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**A Postcolonial study of John Millington Synge's Riders to the Sea (1904)
and Wole Soyinka's The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite (1973)**

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this work to:

My dear parents Mouloud and Ouiza, God bless them

My sweet sisters and lovely brother

My best friend Maya

Special thanks go to my fiancé Akli

Thank you for your endless love, support and encouragement.

Fariza

I dedicate this work to:

The dear ones to my heart

My parents Ahmed and Malika

My most precious husband Mohamed Hadj Ali

My wonderful family

Thank you for all your support and love.

Yousra

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Abstract

The present research paper is a Postcolonial study of the two plays: *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904) written respectively by the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, and the Irish John Millington Synge. The aim of our research is to study the two plays as Postcolonial tragedies and to uncover the way the two playwrights through their respective works write back to the Centre, challenge the western authority and restore the dignity of their countries. To give our research work a theoretical basis we made an appeal for three complementary theories which are *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) written by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000) written by Augusto Boal and *The Fourth Stage* (1976) by Wole Soyinka. Our paper explores the different means adopted by the two dramatists to answer back the Colonial Discourse and to dismantle the cultural hegemony of the colonizer. They did so by their *Appropriation* and *Abrogation* of the colonizer's language, and by the rehabilitation and revival of their respective traditional and native cultures that were long misunderstood and misrepresented by the British 'Centre'. In addition to this, we expanded our research to show that the two plays fall in the Postcolonial Dramatic scope of what Boal called *Theatre of the Oppressed* and the tragic nature of the two plays is closer to the Soyinkan theoretical constellations of the tragic as explained in his *Fourth Stage*, than to the Aristotelian canonical theory of tragedy. These plays, actually, are good examples of a Canonical-Counter Discursive Literature, as they truly embodied the aspirations of Postcolonial enterprise, succeeded to act against the Colonial Discourse, depart from the Western literary canon of Tragedy and challenge the western authority.

Key Words: Colonialism, Cultural trauma, Postcolonial literature, Postcolonial Theory, Colonial discourse, Counter Discourse, Appropriation and Abrogation, Indigenous Culture, Tragedy, Sacrifice, Fate, Poetics of the oppressed.

I) Introduction:

Modern Colonialism is a process of Western's political and economic domination of many regions and nations around the globe, with the use of excessive force against them. While these issues are of great importance, it's equally important to consider the cultural, linguistic and discursive practices that came to be associated with the colonial rule. Colonialism in this context, as Leela Gandhi referred to it, is "insidious in its commitment to the conquest and occupation of minds, selves and cultures"¹ as the colonizer aimed not only to geographically occupy one's region and to take possession of its resources but also to impose his culture, language, religion and make of the colonized his own subject.

This process of cultural domination transforms and displaces everything. The traditions, beliefs and the cultural standards of the West are imposed on all of their subjects who had no choice but to accept these new ways of life. Because of the very long period of brutal contact with the colonizer, the colonized finds himself unconsciously incorporating aspects of the colonizer's culture which often results in the loss of his own language, lifestyle and values. In this context, Franz Fanon claims that "colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "in reality who am I?"², because these people are often subjected to a fundamental destruction of their original culture that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in an irrevocable way.

Furthermore, the colonizer adopted another offensive and intellectual method shown through literary works as an instrument to cover his crimes, legitimize his imperialist task and

Show the “nobility” of his mission, which is supposedly to civilize the underdeveloped continents. These intellectual attacks against the colonized are known as ‘*Colonial Discourse*’ based on binary oppositions and dichotomies such as ‘Self/Other’, ‘Colonizer/Colonized’, ‘Civilized/Uncivilized’ and ‘Occident/Orient’. In his suggestive book *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2010), Paramod Nayar defines the notion of Colonial Discourse as “the construction of the native usually in stereotypical ways in a European narrative, images and representations in a variety of modes and genres”³. In this case “the native is constructed as primitive, depraved, pagan, criminal and vulnerable in colonial discourse”⁴. Moreover, these practices played an instrumental role assigning low prestige to non-European languages and cultures including cultural and linguistic forms, and establishing the “superiority” of the colonizer’s language and culture.

These dehumanizing traits and their continuity even after the decolonization process, however, forged a reaction that is well embodied in the fascinatingly wide array of literary texts that come from parts of the world as varied as India, West Indies and Africa. This literary production is known as ‘*Postcolonial Literature*’. The term ‘*Postcolonial*’ has come to be so in vogue among critical theorists that is difficult to determine a single definition of the term. Ania Loomba, a leading voice in Postcolonial Theory, believes that the diversity of approaches to Postcolonial literature is often linked to its diasporic space. From this space, emerges “separate trajectories of conquest and resistance against the colonial residual practices, ideologies, economic and political policies produced in array of area studies each with differing sense of its place”⁵. In *the Empire Writes Back* (2002), Ashcroft et.al use the term Postcolonial “to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations

through the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression”.⁶ In fact, Postcolonial literature is characterized by the emergence of a ‘*Counter Hegemonic Discourse*’; a new literature which aims at opposing the imperialist assumptions, inaccuracies and generalizations on the colonized which the colonizer circulated in educational, legal, political texts and settings during colonialism. By bringing these assumptions down, Postcolonial writers aim to reveal the inherent cultural and racial structures of the natives.

Claiming one single theorist as being the originator of an entire field is usually a gross simplification of truth. Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak may be considered, though, as the main thinkers who theorized Postcolonial literature. Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978) certainly may claim to popularize some of the key ideas that have now become as the foundation of Postcolonial Theory. The former portrays the imbalance between the ‘*West*’ and the ‘*East*’ by showing the ‘*superiority*’ of the West over the East. Said applied terms and concepts as ‘*Orient*’, ‘*Other*’ and ‘*Occident*’ to illustrate the relation between two discrete cultures; ‘*Western*’ and ‘*Eastern*’. In fact, Said argues that “Ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force or more precisely their configurations of power also being studied”⁷. It’s the suggestion that, if a certain group within a society has more economic and political power, they would have an inequitable amount of power in framing what the culture of that society, in which both they, and the more disempowered groups within that society, live. Said argues that, as a consequence of many years of colonial rule the ‘*West*’ has had a significant amount of power indicating global culture than the ‘*East*’, and in particular, Said suggests that the ‘*West*’ essentially took away the ‘*East*’s’ ability to represent itself and that, instead the ‘*West*’ came to define that the ‘*East*’ in a manner that was useful for its own terms. In Said’s own words

“the imaginative examination of things, oriental was based more or less exclusive upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an oriental word emerged”⁸.

Besides Said’s contribution to the field, Homi Bhabha is another leading voice in Postcolonial studies. He is highly influenced by Post-Structuralist theorists notably Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Homi Bhabha postulates on Postcolonial Discourse in his edited books *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of culture* (1994). Homi Bhabha has made Postcolonial Theory popular through a number of key concepts such as, ‘*Mimicry*’ and ‘*Hybridity*’. By coining these terms, Bhabha supports the plurality of Postcolonial cultures as they hold close to the European culture and indigenous traditions of the colonizer. Bhabha sees ‘*Mimicry*’ as “a double vision which in disclosing ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority”⁹. Thus, the ‘*Mimicry*’ of the colonizer deconstructs the difference which forms the basis of colonialist ideologies. This idea of ‘*Hybridity*’ according to Bhabha is “a positive advantage that allows Postcolonial writers and critics to analyze the West as insiders as well as outsiders”¹⁰.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is another influential and authoritative voice of Postcolonial Theory. Through her critical and cultural theories, she tried to challenge the legacy of Colonialism. She refused to admit the notion that the Western world is having an upper hand over the third world. Spivak proposes a theory of ‘*Subalternity*’ in her essay ‘*Can the Subaltern Speak?*’. The term ‘*subaltern*’ is borrowed from the Italian communist thinker Antonio Gramsci to refer to the oppressed subjects or more generally those with inferior rank. In her essay, Spivak vindicated the limitations of subalterns asking “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*”. Her major concern is whether the Postcolonial ‘*Subaltern*’ can speak for

themselves or they are condemned to be just known and represented in a distorted image by those who exploit them. The theory formulates that the subaltern can speak, but the others don't have the patience to listen to them. "The message conveyed by the sender doesn't reach the receiver as it is hindered by the elements of noise"¹¹.

After many years of cultural domination, Postcolonial Literature came as a reaction to give the way for writers of formally colonized countries to express themselves and write back to the 'Centre', to tell their own stories from their own perspectives and so "to create the psychological base and historical understanding which will encourage wise choices in self government"¹². This resulted in a publication of wide inspiring literary works characterized by a desire to challenge and struggle against the colonialist nations by giving the marginalized 'Other' opportunity to tell the truth about the colonial experience and its consequences.

The Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka and the Irish John Millington Synge are two Postcolonial playwrights who made through their various plays a vivid pictures of the Postcolonial period and arranged its facts that still extend to the present day. Among their works, we may cite *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904); by Soyinka and Synge respectively; two Postcolonial plays that deal with two different cultures deeply affected by British colonialism. They both seek to challenge the Western Canon in effort to assert the richness and validity of indigenous cultures and to remain in practices and traditions that were systematically degraded under colonialism.

As a matter of fact, *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904) separately had a wide resonance in Postcolonial Literature. Several critics have addressed them from different perspectives, therefore received a large bulk of criticism.

To begin, *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) has received a substantial criticism from the professor Lorna Hardwick and Corla Grillepsie. In their book entitled “*Classic in Postcolonial Worlds* (2007)”, they delineates how Soyinka while retaining aspects of Euripides’s play “embed verse that decorates cross cultural elements...whose ingredients are essentially African”¹³. Soyinka prefaces *The Bacchae of Euripides: A communion Rite* (1973) with notes on the racial identity of Slaves and the Bacchantes, in addition, he acknowledges the intertextual elements of the text by stating that he has borrowed from his own poem ‘Idanre’, a passion poem of ‘Ogun’, elder brother to ‘Dionysus’.

The Nigerian novelist Isidoro Okpewho is another literary critic who read Soyinka’s adaptation *The Bacchae of Euripides: Communion Rite* as being a translation of culture not of text. In his article entitled “‘*Soyinka, Euripides, and the Anxiety of Empire*” he claims:

I have chosen to see Soyinka’s effort as a translation of culture, not of text : Since he worked from previously published translation by Mauray and Arrow Smith(as he tells us in a prefatory note), he has obviously given as much of his Energy to reconstruction the ethnos of the play to manipulating the language of it.¹⁴

Furthermore, Okpewho Isidoro links Soyinka’s efforts of understanding ‘*cultural translation*’ and its application in his play, as those exactly articulated by Reuben Browser and James Clifford. That is to say that Soyinka’s model in translating Euripides’s play fits Browser’s words articulated in his successive fortune of *Aeschylus’s Agamemnon* which claims that “translation forcibly reminds us of the obvious fact that when we read, we read from a particular point of space and time”¹⁵, and also fits James Clifford who asserts that “The maker of ethnographic text, cannot avoid expressive tropes, figures and allegories that select and impose meaning as they translate it”¹⁶. Although Soyinka has made great efforts to assert the

validity of his Yoruba myth and culture, he has stayed close enough to Euripides's culture, Greek and Christian myth as well as the playwright's radical spirit in his adaptation.

Other critics of Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* derive their insight from the act of adaptation. From the perspective of the same literary critic, Okpewho explores in his analysis of the background of play "the point of convergence between Soyinka and Euripides in the composition of their respective dramas"¹⁷. That is to say, Soyinka's circumstances of Euripides's adaptation are nearly the same with Euripides's circumstances of composing his play. As far as Euripides is concerned, to mention just one, his critics of his society "took place in an era where Athens was embroiled in a social and political crises... as Athens sought for scapegoat to assuage her defeat, Euripides was forced into exile, and it was here that he composed the *Bacchae*"¹⁸. Soyinka has decided to adapt Euripides's play in almost the same circumstances, when Nigeria was plagued in a civil war and the government accusations to Soyinka being an accomplice to engage the war not only thrown him into jail but also forced into exile.

