Mata Kharibu, affirming that war was the only motor of history, and that Madam Tortoise is not the first woman in History for whom thousands of men would die, which is evocative of the case of "Queen Helen" of Troy .

Demoke, the carver of Ogun's servant, who was once the court poet of Mata Kharibu, is the central character. In his two lives, Demoke is guilty of crime. But a light is thrown on his new status in the final scene of the play. During the dance's performance, he chooses to save the Half-Child, symbol of regeneration and restore it to his mother.

Forest Head, reincarnated as Obaneji, conducts the three humans (Rola, Adenebi and Demoke) into the forest. He wants them to judge themselves by themselves. However, Eshuoro, spirit of evil, wants the humans to be punished harshly; but above all, he aims to take revenge from Demoke for Oreomole's death. In the final scene, he stands against Demoke's choices.

Once the three humans are judged, they recognize their true selves, and can now transmit their new knowledge to the whole community, to improve themselves and their future, as well as the existence of Africans.

2- Summary of J.M. Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*:

A one-act play, written in the summer of 1902, *The Shadow of the Glen* was the first of Synge's plays to be staged in 1903. Nora Burke is married to Dan, a sheep farmer many years her elder, and they live in the last cottage at the head of a long glen in County Wicklow. Dan pretends to be dead, but not before he puts Nora under 'a black curse' not to touch his body and insists only his sister should lay him out. Then, a tramp comes, and begs for shelter from the wet night. Nora accepts, and both of them make a conversation about Dan Burke. Nora lets the tramp to touch her husband's body to make sure that he is really dead, but the tramp rejects it, afraid of the curse Dan Burke made before he dies. Nora wants to go out for a while to call a young neighboring sheep farmer, Michael Dara, so she asks the tramp to stay at home during her absence.

Once she is gone, Dan Burke, who is supposed to be dead, opens his eyes and makes the tramp feel afraid. Dan Burke sits up, shares his suspicions and his schemes with the Tramp. At their return, Nora talks with Michael Dara. The latter wants to marry Nora since he is preparing plans for Dan's legacy.

During Michael's and Nora's discussion, Dan wakes up, and the two are surprised and frightened, when they see a dead man alive again. Dan Burke, angry, banishes his wife from the house and the Tramp takes up her cause. The latter persuades Nora to follow him, because he wants to give her a better life on the road. At the end, the two go together, leaving behind them Dan and Michael, complimenting each other over a glass of whiskey.

III) Results:

From the study of *A Dance of the Forests*, and *The Shadow of the Glen* in the context of Postcolonialism, I will explore the various strategies adopted by Wole Soyinka and J.M Synge to subvert the hegemonic discourse of colonialism, thus their drama acts as a resonant site for resistance. In fact, Soyinka and Synge deploy their language, their conception of nationalism, and their traditional culture and traditions as tools to correct the colonial misrepresentation of their respective countries.

To start with language, the two dramatists, instead of accepting the static hegemony of the imperial language, have shown that it is possible to produce an effective counter discourse even in the language of their former colonizers. Through the abrogation and appropriation of English, Soyinka and Synge confirmed that English is no longer the so-called King's or Queen's language, when the postcolonial writers are using it.

Another strategy deployed by the two authors concerns the representation of their country's national identity, and this is achieved through the way they portrayed their female characters. British feminization of both Nigeria and Ireland gradually became one element of its colonial rhetoric. In fact, in several colonial situations, these stereotypes provided an ideological justification for different kinds of exploitation, for in the colonial discourse, the female bodies came to symbolize the conquered land, and this led to the effeminizing accounts about the colonies. However, Postcolonial Nigerian and Irish nationalists, in their way to criticize the masculine, rationalist traits of the English colonizer, reinforced the femininity of their countries. As a result, Soyinka's and Synge's portrayal of women came as a reaction to both colonizers and nationalists, and have shown their total opposition to make "woman" a symbolic element of nationalism.

The last strategy applied in the two plays is the reclamation of native cultures through the celebration of indigenous traditions and values. The two dramatists share the desire to use

theatre as a medium to explore and re-affirm their cultural values, to denounce the pejorative way with which their culture and civilization was advertised by the colonizers, the imposition of the latter's cultural practices and aspects. The celebration of national symbol and patrimony, the return to pre-colonial and ancestral traditions by postcolonial authors aim to eradicate the cultural hegemony of the colonizer. Through this, Wole Soyinka, and J.M Synge push their audience to change their worldview by calling into question the underlying assumptions about their respective traditional culture and their colonial legacies.

Endnotes

¹ Quoted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 2001), 42.

² Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts*, 43.

³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 02.

⁴ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 163.

⁵ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 47.

⁶ Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 27.

⁷ Homi. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 88.

⁸ C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12.

⁹ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 02.

¹⁰ Innes, *Postcolonial Literatures*, 04-05.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-colonial drama: Theory, practice, politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 77

¹⁴ Oona Frawley, 'The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea', in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M Synge*, ed. J.P Mathews. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17

¹⁶ Ibid., 122.

¹⁷ Mishra Sanjeev Kumar, 'Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*: A Study in Themes and Techniques', *Recent Receptive Exploration* 01 (2013), 09.

¹⁸ Ibid., 08.

¹⁹ Brian Crow with Chris Banfield, *An introduction to post-colonial theatre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 88.

²⁰ Ibid., 90.

²¹ Adebisi Ademakinwa, 'A Dance of the Forests as the Inflection of Wole Soyinka's Socio Political Concern', *The International journal of the Humanities* 05 (2007):02.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Empire Writes Back*, 32.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 39.

²⁶ Ibid., 45.

²⁷ Ibid., 06.

²⁸ Ibid., 37.

²⁹ Ibid., 39.

³⁰ Ibid., 44.

³¹ Ibid., 43.

³² Ibid., 16.

³³ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Post-colonial Drama.*, 110.

IV) Discussion:

A. Postcolonial language and the appropriation and abrogation techniques in *A*

Dance of the Forests and *The Shadow of the Glen*:

1) Linguistic Imperialism:

English language has come a long way from a language introduced by invading forces into England after the Roman occupation; it has grown into a world language.¹ The spread of the English language beyond England was, in turn, the result of British colonization of other countries, it played an important role in the expansion of the British Empire. It was one of the most basic markers of colonial authority; part of the imperialist project has been to impose the English language on the colonized subjects to be more powerful and have more control. In order to impose the power and hegemony of the imperial tongue, the colonizer had recourse to several methods among them forbidding the colonized to speak their mother tongue in their motherland. With this, the imperialist forces gained more control, and the possibility to eradicate the culture of the natives, and impose the hegemony of their own. In fact, “to name people and places in English, replacing any earlier constructions of locations and identity is to establish at least partial control over reality, geography, history and subjectivity”.²

The oldest colony of the British Empire, Ireland for example faced the loss of linguistic autonomy when English was imposed on Gaelic speakers. In fact, one of the major effects of the conquest of Ireland and its continued colonization over the centuries was the suppression of the Gaelic language. The latter was characterized, in the colonialists’ words, by its deficiency when compared to English. “It has been argued that the speakers of the Gaelic language can improve themselves materially or professionally if they abandoned their language, and used English”.³

According to Brenda Murray, there are three main steps behind the process of institutionalization of the English language in Ireland. The first step concerns the adoption of

the Penal laws during 18th c. The aim of the latter was to forbid any use of the Gaelic, whereas the English language gained prominence since it was adopted in different fields. The second step consisted of making English the required medium of instruction, and this became official with the introduction of the national school system. The last step was characterized by the Famine in 1846, after which the Irish people started to learn English, to improve their economic situation .⁴

Moving beyond the white settler colonies to the countries of the third world, we find Nigeria. Though Ireland and Nigeria are situated in two different continents, and their colonization by the British occurred in different periods, Nigeria experienced the same process of linguistic imperialism. When the British colonized Nigeria, they had their armies, but they governed also by pushing a large part of Nigerian society to follow the system that they installed. The latter had three primary tools: the Christian Church, schools that taught a British curriculum, and the English language.⁵ Thus, through the English language, the British colonizers needed to establish a linguistic dominance and hegemony English quickly became the language of privilege; to use it was to have access to many opportunities because of its association with wealth and power.

As significant as the introduction of English in Nigeria is the introduction of writing. Bill Ashcroft, for example, had asserted that “in many postcolonial societies, it was not the English language which had the greatest impact, but writing itself”.⁶ For these societies that have language without written scripts, the introduction of writing is as closely associated with colonialism, as with the introduction of English.

2) Postcolonial English:

The irony with the introduction of the English language by the colonizer, and the linguistic hegemony that followed is that it enabled the natives to use that language in their nationalistic struggle against the colonial masters. In fact, the colonial language remained after the colonizer's departure, a legacy in the decolonized countries. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, for example, argues that "the language issue is a very important key to the decolonization process".⁷ Soon after, intellectuals and writers started to question the continued use of the English language and whether writing in the language of the colonizer would produce a pure national literature.

