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Title

**John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), and Athol Fugard's *The Island* (1973): A
Postcolonial study.**

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I would like to dedicate this work with gratitude and love to:

- ❖ My lovely parents.
- ❖ My dearest brothers: Tarik and Belka.
- ❖ My sisters Lahna and Saliha.
- ❖ All my friends.
- ❖ All my teachers.

Contents:

• Acknowledgments:.....	iii
• Abstract:.....	iv
• General Introduction.....	1
a) Review of the Literature.....	3
b) Issue and Working Hypothesis.....	5
• Method and Materials.....	8
a) Method.....	8
b) Materials.....	12
• Result and Discussion.....	15
1. Results.....	15
2. Discussion.....	17
2) 1Section One.....	18
A. Language as a Means of Resistance.....	18
2) 2 Section Two.....	29
B. The Image of the Prison-like Island and its significance in the three plays.....	29
3) 3 Section Three.....	38
C. Identity Crisis and its effects.....	38

- **General Conclusion**.....49
- **Bibliography**.....51

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the product of my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

September, 15th, 2014

Cynda ISSAAD

Abstract:

The present research paper was a comparison of John Millington Synge's Riders to the Sea (1904), Derek Walcott's The Sea at Dauphin (1945), and Athol Fugard's The Island (1973). These three plays portrayed how islands resist colonial domination and influence even at the end of colonization. To treat this subject, I opted for Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin "The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature" (2002). My choice of this book results from the fact that the three playwrights depicted how the natives resisted the colonial oppression through language and identity in a prison like island. This work was divided into three sections, the first one explored how language was used as a means of resistance, while the second dealt with the image of the prison like island. The third tackled the issue of identity crisis in these islands.

I) General Introduction:

Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on colonized nations. According to Bill Ashcroft's et al., in their **The Empire Writes Back** (2002), the term postcolonialism is used "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day"¹. It means that the colonial process is not over, but there is a continuity of preoccupation throughout the historical process instaurated by the European dominance². Thus, it is also used in literature to discuss the cultural effects of colonization and the way the natives responded to domination and oppression.

Many postcolonial writers rose in order to give their own views about the postcolonial period; among them are John Millington Synge, Derek Walcott, and Athol Fugard. The reasons which encouraged me to undertake this study came first from my interest in the kind of works studied in comparative literature. Second, despite the fact that these three playwrights belong to distant and widely separated societies, whose people speak different languages, and live within different cultures, beliefs, traditions, and religions, yet their main preoccupations in their respective plays seem to be similar. Thus, Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), and Fugard's *The Island* (1973) are postcolonial plays that deal with different cultures affected by colonialism.

It is also of interest to compare the three plays according to the great similarity in the development of post-colonial literature in former British colonies. Thus, Derek Walcott had publically stressed the fact that he was influenced by the Irish literature in general and John Millington Synge's "*Riders to the Sea*" in particular. In "**An Interview with Derek Walcott**" (1977) by Edward Hirsch, an article edited in William Baer's book "**Conversations with Derek Walcott**" (1996), Walcott declares:

When I read Synge's *Riders to the Sea* I realized what he had attempted to do

with the language of the Irish. He had taken a fishing- port kind of language gotten beauty out of it, a beat, something lyrical [...] If you know very clearly that you are imitating such and such a work, it isn't that you're adopting another man's genius ; it is that he has done an experiment that has worked and will be useful to all writers afterwards ³.

Derek Walcott wants to stress the fact that he had mainly borrowed the way language is used by Synge in *Riders to the Sea*. The same colonial experience in both the Araan Island and Dauphin Island also played a role in this affinity.

First, *The Island* was written by the South African playwright and actor Athol Fugard in 1973. The setting is on the Robben Island prison in South Africa during the Apartheid System. The prison was for the political opponents of the South African government during Apartheid. The play is based on two cellmates, John and Winston, who rehearse a play after hard labour day in the prison. Thus, the life in prison portrays the prison experience of the members of the Liberation Movement so as to get rid of this oppressing system, i.e Apartheid.

Second, *The Sea at Dauphin* was written by the poet and playwright Derek Walcott and first staged in 1954. The play is about a St. Lucian fisherman, Afa, who defied the dangers of the sea in order to survive. In fact, from the title of the play, we get the central focus of the play which is the sea and its significance for the fishermen who have no sources of food than of the sea. The latter, can be considered as a sustainer which supports the poor inhabitants with food, and at the same time, it destroys them.

Third, *Riders to the Sea* is a one act play, which was written by the Irish John M. Synge in 1904. The setting of the play is in a cottage on the Inishmaan, the middle island of the Araan islands. The plot of play is based on the hopeless struggle of the people against the cruelty of the sea. Then, the play features Maurya, an old woman who has lost her sons and husband in the sea. The play is also a tragedy portraying the sort of the Irish peasant family and provides a window into the life of the people in ancient times under the British Colonialism.

In fact, the three plays were turning around a similar point which was the life on an island and the hardships experienced by the people because of colonialism. Then, they also shown the confinement of the colonized in a prison-like island, since the inhabitants were not free and could not go beyond it. For instance, in *Riders to the Sea* and *The Sea at Dauphin*, the island was represented as a prison since the islanders were jailed inside. Similarly, in *the Island*, the island in question was the prison in South Africa where the prisoners lived in oppressing and squalid conditions. Also, the three playwrights used specific language mixed to the Standard English to express their culture and identity.

Review of the Literature:

From my readings of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), and Fugard's *The Island* (1973), I noticed that the three works have raised great debate and received a large bulk of criticism.