Concerning critics on Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Dr. Solomon Adedokun Edebor asserts in his article "*Realism in J.M Synge's Riders to the Sea and the Playboy of the Western world* (2014)" that:

Synge vividly captures aspects of the terror of life in the fretted Island, all the mystery and cruelty of the sea, including death, drowning, grief, seafaring life and mother-son relationship ...Riders to The Sea is, no doubt, a realistic play in every sense of the word as Synge gained live inspiration from the Aran Island ...So real is the play that Synge claimed never, or hardly ever to have used a word or phrase which he had not heard among the Irish peasantry.¹⁹

According to him, *Riders to the Sea* is a realistic play since it was inspired by real events that Synge himself experienced in the Aran Islands and which provides him with the necessary

materials for the sources of his play. In fact, the play is a reflection of the Aran Islander's life and society captured from different sides. *Riders to the Sea* is a dramatization of the life of the Irish community during the Eighteenth century; suffering, misery and the complexities of life are portrayed in a real way.

Moreover, Dr. Solomon goes on to shed light on the language of the play. According to him, the distinctive thing about the play is the strength and beauty of the words and phrases used by the characters, where 'sympathy' with 'relentlessness' merged to form the true unique art of Celtic Literature. For him, the Gaelic language used in the play, coexists and fits the atmosphere of the play and creates beauty within it. Through analyzing Maurya's speech, Solomon, A. E affirms that:

In the unsteady rhyme of these words spoken by Maurya, there is expressively present that quality of strangeness and remoteness in beauty...The type of English used is modelled on the Gaelic speech and of his greatest assets. ²⁰.

Other interesting analysis are made by Pr. Mohammed Jashim Uddin and M. FerdousIqbal Chowdhury and found in their article "*Patriarchal Dominance in J.M Synge's Riders to the Sea: Viewing from Feminist perspective*" (2016). On the one hand, they claim that the play has a patriarchal dimension represented by the social system of the Aran community. In *Riders to the Sea*, although women are the central players and it's rarely where the males are portrayed, it is still clear that Bartley; the only visible male figure has captured most of the play. For the two critics:

"Synge truly depicts the Irish society where women depend on others for their existence and livelihoods are mapped... Maurya is enchained by the social, economic and religious bond because of the patriarchal system".²¹

Women have always suffered under the domination of a patriarchal society and this is what the two critics have noticed in the play. The Aran community has the tendency to dominate women, and that explains why Bartley controls the whole family. As a man, he has to take risks, strives for his living and proves his presence in the family. On the other hand, by highlighting Maurya's latest words, the critics assert:

“The tragic wisdom illuminate her mind...it is this spiritual sublimation of misery that gives Maurya the status of a great tragic heroine”²².

The tragic suffering and the trauma Maurya has received throughout her life made her a woman of wisdom. Therefore, she tries to reconstruct a broken life into a new existence and accepts bravely the death of her boys. Not only that, but she also tries to break the so-called patriarchal social system and wants to establish the women empowerment.

- **Issue and Working Hypothesis:**

After our Review of the literature about Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) and Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904), we think that many critics have analyzed the two plays separately, but to our knowledge, none has investigated the two plays together as Postcolonial tragedies, relaying on Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* and Soyinka's *The Fourth Stage*. Plus, no work has studied the way Wole Soyinka and John Millington Synge have answered back the 'British Centre'.

To conduct our analysis, we intend to study the two plays as Postcolonial Tragedies to show that through their plays, the two playwrights tried to write back to the 'Centre' by making use of different linguistic and cultural strategies to challenge the legacy of colonialism and create a new kind of tragedy that is different from the Western canon of tragedy, as it is theorized by Aristotle. We will try to uncover how both *The Bacchae of Euripides* and *Riders to the Sea* belong to what is called by Augusto Boal *Theatre of the Oppressed*. The two plays moreover, belong to Soyinka's Postcolonial theory of the tragic, as it is explained in his *Forth Stage*. Our research work is a study of how Soyinka and Synge departed from the classical and dominant western ideas about drama to create their own Postcolonial form of Tragedy.

The first section of our dissertation is the Methods and Materials part. In the Methods part, we have selected more than one approach to conduct our research work. First of all, we decided to make use of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial literature*. In this part, we will provide the reader with a summary of Postcolonial theory and we intend to explore different methods and strategies that Postcolonial writers have opted in their writings to counteract the hegemonic power of the colonizer by using language *Appropriation* and *Abrogation* in addition to *'the insertion of traditional cultural elements'* in their respective works. In the similar context, we will go further to provide the readers with a general overview of Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the*

Oppressed and the way he rejected Aristotle Coercive System of Tragedy to create his own 'poetics of Liberation'. Leaning on this method, we will try to prove that the two plays belong to what Augusto Boal called *Poetics of the Oppressed*. Finally, our Method section will constitute of a short summary of Soyinka's seminal essay *The Fourth Stage* found in his book *Myth, Literature and African World* (1976). We will shed light on the main functioning strategies that Soyinka used in order to detach himself from the Western Canon and create his own tragedy that is different from the Aristotelian tragedy which has long dominated the world of drama. As far as the Materials part is concerned, we will provide our readers with summaries of Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* and John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.

In the second section of our thesis, we will try to provide our readers with the different results and findings of our research that we have reached after an analysis of the under studied Materials. Finally, in the third section, we shall discuss the main strategies of Postcolonial literary enterprise the two playwrights have applied to write back to the 'Centre', as well as the elements they used to depart from the Aristotelian theory of tragedy. The dissertation ends with a general conclusion.

II) Methods and Materials:

1. Methods:

A. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial literature* (2002):

To give our research work a theoretical basis, we first opted to make use of Postcolonial theory. A distinctive way of reading a new emerging literature that reveals the effects of colonialism and imperialism on the colonized people. One of the most significant works published in the field of Postcolonial studies is *Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial literature* (2002). In this section, we are going to point out the main ideas of the Postcolonial theory elaborated by the trio of the Empire Writes back and we will try to highlight the most important linguistic and cultural strategies used by the Postcolonial literary enterprise.

In their book, Ashcroft et al, use the term of Postcolonial “to cover all the cultures effected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day”²³ and assert that literatures are made distinctively Postcolonial by the fact that “they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension of the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre”²⁴. Postcolonial Literature thus, acts as an enterprise of writing back to the hegemonic ‘Centre’ and it is defined by the trio of *the Empire Writes Back* as “a form of resistance of reclaiming one’s ownership of oneself by resisting the hegemony, undercutting the tropes of Orientalism, overturning the narratives of the empire and thereby disjuncturing colonial discourse”²⁵.

The Postcolonial literary enterprise is largely based on the concept of '*Hybridity*' which commonly refers to any mixing of Eastern and Western cultures' attributes be they linguistic, cultural, political or racial. '*Hybridity*' is evocative of the nature of Postcolonial literature and culture which is in fact hybrid one. Language of Postcolonial writings is in no exceptions hybrid, since it is the outcome of the colonialist encounter with the Natives. This huge support of the idea of cultural exchange gives rise to a practicing number of linguistic and cultural strategies in Postcolonial writings. '*Abrogation*' and '*Appropriation*' are central linguistic strategies used in Postcolonial writing to reject the authority and the privileging norms of English language. '*Appropriation*' and '*Abrogation*' are both related to the use language and act in harmony, since according to Ashcroft et.al:

Without the process of *Appropriation*, the moment of *Abrogation* may not extend beyond a reversal of the assumption of the privilege, normal and correct inscription of all of which can be simply taken over the maintained by the new usage.²⁶

'*Abrogation*' on the one hand, is a negation of the practice of English language especially the way it dominates the local language. In other words, '*Abrogation*' is to disagree with the basic elements of English especially the right use of meaning of utterances. Ashcroft et.al define the process of '*Abrogation*' as "a refusal to the categories of the imperial cultures, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or '*correct*' usage, and its assumptions of traditional and fixed meaning inscribed in the word"²⁷. That is to say, Postcolonial writers reject the metropolitan norms and deny the use of English language because they need to create a distinct '*english*'. Postcolonial literature contradicts all what is related to the '*Centre*' simply because they do not want to express their human experiences with the language of the oppressor, but they prefer using the Vernacular English as a tool to oppose the hegemonic view of the '*Centre*'.

'*Appropriation*' on the other hand, is a complementary process that would complete the denial of colonial privileging norms of Standard English. It means to take the metropolitan

language and reformulate it in a new context as it would look different from the colonizer's one. In other words, Postcolonial writers reconstruct the language of their oppressor to new usages to mark a separation from the site of colonial privilege. Bill Ashcroft et.al define the concept of '*Appropriation*' as "a process by which the abrogated language (English) is taken and made 'to bear the burden of one's own cultural experience'"²⁸.

In addition to '*Abrogation*' and '*Appropriation*', the trio of *the Empire Writes Back* cited many other textual techniques such as '*Code Switching*', '*Code Mixing*', '*Allusions*', '*Vernacular Transcriptions*', inserting '*untranslated words*' and '*creolized versions of English*' into the text and by '*glossing*' seemingly obscure terms...etc. Such strategies enable to gain a wide world audience and yet, install the cultural distinctiveness and nativity that announces itself as different even though it's English.

Rehabilitating and recovering of the submerged past and history of the colonized people is another concern highlighted in Postcolonial Theory to answer back the colonial assumptions and discourses. Without question, Colonial rule has systematically abolated the historical past and communal traditions of subject people. Pretexts such as civilizing missions are the major tools through which the colonizer perpetuates his crimes. They hide behind the masks as '*superior others*' that supposedly care for the welfare of the '*inferior others*' who cannot take care of themselves. Postcolonial authors do not seem to like this version of the story. Therefore, in order to counteract and challenge this hegemony, they turned into reviving and valorizing their indigenous cultures in their writings. That is to say, in order to subvert such hegemony, Postcolonial writers went back into their ancestral practices and national traditions to prove that they did have a history which is in fact, far from the imperialist assumptions. These rehabilitating of their traditions and identities can be presented in many different aspects such as the use of proverbs, folktales, idioms, words and phrases from their native languages. These strategies counteract the colonial hegemony and its persistent attempt

to erase the past of natives and prove that they really had their own civilization even before the arrival of the colonial rules

B. The Aristotelian Theory of Tragedy as a representative of the Western Literary Canons:

For decades, the Western Canons control the field of literature and exercise a great influence which is shown when determining the canonicity of any artistic and literary work produced. The Westerners impose their cultures and history over other people that they basically view as inferior and less creative. That is to say, the Western Canon is simply a practice which reinforces the '*superiority*' of the Western art and the marginalization of Non-Western art forms. As may be expected, the '*Western Canons*' are regarded as imperialist as they left colonizing effects on smaller marginalized cultures which became dependent upon dominant Western theory rather than teaching about their cultures. The editors of the book '*Constructing a New Canon of Post 1980 Indian Fiction*' (2017) Shadav Luhar and Madharita Choudhay define the term Literary Canon as follows:

The term literary canon suggests the corpus of literary texts that are considered the most important. The term canon seems to confer a certain authority on a work of literature and offers the work official authentication and respect as valuable text.²⁹

Aristotle is classified among the greatest philosophers of ancient Greece and his ideas about an ideal tragedy become a guideline for a considerable number of playwrights. He is viewed as a model and representative of Western Literary Canon. His ideas are found in his famous *Poetics* (about 330 BC).

The most important characteristics of tragedy are found in the following definition translated from his poetics:

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kinds being found in separate parts of the play ; in the form of action, not of narrative ; with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions... Every tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine quality namely Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Melody.³⁰

According to this definition, one may understand that Tragedy is a dramatic imitation of tragic action written in rhetorical language. Aristotle stresses the completeness of Tragedy or what commonly known as the three unities: '*Unity of Time*', '*Unity of Space*' and '*Unity of Action*'. It means that the events of an ideal tragedy must take place over one day, in one place and must deals with one subject. Another important feature of the Aristotelian tragedy is '*Pity*' and '*Fear*' evoked in the audience as a result of the fall of the hero. Moreover, the hero of tragedy must be of a high social rank and commits a tragic flaw which causes a reversal of his situation from good to bad ('*Peripeteia*' in Aristotle words) which eventually brings about his downfall. All this must be found in a plot that has a Beginning, Middle (Climax) and an End. Therefore, the plot of an Aristotelian tragedy which is of a paramount importance forms a chain of causes and effects.