Nevertheless, even if English remains the language of colonialism, its application by postcolonial writers can be considered as an act of defiance, a challenge to the superiority and hegemony of the colonizers. In this sense, Baker (2000) affirms that writers who use English "are using the primary tool of oppression as a means of their own liberation".⁸ Thus, some native novelists, poets and playwrights used this colonial language; English to depict their own cultures and societies, among them the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe who chose to learn English, and eventually to write in the language as a means of "infiltrating the ranks of the enemy, and destroying him from within".⁹

J.M Synge from Ireland and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria are among those writers who used the colonial language in their respective plays *The Shadow of the Glen*, and *A Dance of the Forests*. Each, in his own way, was able to appropriate English and express the feelings, ideas, and customs of their native culture. Both, as postcolonial playwrights, have been able to destroy the Standard English, with its entire colonial legacy, and use instead personal English. In fact, if postcolonial writers want to reflect their colonial and postcolonial experience appropriately, the use of English language is not sufficient; they need to make the latter suitable by transforming it into a unique form of English, an English of their own, and there

are two distinct processes by which to do this: appropriation and abrogation. The latter refer to the site of creating differences in postcolonial writings. According to Ashcroft et al (2002):

The most interesting feature of its use in Postcolonial literature may be the way in which it also constructs difference, separation, and absence from the metropolitan norm. But the ground in which such construction is based is an abrogation of the essentialist assumptions of that norm, and a dismantling of its imperialists centralism.¹⁰

Strategies of appropriation and abrogation found in postcolonial texts are numerous and variable. Such strategies enable the writer to gain a world audience, and produce a culturally distinct and appropriate language that appears particular and different even though it is English. As a result, postcolonial writers appropriate the imperial language, and make it suit their culture and its people; the result is “a production of various culturally marked Englishes which usually diverge from the “Queen’s Englishs”.”¹¹

3) Appropriation and Abrogation in Wole Soyinka’s *A Dance of The Forests*:

During the post-independence era, African writers found themselves in the face of a big challenge and dilemma: to produce an African literature despite the persistent linguistic hegemony of the ex-colonizers. To counter this influence, the majority of African authors combined both foreign and native language, to stress the difference and produce a distinct literature. Wole Soyinka is among those Nigerian writers who perfectly combine English with the metaphorical, sonorous Yoruba traditional language.

Writing in English is a colonial legacy that was inevitable and imposed on the colonized, a choice imposed by history, but as a Post-Colonial writer, Soyinka still uses the non-pure English to resist linguistic hegemony. For this, he creates and changes the English with African native features, by using mainly the following methods : "double languages"; "untranslated words" ... etc, to depict and stress the racial identity of Africa in literature.

Ashcroft et al (2002) affirmed that among the most common methods applied in the appropriation and abrogation of the English language is ‘code-switching’ i.e. switching between two or more languages:

The techniques employed by the polydialectal writer include variable orthography to make dialect more accessible, double glossing and code-switching to act as an interweaving interpretative mode, and the selection of certain words which remain untranslated in the text.¹²

Thus, by code switching, we mean occasional linguistic shifts, the importation of particular dialects that are shared by the members of a particular community. All these are common ways of stressing cultural distinctiveness in the writing.

A Dance of the Forests comprises several examples of ‘code-switching’. In fact though the play is written in English, Soyinka inserts to it Yoruba language. The first Yoruba elements that are noticeable in the play are the names of the characters, both human and divine, and the forest setting. The names of the characters are represented in Yoruba language which depicts the African nature of the play. In the latter, such names as *Agboreko*, *Eshuoro*, and *Ogun*... are derived from the Yoruba language. Here are some illustration of English and Yoruba language that are side by side: “Enter Agboreko, Elder of the Sealed Lips. He wears a white agbada and a white wrapper”.¹³ and also “With the living has fully repeated its nature, has re-impressed fully on the tapestry of Igbehinadun”.¹⁴ and “then, spoken I a sense of epilogue, Igbale music gently in the background”.¹⁵ This shows clearly that when we have a postcolonial text written in English, and we incorporate in it words or phrases from another language, this can be described in terms of “literary strategies which express cultural conflicts through linguistic tensions”.¹⁶

The use of Yoruba language results in untranslated words, the latter refer to a technique used by Postcolonial writers. It consists of leaving some words untranslated in the text, and this can be considered as a mark of fidelity and attachment to the indigenous language. It is a device used to convey the sense of cultural distinctiveness. In fact, the

untranslated words can “be held to have the presence and power of the culture they signify”.¹⁷ Thus, a word that is characteristically African, like the ones inserted in the play (Igbehinadun, agbada...) may be held to embody the culture from which they derive. Moreover, Gilbert and Tompkins argue that as colonial authorities forbade the use of indigenous language, “their presentation on stage can represent an act of defiance, and an attempt to get back cultural autonomy”.¹⁸

Theatre also assists in the maintenance of spoken languages that are essential to oral traditions and their transmission of history, culture, and social order. In this sense, Ashcroft et al (2002) affirm : “The study of ‘oral performance art’ was rescued from such limiting labels as ‘traditional’, or even ‘primitive’, and given equal status as a rich, sophisticated artistic tradition”.¹⁹ Moreover, a postcolonial theatre’s focus on orality can be interpreted as a challenge to the hegemony of writing that came with colonialism, and represented a danger to the continuity of oral culture. In this sense, Gilbert and Tompkins argue : “a dramatic focus on oral traditions opens up the possibility of challenging the tyranny of the written word through which many imperial languages claim their authenticity”.²⁰

Among the components of the African oral culture and tradition, we have proverbs. The latter belong to ancestral legacies, and they are integral elements of the spoken form transmitted from one generation to another verbally. Richard K. Priebe (1988) maintains: “the proverb user tries to minimize conflict, to conspire with his audience to find a solution to a problem through a clear and direct appeal to tradition”.²¹ Proverbs are still significant and have a positive impact on African societies mainly because of their didacticism. In fact, proverbs serve to teach morality and ancestral values and principles on which the African civilization is built.

A Dance of the Forests is characterized by Soyinka’s prolific use of proverbs. The latter appear, for example, in the words of the old man: “the cricket didn’t know he was well

off until he asked the sparrow to admire his hole”.²² or “It is only the cockroach who shouts vanity when the chicken struts”.²³ Proverbs are also seen in the other characters’ saying, among whom Agboreko who states that: “If the wind can get lost in the rainstorm it is useless to send him an umbrella”.²⁴ and also: “if the hunter loses his quarry, he looks up to see where the vultures are circling”.²⁵ From the translation of proverbs into English by postcolonial writers, results hybrid discourse, for proverbs in English can be understood internationally, and by their content and oral characteristics, they become suitable to the indigenous communities. “Proverbs invoke different kinds of authority that are heavily laden with cultural significance, although many colonialists would see them as outdated rhetorical devices which are of little importance”.²⁶ Thus, even if proverbs are considered by the colonizer as meaningless and useless, the postcolonial writers focus on them as they represent the richness of African folklore and traditions. By their didacticism, proverbs prove that African civilization is no longer “primitive”, and based on anarchy, but is a civilization with values, principles that are transmitted from one generation to another.

‘code-switching’, untranslated words, and proverbs, as strategies of appropriation play a decisive role in highlighting differences, and rejection of the imperialist English imposed on the colonized. The use of English by postcolonial writers to fulfill a discourse, and the strategies they adopt to do so “captures that metonymic moment between the culture affirmed on the one hand as ‘indigenous’ or ‘national’ and that characterized on the other as ‘imperialist’, ‘metropolitan’”.²⁷

4) Appropriation and abrogation in J.M Synge’s *The Shadow of the Glen*:

With the demise of the Gaelic language in Ireland, and the rising of the English one, Irish people felt themselves strangers in their own community, as the linguistic hegemony was everywhere, in every field. However, this started to change when Irish renaissance writers like J M Synge began to introduce some modification into that imperial language to make it

appropriate and suite the needs of the Irish population. The origin of this linguistic modification came from the language of the folk. In Evelyn Ch'ien's formulation: "the subject matter of those writers is not simply a narrative, but an effort to re-embody language, its historical residue, its syntax, its grammar, its tone, and its sentiment".²⁸ Thus, Irish writers, like Synge, through their focus on the language of the folk or rural peasants, are reflecting the history, culture and traditions of this category of people, and they negotiated the hegemony of English by developing Hiberno English. Synge learned Hiberno-English, "the kind of English spoken in Ireland, which was heavily influenced by a Gaelic substratum".²⁹ Synge is well known in Irish literature for presenting better than any other writer the Hiberno- English language that the Irish peasants spoke at that time.

Synge's decision to modify the Standard English can be explained by the fact that the Irish National Theatre faced the difficulty to produce a pure Irish play, since the English language was dominant in Ireland, and an Irish play will not attract a large audience. To this dilemma, Synge thought about a theatre that will be performed in English, with an Irish locution and syntax.

Elaine Sisson argues: "A commonly held Revivalist conception was that the west of Ireland had a mystical quality lacking in other parts of the country where English prevailed".³⁰ This according to her explains the deep interest in the folk culture, their language and traditions. The nationalists, in their way to build a strong cultural nationalist discourse sought to revive the real, and pure nature of Ireland. Thus, they find it appropriate to focus on the west of Ireland which suffered from the discourse of inferiorisation on the part of the urban center. For the nationalists, the west of Ireland, the western peasants, and the rural life represented the true essence of Ireland, a characteristic they found suitable to their cultural and national discourse. This explains Synge's attachment and focus on the language of the western Ireland, a language which when you heard it sounds English, but with an Irish

intonation and syntax. Ruchika Singh affirms that: “Synge, by using this style, avoided the problem that many of the other writers within the Irish Literary Revival had; most of them were no native Irish speakers, their Irish was indeed very poor”.³¹ J.M Synge first used this new language in his book *The Aran Islands*, which can be considered as an anthropological study since he recorded in it his meeting with the Western peasants, discovered their rituals, culture, and heard different myths, folktales, and legends.