It is worth mentioning that many writers claim the dominance of Aristotle's works and ideas in Drama. For instance, in his work '*Aristotle Poetics, the Classic on Drama Theory: Literature (2006)*', Stefan Stenud states that "Aristotle's words in the Poetics have set the standard, to the extent that there has in the Western world not been any theory of the drama, or discussion of its structure and inner workings without reference to Aristotle in all periods when poetics was known"³¹. Moreover, Sirkan Kiranayaz et.al state in their book "*Multidimensional Practical Swarm Optimization for Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition (2014)*"state that "Aristotle determined the orientation and the content of

Western intellectual history. He was the author of a philosophical and scientific system that through the centuries became the support and the vehicle for both medieval Christian and Islamic thoughts: until the end of 17th century, Western culture was Aristotelian. And, even after the intellectual revolutions of centuries to follow, Aristotelian concepts and ideas remained embedded in Western thinking”³². Indeed, all these views demonstrate Aristotle’s dominance and significance to many philosophers and playwrights who followed him regarding the impact he left to construct most of their works.

Undoubtedly, not all the playwrights and philosophers follow the Western canons. In fact, some stand in direct opposition and rebelled against it as a means to create their own national canonical texts. Subsequently, the 20th century witnessed the rise of divergent literary Canons to challenge the Western hegemony over literary Canon. The Postcolonial enterprise was among the first to challenge the literary canon of the West and interpret it in term of East/West controversy, privileged marginalized hierarchies or Centre periphery relationships. It has rejected the Bloomian legacy of the literary canon which is based on the denial of literary works of the writers from formally colonized countries as Canons. Therefore, the only way to deconstruct this hegemony is to break up with the imposed models and to include new Canons in literary syllabi.

C. Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*:

We have chosen to rely on Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* because of its suitability for our research work. In this section, we will try to clarify the original project of Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* and to outline few of its major ideas and techniques.

In his seminal work *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000), Boal arranges a set of dramatist techniques that he refers to as ‘*Poetic of the Oppressed*’. A new poetics that is intended to give voice to the oppressed people and to provide a forum that encourages revolution and

liberating change. Boal argues that the Traditional Theatre is oppressive and loses its own place as a means of communication and expression, since Spectators usually do not get the chance to express themselves during theatrical experience.

The spectator is encouraged to think in a way which is presented as being the right way of thinking, the Truth. It is the dramatist who tells the truth who points the way: he is affirming not asking.”³³

Boal response to this aesthetic representation of the Spectator as a tool of ‘*community dialogue*’ is to claim the appropriation of theatrical practices by those who were Hitherto-Spectators and with the acknowledgment of the Marxist influence on his work, Boal desired to transfer the means of production to the ordinary people in the theatre so that the people themselves may utilize them. The very core of ‘*The poetics of the Oppressed*’ is that “theatre should be performed by the oppressed people and not by professional actors claiming to stand on stage for them”³⁴. He does that by providing us with a set of exercises and methods including ‘*Newspaper theatre*’, ‘*image Theatre*’, ‘*invisible Theatre*’ and his major technique ‘*Forum Theatre*’. All these have been elaborated to pursue a clear objective that is to transform Spectators into ‘*Spect-actors*’. Indeed, we should not take the word ‘*Spect-actor*’ just as an artistic term but also as a political one. By becoming actors within dramatist setting, Boal thinks that we can become political actors in everyday life. In this context, he claims:

I want the Spectator to take on the role of Actor and invade the Character and the stage. I want him to occupy space and offer solutions. By taking possession of the stage, the Spect-actor is consciously performing a responsible act. The stage is a representation of reality, a fiction. But the Spect-actor is not fictional. He exists in the scene and outside of it, in a dual reality. By taking possession on the stage in the fiction of the theatre he acts: not just in the fiction but also in the social reality. By transforming fiction he is transforming into himself.³⁵

Boal manages to do a very detailed and clear deconstruction of the Aristotelian tragedy. In his essay ‘*Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy*’, he aims to prove that in spite of declaring independence of Poetry in relation to Politics, Aristotle manages to provide the audience with “a very powerful Poetic political system for intimidation of the Spectator”³⁶ for

all the tendencies that go against the political goods including revolution. Boal gradually unpacks every notion used by Aristotle starting with imitation finishing with constitution and the last definition he provides is the following:

For Aristotle Tragedy imitates the actions of man's rational soul, his passions turned into habits, in his search for happiness, which consists in virtuous behavior, remote from the extremes, whose supreme good is justice and whose maximum expression is the constitution.³⁷

This Aristotelian definition of tragedy favors the monarch in that the happiness searched for, resides on how people obey the laws. This brings about the issue of coercion. Thus, the people are coerced to obey the laws and as long as there is no a revolt all is well with the monarch.

In '*Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy*', Boal speaks about Aristotle support for the idea of '*Catharsis*'; a concept used in order to manipulate the audience's actions and dialogues. This '*Catharsis*' occurs in the course of events in the tragic play. A tragic hero who is found to be virtuous suffers from one vice or as Aristotle calls it '*Hamartia*'. This '*Hamartia*' eventually causes this virtuous being to suffer from a downfall, this occurs in what is classified as the '*Peripeteia*'. During this time the Spectators experience growing fear of his/her '*Hamartia*'. After this, the tragic hero goes through what is known as '*Anagnorsis*', which is the moment where the hero recognizes his flaw by the meaning of reasoning. Eventually, the audience would feel empathy in this moment since they start accepting their own '*Hamartia*'. The final stage is the terrible ending of the play, which is known as '*Catastrophe*'. Terrified from the tragic end of the hero, the Spectator will be purged of his own '*Hamartia*'; the purgation is '*Catharsis*'. In short, the Spectator is seen feared and even felt the terrible consequences of the Tragic flaw and recognizes his own flaw to turn away from it promising never to make mistakes again.

Boal sees that '*Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy*' has erased the will of the people. It functions "to diminish, placate, satisfy, eliminate all that can break the balance,

including revolutionary, transforming impetus”³⁸. He sees that this system is created to suppress individuals in society preventing them from taking an action which aims for change. Moreover, Boal claims that this system cannot be utilized during ‘Cultural Revolution’ in which values are being questioned. Thus, regarding the political turmoil of 1960 in Brazil, Boal goes into creating appropriate theatrical forms for these oppressed people to fight against the oppressive government.

D. Wole Soyinka’s Theory of Tragedy and *The Fourth Stage*:

The Nigerian Dramatist, Poet and Novelist Wole Soyinka is the first African to produce a theory of tragedy. Most of his ideas are presented in his essay *The Fourth Stage* found in his book *Myth, Literature and the African World (1976)*.

In his attempt to find a distinctive African dramatic view far from the Western Canonical Theatre, Wole Soyinka forges a unique theatre tradition with blending both traditional dramatic elements, Yoruba mythic figures with Greek mythology and myth of Dionysus in particular. Hence, he gives rise to what he has termed ‘*Yoruba tragedy*’ which is a new way of perceiving reality and changing ideology. The distinctiveness of Soyinka’s theory of ‘*Yoruba Tragedy*’ lies in the fact that it is drawn from the Yoruba myths and rituals particularly the myth of god ‘*Ogun*’. In Yoruba myth, there exists what Soyinka refers to a ‘*Chthonic realm*’; “the area of the really dark forces, the really dark spirits, and the area of stress of human will”³⁹ by which he means the worlds of the Ancestors (i.e. the dead), the living and the unborn. In fact, these worlds are separated from impassable gulf, but Soyinka believes that there is an immense gulf of transition between these worlds which he calls ‘*The Fourth Stage*’. In Yoruba mythology, this gulf must be constantly diminished by sacrifice, the rituals, the ceremonies of appeasement to the cosmic powers which lie guardian to the gulf”⁴⁰.

Soyinka has elaborated a number of Yoruba deities to illustrate the cosmic birth of the

tragic such as 'Obatala', 'Sango', and the God 'Ogun' is believed to play a primary role in the universe of the *Fourth Stage*. He is the first who manages to cross this gulf and leads the other deities down to earth to be reunited with the living and establishes a successful connection between them. This is the reason why, he is described by Soyinka as "the first actor, first suffering deity, first creative energy, the first challenger, and conqueror of transition"⁴¹. Ogun's first plunge into the transitional gulf provides us with an understanding of Obatala initial role. In fact, Obatala is a God of creation, the one who is supposed to give form to the child in the mother's womb. In many respect, Ogun and Obatala are complementary because while Ogun mirrors the actors to Plunge into the transitional gulf, Obatala is supposed to give this experience a coherent form.

Within the experience of crossing this Transitional gulf, when the protagonist (Ogun) sacrifices himself and plunges straight into the realm, he feels an initial isolation, disintegration of the self and severe suffering. However, this suffering has a meaningful kind resulting from Ogun's creative use of his energies in forging a path for the god's journey to earth. It is because of Ogun's passage through the transitional gulf and only after him, the other gods that "the Yoruba harmonious would or could be born"⁴². Consequently, in Yoruba Tragedy the dissolution of the self may or may not lead the protagonist's death. However, the experience itself is tragic and doesn't require the event of death to make it so. According to Soyinka, to remain alive from the transitional gulf is, in fact the more difficult challenge. Furthermore, within the experience of transition, what enables the protagonist to survive and reassemble himself is his individual will. In other words, the 'will' is the only faculty that survives the annihilation of the self, only 'the battle of the will' which is 'primary creative' comments Soyinka can save the tragic hero. In case the tragic hero dies or not at the end of the drama, his tragic experience is profitable somehow by his community.

Tragedy does not always mean death for the main character. The tragic moment are often moments when the central character courageously enters the gulf of transition, contends the forces that guard it, and finally emerges with new knowledge to energize the community”⁴³.

Moreover, the ‘*Will*’ which seems to save the tragic actor from tragic death is generally expressed through ‘*Music*’ which according to Soyinka plays an initial role superseding that of language and action. Music according to Soyinka is “the direct copy or the direct expression of the will”⁴⁴. At heightened moment of tragic experience, “music comes to contain the sole art form which does contain tragic reality”⁴⁵. In the similar context, Soyinka goes on to connect between Music and Language. This connection is apparently based on Nietzschean concepts in ‘*The Birth of Tragedy*’, however, Soyinka moves into another direction. In fact, Nietzsche from one hand, separates the two concepts of ‘*Music*’ and ‘*Language*’, thus he grants a more dominant role to Music. Soyinka on the other hand, emphasizes the unity of Yoruba music and poetry and perceives the oneness between the two. Soyinka claims: “It is unmusical to separate Yoruba musical from myth and poetry. The nature of Yoruba music is intensively the nature of its language and poetry highly charged, symbolic, myth embryonic”⁴⁶.

The aim behind this model of Tragedy is to stimulate change in society and assume the experience of suffering a positive tone, by turning pain into pleasure and obtaining a new vision of life. He believes that people’s action must be a recreation of Ogun’s experience. For Soyinka, the renewal and better understanding of life can be achieved only after passing through the disintegrating and destabilizing experience of suffering aroused by tragedy for the sake of achieving stability and salvation. Soyinka seeks to sensitize community to the need of creativity and plunging into suffering despite ‘self-disintegration’, the results will be satisfactory.

2) Materials:

A. Summary of Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite (1973)*:

Wole Soyinka's play *The Bacchae of Euripides: a communion rite (1973)* is a reworking of the Euripides's famous ancient Greek tragedy '*The Bacchae*'. The play centers on the God Dionysus' journey on earth to extract revenge over his community for their betrayal. All Thebes including the king 'Cadmus' and 'Terisias' have become votaries of the new god Dionysus except the young king of Thebes 'Pentheus', who appears infuriated by this behavior and asks his soldiers to arrest him, something that makes Dionysus to rage with revenge. Under hypnotic power of Dionysus, Pentheus submits to his own request and convinces him to join him to personally spy on the Maenads and punish them for their betrayal. The king Pentheus and Dionysus set out on their spy journey. Once there, Dionysus disappears and Pentheus is seen by frenzied hysterical women led by his mother 'Agave'. They started pulling stones at him until he falls down and they rip his body apart piece by piece. Agave under the Dionysian possession is proud of her victory, but when the Dionysian possession begins to wear off, she slowly starts to realize with horror what she has done. The final note of Euripides play shows us the inscrutable vision of the god as "a shining powerful red glow". After Pentheus' dismemberment by Agave and the Bacchante, 'red jets' of wine spring from Pentheus' impaled head. Everyone including Agave move toward the fountain, and they collectively drink from Pentheus' head in a ritual bringing the community together after the violent conflict.