The Aran Islands then provided Synge with a setting, an idiom, and a language to express his attitudes towards life in general and Irish life in particular. “Irish peasants helped him to establish a new sense of culture and linguistic identity in Ireland by transforming Irish folklore into art and by capturing the rhythms of the Anglo-Irish dialect”.³² In fact, though Synge uses the English language in his works, one of the ways he asserts his sense of nationalism is through the use of a dialect of English, not found in the English itself. according to T.J. Cribb(1999): “Synge uses a selection from various dialects imparting a sufficient flavor to standard English for it to sound different while still remaining accessible to metropolitan audiences”.³³ Thus, Synge tries to balance the nationalistic (anti-colonial) use of dialect, and the comprehensibility to other speakers of English.

Such was the case with the language of the play *The Shadow of the Glen*. In this play, Synge had recorded peculiar pronunciations of words and unusual phrases, the following extracts are suitable illustration to the above arguments. For example, when Nora speaks about her seemingly impotent Husband: “ Maybe cold would be no sign of death with the like of him for he was always cold , every day since I knew him....but I’m thinking it’s dead he is surely...., Then he went into his bed , and he was saying it was destroyed he was”.³⁴ Or when she addresses the Tramp: “ It’s other thing than the like of you, stranger, would make a person afeard”.³⁵ Another example is when Dan speaks to the Tramp about his wife and says: “It’s herself; surely, it’s a bad wife she is”.³⁶ It appears from these examples that People are

speaking in a language which appears to be English, but it is English that is re-worked. “But the sets and the setting tell you that this is Ireland, and these are people who would be speaking Irish if the audience could only understand them”.³⁷ Although writing in English, Synge captured the rhythms of the local language and the mythology. His innovative use of dialect informed by the rhythms of Irish language syntax and his anthropological depiction of rural customs and landscapes played a major role in the nationalists programs and the building of the New Irish State.³⁸

Endnotes

¹ Ismail Talib. S, *The Language of Postcolonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 122.

² Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, practice, politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 164.

³ Talib, *Language of Postcolonial Literature*, 32.

⁴ Brenda Murray, ‘Ireland- a test case of Postcolonialism/ Post-colonialism’, *Educate: The journal of doctoral research in education* 05(2005), 22.

⁵ Awam Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 04.

⁶ Quoted in Talib, *Language of Postcolonial Literature*, 56.

⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁹ Ibid., 71.

¹⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 43.

¹¹ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama*, 177.

¹² Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Empire Writes back*, 71.

¹³ Wole Soyinka, *A Dance of The Forests* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 12.

¹⁴ Ibid., 50.

¹⁵ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶ Quoted in Talib, *Language of Postcolonial Literature*, 115.

¹⁷ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Empire Writes back*, 51.

¹⁸ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama*, 169.

- ¹⁹ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Empire Writes back*, 126.
- ²⁰ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama*, 167
- ²¹ Quoted in Gilbert and Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama*, 182.
- ²² Soyinka, *Dance of the Forests*, 34.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 38.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 12.
- ²⁶ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama*, 183.
- ²⁷ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Empire Writes back*, 52
- ²⁸ Quoted in Plamen Gaptov, 'The three-holed whistle from Kiltartan: Communal language making in the Irish literary renaissance', *Management and Education*, Vol VII (2), 2011:84.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Elaine Sisson, 'The Aran Islands and the Travel Essays', in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M Synge*, ed. J.P Mathews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 56.
- ³¹ Ruchika Singh, 'Treatment of Christianity and Paganism, myth and Folklore: The plays of John Millington Synge' (Phd. Thesis. Aligarh Muslim University, 2012)
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Quoted in Talib, *Postcolonial Language*, 97.
- ³⁴ John Millington Synge, *The Shadow of the Glen* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1905), 04.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 05.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 09.
- ³⁷ Alan Titley, 'Synge and The Irish Language' in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M Synge*, ed. J.P Mathews. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 92.
- ³⁸ J.P Mathews, *The Cambridge Companion to J.M Synge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 07.

B. The Question of Nationalism in *A Dance of The Forests* and *The Shadow of The Glen*:

The concept of nation was the subject of many studies achieved by theorists and analysts, for to define that concept is not easy, as it is always changing, and evolving through times and contexts. However, every study tried to give an approximate definition of nation, and its relation with culture. For example Eric Hobsbawm (1983) argues that what contributes to the construction of nation is the gathering of specific traditions, customs, and symbols.¹ Benedict Anderson defines Nation as an “imagined community” which permit to postcolonial societies to produce “a self image” to struggle against and challenge the colonialist hegemony and ideology.² From these two definitions, it can be said that nation is a community which occupies a country, and which has a common culture, history, religion and identity, nation thus is a communal construction of a culture, a collective identity based on a shared background.

In addition to the study of nation, Anderson has provided many theoretical works about the relationship between gender and nation. When for example defining nationality, Anderson draws on an interesting analogy: “in the modern world, everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender”.³ Anderson has already influenced other critics who would argue that nationalism is male-based. Anne McClintock is a feminist scholars frequently quoted for her criticism on the sexism of modern nationalism. “All nationalisms are gendered All nations depend on powerful constructions of gender”.⁴ McClintock argues that family and domestic space symbolize modern nations, and the latter becomes “the national family of man,” which constitutes a “social hierarchy” where the subordination of women and children to men is naturalized.⁵

As a result of man’s superiority in nation and family, “women are often excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit”.⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis affirms that in addition to

their status as the passive symbol of nation, women are supposed to be the “cultural reproducers” in a nation as well.⁷ That is to say, women are responsible for the reproduction of young men and for their domestic education to fulfill a respectful national culture.

Colonization is understood as more than territorial rule; it involved patterns of representation identified as colonial discourse. Colonial discourse is best understood as the ways in which the colonizer describes the colonized. In his discussion of the colonialist discourse in *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains how the Orient “helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience”.⁸ The feminization of the indigenous people is one of the most common tactics deployed by colonial discourse. Therefore, the experience of colonial rule is one of the major factors that had profound consequences on the development of gender and sexuality in colonized nations.

Since the colonizer saw the colonized as being inferior to him, the feminization of the indigenous people gave the British the opportunity to praise their virility and masculinity, as a way to justify the imperialist mission, to affirm that the feminine ‘other’ was in need of a male’s protection. British’s feminization of other countries was one of the strongest elements of its colonial conquest. Moreover, native women and their bodies are described in terms of the promise and the fear of the colonial land, “as in the much later description of a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman whom the narrator in Conrad’s *Heart of darkness* encounters on the shores of Congo river”.⁹ Thus, from the beginning of the colonial period till its end, female bodies symbolize the conquered land. Boehmer (1995) asserts that the depiction of the natives as feminine, and exotic ‘other’, was an opportunity for the ‘center’ to attain the status of a rational and enlightened man.¹⁰

1) Nationalism in *The Shadow of the Glen*:

Among the British colonies that were given feminine attributes is Ireland. The Irish nation was subjugated to the British Empire before it became a free state in 1921 and gained complete independence in 1949. This historical background conjoined with the colonial discourse has had a decisive impact on the definition of nation and gender in relation to Ireland. Before analyzing these three elements, it is important to know that the feminization of the Irish nation was not only the result of the colonial discourse but also of the Irish nationalist movement which proclaimed their intention to fight the colonialist presence in Ireland, and correct the distorted image attributed to their nation. Thus, the relation between gender and nationality in Ireland is expressed both in colonial and postcolonial discourse.

As Ireland was under the colonial rule of England, the process of colonial discourse was at work; the colonized (native Irish) were seen “as the repressed and rejected ‘other’ against which the colonizer (the English) defined an ordered self”.¹¹ Imperialism was commonly explained and justified on the basis of a cultural and racial hierarchy determined by the difference between the indigenous people and the colonizer, “racial categories were established that identified a masculine, rational, and honest English race and a feminine, infantile, bestial, sentimental, and magical Irish one”¹²

Ireland as a feminine race was the subject of many studies undertaken by many intellectuals and scientists, notably Ernest Renan, who is generally agreed to have been the writer who got most interest in the subject, and published many studies on it. In his work *Poesies des Races Celtiques* (1860), Renan presented his definition of races. According to him, there are different kinds of races, each with specific traits. To identify those races, Renan used the category of sexuality and came to the conclusion that “the Celtic race...is an essentially feminine race”.¹³ contrary to the masculine and virile English race. Renan’s studies did influence nineteenth- and early twentieth- century thinkers and scientists, among whom

Matthew Arnold, a British poet and critic who, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1891), asserted that the Celtic character was “sentimental [...] quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly”.¹⁴ According to him, the Celt was “lively [...] keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow” and “loves bright colors, who easily becomes audacious, overcrowding, and full of fanfaronade”¹⁵ contrasting the “English focus on the intellectual, rational, and political”¹⁶

What marked the nineteenth century was the distinction made between cultures, races and sexes. The latter was characterized as a hierarchical structure where the male occupies a superior position in society while the female was in a position of inferiority. Femininity was linked with weakness, irrationality, and emotion. Thus, Renan and Arnold’s depiction of the Irish as feminine relegated the latter into an inferior position, a race defined by their “material and political incapacity and emotional and mental instability, and were thus naturally inferior to the masculine, capable and stable, English race”.¹⁷

Like all countries that suffered from British Imperialism, resistance to colonialism, and its discourse emerged in Ireland to oppose the British rule, and the British view on the Irish race. The result was the beginning of a cultural nationalism, a movement dedicated to the Irish national identity, a counter-enterprise to the ideology of colonialism, and its persistent hegemony. Cultural nationalism is understood as a way to praise, and revalorize the identity of the colonized, correct the misrepresentation of the national identity, and the damages it caused. However, in some cases, postcolonial nationalism fails to realize its ambition, and objectives. Instead of being a movement that is supposed to struggle against the colonial discourse, it ironically enforced that discourse, and this happened unfortunately in Ireland. In this sense Ashcroft et al argue that:

Yet all too often nationalist criticism by failing to alter the terms of the discourse within which it operates, has participated implicitly or even explicitly in a discourse ultimately controlled by the very imperial power its nationalist assertion is designed to exclude. Emphasis may have been transferred to the national literature, but the theoretical assumptions, critical perspectives, and value judgment made have often replicated those of the British establishment.¹⁸

Irish nationalism emerged with the hope of bringing something positive, and changing the established hegemony of the colonial discourse, particularly the feminization of the Irish race. However, it was the contrary that happened. In fact, in their way to challenge the masculine superiority of the colonizer, which described the Irish as feminine, dependant, and weak, Irish nationalist's discourse emphasized an exaggerated femininity, linking the image of their nation with feminine attributes, thus repeating the same colonial discourse

W.B Yeats was an important figure in the Irish nationalism. His contribution to this movement appeared not only through several plays and poems, but also through the creation of the Abbey Theatre. The feminization of Ireland has had many consequences on the way the female figure will be represented in different genres of literature. The Irish woman portrayed by classical nationalism was "typically an emblem for both motherhood and womanhood, envisioned as gentle, rooted in the "native" folk, suffering due to colonialism and in need of male action to end that suffering".¹⁹

In his article 'Postcolonialism and Stories of the Irish Troubles', Michael Storey affirms that among the various techniques applied in Postcolonial literature, to build a cultural identity is Allegory and that in the case of Ireland "The central allegory of the Irish Nationalistic movement is that Ireland is a woman".²⁰ In fact, many nationalists enforced the femininity of Ireland in order to criticize the masculine, rationalist traits of the English colonizer. One of the most pronounced examples was the Irish Revival's return to Gaelic myth and folktales in order to create Ireland as Woman.

The most important example on the symbolization of Ireland by a woman appeared in W.B Yeate's play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), which is based on folk legend and myth, a play that was in accordance with the Irish nationalist's ambitions, since it made a feminine representation of Ireland, embodied in a poor old woman "who is made young and beautiful again by the willingness of young men to go out and fight for her".²¹ or "a mother Ireland who

calls for the blood of her young men”.²² In the play set in 1798, a young man, Michael, abandons his fiancée to fight for the old woman, a fight for “the principles of national freedom and revolution”.²³ Thus; the old woman in the play is an allegorical representation of the Irish nation, since Michael’s action is interpreted as “an heroic and symbolic act of sacrifice for Ireland”.²⁴

Thus, in the light of Irish nationalism, Cathleen exemplifies women’s representation of Irish National identity, Susan Cannon Harris argues that:

The integrity and purity of the domestic sphere and the female body at its center is necessary for all forms of national security—whether cultural, economic, or demographic—and that the job of maintaining that integrity falls to the Irish woman, who must regulate not only her sexual behavior but a host of other desires and preferences in order to render herself proof against outside intervention.²⁵

Therefore, women are representative of the Irish identity, and are viewed as having the responsibility to take care of the domestic sphere, through preserving their sexual purity, bear Irish children with an ideal education, to build the perfect Irish nation.

In addition to W.B Yeats, James Joyce is another Irish writer who is assumed to support the idea of a feminine Irish nation, and this is exemplified through his work, like *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* . This is explained by C.L Innes who affirms that the protagonist of *The Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus, like many postcolonial nationalists views his nation as feminine. This is illustrated through the way Stephen speaks about Emma Cleary, a female character in the novel. When thinking about her, Stephen draws a link between Emma and Ireland:

And yet he felt that, however he might revile and mock her image, his anger was also a form of homage. He had left the classroom in disdain that was not wholly sincere, feeling that perhaps the secret of her race lay behind those dark eyes upon which her long lashes flung a quick shadow. He had told himself bitterly, as he walked through the streets, that she was a figure of the womanhood of her country, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness, and secrecy, and loneliness.²⁶

From the examples above, we deduce that in Irish Nationalism, Women's role remains that of a passive symbol, this supports McClintock's arguments that women "are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency".²⁷

Thus, we have a double feminine characterization of Ireland. While the British depicted the Irish nation as a young woman, the Irish nationalists preferred the protecting mother figure. This supports C.L Innes's argument that in its colonialist implementation, Ireland as a woman was associated with sexuality and was considered as an innocent young female, the object of desire of other countries, while internally (nationalism), Ireland was more associated with purity, chastity, in the role of motherhood, who has to take care of the domestic sphere, representing the Irish identity.²⁸ Since the Irish woman as a symbol of Ireland was represented as mother figure in the Irish nationalists agendas, any association with sexual attributes was not tolerated. However, Synge's depiction of woman in *The Shadow of the Glen*, was not totally in accordance with this idea, and this provocative aspect would trouble the nationalists for many reasons.

The Shadow of the Glen (1905) is Synge's earliest controversial depiction of women. In this work, his character Nora Burke is unhappily married to Dan. While he lies (supposedly) on the brink of death, she and Michael Dara discuss the project of a marriage between themselves; at this point there is also a tramp resting in the house. Dan suddenly sits up and confronts his wife, sending her out of the house with "Let you walk out through that door [...] and let you not be passing this way if it's hungry you are, or wanting a bed".²⁹ Then, Nora finally leaves her husband, and goes with the tramp. After their exit, Dan strikes up a friendship with Michael over some whiskey, "I was thinking to strike you, Michael Dara, but you're a quiet man, God help you, and I don't mind you at all". Michael, completely forgetting about Nora, answers "God reward you, Daniel Burke, and May you have a long life

and a quiet life, and good health with it”.³⁰ This representation of marriage and an Irish wife’s infidelity shocked the audiences. Nora’s and Dan’s unhappiness in their marriage and the fact that Nora was searching for her next husband before her first was dead suggested that not everything Irish was as good as many Nationalists wanted to believe.

Nora’s sexuality is a major theme in this play; she is clearly unsatisfied with Dan, saying, “He was always cold, every day since I knew him, and every night”.³¹ Nora and the tramp discuss a man that was her lover. Before this man’s death, Nora says, “he’d always look in here [...] and it’s very lonesome I was after him a long while (*she looks over at the bed*)”. She also laments the fact that she has no children and is getting older; Nora is a woman of limited options, as hers is a loveless marriage, arranged for “a bit of farm”.³² The emotional and spiritual poverty of her situation is shown in a very realistic manner, implying that Nora is an accurate representation of many Irish women much different than the image many nationalists wanted to portray.

The themes of sexuality and infidelity found in the play angered many nationalists whose aim was to rally audiences behind the idea of a moral and culturally correct Ireland (with its symbol as a woman). Suzanne Cannon Harris argues about Synge’s portrayal of woman: “What she is betraying, then, by leaving with the Tramp is not just Dan, but her responsibility as homemaker—her sacrificial duty, which is not only to bear and rear children but also to preserve the peasant cottage in which they grow up as a repository of all that is Irish”.³³ Therefore, *The Shadow of the Glen* can be considered as a threat toward the nationalist’s ideologies, based on the principles of chastity and purity.

Synge’s intention through his play, mainly through his female protagonist, Nora, was to shock and offend some of the principles and ambitions proclaimed by the Irish Nationalist’s movement in their way to challenge the colonial discourse that denigrated the national image of their nation. Synge’s objective was to put into question the nationalist’s

representation of Ireland. Since his own depiction of the nation and his portrayal of woman were not in accordance with the nationalist's ideologies, Synge was the subject of many attacks. His Irish identity was put in doubt, as well as the validity of his version of the Irish national identity. In fact, while the nationalist's promoted the image of an Ireland symbolized by a mother figure, a perfect housewife whose role is to maintain the stability of the familial sphere, Synge's female protagonist, Nora, did leave her husband, her responsibilities as a housewife, with a Tramp who has known her for less than an hour. This was too much for Arthur Griffith, the latter was the editor of the well known Irish nationalist newspaper *United Irishman*, and who devoted many articles to argue that Nora Burke was not Irish. No real Irish woman would ever do such a thing, Griffith maintained, because "Irish women are the most virtuous in the world".³⁴

Synge's depiction of woman in *The Shadow of the Glen* is not an icon of womanhood, and Griffith's hostile comments indicate how Synge's play was read as an attack on Irish virtue. Synge's play was received as an insult. Since in the nationalist formulation, the role of the Irish woman is to maintain her sexual purity, to conceive and bear children, and to preserve her domestic field.