B. Summary of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904):

Synge's *Riders to the Sea* is a one act play which events take place in a poorest part of the Southern Island of Ireland. The play recounts a story of a poor rural family that relies on the sea as the only source of survival and at the same time their fearful enemy. The tragic heroine 'Maurya' has long lived bitter suffering due to the loss of six members of her family that caused her grief, depression and fear of losing the rest.

The play opens in Maurya's house where the two sisters 'Cathleen' and 'Nora' receive a bundle from a young priest which contains clothes may belong to their lost brother 'Michael'. The sisters hide the bundle for fear of Maurya's reaction. During their discussion, 'Bartley' who is Maurya's only surviving son appears to tell the family that he wants to go to the Galway fair to sail. Maurya opposes him and tries to stop him because of the strong frightening feeling of losing him but he refuses to listen to her and leaves home. Maurya is so angry that she does not bless him thus, she goes after him. During Maurya's absence, the two sisters open the bundle to make sure that the clothes belong to their lost brother. While Nora and Cathleen were looking for a way to tell their mother about Michael's death, a group of peasants come carrying Bartley's corpse. Meanwhile, the two sisters are waiting for a strong reaction from their mother who has always cried and screamed at every death, however, she remains calm. She accepts her latest son's death and reassures that sea will never take someone else. The conflict between Maurya and the sea is over, the curtain descends and the story ends.

• **Endnotes:**

- ¹ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 1998), 15.
- ² Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Paris: F.Maspero, 1991), 15.
- ³ Paramod, K.Nayar, *Post-colonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 2.
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ Toni Francis (2007), '*Identity politics: Postcolonial Theory and Writing Instruction*' (Doctorial dissertation, University of South Florida) retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org>
- ⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002). 23.
- ⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: penguin, 1977), 45.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 88.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 2.
- ¹¹ Dona Landry and Gerald, *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- ¹² Innes, *Postcolonial Literature*, 19.
- ¹³ Lorna Hardwick and Corla Grillepsie, *Classic in Postcolonial World: Classical Presences* (Oxford University Press: USA, 2007), 79.
- ¹⁴ Isidero Okpewho, "Soyinka and Anxiety of Empire" in *The African Drama and Performance*: (Indian University Press: 2004), 32.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 57.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 59.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 60.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 61.
- ¹⁹ Solomon Adedokun Edebor, Realism in J.M Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and the *Playboy of Western World*, "*The Literary Response to Modernity*", ed.Austine A.Akpuda (Aba E-klan Books, 2014) , 10.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Mohammad Jashim Uddin and Md.FerdousIqbal Chowdhury, "Patriarchal Dominance in J.M Synge *Riders to the Sea* Viewing from Feminist Perspective", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*.Vol.21,no.2 (2016), pp 04/09,

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²² Ibid.

²³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature*. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 206.

²⁷ Ibid, 38.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Shadev Luhar Madharita, *Constructing of New Canon of Post 1980 Indian Fiction* (Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2017), 2.

³⁰ S. H Butcher, *The Poetics of Aristotle* (Pennsylvania: An Electronic Classics Series Publication, 2013), p10.

³¹ Stefan, S., *Aristotle Poetics: The Classic on Drama Theory*. Retrieved from <https://www.stenud.com/Aristotle:poetics.htm>

³² Sirkan Kiranaya, Turker Ince and Moncef Gabbouj., *Multidimensional Practical Swarm Optimization for Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition* (New York London: 2014), 14.

³³ Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press 345, Archway Road, 2000).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Wole Soyinka, *Myth Literature and African World* (Cambridge University Press: London, 1976), p 144.

⁴⁰ Bidieum Jeyifo, *Conversations with Wole Soyinka* (University of Mississippi, 2001) 22.

⁴¹ Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage" in *Myth Literature and African World* (London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 145.

⁴² Ibid, 146.

⁴³ Osita Okagbue, *Contemporary Dramatists*, (Sixth Edition, ed., by Thomas Rigges, St. James Press, Detroit, New York, 1999), 659.

⁴⁴Wole Soyinka, “The Fourth Stage” in *Myth Literature and African World* (London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 149.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 146.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 147.

III) Results:

This part is concerned with the major findings that we have reached after our study of Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904). In fact, our research paper covers many interests; it analyzes the different strategies applied by the two playwrights to answer back the British 'Centre' and how they departed from the Aristotelian theory of Tragedy. This is, actually shown through Soyinka and Synge's 'Appropriation' and 'Abrogation' of the language of the colonizer, the rehabilitation of culture that is long distorted by the colonizer and finally through the disregard of the most significant principles that shape their assumptions. Our investigation has been conducted in the light of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin '*The Empire Writes Back*', Augusto Boal's '*Theatre of the Oppressed*' and Wole Soyinka's '*The Fourth Stage*'.

In the first section of our dissertation, we have been able to trait the different strategies that Soyinka and Synge have used to answer back the assumptions of the colonizer relying on Bill Ashcroft, et.al '*The Empire Writes Back*'. We have noticed that both playwrights have incorporated many linguistic and cultural strategies in their plays. Linguistically speaking, they used the language of the colonizer in a way that will fit both the African and the Irish environments. They appropriated the language of the colonizer and subverted its grammatical structure and syntax and used unusual sentences which do not really exist in Standard English. They also used Code-Switching, and a variety of untranslated words and proverbs based on Yoruba or Celtic languages. Culturally speaking, Synge and Soyinka felt the need to revive the distorted image of their cultures and made use of different cultural elements inspired from Yoruba or Celtic myths, folklore and storytelling.

In the second section of our dissertation we relied on both Augusto Boal ‘*Theatre of The Oppressed*’ and Wole Soyinka’s ‘*The Fourth Stage*’ to analyze the different means they used to depart from the Aristotelian theory of tragedy and its central elements. Synge and Soyinka did not respect the plot structure which constitutes the most important element of the six constituents that he thinks determine the quality of Tragedy. They also disobeyed the laws of three unities. Soyinka skipped both the ‘Unity of Action’ and ‘Space’ which made his work far from being Aristotelian. In addition, our study of the plays reveals that Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* disobeyed the laws of the Aristotelian tragic hero who is supposed to be person of a noble stature in society. In fact, neither Maurya nor Bartley belong to a high social rank, their standards of living is too low to be described even as a middle class.

A further study of the two plays reveals that neither Soyinka nor Synge respected the elements of ‘*Peripeteia*’, ‘*Hamartia*’, ‘*Anagnorsis*’, ‘*Catastrophe*’ and ‘*Catharsis*’ which are regarded as the most interdependent elements that define Aristotle’s system of Tragedy. Synge for instance did not take into consideration the middle of the plot where according to the ancient Greek philosophers; the situation is reversed from good to bad for the tragic hero because the latter has committed no fatal mistake. Synge’s play also lacked the element of ‘*Hamartia*’, ‘*Anagnorsis*’ and ‘*Catharsis*’. This deviation from Aristotle’s theory of the tragic is actually a way to create a ‘*Theatre of Liberation*’ in contrast to Aristotle’s ‘*Theatre of Oppression*’ which in fact prevents his audience to take any action in real life.

In the final part, our research paper analyzes the notion of ‘*Sacrifice*’ according to both plays as an opposition to the Aristotle’s ideas of ‘*Fate*’. In Soyinka’s version of *The Bacchae of Euripides* and Synge’s *Riders to the Sea*, the death of the tragic heroes is not an outcome of an inevitable fate as claimed by Aristotle. In fact, the downfall of ‘Pentheus’ in *The Bacchae of Euripides* and ‘Bartley’ in *Riders to the Sea* is a result of sacrifice for their respective community members to restore peace and liberation.

IV) Discussion:

CHAPTER ONE: Language and Myth in Soyinka's *The Baccahae of Euripides: A Communication Rite* (1973) and Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904).

1. Language Appropriation and Abrogation in Soyinka's *The Baccahae of Euripides: A Communication Rite* (1973) and Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904):

Since language has been used as a tool to oppress and denigrate the colonized people, in the same way, it is being utilized as an instrument of resistance and liberation in the Postcolonial literary enterprise. This can be attained either by '*Abrogation*', which is a total denial of the power and privilege vested with English or by '*Appropriation*', which is a process of reconstituting and "remolding the language of the centre to new usages"¹. By the process of '*Appropriation*', Postcolonial writers adapt the colonial tongue to bear the elements of one's own cultural experience or, as Roja Rao puts it, "To convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own"². This in other words, means that Postcolonial creative writings are using the textual offensiveness of the colonial authority to define their space as different of what has been outlined by the colonizer. As Chris Tiffin and Allan Lawson note:

Just as fire can be fought by fire, textual control can be fought by textuality... The postcolonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power of that resides in discourse and textuality ; its resistance, then quite appropriately takes place in and from the domain of textuality, in among other things motivated acts of reading".³

Hence, Wole Soyinka's *The Baccahae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904) are among important Postcolonial works that display well the use of the colonial language. Both maintain the language of the former colonizer to reach a widest possible audience but also as a means of empowerment to subvert

Colonialist's ideologies and assumptions while articulating their specific cultural practices and world views.

A. Language Appropriation and Abrogation in Wole Soyinka's *the Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973):

Nigeria was one of the most important English colonies that had lost its linguistic autonomy when English language was imposed on Yoruba speakers and other local languages such as the 'Igbo', the 'Hausa', the 'Fulani'...etc. The Yoruba were among the most popular ethnic group in all Africa. The former was part of the imperialistic project to have more control over the colonized people. In this context, Ashcroft et.al claim that "one of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a Standard version of the metropolitan language as the norm and marginalizes all variants and impurities"⁴. In fact, one of the major effects of the conquest of Nigeria and its continued colonization over centuries is the displacement and annihilation of the Yoruba language.

While Some African dramatists and playwrights completely reject the language of the colonizer, some others adopt it as a means of expression and come to introduce some modifications into the imperial language to make it appropriate and suitable for the needs of the Africans. Soyinka is among these African playwrights who despite his Western education, he does not seem to like the idea of erasing African languages and more particularly his mother language, 'Yoruba'. Thus, he adopts English as a means of expression in all his writings but in a way that suits the Yoruba environment. In *'Morning yet on Creation Day'*, Chinua Achebe responds to the use of English Language as follows:

The African writers should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will not be lost. He should aim at fashioning

An “English” which is at once universal and able to carry out the peculiar experience.⁵

Soyinka achieves these aims in most of his works particularly *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) by using a practicing number of abrogating and subversive techniques of the language of the colonizer. When reading the play, we may notice that Soyinka maintains a Standard English translation of the play and contemporary European scenes, however, he projects his African culture and history particularly Yoruba aspects to assert authority over imported Western traditions.

Through our analysis of the play, we have recognized that Soyinka used unusual sentences which do not really exist in Standard English for example the scene when ‘Terisias’ faints and the flogger offers him help to stand up and asks him: “...Where you hurt?”⁶ In this case, Soyinka does not really respect the correct structure of Standard English sentence. In fact, the English correct structure of this sentence is “Where do/does it/are you hurt?” Also when ‘Cadmus’ asks ‘Terisias’ about ‘Pentheus’ reaction regarding the coming of ‘Dionysus’, he states: “Not suicide bent I hope. His fault I readily admit. But what is he done now?”⁷ The structure of the sentence is not correct, we instead can say “what he did” or “what he have/has done?”

An additional obvious matter is the fact that grammatical elements and the syntax of the language are not correct. The playwright does not follow the syntax of the English language and the correct conjunction of verbs and many cases; he does not include verbs at all. In fact, the distortion of the grammar and the syntax of the colonizer language is one of the ways in which language can be appropriated, abrogated and subverted at the same time. The following sentences are suitable illustration to the above arguments:

“...In the foreground, the main gate to the palace of Pentheus. further down and into the wings, a lean to build against the wall, a threshing floor. As smell and sweat of

hervest. Ripeness. As spotlight, reveals Dionysus just behind the rise, within the tomb of Semele...”⁸

Moreover, in his version of the *Bacchae*, Soyinka integrates the ancient art of ‘Storytelling’ which is a vital part of the African community because it brings people together. The stories function as tools for educating the young and reminding the old of their history. The story teller is an actor in his own right as he uses his voice and actions to dramatize the events as he narrates them. Soyinka uses this technique for the officer’s report of Pentheus’ death. In the form of oral traditions half way through his report, the officer incorporates an appropriate African proverb:

OFFICER: You know that saying, a man the people seek to roast, rubs himself in oil, crouches beside an open fire Moaning, I have a chill: the rest is soon told.⁹

Soyinka says that “you know that saying” knowing full well that a majority of his immediate audience would not know the saying, however, when he translated the proverb from its original, he presents it in such a way that the meaning can be understood.