The character of the Tramp can be considered as an allegory of the British colonizer. In the play, from the beginning when Nora meets the tramp, she calls him 'stranger': "Good evening kindly stranger".³⁵ As a stranger and a homeless, the tramp's intrusion into the house, and the problems he caused to Nora, her husband, and their domestic life, refers to the British intrusion into Ireland, and the damages of the colonialist experience. From this analogy between the stranger and the British colonizer, the audience found itself in front of a colonial sexual imagery namely: "the prostitution of Ireland to the British. Nora exemplifies Ireland, but now within a context that most Irishmen would rather forget, namely as the whore to the British".³⁶ Furthermore, this "prostitution extended to a middle class which had to rely upon

the British as its economy was largely dependent on the occupying forces. In so doing, Synge also insinuated the inability of Irish men to care for their women without the help of the colonizer".³⁷ The fact that Nora (symbol of Ireland) follows the tramp (symbol of the British), and leaves her husband proves, according to Kristina Buss, that Irish men had been handicapped, unable to defend their territory, all this because of the intrusion of the colonizer. Irish men are unable to care about their country without the assistance of the colonizer.³⁸

To sum up, Synge's portrayal of women has had the double aim of challenging both the colonialist and Irish nationalists' discourse that linked the image of Ireland with feminine attributes. In fact, while the British used to describe the Irish nation in romantic and feminine terms, to stress their masculine values, and by the way to justify the colonial conquest, ironically, those traits of femininity proper to the colonial discourse, were re-appropriated by the Irish nationalists in their way to build an Irish cultural and national identity. While their first objective was to challenge the promoted masculine and nationalist traits of the British, the Irish nationalists fall into a romantic and emotional discourse which, instead of saving the national image of Ireland, continued what had been proclaimed by the colonizers.

2) **Nationalism in *A Dance of the Forests*:**

Nigeria suffered from the same colonial stereotyping as Ireland. In fact, one of the impacts of colonialism on the African nation has been the distorted image created by the western colonizer about Africa, as the latter was depicted as an "exotic" and "seductive female". As with the Irish, the colonizer used the argument of feminization to justify their presence in Africa. In the colonial narrative, "African female was presented through pejorative images of fascination, and horror, akin to the femme-fatale figure in Western dichotomizing of women at Madonna/whore".³⁹ They were put within the domestic sphere, living under the authority of fathers and husbands.⁴⁰

Anne McClintock in her *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* asserts: “the tropes of discovery and settlement are colonial myths, rooted in masculine ideologies that demand mastery and penetration of a feminized ‘virgin’ land”.⁴¹ and she reminds us that “within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language, and reason”.⁴² Thus, the justification for the colonial intrusion in Africa was based on the argument of savagery and sexuality. According to McClintock, “Africa and the Americas had become what can be called porno-tropics for the European imagination, a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears”.⁴³

When the European missionaries arrived in Africa, they looked at the African civilization with a sentiment of racial and masculine superiority, and by their feminization of the colonial land, a ‘virgin land’; the colonizer became the proprietor of the territory. Since if the land is virgin, the Africans have no longer rights of possession and “the white male patrimony can be violently assured”⁴⁴ Thus Africa, as a virgin female, was the object of desire of the male colonizer who, by his ‘penetration’ of the virgin land, gains the right of control and colonization.

During the post-independence period started to flourish nationalist’s movements, their discourses and ideas were based on the liberation of the African nation from the imperialists power. These movements envisaged a nation built on security, familiarity and traditions. Moreover, the role of woman was primordial to accomplish those objectives. Woman became the symbol of nation, its ‘biological reproducers’. Since the nationalists projected a nation based on prosperity, stability and morality, purity and chastity became the required behavior of the patriotic woman. In Africa, the role of woman in the nationalist movement was principal. As a national symbol, women were usually referred to as ‘mothers’ or ‘wives’, the

maternal icon of the nation. Therefore, they are expected to raise families and to keep the latter tied to traditional values.

The era following the declaration of independence for most of the African countries, was characterized by the emergence of political and cultural nationalists movements as well as African narrative and poetry. Both of them set the objective to challenge and struggle against myths and pejorative discourse that followed the colonial conquest. Writers and intellectuals used different forms of fiction and poetry to re-write the African history. Negritude belongs to those movements whose aim is to re-affirm the African values and identity. The Negritude poets became the defenders of those colonized people who had been marginalized on the basis of race. To accomplish appropriately their task and re-affirm the values of the African race, a return to pre-colonial roots was necessary.

The Negritude writers like Leopold .S.Senghor, in their way to free Africa and the African people from the colonial hegemony and the marginalization they suffered from declared that their main objective was to glorify the African black culture as opposed to the materialist Western one. For the Negritude movement, who says celebration of African culture and beauty, says celebration of womanhood. The black culture was said to be emotional rather than rational. From this, it became clear that Negritude has kept the colonial portrayal of Africa as a woman since the latter became a national symbol in the movement's projects. Ashcroft et al assert that:

The concept of Negritude developed, by the Martinican Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese poet and politician Leopold S. Senghor was the most pronounced assertion of the distinctive qualities of Black culture and identity. But in making this assertion it adopted stereotypes which curiously reflected European prejudices.⁴⁵

By making of the woman an African nationalist icon, the negritude writers used to praise her in their works. In the famous first lines of the poem by Léopold Sédar Senghor titled "Black Woman," the African 'mother' is presented as: "Naked woman, black woman / Clothed with your color which is life, with your form which is beauty".⁴⁶ Moreover, Senghor attributed to

the African identity/ race characteristics of intuition and emotion. Ironically then, we notice at which point the Senghorian words, and the Negritude's concept of mothering, reproduce the same colonial pejorative depiction of the African race. In fact, both colonial and African narrative used the same feminine stereotype by making of woman a national icon.

This postcolonial and nationalist representation of African identity was criticized by many African intellectuals and writers, most notably Wole Soyinka who considered that Africa has its part of bad aspects, as he also rejected the excessive praising of African elements as well as giving Africa an image of a woman. Soyinka asserts that “ the negritude mythical portrayal of African black woman instead of serving African masses to be more conceited with their own cultural heritage, had reproduced the same allegory on Africa”.⁴⁷

In *A Dance of the forests*, Soyinka shows his total opposition to make “woman” a symbolic element of African nationalism by revealing the negative aspects of African woman whom the Negritude movement praised intensively and viewed as a nationalist icon. In the play, Soyinka expressed his rejection of the negritude feminized portrayal of Africa. Therefore, his stereotype of African woman came to be that of a loose woman, a characteristic that did not fits with Nationalism, but shows Soyinka's disagreement towards implying Africa in the perception of woman.

In his play, Soyinka's “misogyny” is shown mainly through the character of “Rola” or “Madam Tortoise”. Rola, the eternal whore, queen in the ancient court of Mata Kharibu, is also called Madame Tortoise. “She is depicted as a tormentor and a sexual sadist; she demands the attention and subjugation of all men”⁴⁸. Here are some illustrations of the pejorative description of women in the play: “Obaneji: Again I apologize, But please keep your distance in future, I have a particular aversion to being mauled by women”.⁴⁹

Rola/Madame Tortoise has a cruel character. This is illustrated when she orders the army captain (the Dead Man) to be castrated because he rejected her sexual demands. In

modern time, reduced to the state of prostitution, and she continues sexual scandals, Her personality and cruelty led to the death of two of her lovers, one by murder and the other by suicide. “She is the female black widow spider in human form”.⁵⁰, “ROLA: Go. It is people like you.....Pshn Since when did I ever begin to waste a glance on fools. You know that, I hope you are a fool, a foolish man. The word has meaning when I look at you. I wouldn’t be sorry to see you under the ground, except that it would not be because you were my lover”.⁵¹ “MADAME TORTOISE: Call me by my name. Madame Tortoise. I am the one who outlasts you all. Madame Tortoise. You are a man; I swear I must respect you”.⁵² Rola/ Madam Tortoise is presented as a criminal, and she has a shameful and vulgar behavior, she kills many people in the court of Mata Kharibu and many more died because of her, paradoxically, she is the only substantial woman in the play. However, apart from her exposition as Madame Tortoise and her deed of filling the graveyard with her lovers, through what method we are not told, she seems to have a flat character in the present generation. Rola in *A Dance of the Forests* is a “woman with a fatal attractiveness whose path is littered with dead lovers who she has callously sent to their death”.⁵³

Unlike the other nationalists who, in their excessive estimation of African heritage, have celebrated woman as a part of African authentic values and glorified icons, Soyinka’s loose stereotype of African female is far from that of the virtuous one portrayed in early works of the negritude such as Senghor’s poems. In his attempt to challenge the colonial effeminizing account on Africa, Soyinka attacks the African woman made by the negritude as well as the colonial portrayal as a national icon. Thus, Soyinka’s depiction of woman instead of being honorable has become shameful. In fact, Negritude’s early attempt to counter racist colonial narratives resorted to imagery and categorizations that ironically reinforced the colonial tags of African intellectual inferiority, and effeminacy that were employed to justify the conquest and slavery of Africa in the first place. Thus, instead of correcting the colonial

discourse, woman was used to transmit the image of “the country” or “the homeland in so many literary works of African nationalists. Thus, to show his disagreement with the nationalists and colonialist conception of Nationalism, Soyinka made an attack on the African woman.

Notes

¹ Quoted in Kate Moles, ‘Narratives of Postcolonialism in Liminal Space: The place called Phoenix Park’ (PhD diss., Cardiff University, 2007).

² Quoted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *THE POST-COLONIAL STUDIES READER*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 151.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London:Verso, 1991), 49.

⁴ Anne McClintock, ‘Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family’, *Feminist Review* 44 (1993), 61.

⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁷ Quoted in McClintock, ‘Family Feuds’, 62.

⁸ Quoted in Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*(London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 47.

⁹ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*(London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 152.

¹⁰ Pauline Maclaran and Lorna Stevens, ‘Magners Man: Irish Cider, Representations of Masculinity and the Burning Celtic Soul’, *Irish Marketing Review* 20(2009), 78.

¹¹ Quoted in Christina Wilson, ‘Representations of Women in the Abbey Theatre’, *Chrestomathy* 05 (2006), 299.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Quoted in Wilson, ‘Women in the Abbey Theatre’, 300.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Sarah Marie Gray, ‘IRISH DISABILITY: POSTCOLONIAL NARRATIVES OF STUNTED DEVELOPMENT’(PhD diss., University of Illinois, 2011).

¹⁷ Wilson, ‘Women in the Abbey Theatre’, 301.

- ¹⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 17.
- ¹⁹ Wilson, 'Women in the Abbey Theatre', 304.
- ²⁰ Michael Storey, 'Postcolonialism and Stories of the Irish Troubles', *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3(1998), 68.
- ²¹ C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20.
- ²² Ibid., 74.
- ²³ Oona Frawley, 'The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea', in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M. Synge*, ed. P.J. Mathews (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 21.
- ²⁵ Susan Cannon Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), 67.
- ²⁶ Innes, *Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 59.
- ²⁷ McClintock, 'Family Feuds', 62.
- ²⁸ Quoted in Kristina Buss, 'I've got a bad wife in the house': Competing Discourses of Nationalism, Sexuality, and Religion in *The Shadow of the Glen*, in www.Kristinabuss.Com/cv/research/synge.Pdf, 03.
- ²⁹ John Millington Synge, *The Shadow of the Glen* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1905), 15.
- ³⁰ Ibid. 16.
- ³¹ Ibid., 04.
- ³² Ibid., 05.
- ³³ Susan Cannon Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), 73.
- ³⁴ Quoted in Cannon Harris, *Gender and Drama*, 105.
- ³⁵ Synge, *Shadow of the Glen*, 05.
- ³⁶ Buss, 'I've got a bad wife in the house', 15.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 16.
- ³⁹ Omotayo Oloruntoba-Oju and Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju, 'Models in the construction of female identity in Nigerian postcolonial literature', *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*, 50.02(2013), 06.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.

- ⁴¹ Quoted in Alison Toron, 'Refusing to Tell: Gender, Postcolonialism, and Withholding in M.G. Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets*', *Postcolonial Text*, Vol 5, No 3 (2009), 04.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ McClintock, 'Family Feuds', 69.
- ⁴⁵ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Empire Writes back*, 20.
- ⁴⁶ Quoted in Oloruntoba-Oju, 'female identity in Nigerian postcolonial literature', 06.
- ⁴⁷ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 82.
- ⁴⁸ Junaid Shabir, 'Myth in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*' (Master diss., University of Kashmir, 2011).
- ⁴⁹ Wole Soyinka, *A Dance of The Forests* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 20.
- ⁵⁰ Shabir, 'Myth in Wole Soyinka', 51.
- ⁵¹ Soyinka, *A Dance of The Forests*, 23.
- ⁵² Ibid., 56.
- ⁵³ Adebisi Ademakinwa, 'A Dance of the Forests as the Inflection of Wole Soyinka's Socio Political Concern', *The International journal of the Humanities* 05 (2007):03.

C. Cultural identity in *A Dance of the Forests* and *In the Shadow of the Glen*:

One of the problems faced by colonized people is that of cultural identity. The colonizer's cultural hegemony is so powerful that the native traditions and customs lost their importance. The colonial discourse and the way the colonized culture is depicted can influence negatively the way in which the native people perceive themselves, since colonial terms like exoticism, mystery and savageness are used as a means to place the colonized as the 'other' of the colonizer. That is why one of the central strategies used by postcolonial writers concerns "self-representation", an opportunity to challenge the imperialist's distorted truth about the native's history, culture, and give voice to the natives to tell their own truth. In his chapter on 'National Consciousness' in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), Frantz Fanon states:

The claims of the native intellectual are not a luxury but a necessity in any coherent program. The native intellectual who takes up arms to defend his nation's legitimacy and who wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, is obliged to dissect the heart of his people.¹

The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* believe that the way postcolonial societies achieve their identity is by linking their culture with that of the 'centre', and it is through this that "identity both as distancing from the centre, and as a means of self-assertion comes into being".²

1) Cultural identity in *The Shadow of the Glen*:

The case of Ireland is a perfect example of the effects of colonial discourse on the image of a colonized country and its inhabitants. Generally, before and during the colonial conquest of a country, the colonial discourse and marginalization of the colonized 'other' is centered on racial differences, and the black/ white dichotomy forms the basis of that difference. Yet, the Irish are white, like their colonizer, but the hegemony of the colonial

discourse was so powerful that the colonization of Ireland was considered as being logical. Brenda Murray affirms: “Justification for the mission of saving the Irish from themselves was based on conception of barbarism, ignorance, paganism, and inferiority”.³ This resulted in the marginalization of the Irish. Thus despite their whiteness, they were reduced into an inferior position for many centuries. It is this racial and cultural affinities between the Irish and their colonizer that pushed the latter to find a strong argument to justify their act, a relevant difference that will make the Irish the ‘other’ of the British since the latter thought “to oppose the rural Celts or ‘democratic’ bush worker, to an urban, English colonizer”⁴

Therefore, the discrimination of this category of the Irish population, rural peasant, pushed early postcolonial writers to concentrate on them and make them the central figure of their works. For some writers, “this meant an engagement with ‘folk culture’, a concern to speak of and for the folk, usually defined as the peasantry or rural population, rather than the urban residents”.⁵

Lady Gregory, W.B Yeats, J.M Synge and others began a political and cultural campaign which resulted in the Irish National Theatre in Dublin. Their aim to recreate and revive the old Irish traditions and myths. For this, a concentration on the native and folk culture was necessary. This is formulated in the famous statement issued in 1897 by the founders of the Irish National Theatre:

We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us.⁶

The Irish revivalist’s objective was to challenge the hegemony of the colonial discourse, and give a more relevant and real representation of the Irish culture, and history. In their discourse, the British state that Ireland was less civilized than Britain, and that :“the barbarous Irish peasantry had more in common with American Indians or other savages less than with themselves.”⁷ Thus, one central idea of the Irish Nationalist was to revive the old

Irish culture which was still practiced by the rural peasants. Consequently, the latter became the source of inspiration of the postcolonial writers.

Since they were representing the true essence of Irish identity, the Irish peasants, or the folk and their traditions were crucial to the postcolonial cultural discourse of Ireland, and the development of modern Irish drama. Therefore: “to define the idea of the Irish peasant is to define Ireland itself. The imaginative wealth of the Irish peasants is posed against the modern and industrial British spirit”⁸ The importance of the rural peasant to the Irish nationalists is explained by the fact that they represent the pure and authentic Irish culture as well as Irish values

Irish rural life is natural, contrary to the colonizer’s materialist conception of culture. What characterizes also the traditional life of the peasants is orality:

The simple peasants, fishermen and vagabonds cultivate and enjoy the art of narration, singing and reading histories. These stories were an intricate part of their spiritual patrimony, and of their own personality as people.⁹

The marginalization of the Irish peasants in the colonial discourse is challenged by an Irish nationalist discourse which portrays the Irish peasants as a category that embodies the pure Irish culture with all the traditions, myth, legends, rural customs, and folklore included in that culture, For this reason, this category Of Irish population became the basis on which the national theatre was built.

As a postcolonial writer, John Millington Synge shows in his works his increasing interest in the rural life and culture of the Irish peasant , since the source of his plays are rural settings, especially the ‘Aran Island’, the latter “known as Aranmor, Inishmann and Inishere, are about thirty miles from Galaway, and are the setting and/or influence for Synge’s play”.¹⁰ The majority of Synge’s works like *The Aran Island* can be considered as anthropological studies, since to produce his plays, Synge met rural peasant, lived with them, learned and acquired their habits and customs, in this sense Donna Gerstenberger says:

Synge had acquired before his journey to the islands the habit of isolation (physical, spiritual, and social) that enabled him to record and evaluate the lives of a people. Physically isolated from the rest of the world, spiritually and socially cut off from the world beyond the separating sea, he found in the islands, as W.B. Yeats said, “among forgotten people a mirror for his bitterness”.¹¹

Synge’s depiction of the rural life of the Irish peasants came from his appreciation of the Western peasantry. Synge lived with the peasants, observed their way of life, and the different aspects of their culture (rituals, customs, traditions...). By focusing on these aspects, he appealed for the preservation of the true Irish identity. This explains the realism of his plays which are based on real stories he learned from the Irish peasants themselves.

We notice in the plays by Synge a strong link between the representations of ‘Irishness’ and the setting. Edward Said points out: “If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical in it”.¹² The link between people and setting is shown through Synge’s detailed description of the peasants, their speech, cloths, habits and daily occupations, as well as local landscape

The source of the play, *The Shadow of the Glen* came from Synge’s time with the peasants in the Aran Islands, when a teller of tales and legends, Pat Diran, told him the story of the ‘unfaithful wife’.¹³ The latter has many similarities with *The Shadow of the Glen*. Like Nora, the unfaithful wife is alone at home with her supposed dead husband, then a stranger comes, and while she goes out to inform a neighboring man about her husband’s death, the latter discuss his plan with the stranger. While returning at home with the young man, the latter lies down for a rest, and the woman soon follows him into the bedroom, and the story ends like this: “Then the dead man got up, and he took one stick, he went in and saw them lying together with her head on his arm. The dead man hit him a blow with the stick so that the blood leapt up and hit the gallery”.¹⁵

In addition to the folkloric origins of the play, the setting was constructed in details to resemble a western Irish cottage. This can be explained by Synge’s need to present a realistic

picture of the Irish peasantry that is generally represented negatively by the urban citizens. Thus, *The Shadow's* dramatic representation was made as authentic as possible: "The loft, peat fireplace, and thatched roof were rendered in detail, and small touches, such as leather "pampooties" for the actors' feet and correct color detail in their folk costumes".¹⁶ were part of the dramatic stage.