B. Language *Appropriation* and *Abrogation* in John Millington Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* (1904):

Ireland was one of the British colonies which was subjected to a marginalization of its linguistic background by imposing English on the Gaelic speakers through dictating Penal Laws in the 18th century “forbidding people to speak their own tongue and replacing it by the imperial tongue”¹⁰ thus, English could be heard over large areas of Ireland . This caused the native language to fade slowly and stimulated the spread of English among the Irish population.

This hegemony started to change with the Literary Revival of the 19th century and early 20th century with the birth of the Irish Renaissance writers. John Millington Synge is one of the icons of the Irish Renaissance who rejects, subverts and appropriates the Standard

English in his own way by incorporating 'Idioms', 'Gaelic words' and by combining both foreign and native language to produce a distinct and a unique literature, depending on the language of the folk and rural peasants of the Aran Islands. The latter reflects history and traditions of the Irish population.

Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904) embodies well the Gaelic culture, myths, tales, idioms and the Non-Standard English in particular. According to Gilmartin Elizabeth "the dialect that Synge used has been translated in a manner that defines himself linguistically as an Irish rather than English"¹¹ *Riders to the Sea* is written in Hiberno-English or the Anglo-Irish which is "a variety of English which arouse among the native Gaelic-speakers as they made the language shift from Gaelic to English."¹² The Hiberno-English can be summarized as follows:

"In the pronunciation and vocabulary of Hiberno-English it is possible to trace the influence of older strata of the English language and of the Irish language; in grammar, syntax and idiom the peculiarities of southern Hiberno-English depend exclusively on the Irish language"¹³

In other words, it is a birth of mixing English and Irish language, a hybrid dialect and a new Irish English which subverts the grammatical rules and abrogates the syntax and the norms of the Standard English, aiming at ending the hegemony of English, defining the linguistic heritage of Ireland and producing a pure Irish literature. According to Ruchika Singh "Synge, by using this style, avoided the problem that many other writers within the Irish Literary Revival had; most of them were no native Irish speakers, their Irish was indeed very poor."¹⁴

In *Riders to the Sea*, the one can notice and feel clearly the Irish identity since Synge depends more on the Anglo-Irish dialect rather than Standard English and in some cases, a mixing between them. Within the different passages of the play, different grammatical rules and syntax are being subverted in order to conform with the real sense of the Irish identity and language. To show his refusal of the English language and challenge its hegemony, Synge

uses different strategies of 'Appropriation' such as 'Vernacular Transcription', 'Code-Switching', 'Syntactic Fusion' and 'untranslated words'.

From the beginning of the play, we notice a kind of Code-Switching from English to Irish. Code-Switching in Postcolonial context is writing with the colonizer's language including some words and sentences from the mother tongue. Synge relies on Code-Switching and Vernacular Transcription as good ways to answer back the British 'Centre' which "achieve dual results of abrogating the Standard English and appropriating an 'english' as a culturally significant discourse"¹⁵. It is defined by the trio of *The Empire Writes Back* as:

The most common method of inscribing alterity by the process of appropriation is the technique of switching between two or more codes(...) the technique 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. All these are common ways of installing cultural distinctiveness in the writing.¹⁶

In order to install 'cultural distinctiveness' of the Irish, Synge demonstrates brilliant use of the strategy of Code-Switching from Irish language to English language and the verse versa is correct. He inserts different Anglo-Irish words with Standard English; in some cases these words do have an equivalent in the language of the colonizer and in other cases, they are pure and original. Let us deduce with some examples from the play:

CATHELEN: Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and may be when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.¹⁷

NORA: I won't stop him...herself does be saying prayers half through the night, the Almighty God won't leave her destitute... with no son living.¹⁸

CATHELEEN: Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora.¹⁹

By reading and analyzing each line carefully, we notice that most of the sentences used by the characters have a kind of Irish tone as it is the case in the first example. If we look at the second sentence "I won't Stop him...herself does be saying...", we notice a switch

between Standard English and Irish dialect. Concerning the last example, it is a pure Standard English. Within the passages, we find sentences that include Stock phrases associated habitually to the Irish themselves such as ‘the Almighty God or God speed you’ which are “blessings for the living as well as the dead and answering these expressions are considered as an inherent custom by the islanders”²⁰. Also when Maurya says “...There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over”²¹; the word ‘*curagh*’ is a pure Gaelic word which means a small boat. Moreover, this variance of languages produces the Vernacular language or we may say ‘*english*’. For Ashcroft “both ‘english’ and ‘English’ with their attendant social, cultural and political allegiances will exist side by side as vernacular and standard”²². This inclusion of Irish and Standard language shows “the processes by which Post-European cultures make ‘english’ ‘bear the burden “of an experience for which the terms of the inherited language do not seem appropriate.”²³

In addition to Code-Switching, other strategies are being used such as Syntactic Fusions. According to Regis Stella, Syntactic Fusions “are linguistic adaptation of the rhythms and textures of vernacular speech to standard orthography.”²⁴ In his play, Synge adopts Irish vernacular syntax and rhyme. We can notice clearly the influence of the Irish Syntax over the Standard English as well as the subversion of the grammar and the incorrect use of prepositions, verbs and adjectives which are of course attributed to the Irish syntax, as it is the case with these examples:

NORA: He’s coming now, and he in a hurry.²⁵

CATHELEEN: Why wouldn’t you give him your blessing and he looking round?²⁶

MAURYA: I’ll have no son left me in the world.²⁷

CATHELEEN: What is it you seen? ²⁸

MAURYA: I seen Michael.²⁹

In grammar rules and in any informative sentence, we always have a '*subject*', '*verb*' and '*object*', but it is not the case with the first and the second example where no verb or auxiliary is noticed. Instead of saying 'he is in a hurry' and 'he is looking', Synge preserves the Standard English and at the same time keeps the grammatical structures and patterns of the local language. Besides, we notice the omission of the conjunction 'For' in the third example, the subversion of the grammatical structure and the absence of the auxiliary 'To Have' in the two last examples. These are the unusual sentences that are unstructured in relation to Standard English; sometimes no verbs and other more than one pronoun. That is actually Synge's way to distort the grammar and syntax of the colonizer language. Raymond Hickey from his part asserts that there is:

a variety of specifically Irish English features which are asserted in Synge's plays; as the use of 'on + personal pronoun' to express relevance of an action (Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done and the use of 'and +continuous verb forms' as a type of subordinate clause (And what time would a man take, and floating.³⁰

Furthermore, Synge inserts a practicing number of untranslated words and proverbs throughout the play. Such a practice that is according to Ashcroft et.al a way to show cultural distinctiveness and a means which prompt the reader to explain the concepts and thus acquire knowledge of the culture from which the concepts are derived and so, indirectly influence the reader. Synge thus, incorporates some untranslated names such as '*Nora*', Symbols of Gaelic culture as '*Holy water*', and typically Irish words as '*poteen*' (little pot). All these expressions make the reader exposed to his native culture. All in all, these Strategies or we may call it act of defiance adopted by Synge show his refusal of the English 'superiority'.

2 Myth and Indigenous culture in Soyinka's *The Baccahae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904):

Theatre provides some Postcolonial playwrights with necessary materials to draw extensively from mythical elements of indigenous culture such as music, dance, folklore, religion and rituals...etc, then incorporate them to the totality of the art and thus attribute a political shade to the work. In this context, Payma Dasht claims: "There is a repeated use of indigenous songs and music or hybridized forms recalling pre-contact ways of communication, providing the validity of the continued oral traditions, helping to dismantle conventional Western representations"³¹. Hence, Wole Soyinka's *the Baccahae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904) are among the important works that display well the use of Myth and indigenous cultures as a means to answer back the British assumptions that both Nigeria and Ireland were cultureless and uncivilized areas.

A. Myth and Indigenous culture in *The Baccahae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973):

For a long time before African nations won political independence from their European colonizers, African cultures were misunderstood and misrepresented. Words such as 'savage' and 'primitive' were used to describe them by foreign scholars who had no feeling for the languages and attitudes in which that literature is expressed. Comes the process of decolonization, the colonies continue their engagement against former colonized countries, as Bill Ashcroft, et.al define the term 'Postcolonization' in their work 'The Empire Writes Back':

"a process in which colonized societies participate over a longue period, through different phases and modes of engagement with the colonizing power, during and after the actual period of different colonial rule".³²

This obviously indicates that the colonial influences continue to chase after attaining political independence and the colonized cannot entirely free themselves from these influences, but they can absolutely “appropriate and transform it in infinite ways, and the recuperation and re-acknowledgement of the pre-colonial culture is part of such transformation”³³. In other words, the colonized undertakes the task of re-examining not only the institutions by which they have been governed but also the image of their culture that has long been distorted by the outsiders. The aim is to demonstrate that Africa has had, since time immemorial, traditions and theatre that should be respected and a culture to be proud of.

Undoubtedly, the roots of African theatre are very ancient and complex. It is entwined with community festivals, seasonal rhythm, religious rituals and storytelling. Since 1950s, the Theatre grows in strength parallel with the political emancipation of the nations across most of the continent. Contemporary African theatre reasserted its function and realized that its responsibility is much greater than its entertainment quality. It's obvious that centuries of European dominance have undoubtedly influenced African cultures and thereby its theatre. During the first half of Twentieth century, Indigenous Theatre Movement often reflected Western models, but the generation that followed made effective measures to subvert or replace these European influences.

Wole Soyinka is one of the continent's most imaginative advocates of native culture and the human social order it embodies. He makes much use of traditional African forms and ideas mostly stepped in the Yoruba culture and mythology to create the structure of his play. Roy Ajali Gera argues that:

It is large body of Yoruba myths, tales, songs, proverbs, chants and most of all rituals, embodying a specific ontological and epistemological system, which frames Soyinka's writing. ³⁴

In *the Bacchae o Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) Soyinka reworks Pentheus' myth and remains to some extent faithful to the Greek Tragedy , but that does not stop him to

reflect a number of Yoruba elements in his play as a tool to challenge colonial supremacy. One of the most significant mythical elements found in the *Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) is the use of 'Yoruba Deities'. In the foreground, we may cite the God 'Ogun', Soyinka's major figure in most of his works. In the prologue to his play, Soyinka explains that the Yoruba God 'Ogun' parallels the Greek God 'Dionysus'. Thus, he changes the character of Dionysus with Ogun but he keeps his name as it is used in the original one. There are several passages of the *Bacchae* in which references to Ogun can be perceived for instance when Dionysus first appears on the stage to present himself, he utters the following words:

DIONYSUS: I am the gentle, jealous joy. Vengeful and kind. An essence that will not exclude, nor be exploded, if you are a man or women. I am Dionysus. Accept.³⁵

In fact, Soyinka does not emphasize Dionysus gender ambivalence as much as Euripides did; his Dionysus similarly avoids gender specificity. Hence, Soyinka's Dionysus not so much confuses but rather exceeds gender. This makes him fundamentally Yoruba, because as the British Anthropologist Jhon David Peel explains "Traditionally in Yoruba religion the gods were intrinsically simply powers or spirits. Their gender is a secondary attribution bestowed upon them by their devotees. Some gods were regarded as male in some context and female in others".³⁶

Another striking Mythical element in the play is the fusion of African oral and music traditions and dancing performances. Among many deviations from of the canonical model, *the Bacchae of Euripides* foregrounds dance as a motif of disjunction with the original text. As an illustration, we may cite the scene when 'Dionysus' asks 'Terisias' to dance: "The music of Dionysus is heard. Terisias stands enhanced for some moments, the moves naturally into the rhythm, continues to dance, rapt".³⁷ The second dance is also performed by 'Terisias' but this time with the old king 'Cadmus' to celebrate the coming of 'Dionysus':

TERESIAS: Where is your hand? When you step into the dance you will loss all your silly notions. You accept, and that's the real stature of man. You are immersed in the richest essence of all you're real essence. This is what the dance of Dionysus brings forth from you, this is the meaning of the dance. Follow the motions of my feet and dance Cadmus. We will keep dancing all the way to the hills. One Two Back, One Two Back...³⁸.

Additionally, when 'Agave' turns the thyrsus, the Baccahae start to dance around the unveiled head chasing and catching "the ribbons might as they unfurl and float outwards".³⁹ This dance of unfurling ribbons may also relate to the whirling costumes of Yoruba Egungun performers, as they incarnate the spirits of the dead. As Sotto remarks, this scene "shows again how Soyinka fuses elements from different cultural contexts in order to emphasize a particular meaning".⁴⁰

Furthermore, Soyinka incorporates a '*Chorus*' to perform different songs throughout the play. For instance when Pentheus has chained Dionysus, along with the Bacchantes, the slave chorus begin to chant verses calling for Dionysus to break free. "As Dionysus is chained his Bacchantes begin a noise; a kind of ululating which is found among some African and oriental people and signifies great distress, warning or agitation. Sometimes all combined. It increased in volume. As Dionysus is led away it spreads to the slave Chorus swelling into deafening proportion".⁴¹

CHORUS: Earth... Swell...Earth...Grow...Earth...Move...
Earth...Strain...Earth...Groan...Earth...Clutch.⁴²

In fact, the above mentioned chants and dances performed by the Chorus slaves, Terisias and Cadmus are not found in Euripides' original play but, Soyinka incorporates these aspects to his adaptation as a means to revive his Yoruba ancient traditions.

Additionally, Soyinka incorporates other mythical and Yoruba elements to his version of The Baccahae. Undoubtedly, Yoruba culture is well known with its richness of rituals and ceremonies. Wole Soyinka sees the need to revive it and incorporate it with Greek traditions.

In *the Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973), the first ceremony is the Yoruba annual ritual which deals with cleansing of sins of the community. It is performed at the opening of the play where the old Terisias is chosen as the scapegoat for cleansing the country from its evils: "A small ceremony of cleansing is performed on the palace gate. The Priests take branches from a bundle borne by the two leading girls, symbolically scouring the gates with them then pile the used twigs on the bunch already borne by Terisias. He is sprinkled and flogged as before."⁴³ This ceremony according to Terisias takes place so that "the city can be cleansed of filth, pollution, cruelties and secret abominations"⁴⁴, but when the story draws to its end, it's the king Pentheus who is going to sacrifice himself for his nation.

B. Myth and Indigenous Culture in John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904):

Much like African one, Irish identity and culture were marginalized and classified as inferior in opposition to the 'superiority' of the British Empire. The elimination of the pillar of strength on which the colony is based was among the colonizer's fundamental plans. History, traditions, beliefs, myths and other elements that express the culture of the colony were the focus of the colonizer attention. This cultural marginalization was the main reason to justify Postcolonial writer's arguments for rewriting back to the 'Centre'. One of the strategies adopted by Postcolonial writers to challenge such acts was the revival of the cultural heritage, traditions and beliefs of indigenous people in order to create a new Irish identity out of the old Celtic traditions.

As a Postcolonial writer, John Millington Synge in his own way, tried to confront the colonial stereotypical representations of the Irish and rehabilitate their ancestral traditions through incorporating in his works elements of Irish myths, folklore, legends and rural customs that were alive in rural societies. This becomes a source of inspiration and central aim of his Postcolonial writings. As an Irish, Synge represents the true essence of Irish

identity and the pure Irish culture. As Hana Khawawneh asserts in her article ‘*An Aestheticizing of Irish Peasantry*’ (2012): “to define the idea of the Irish peasant is to define Ireland itself. The imaginative wealth of the Irish peasant is posed against the modern and industrial British spirit”⁴⁵. This explains Synge’s great interest in rural life in most of his writings more particularly *Riders to the Sea* which took place in the Aran Islands.

“Synge found that the peasantry dwelling on the Aran Islands, in Connemara and Wicklow was the perfect material for his drama. Therefore, he deals with a variety of characters in his plays which reveal different aspects of rural Irish countryside”.⁴⁶

In fact, most of Synge’s writings fell within the context of rural life, based on his journeys and drawn from true stories. He was a regular visitor to the Islands, observing, listening and noting down the smallest details of the folk life of the fisherman. To draw the distinction between his Irishness and the colonizer indigenous culture, he relied on the islanders as an important part in the Irish Literary Revival and a way to get his message across universal themes. According to Dr. Amal Riyadh, “this tendency of glorifying the Irish material as a way of cultural resistance against the English colonial and literary hegemony makes Synge as one of the distinctive Irish writers in the Irish dramatic movement because of his reintroduction of Irish habitat to strengthen the national feelings and establish a distinct Irish identity”⁴⁷.

Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* is a vivid example of all what has been already said. It’s a story which is based on realistic events, about a hopeless struggle of a rural family against the cruelty of the Sea, its close relation to nature and the heartbreak of loss. Synge conveys to us the tragedy experienced by the peasants in Aran Islands, the nature of their lives, suffering while highlighting and reviving their traditions, customs and culture which is a direct image of indigenous Irish identity. Myth, rituals and traditions are all elements that Synge relies on to show the richness and distinctiveness of Ireland.

Myth has always played a prominent role in shaping the Irish culture and national identity. Irish myths and mythical characters and stories prove the richness of its past. It is greatly tied to Irish population and their social life including legends, fairy tales and myths. According to Douglas, there is “no other country in Europe has such wealth of legends, old beliefs, and long-told tales as Ireland”⁴⁸. *Riders to the Sea* carries a significant cultural background; it is a play full of myth traditions and beliefs. The following words of Nora are illustrative:

NORA: (coming down) “There are two men ...and they rowing round with potent before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north.”⁴⁹

From the above quote, we understand that the body of ‘Michael’ is found when two men rowed and accidentally collided with the body and this happens before the Cock crows, at the time they were passing the Black Cliff of the North. From one side, in the beliefs of the Islanders, the inhabitant should start their activities only after the cocks crowed because for their assumptions, “the cocks crowed are always associated with the spirit of the dead returning to the grave and the spirit must arrive at the grave before or along with the time of the cock’s crow.”⁵⁰ Hence, they are forbidden to go out so that they will not disturb the spirits or the ghosts. From other side, the black cliffs represent a gateway by which the spirit passes through in order to reach the underworld. In the similar context, Maurya says:

MAURYA: If it isn’t found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it raising in the night”⁵¹.

The cycle of the moon in the Aran Islanders beliefs has a divine power; it determines their actions “especially when they think to start a new work, undertake a fresh journey, or plan for marriage”⁵². Through the position of the moon, the islanders judge the state of the weather. Maurya believes that ‘the star up against the moon’ is a prediction that the upcoming troubles will be more difficult and her son Bartley will never come back alive. Ruchika Singh

believes that “Celtic traditions, the waxing moon, the full moon, the waning moon and the new moon, all have their own special magical properties , and so all new ventures should be planned accordingly”⁵³.

According to the Irish peasant’s beliefs, “the horses in general and the grey horses in particular from a mythical perspective represent death and mystery”⁵⁴. This finds an interesting place in *Riders to the Sea* when Michael is portrayed upon the grey pony behind Bartley. This strengthened Maurya’s faith in Myths and explains her fear and scream when she saw her dead son Michael came to seek his brother, simply because “Michael is one of the companies of the dead who comes seeking out his brother to join the fairy company”⁵⁵. According to Eugene Beson, “Spectral and apocalyptic riders on the grey pony that Maurya saw have association with the ghostly riders in the folk stories recounted in the Aran Islands.”⁵⁶

Along with Mythical elements, Synge sheds light on different Irish rituals and traditions to revive the indigenous culture of the colonizer; among them we may cite the rituals of keening, the wake and the burial of the dead. In fact, “keening is a lamentation for the dead in which the women moan and sway their bodies rhythmically”⁵⁷. Most of the time the Keening is accompanied with wails and screams; it is one of the rituals through which the peasants express their grief and rebellion against the sea. In *Riders to the Sea*, “women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement”⁵⁸ for Bartley and for the same reasons of grief and despair.

Moreover, in the Aran rituals and beliefs, women are always praying for the safety of their men. In *Riders to the Sea* Maurya is constantly praying for Bartley to protect him from death and the cruelty of the sea. The following words from the play are illustrative: “herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won’t leave her destitute”⁵⁹. This gives a good image of the Irish distinctive woman who seeks to keep her family together and shows her faithfulness.

Furthermore, in the Aran traditions and beliefs, when a family member dies, “the custom is that the male members make the coffin”⁶⁰. In Synge’s *Riders to the Sea*, Maurya invokes Michael’s coffin as way to convince Bartley to back down from his decision. Bartley is the last male figure in his family, the reason why Cathleen asks others for help to make a coffin for her brother. The following words are illustrative:

CATHELEEN: to the old man “Maybe yourself and Eamen would make a coffin when the sun rises”.

Language and indigenous culture of the colonized were the two distinct choices for John Millington Synge as well as Wole Soyinka to answer back the British colonizer and break the western authority in their respective works *Riders to the Sea* and *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite*. In both plays, language was successfully subverted and reformulated in a brilliant manner. As for the Irish or Yoruba cultural elements, they were strongly present in both works to prove that Ireland and Nigeria really did have a history.

- **Endnotes:**

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⁵⁵ Eugene Benson, *J.M Synge: Macmillan Modern Dramatists* (The Macmillan Press LTD, 1982), 58.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷ Kokila.M and Thavamani.S, "Atmosphere, tradition and beliefs of the people for Aran Island in Riders to the Sea", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* ,vol 5 ,Issue 1, (January 2018) p108. <http://www.allsubjectjournal.com/submission>.

⁵⁸ Synge, John M., "Riders to the Sea", *Synge plays, Poems and Prose*. (London: Everyman's Library, 1964), 20.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p09.

⁶⁰ Kokila.M and Thavamani.S “Atmosphere, tradition and beliefs of the people for Aran Island in Riders to the Sea”, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, vol 5, Issue 1, (January 2018) p108. <http://www.allsubjectjournal.com/submission>.

⁶¹ Synge, John M., “Riders to the Sea”, Synge plays, Poems and Prose. (London: Everyman’s Library, 1964), p20.

Chapter Two: Wole Soyinka's and John Millington Synge's Departure from the Classical Elements of the Aristotelian Theory of Tragedy.

In their attempt to separate themselves from the Western Canonical Theatre, Postcolonial playwrights and dramatists created their own Tragedy that will fit the oppressed environment of their lands. Simply because according to them, the Aristotelian system of tragedy functions as an instrument of '*purification*' and '*repression*' of the masses. Boal argues in his '*Theatre of the Oppressed*' (2000):

Of course the system presented by Aristotle in his Poetics, the functional system of tragedy and all the forms of theatre which to this day follow its general mechanism is not only a system of repression. Other, more 'aesthetic', factors clearly enter into it and there are many other aspects that ought likewise to be taken into account. But it is important to consider especially this fundamental aspect: its repressive function.¹

Thus, in order to cover their effected culture and history, Postcolonial writers must find an alternative to unmask the colonizer's atrocities and to answer back his hegemonic assumptions. Actually, some Postcolonial writers tend willingly to overlook at least one of most significant characteristics of the plot that defines the Aristotelian system of tragedy, for instance the ignorance of some of the plot's scopes which namely are the beginning, the middle and the end in addition to the three Unities. Furthermore, Postcolonial Drama also does not regard the tragic hero's specific features claimed by Aristotle. Besides, when Aristotle believes that the tragic end of the protagonist is due to some fatal mistakes, some Postcolonial writers believe that a tragic hero can simply come to his end because of the sacrificial rituals of his society or because of injustices against him/her. In addition to this, some Postcolonial dramatists tend to skip at least one element of the defined stages of Aristotle's tragedy which namely are the stimulation of the '*Hamartia*', the character recognition of his error '*Anagnorsis*', '*Catastrophe*' and finally the '*Catharsis*'.

A. Structure and Action:

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle not only views plot as '*the ordering of incidents*' of the play, but also regards it as the most important element of the six constituents that he thinks determines the quality and the effectiveness of tragedy. Noteworthy also the plot's scopes, for which Aristotle deposits:

Now that these definitions have been established, I must go on to discuss the arrangement of the incidents, for this is the most importance in tragedy. I have already laid down is the representation of an action that is complete and whole and for a certain magnitude for a thing may be whole and yet lack magnitude. Now a whole is that which has a beginning, middle and an end...²

In essence, the 'Wholeness' of the plot of tragedy is determined by its tendency to have a beginning, middle and an end. Some Postcolonial playwrights and dramatists, however, departed from this context and deliberately broke these artistic rules of tragedy when they had structured the plots of their drama texts. *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) is a suitable example of Wole Soyinka's departure from the Western classical elements of tragedy. In fact, Soyinka's version of the *Bacchae* skips the first part of the action, hence exposition. It immediately starts with the emergence the god Dionysus to seek his revenge from the royal family who deny his holy origins but as audience we are not exposed to the whole story of Dionysus birth conditions.