In addition to the setting, the Irish revivalist focused on the traditions and customs that shaped the life of the rural peasants. As a postcolonial and nationalist playwright, Synge focuses on all those traditions, legends and rituals that represent the true nature and essence of the Irish Identity since he "borrowed mythological themes and pagan ideology from the ancient Irish culture".¹⁷

The ritual of death in *The Shadow of the Glen* is an example of those realistic elements applied by Synge in his play since the rituals include keening, the wake and the burial.¹⁸ And the ceremony of the wake is one of the pagan activities in *The Shadow of the Glen*. Since the peasants are the transmitters of old beliefs and myth, their presence in the play signify the presence of Celtic folklore. "Tales about the likelihood of being kidnapped by fairies on certain days were connected to rituals of protection, such as wearing clothes backwards and carrying iron pins in the scarf".¹⁹ In the play, Nora leaves the tramp alone with her dead husband, and goes outside to call someone for help, however, before she could go, the tramp asks her for a needle: "TRAMP [*moving uneasily*]. Maybe if you'd a piece of a grey thread and a sharp needle there's great safety in a needle, lady of the house I'd be putting a little stitch here and there in my old coat, the time I'll be praying for his soul, and it going up naked to the saints of God. NORA [*takes a needle and thread from the front of her dress and gives it to him*]. There's the needle, stranger, and I'm Thinking you won't be lonesome .²⁰

As a postcolonial dramatist, J.M Synge set the objective to challenge the colonial discourse that gave a negative representation of the Celtic nature, and particularly denigrated the peasant's category. His plays contain a vivid realism and originality that reveals the truth about the folk culture, and correct the false image of the colonizer. Synge put the peasants and their culture on the front stage and gave them the opportunity to speak, to assert themselves, and to show the real value of the Irish cultural identity.

2) Cultural identity in *A Dance of the Forests*:

As a colonized country, Nigeria suffered from cultural discrimination on the part of the British Empire, since before and during its colonization, the African continent was associated with savageness, inferiority and anarchy. The principles and values, on which the African societies were built were denigrated by the colonizers. In this sense, Frantz Fanon asserts that: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it".²¹ The cultural and racial discrimination of the indigenous people was carried out through the colonial discourse, a "system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, disciplines and values upon dominated groups".²² Through the colonial discourse, the colonizers pretend that they are in the colonies to civilize, to bring peace and stability.

Regarding the dimension of the colonial discourse, and the distorted truth attached to the African nation, the first task postcolonial intellectuals and writers undertook was to suppress all the institutions established by the colonizer, their hegemony, and correct the image of their cultural identity, to show that African nations have a culture of their own, a respectful culture based on ancestral values and traditions. Several movements were launched

by black artists, and intellectuals, dedicated to the rehabilitation of the African culture, and black aesthetics. Among those movements, the 'New Negro Movement' created in 1920's.²³

This movement was the result of collaboration between prominent writers such as Langston Hughs, Claude Mc Kay... who has influenced many postcolonial African artists, particularly writers such as the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiongo, the Nigerians Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and others. Ashcroft et al assert that:

What differentiated African artists from their European counterparts was that they privileged the social function of writing over its function as a tool of individual expression. They created their myths and legends, and told stories for a human purpose.²⁴

In fact, the postcolonial writers dedicated their work to the re-discovering of African customs, folklore, legends...they wanted to re-create the pre-colonial period, and recuperate all that has been suppressed by the cultural hegemony of the colonialism.

As a means to assert the cultural identity of the African race and challenge the colonialist discourse, African writers draw on oral literature since the latter is the symbol of African values and aesthetics. Thus, a return to African art aims "to ride over the inescapable political and cultural legacies of the colonial period, and its continuing neo-colonial presence in contemporary Africa".²⁵

Concerning Wole Soyinka, the African Negro art and aesthetics is linked to the Yoruba tradition, performed through rituals, materials like dance, masquerade, festivals...The Nigerian theatre, like the majority of the African theatres, is based on those rituals, customs...that make up the history of the African nation:

The cycle of human life is marked by a succession of these events, from domestic occasions to the elaborate procession of ritual forms. The tradition of theatrical performances, in both form and substance, evolved from these festivals and rituals.²⁶

Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* belongs to those ritual dramatic works. The play begins with a prologue by Aroni, the Lame one, who speaks about the Feast of the Human Community, and mentions past events during the reign of Mata Kharibu. The presence of

dead spirits (a dead man and a dead woman), the interactions between the human and the superhuman, between the spirit of the ancestors and the humans, between the human and the divine are convincingly are the major themes in the play. We have the presence of Gods and Spirits, for example Ogun is an important cult deity who plays a major role in the play, and a strong influence on the other characters and their actions.

An important device found in *A Dance of the Forest* is the use of Myth. The latter aims at making the blacks remember their cultural values, the richness of their traditions, and folklore. Soyinka himself says: “the energy and passion of social revolution appears to carry into the metaphorical resources of language, in order to brand its message deeper in the heart of humanity”.²⁷ Soyinka wants to free the African nations from the white cultural hegemony. Soyinka envisioned a New Africa “that would escape its colonial past by grafting the technical advances of the present onto the stock of its own ancient traditions”.²⁸

Myth belongs to the folklore of a particular society. It can refer to a traditional story; it can explain the origin of the worlds. The main characters in myth are usually spirits, deities, and supernatural creatures. In *A Dance of the Forests*, Soyinka took from the Yoruba mythology the God of Iron: Ogun who symbolizes “the metaphor for artistic and technical excellence and according to popular traditions in Africa; Ogun also typifies spiritual health and is the harbinger of social prosperity”.²⁹ From the beginning of the play, Ogun does have a strong influence on Demoke. The latter is closed to create the totem for the celebration of the gathering between the livings and their ancestors. In the Yoruba myths, Ogun is the Iron God, originally from heaven; he came to visit the humans, who lived in an ill earth where anarchy reigned:

Later the earth was formed by Great God, who set about arranging everything in order. But he came to thick forest that his tools could not cut, since they were only bronze. Ogun alone, whose axe was iron, was able to clear a way, and he only did this after the other gods had promised to reward him. So when they built their sacred city of Ile-Ife, they gave him a crown. But the iron god did not want to rule his fellows, since he still enjoyed hunting and battle, and for a longtime he lived alone on a hilltop, from whence he could watch over the land and spy out his prey. When finally he came to the gods they did not want to harbor him, for his clothes

were stained with blood. So he made clothes from the bark of a palm tree and went to live elsewhere.³⁰

In addition to mythology, ancestral figures, spirits, and deities, we have the deployment of some artistic elements from the Yoruba traditions like dance, music, festivals...that gave significance to the African civilization. Those artistic materials belong to oral traditions and customs that symbolize the African Negro aesthetics. Gilbert and Tompkins affirm that:

To refute the misguided belief that colonized people do/did not have a history of their own, many plays stage aspects of the pre-contact past in order to re-establish traditions, to lay claim to an heritage or territory , and to recuperate various forms of cultural expression.³¹

As a dramatized ritual play, *A Dance of the forests* is full of Yoruba's customs and traditions; there is the interaction between spirits and humans, the presence of different Gods, festivals...and among the rites dramatized in the play: the masquerades, which are considered as the basis of African arts, and black aesthetics. The ritual masquerade is accompanied by other materials such as masks, music, and dance. The performer of the ritual of masquerade is no longer a human, but a spirit who possesses the body of the mortals. In the play, Soyinka deploys Yoruba masquerade called *egungun* as "a narrative device through mask motif of the three mortals such as Demoke, Rola, and Adenebie while they are reliving their past crimes"³². When the mortals put the mask of the *egungun*, the spirits and the ancestors who penetrate their body, he usually speaks in a 'croaky voice'.³³

Therefore, the gathering of the tribes shows the presence of different kinds of Gods, and spirits, like the spirit of the Rivers, the Chorus of waters, the Spirit of the Sun... In other words, as Ahmed A. Ahmed asserts:

By taking part in the drama, actors actively enter into the metaphysical realm of the gods, the ancestors, the living and the unborn, communally reinforcing Yoruba ontology. Conversely, the masked actor becomes part of a larger world into which the audience is drawn through active participation in the dramatic event.³⁴

Therefore, a mask is not just an object of decoration, but it carries much significance to the African rituals, and traditions, and for the rediscovering of ancestral customs.

Other artistic materials like Dance and music play a decisive role in the Yoruba rites and beliefs. Soyinka defines music as follow:

As the language of transition, it lies at the heart of his metaphysics; it is the actual means of communication to the audience both of the disintegration and the retrieval of self; it actually translates the actor and the audience to that state of awareness of the journey through the abyss.³⁵

In the play, it is the Dirge man who sings and dances for the welcoming of the dead couple, his action is accompanied by the music played with native instruments like the drum, and the flute:

DIRGE-MAN: Move on eyah! Move apart

I felt the wind breathe—no more

Keep away now. Leave the dead

Some room to dance.

[The Old Man turns away, disappointed. The dancer does not, of course, ever stop, although the drumming is lowered for Agboreko and for the dirge-man]

DIRGE-MAN: [goes to the drummer and gives him the two-fisted greeting. The acolyte, who has finished her sprinkling, Begins to dance softly, growing rapidly more intense]: Ah your hands are vanished and if it thunders. We know where the hands are gone. But we name no names. Leave the dead. Some room to dance.³⁶

The motif of dance in the play illustrates, and signifies the rhythm of the life of the Yoruba people, and there different types of dances like the dance of the half-child, the dance of welcome.... “In many cases, the spirits are actually conjured through dancing, assisted by the power of the drum which is first felt in the dancer’s feet as they contact the earth”.³⁷ In the play, every action is followed by a particular dance:

In most of the Yoruba ritual dances, a step or two might be sufficient. We have dance as drama, dance as ritual, dance as the movement of transition, and dance as festival.

The entire dramatic enactment itself, as the title the play implies, is conceived as dance.³⁸

For example, we have the ‘ampe’ dance: “A clap of drums, and the interpreter begins another round of ‘ampe’ with the third Triplet...The interpreter throws off his mask, reveals himself as Eshuoro’s Jester. He draws the child into a game of ‘ampe’”.³⁹ The ‘ampe’ dance is performed by Yoruba children, generally, two of them face each other, doing the same movement, that are corresponding, and at the same time they cry together ‘pe pe pe pe pe pe shampe!’⁴⁰

Music associated with dance, masquerades, and rituals creates “weird disruptive melodies which can unearth cosmic uncertainties which pervade human existence, can reveal the magnitude and power of creation, and can create the experience of the chasm, the yawning abyss, and the chthonic realm.”⁴¹ The gathering of the tribes, the intersection between humans and spirits, and the rituals, all are performed through traditional music whose sounds penetrate every part of the forests. The sound of the drums and the flutes are mixed with the movement of the dancers. Here are some illustrations: “The noise, very much like that of beaters, comes quite near the clearing. Gunshots are let off, bells rung, etc. It builds to a crescendo and then dies off in the distance”.⁴² “The beaters’ noise comes over, increasing during Ogun’s speech. He goes off as the Old Man, followed by two of the councilors, enters, surrounded by the whole chaos of beaters”.⁴³ “Definite rhythm of drums above beaters’ noises”, and “then, spoken in a sense of epilogue, Igbale music gently in the background”.⁴⁴ The rhythm of the drum is one of the principal factors that guide the action; it shapes the dance and song, and participate to summon the presence of the spirits.

The above analysis demonstrated Wole Soyinka’s commitment to deconstruct negative stereotypical portrayals of African Negro aesthetics. He deconstructs colonialist discourse that perceives Black aesthetics as senseless. Yoruba traditional art forms such as songs, sculpture

and painting are cultural responses to racist Western hegemonic culture. Soyinka uses art to awake black consciousness regarding their changing society under Western culture influence and to help African renew with their cultural values.

Notes

¹ Quoted in C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37.

² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 165.

³ Brenda Murray, 19

⁴ Innes, *Postcolonial Literatures*, 162.

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶ Quoted in Djelloul Bourahla, 'Modernism in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*: A Comparative Study', (Magister diss., University M'hamed Bougara at Boumerdes, 2008).

⁷ Hana F. Khasawneh, 'An Aestheticizing Of Irish Peasantry', *International Journal of Linguistics and Literature* 01(2012): 1-12.

⁸ Ibid., 04.

⁹ Ibid., 05.

¹⁰ Amy R. Johnson, 'Stranger in the Room: Illuminating Female identity through Irish drama' (Master diss., Indiana University, 2007).

¹¹ Ruchika Singh, '*Treatment of Christianity and Paganism, myth and Folklore: The plays of John Millington Synge*' (Phd. Thesis., Aligarth Muslim University, 2012)

¹² Quoted in Innes, *Postcolonial Literatures*, 72.

¹³ Mishra Sanjeev Kumar, 'Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*: A Study in Themes and Techniques', *Recent Receptive Exploration* 01 (2013), 09.

¹⁴ Quoted in Oona Frawley, 'The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea', in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M Synge*, ed. J.P Mathews. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁶ Sanjeev Kumar, *Recent Receptive Exploration*, 09.

¹⁷ Singh, *Treatment of Christianity and Paganism, myth and Folklore*, 221.

¹⁸ Munira H. Mutran, 'The Interrelations Between The Text And Its Illustrations – The Aran Islands, By John M. Synge With Drawings By Jack B. Yeats, *Crop* 11(2006): 217.

- ¹⁹ Singh, *Treatment of Christianity and Paganism, myth and Folklore*, 236.
- ²⁰ John Millington Synge, *The Shadow of the Glen* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1905), 11.
- ²¹ Quoted in Junaid Shabir. 'Myth in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*', (Master diss., University of Kashmir, 2011), 45.
- ²² Quoted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *KEY CONCEPTS IN POST-COLONIAL STUDIES*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 42.
- ²³ Innes, *Postcolonial Literatures*, 236.
- ²⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Empire Writes Back*, 125.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 129.
- ²⁶ Dapo Adelugba and Olu Obafemi, 'Anglophone West Africa, Nigeria' in *A History of Theatre in Africa*, ed. Martin Banham. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 138.
- ²⁷ Quoted in Shabir, 'Myth in Wole Soyinka, 10.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 11.
- ²⁹ Pinky Isha, 'The politics of Cultural Revalidation and Retrieval: A peep into the Yoruba paradigm in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 02(2012), 08.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 09.
- ³¹ Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *POST-COLONIAL DRAMA: Theory, practice, politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 110.
- ³² Shabir, 'Myth in Wole Soyinka, 57.
- ³³ Quoted in Gilbert and Tompkins, *POST-COLONIAL DRAMA*, 57.
- ³⁴ Quoted in Hala M. Altuwaijri, 'Cosmology and Politics in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*., in www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/tuwaijriplay.pdf, 04.
- ³⁵ Quoted in Rosa Figueiredo, 'The intensive language of transition': music, dance and masquerade in Soyinka's plays', *SEMINAR OF DOCTORAL STUDIES OF THEATR SCHOOLS*, (2009), 02.
- ³⁶ Wole Soyinka, *A Dance of The Forests* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 39.
- ³⁷ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama*, 62.
- ³⁸ Quoted in in Shabir, Myth in Wole Soyinka, 59.
- ³⁹ Soyinka, *Dance of Forests*, 81.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted in Figueiredo, 'The intensive language of transition', 11.

⁴¹ G. Vasistha Bhargavi, 'Welcoming the New Beginnings of the Nation in Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*', *International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 02(2013), 02.

⁴² Soyinka, *Dance of Forests*, 05.

⁴³ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Conclusion:

One major consequence of British colonialism has been the development of literature in English by postcolonial authors. Wole Soyinka and J.M Synge are among those authors who present the story of colonialism and its consequences from their own personal perspective, and reclaim their land and experience through their drama, as demonstrated by their language, their portrayal of woman, and their commitment to their cultural identity in their respective plays *A Dance of the Forests*, and *The shadow of the Glen*.

The language of former British colonies, like Nigeria and Ireland, was no doubt under the strong influence of their former colonizers. The dilemma of the choice of language that was strongly influenced by English characterized the post independence era. The loss of one's own language and the substitution of the old cultures by the foreign ones brought about the need to bring some changes. In their drama, both Soyinka and Synge challenge the colonial stereotypes and approaches to their native language and way of life. They made of English no more the exclusive possession of the British. Rather, it is the way in which the language is employed that distinguishes the roots of the authors. Its use is now seen as an act of national awareness and solidarity, and the possibility of employing several codes at the same time (mixing, switching...) provides the postcolonial writers with new possibilities and enriches their source of literary devices. Thanks to this, the English language ceased to be the language of the oppressor and has become a useful tool for promoting the authenticity of indigenous cultures.

By their negative portrayal of women, Soyinka and Synge show their disagreement not only against colonial stereotypes but also with the nationalist attempts to counter racist colonial narratives, because the latter have resorted to an imagery and categorizations that ironically reinforced the colonial discourse of inferiority, effeminacy and ineffectuality that were formerly employed to justify the conquest of Nigeria and Ireland. For this, Soyinka and

Synge attributed to their female characters negative aspects, and refused to make woman a national symbol.

This work has also displayed the basis of Soyinka's and Synge's commitment to deconstruct negative stereotypical portrayals of their respective culture. The history of Colonized culture has been entrenched with discriminatory assumptions from the hegemonic Western critics who promoted a negative portrayal of the "uncivilized" societies such as the Nigerian and the Irish ones. Therefore, postcolonial literature has been characterized by the deployment of some traditional items such as myth, folklore, rituals which act as aesthetic and political responses to the racist center's hegemonic culture. Soyinka's and Synge drama bring the message that their respective cultures are rich and their native men should feel proud of it. Thus, there is an increasing interest in the rural customs, myths and stories of the natives which became the source and subject for cultural production in the drama of Soyinka and Synge to correct the colonialist image of their culture by rewriting it.

To sum up, as postcolonial authors, Wole Soyinka and J.M Synge used their drama as a means to subvert the hegemony of the colonial discourse by making theatre act as a site of resistance. Through their detailed focus on Language, Nationalism, and Cultural identity, the two dramatists succeeded to challenge the misrepresentation of their country, its identity and culture.

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