In the original version of *The Bacchae*, Euripides opens his play with background information that helps understand the story. He explains the complicated circumstances of the God Dionysus' birth, how Semele becomes pregnant for the God Zeus and the way Semele's family denies her story and convinces Zeus to kill her. Wole Soyinka, however, skips this part in his version to give more importance to the cleansing ceremony of sacrifice performed in Thebes.

Besides, according to Aristotle a play should have three unities namely *the Unity of Action* 'of *Time*', and *Space*'. Some Postcolonial playwrights tend to ignore them, and "when dealing with Shakespeare or Medieval theatre, it's very common to decide that such a play is not Aristotelian because it doesn't obey the law of the three unities"³. Thus, from the above quote we can say that *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904) are not Aristotelian since they disobey the law of the three unities.

By '*Unity of Action*', a play is thought to have only one action limited to a single set of incidents which are related in cause and effect manner. In his version of *The Bacchae*, Soyinka makes some modifications to the plot structure of the Greek play so as to fit his African environment and audience. As far as the unity of action is concerned in Soyinka's play, it deals with more than one subject. Although, the main subject of the play is based on God Dionysus desire to execute revenge against his mortal family for refusing to honor him as a god, Soyinka puts more interest on the sacrificial ritual, where a member of Thebes must be executed in the behalf of his nation for the sake of purification and regeneration. Furthermore, '*the Unity of Place*' is not also observed as the actions take place in various parts of Thebes such as king Pentheus' palace and the mountain of Cithaeron. For example, Dionysus is arrested and imprisoned in the palace of Pentheus, the Bacchantes practice their Bacchic frenzies in the mountain of Cithaeron and the tragic end of Pentheus takes place in Cithaeron.

Synge's *Riders to the Sea* is another incompatible work with the Western Canonical Tragedy. He smashed the very important principles of the classical tragedy and provides his writing with new different form of tragedy.

First of all, plot in *Riders to the Sea* is almost non-existent and if there is any, it is mainly inconsistent with what Aristotle believes to be important in the system of tragedy. Exposition, Raising action, Climax, Falling action and Denouement are not respected in the

play. The play opens directly with the low voice of Nora, telling her sister of the bundle she received from the priest. In other words, the play does not begin with a sound start, but rather with tragic events that took place before, so the play starts immediately with a Climax of the story of Michael's death. Hence, the suffering remains on the same level until the end of the story marked by the death of Bartley.

In Aristotle's notion of Tragedy there has to be a '*Unity of Time*', however, Synge's *Riders to the Sea* does not have this feature. If we look closely to the passages of the play, we notice a kind of flashbacks which are used in literature through "inserting past events while facing new ones, the narrator relates both sets of events."⁶ Let us consider these passages:

MAURYA "... I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door..."⁷

She adds:

MAURYA [Continues without hearing anything.]: There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it -- it was a dry day, Nora -- and leaving a track to the door.⁸

Throughout the play, Maurya returns back to her old memories and remembers her "Six fine men", the suffering she has received during their birth and even the story of each male's death in details, where they were found and how they died with great sadness in her voice. Flashbacks are accompanied with past tense; these examples are clear evidences of the absence of unity of time in Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.

B. Tragic Hero:

The Tragic Hero, according to Aristotle as posits in the poetics, is the first of the six constituents that determines a tragedy. The ideal tragic hero is normally considered to be person of noble stature in society especially admirable because of his good heartedness and a fatal mistake would bring his tragic flow. Aristotle describes the ‘*ideal*’ tragic hero thus:

This is the sort of man who is not conspicuous for virtue and justice, and who fall into misery is not due to vice and depravity, but rather to some errors, but rather to some error a man who enjoys prosperity and a high reputation like Oedipus, Thyestes and other famous members of families like theirs.⁹

This classical or rather Aristotelian concept of ‘Tragic hero’ is what Postcolonial playwrights Wole Soyinka and John Millington Synge departed from in their works. In Soyinka’s version of the *Bacchae*, the tragic hero is Pentheus, the new king of Thebes. Although Soyinka keeps him a noble man from a high social rank, his attempt to defy God Dionysus (*‘Hamartia’*) is not the ultimate reason that lead to his downfall. However, the African beliefs and laws of the ‘*annual cleansing ceremony*’ incorporated by Soyinka claims that the one must drop blood or be flogged to death for the sake of cleansing to maintain the continuity and peaceful life in one community. In other words, the reasons that caused Pentheus’ tragic end are not results of his sins or committed mistakes, but rather laws of his social belief to maintain the continuity of a peaceful life in his society.

As far as *Riders to the Sea* is concerned, Synge does not draw for the audience a clear picture of who the tragic hero is, some events highlight Maurya while others on Bartley. In all cases, the tragic hero for Aristotle must belong to a high social rank or at least had a noble birth. In case of Maurya and Bartley, the working class in Greek tragedy, are considered to be “marginalized characters without any tragic dimension about them”¹⁰. According to Sibaprasad Dutta, the play “is probably the first real tragedy of low life in English literature, breaking the tradition of Greek and Elizabeth tragic plays which implicitly assume that a

tragedy can be written only when the theme is the suffering of those who are highly placed in society”¹¹. In the play, neither Maurya nor Bartley belong to Monarchy or Aristocracy, their standard of living is too low to be described even as a middle class, a poor rural family in an isolated island of peasants survive on sailing as one and only way to survive, as an illustration:

MAURYA: “...if it’s only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.”¹²

C. *Peripeteia/ Hamartia/Anagnorsis/Catastrophe/Catharsis*:

‘*Peripeteia*’, ‘*Hamartia*’, ‘*Anagnorsis*’, ‘*Catastrophe*’ and ‘*Catharsis*’ are considered to be the most important and interdependent elements that define the Aristotelian system of Tragedy. Undoubtedly, Postcolonial dramatists as usual skip at least one of these elements which will make their plays not Aristotelian. Be it an adaptation of the Greek Tragedy, *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* respects some of the Aristotelian elements expect the felling of fear and pity which will later produce ‘*Catharsis*’.

Logically, when a tragic play draws to its end, a kind of ‘*Fear*’ and ‘*Pity*’ come to be aroused inside the audience and then, he will keep in mind the terrible consequences of committing the same error. In this context Augusto Boal claims: “The Spectator, terrified by the spectacle of the catastrophe, is purified of his *Harmatia*”¹³. Soyinka did not seem to like the idea of arousing fear, pity and the Purgation of ‘*Hamartia*’ of his own audience. In the contrary, he seeks to arouse the feeling of hope and renewal. In fact, when Soyinka’s version of the play draws to its end, the people of Thebes are portrayed reunited to drink the wine following from the head of king Pentheus as a symbol of communion and regeneration for the re-ordered Theban kingdom by the God Dionysus.

The theme of music of Dionysus wells up and fills the stage with the god's presence as a powerful red glow shines suddenly as it if from the head of Pentheus, rendering it near luminous. The stage is bathed in it instantly, from the every orifice of the impaled head spring red jets, spurting in every direction..."¹⁴

TIRESIAS: What is it Cadmus? What is it? ¹⁵

KADMOS: Again blood Terisias, nothing but blood.¹⁶

TERISIAS: No it's wine¹⁷

Slowly, dreamlike, they all move toward the fountain, cup their hands and drink. Agave raises herself at last to observe them, then titles her head backwards to let a jet flush full in her face and flash her mouth. The light contracts to a final glow around the heads of PENTHEUS and AGAVE.¹⁸

The above last lines of Soyinka's version of the *Bacchae* are enough to see that neither '*Fear*' nor '*Pity*' exist in the play. In contrast, it arouses inside the audience a sense of hope, regeneration, renewal and provides the oppressed people with courage to take actions in the future for the aim of change and liberation.

As for Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, and by highlighting deeply what Aristotle terms '*Peripeteia*'; the reversal of circumstances and the fortune of the protagonist, it turns out that the play departs clearly from the Aristotelian system Tragedy. The play portrays the hopeless conflict of Irish fishermen against Sea. From the beginning till the end, the subject of the play is about sea and death, about suffering and pain which will extend throughout the play and runs parallel to the story events. In Maurya's family, situation remains the same. Even when we consider Maurya as a tragic heroin, she does not pass through an exceptional calamity owing to '*Hamartia*' committed by her that creates '*Peripeteia*' leading toward sorrow and '*Catharsis*'. The situation of Maurya remains a struggle to survive from the beginning to the end.

In Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, tragedy comes without any tragic flaw and Maurya or Bartley are not responsible for their downfall or death. In fact, Maurya's misfortune is not caused by any '*Hamartia*', inordinate ambition in the case of Macbeth and incest with his

own mother in the case of Oedipus, her misfortune is preordained; she was born free but born to suffer and suffer”¹⁹. The miserable life obliges them to sacrifice their lives as it is the case for the most peasants of the Aran Islands. Michael, Bartley and the other family members thus, are not dead because of their committed mistakes but rather the injustices against them all; they need to tempt and sacrifice their lives for the rest members of the family. Maurya words are illustrative:

“In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but is this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old”²⁰.

‘*Anagnorsis*’ or recognition; the term means the discovery of the tragic hero that the reversal was brought by his actions. Maurya, the tragic heroin does not commit any mistake or an error of judgment as it is claimed by Aristotle. It is neither her fault to rely on the sea to live, because most peasants of the Aran Islands do, nor her fault in the passing of her male members. Hence, she cannot recognize anything simply because she does any fatal mistake. This is the second time where Synge marks his disregard to the Greek notion of tragedy.

In Aristotle’s view, the purpose of tragedy is to arouse fear and pity and thereby affect the catharsis of these emotions, the only thing that we did not feel as audience while reading the play events, simply as Sibaprasad Dutta explained: “Maurya is not a character that arouses pity, she cannot draw our admiration for any extra-ordinary traits of her character that Oedipus Rex or Macbeth has...we feel distant from these people and their miseries hardly awe us”²¹. Watching the daily misery life of the peasants always being subject to death is a feeling that does not create pity, but discomfort. As for fear, the death and what Maurya has experienced become something familiar and ordinary for the audience, since Synge has prepared through the first lines of the play an atmosphere that makes death an ordinary thing. As the Aran inhabitants die daily without prediction in the sea, Maurya’s family confronts the same circumstances. Hence, ‘*Fear*’ and ‘*Pity*’ which in Aristotle words bring ‘*Catharsis*’ and

'Purgation' are not realized in the play. In contrast, the events of the play give us a sense of courage to fight and struggle to make things better in the future.

D. Fate Vs Sacrifice:

According to the Aristotelian theory of tragedy, the tragic end of the protagonist is certainly an outcome of an error or a mistake committed by the tragic hero himself. But we should also note what is referred to the power of Fate; a lack of choice in the occurrence of something already predetermined for him by higher power that determines the course of events beyond human control. This power is supernatural that is believed to have control over everything that happens in the play, and it can neither be stopped nor changed by human. In fact, the tragic hero is a very famed person whose failure is doomed and his downfall is rather compared to the meaning of fatality in human life. In other words, it is like some mysteries and facts that are out of human control and shows the weakness of human being to fight their fate which is only determined by gods and none can escape his destiny.

In a true tragedy, the hero's demise must come as a result of some personal error or decision. In other words, in Aristotle's view there is no such thing as an innocent victim of tragedy, nor can a genuinely tragic downfall ever be purely a matter of blind accident or bad luck. Instead authentic tragedy must always be product of some fatal choice or action for the tragic hero must always bear at least some responsibility for his own doom.²²

The tragic hero according to Aristotle then, is doomed to have flaws or make mistakes that would ultimately bring his downfall. Therefore, fatality plays a crucial role in the completion and the effectiveness of his theory simply because it is a core that will determine the course of events of the play and the hero's final destiny.

The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite (1973) does not confirm with the conventional traits of tragic hero and the reasons behind his final destiny, but it does fit the characteristics of tragic hero claimed by Wole Soyinka in his Yoruba tragedy. In fact, Soyinka

strongly insists on the role of the individual who sacrifices himself to save his community. In other words, the reasons behind the protagonist's death are neither results of his actions nor of his inevitable fate as claimed by Aristotle, but rather an answer to a sacrifice ritual and a costume of his society to maintain the continuity of its peaceful life. In keeping with this, the tragic hero in Soyinka's view suffers in the behalf of his community and his drama is concerned not so much with what would happens to the tragic hero as what happens to the society around him.

Thus, in order to indicate a new dimension to the great classical tragedy, Soyinka incorporates '*a ceremony of Cleansing*' where a member of Thebes needs to sacrifice his soul in the behalf of his community for the sake of purification. In fact, this idea of sacrifice does not occur in Euripides play, it is strongly introduced in Soyinka's version. At the opening scene of *The Bacchae of Euripides*, the chosen scapegoat is not the king but rather an old priest, Terisias. He takes over the role of a scapegoat and receives himself the symbolic flogging given by overseers who can no longer "tell the difference between ritual and reality"²³. But the emergence of Dionysus on stage ceases all the actions and prevents Terisias from offering himself up for sacrifice. It seems for Dionysus to have another plan and the below passages are illustrative:

"A small cleansing ceremony is performed on the palace gate Terisias is sprinkled and flogged as before ... suddenly Terisias appears to wilt, collapse. A further stroke of lash brings him to his knees. The intoning continues without stopping, and the lashes. As he falls prone, a bright flash reveals Dionysus on the Tomb of Semele. All actions ceased."²⁴

DIONYSUS: what made the high priest of Thebes elect to play flagellant? ²⁵

TIRESIAS: The city must be cleansed. Filth, pollution, cruelties... a whole year accumulation.²⁶

DIONYSUS: Why you? Are you short of lunatics, criminal or slave? ²⁷

TIRESIAS: A mere favor to Cadmus whom I love like a brother... You forget. That goes by rote. Ecstasy is too elusive a quarry for such tricks. Even if I did sacrifice a few drops of blood.²⁸

DIONYSUS: (lays his hands gently on Terisias' shoulder) **Thebes will have its pure sacrifice** and Terisias will now ecstasy.²⁹

As the play progresses, the burden of Sacrifice shifts to the king Pentheus whose death is not seen by the oppressed masses of Thebes as mere retribution from Dionysus, but as a means of ushering communion and regeneration in the Kingdom. Although, Pentheus has been killed by his mother Agave, but the fact that he accepts to join the mountains with Dionysus, he willingly sacrifices himself for the behalf of his community to maintain control and order in Thebes:

PENTHEUS: take me right to Thebes. Right through the centre. I am the only man here with dare and courage.³⁰

DIONYSUS: Yes you alone make **sacrifices for your people**, you alone. The role belongs to the king.³¹

In the final scene of Soyinka's version of the Bacchae enters Agave Pentheus' head. She tells the assembled group that she has killed a lion and all must join '*a feast of celebration*'. After a maypole dance, the head is nailed to the palace of wall. As Cadmus and Terisias enters with Pentheus body, Agave realizes that she actually killed her son and she want to remove the head from the wall but it begins to act as fountain spraying wine in every direction. One by one, they approach the head to drink from the fountain of blood wine. Accordingly, this final image of the play "transforms the Greek tragedy into the sacrificial drama of Soyinka. The sacrifice of Pentheus frees the nation from political oppression, but also draws the people together into a community with communities"³²

Even Synge's *Riders to the Sea* adopts the notion of Sacrifice in parallel to Soyinka's Yoruba Tragedy and in contradiction to Aristotle concept of '*Fate*'. In *Riders To the sea*, Synge portrays the miserable life of the peasants and the deadly sea. In fact, it is considered to be the natural uncontrolled force that shapes the destiny of each male member of the Aran

inhabitants. Sea in the Aran Islands is a blessing and a curse; it “functions as both the provider for the family and as its potential destroyer”³³. Contrary to the Aristotelian view of tragedy, *Riders to the Sea* is a tragedy that glorifies sacrifice. The tragic hero is not died because of an error of judgment but he actually chooses to die. In other words, the end is optional for the Aran individuals and Maurya’s family in particular. That is to say, no one forced Bartley, Michael and all the male members to rid the sea. They willingly left and sacrificed their lives for the behalf of their family. Even Bartley was warned by his mother of the risks and that there is no chance to survive once he will board the deadly sea, but he decided to sail. From his part, he tried to hide his fear and gave hope to Maurya to return, although he knew that nothing of that would happen.

MAURYA: It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drownd'd with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave? ³⁴

BARTLEY: [Getting his purse and tobacco.]I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad. ³⁵

Beyond that sacrifice of riding the Sea toward the other side, the poor rural family can change their miserable life and fight against their economic and social obstacles. Hence, this confirms that *Riders to the Sea* is a tragedy which contradicts the Aristotelian view.

***Riders to the Sea* represent a great sacrifice in terms of theatre language. The very title implies the inevitable sacrifice of the riders to the sea. It seems that it is perpetual process, a ritual, an eternal journey and an inescapable sacrifice. The men-folk of the Aran Islands go to the sea for feeding their dear and near ones. They have to go, and we find that this is a pilgrimage from which they will never comeback.** ³⁶

Furthermore, there is actually, a hiding meaning behind this tragic play. *Riders to the Sea* is a project of liberation that epitomizes the colonizer. Synge’s choice of the title is not done in a random way. The play is a vivid picture of the status of Ireland under Colonialism embodied in the inhabitants of the Aran Islands .The title ‘*Riders to the Sea*’ is a clear metaphor of Sacrifice. In fact, sea is a metaphor of England ‘*the country of Waves*’ and

Maurya is the Motherland '*Ireland*', whereas the males of Maurya's family are the same Irish people who sacrifice themselves to fight for their Motherland and against that sea. This sacrifice is a reaction to not giving into fate and strengthens the feeling of nationalism among the audience to restore identity and independence of their country.

Through our analysis of both plays, we came to a conclusion that both playwrights have created their own tragedy as opposed to the Aristotelian concept of the tragic. They did so, through departing from the most interdependent elements that shape the Aristotelian theory of tragedy including plot scopes which namely are the beginning, the middle and the end, the '*Tragic Hero*'s specific features claimed by Aristotle, falling as a result of fate and finally the absence of some of the defined stages of Aristotle system of tragedy which are the stimulation of the '*Hamartia*', the character recognition of his error ('*Anagnorsis*'), '*Catastrophe*', and finally '*Catharsis*'. Instead, Soyinka and Synge have inserted distinct elements which are typically African or Irish. Among these elements we have cited Sacrifice and Will as the essentialist elements that shape the African and Irish drama.

• Endnotes:

- ¹Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press 345, Archway Road, 2000), 21.
- ²Aristotle, *Poetics* Mineola (Dover publication, 1997), 66.
- ³Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Pluto Press 345, Archway Road, London, 2000).
- ⁶Tsegage A.G (2019), ‘*Analysis of Literary Techniques Employed in the Novel the Revelation: Flashback in Focus*’ *Journal of Literature language and Linguistics: An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, ISSN 2422-8435, vol.63),01.
- ⁷Synge, John M. “*Riders to the Sea*”, *Synge’s Plays, Poems and Prose*. (London: Everyman’s Library, 1964), 18.
- ⁸*Ibid*,p19.
- ⁹Aristotle, *Poetics*: Mineola (Dover publication, 1997), 89.
- ¹⁰Sibaparasad Dutta, ‘*Riders to the Sea: A New Genre of Tragedy*’ (Online).Available from: https://www.academia.edu/21936964/Riders_to_the_Sea_A_New_Genre_Of_Tragedy.p01.
- ¹¹*Ibid*.
- ¹² Synge John M, ‘*Riders to the Sea*’, *Synge’s Plays, Poems and Prose* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1964), 20
- ¹³ Augusto Boal *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Pluto Press 345, Archway Road, London, 2000), 33
- ¹⁴ Wole Soyinka, *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (New York: London, 1973), 97
- ¹⁵*Ibid*.
- ¹⁶*Ibid*.
- ¹⁷*Ibid*.
- ¹⁸*Ibid*.
- ¹⁹Sibaparasad Dutta, *Riders to the Sea : A New Genre of Tragedy* (Online).Available from: https://www.academia.edu/21936964/Riders_to_the_Sea_A_New_Genre_Of_Tragedy.p02.
- ²⁰ Synge, John M., “*Riders to the Sea*”, *Synge’s Plays, Poems and Prose*. (London: Everyman’s Library, 1964), 13
- ²¹Sibaparasad Dutta, ‘*Riders to the Sea: A New Genre of Tragedy*’.(Online).Available in: https://www.academia.edu/21936964/Riders_to_the_Sea_A_New_Genre_Of_Tragedy.p01.
- ²² ‘Comedy and Tragedy’, viewed July 15 2020, <http://condor.depaul.edu/dsimpson/tlove/comic.tragic.html>

²³Wole Soyinka, *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (New York: London, 1973), 9.

²⁴Ibid, p5.

²⁵Ibid, p10.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid, 12.

³⁰Ibid, p78.

³¹ Ibid.

³²Kevin J. Wetmore, JR, *The Athenian Sky in African Sky: African Context: Modern African Adaptation of Classical Greek Tragedy* (North Carolina: London, 1969), 95.

³³Kennedy, J. "Sympathy between Man and Nature", *Landscape and Loss in Synge's Riders to the Sea* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment, January 2004) p1.

³⁴Synge, John M., "*Riders to the Sea*", *Synge's Plays, Poems and Prose*. (London: Everyman's Library, 1964), p11/12

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶ "*Riders to the Sea: The Visuals of a Ritualistic Tragedy*" (Chapter 3, p86.) viewed July 13, 2020. https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/10603/143867/7/07_chapter203.pdf.

V) Conclusion:

Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) and John Millington Synge *Riders to the Sea* (1904) are significant plays that have adopted Postcolonial strategies for different aims but much to answer back the British 'Centre', act against and correct the Western Colonial-Discourse.

Our assumption is that, despite the fact that the two dramatists belonging to different context, time and space, they actually share in a very similar ways principles which are the writing back to the 'Centre' and the disagreement with the Western Canon particularly the Aristotelian perception of Tragedy. To demonstrate this, we have relied on different and complementary theories which are *The Empire Writes Back* written by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Theatre of the Oppressed* written by Augusto Boal and finally Wole Soyinka's *The Fourth Stage*.

Through our analysis of the two plays, we came to a conclusion that the two playwrights applied different linguistic and cultural strategies in order to challenge the legacy of colonialism. They did so by their 'Appropriation' and 'Abrogation' of the colonizer's language, and by their rehabilitation and revival of their traditional and native culture that were long misunderstood and misrepresented by the British 'Centre'. In fact both dramatists incorporated a distinct 'english' that does not confirm to the metropolitan norms and basic elements of Standard 'English' so as to mark a separation and assert an authority over the imported Western language and traditions. It is obvious that Soyinka used in his play a set of unusual sentences which do not exist in Standard English and the one may notice the language of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* which depends more on the Anglo Irish dialect. Both playwrights turned to revive their submerged past and traditions and extensively incorporated their local mythologies and cultures such as music, dance, folklore, religion and rituals. This is for the

sake of rehabilitating their distorted culture and history.

Deeper studies of the two plays revealed that both Soyinka and Synge departed from the Western notion of Tragedy. As a prominent example of the Counter-Canonical literary works, Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* and John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* had successfully departed from the most notable elements that shape the Aristotelian theory of Tragedy including the plot's scopes, which namely are the 'Beginning', 'Middle' and the 'End', 'the three Unities', the 'Tragic Hero's specific features claimed by Aristotle, falling as a result of fate and finally the absence of some of the defined stages of Aristotle's system of tragedy which are the stimulation of the 'Hamartia', the character's recognition of his error ('Anagnorsis'), 'Catastrophe', and finally 'Catharsis'.

Through the different linguistic and cultural strategies, the depiction of the native culture and mythology as well as the departure from the fundamental elements that the Western tragedy relies on, both playwrights succeeded to answer back the British 'Centre', correct the hegemonic discourse of the colonizer and challenge the canonical perception of tragedy particularly as defined in Aristotle's *Poetics*. These principles qualify their works to be among the most significant and remarkable plays of the Postcolonial literary enterprise.

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