To begin with, Michael Malouf's article "*Dissimilation and Federation: Irish and Caribbean Modernism in Derek Walcott's the Sea at Dauphin*" (2010), assumes that *the Sea at Dauphin* should be read in terms of comparison to Synge's *Riders to the Sea*; since he has claimed it as his source. In fact, he argues that the two plays are put together so as to address the problem of comparing the modernisms that are seen as "heterogeneous" in so far as they exist on the peripheries of traditional transatlantic modernism.⁴ Then, he points out that even Walcott's play is tended to be discussed in comparison to *Riders to the Sea*, but he shows that these two plays are tackled in two distinctive viewpoints; *Riders to the Sea* according to an Irish nationalist aspect, and *The Sea at Dauphin* according to a federationist aesthetics viewpoint⁵.

Another interesting critical study about *The Island* and *The Sea at Dauphin* is Harry Garuda's article "*The Island Writesback: Discourse/ Power, and Marginality*" (2001). In this

article, Garuda classified the plays into the literature of exploration, slavery, and colonialism in islands⁶. In fact, islands and blank spaces in vastness of seas have always been a symbol of greediness for explorers so that they oppress and marginalize the natives there. Then, Garuda adds that the dramatist is very interested in the process of telling the story of the islanders basing on their own experiences of colonialism.⁷

Additionally, Judith Remy's article entitled: "*Synge's Riders to the Sea: Island as Cultural Battleground*" (1990), can be considered as a piece of criticism of *Riders to the Sea*.

In her article she focuses on the persistence of traditional beliefs of the main character Maurya who suffers from the death of her sons in the sea and her fear of losing her last son in the sea. She also stresses the point of the major cultural transition of the modern age i.e the transition from a folk consciousness to an urban one.⁸

Finally, Keith Hull's article "*Nature and Supernaturalism in Riders to the Sea*" (1989) is another interesting critic of the same play. In it, she focuses on Maurya's vision of her dead son and the sea's supernatural force; this means that there are many deaths caused by supernatural sea. Then, she speaks on the fact that all these deaths can be taken as supernatural facts because it can be just a strange coincidence.⁹

Thus, according to these critics, it is noticeable that the three plays are widely criticised. However, my aim is to engage a study on these three works but from a postcolonial perspective.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The above review of literature made it clear that many studies and critics have been devoted to John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin*, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*. It means that, the three plays have been approached from many viewpoints and perspectives, as traditional beliefs, cultural transition, power, and marginality. Thus, my intention to carry research is to undertake a postcolonial comparison between the three works so as to show how J.M. Synge, Derek Walcott, and Athol Fugard portrayed the colonized people's resistance through language, culture, and identity in a prison-like island.

In the light of what I have said, I suggest to use Bill Ashcroft et al's book **The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures** (2002), which I think is the appropriate to deal with the three selected plays. According to them: "they use the term post-colonial to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day"¹⁰. So, the word postcolonial covers the nation and culture which affected by colonialism from its beginning till its end. In another book written by the same authors **Postcolonial studies Key Concepts** (1998), they assume that the word "post-colonialism" signifies the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were formerly European colonies ¹¹. Moreover, after the Second World War, historians used it in a chronological meaning designating the post-independence period. But, from the seventies, the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization.¹² Thus, literary speaking the concept has not only chronological meaning but also it deals with various effects of colonialism upon the colonised societies during and after that period. Indeed, in the postcolonial writing, the experience of colonialism is told from the point of view of the colonized people. Then,

postcolonial criticism studies this colonial history that defines the present condition of the postcolonial countries, and postcolonial writers rewrite their own histories.

End Notes:

1. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.
2. Ibid., 2.
3. Edward Hirsh, *An Interview with Derek Walcott* in William Baer “Conversation with Derek Walcott”; (University press of Mississippi, 1996), 59-60.
4. Michael Malouf, ‘Dissimilation and Freedom: Irish and Caribbean Modernism in Derek Walcott’s *the Sea at Dauphin*’, *Comparative American Studies* 8 (2010): 141. Viewed on 28 December 2013. <http://www.maneyonline.com/doi/pdfplus>
5. Ibid., 142.
6. Harry Garuda, ‘The Island Writes Back: Discourse/ Power, and Marginality in Wole Soyinka’s *The Swap Dwellers*, Derek Walcott’s *the Sea at Dauphin*, and Athol Fugard’s *The Island*’, *Research in African Literatures* 32 (2001): 64. Viewed on: 12 January 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820807>.
7. Ibid.,
8. Judith Remy, ‘Synge’s Riders to the Sea: Island as Battleground’, *Twentieth Century Literature* 36 (1990): 207. Viewed on 12 January 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/>
9. Keith Hull, ‘Nature and Supernaturalism in Riders to the Sea’, *Colby Literary Quarterly* 25 (1989): 246. Viewed on January 12th, 2014 <http://www.digitalcommons.colby.edu>.
10. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 2.
11. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 168.
12. Ibid., 168.

II) Method and Materials

a) Method

To give my work a theoretical basis, I opted to use Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* (2002). In this section, my intention is to look for key theoretical elements, which will help me to discuss my issue. Indeed, Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths "use the term post-colonial to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day"¹. This means that post-colonialism does not cover only the period after independence, but from the beginning of colonization till nowadays. Thus, the experience of colonialism produced an explosion of new writing in English. So, the writers of *The Empire Writes Back* debate on the relationships that might exist within postcolonial writings and study the powerful forces that act on those texts such as language, and place.

In fact, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin have used many and important concepts, but I have just selected some which I think are more appropriate to my dissertation. To begin with, they assume that one of the important ways of oppression is the control over "language" that becomes the means through which an imperial power lasts forever. Then, they have made a distinction between the standard "British English" which is inherited from the colonizer and the "english" used in the post-colonial countries. It means that, even though the British colonialism spread the English language, it gave birth to various englishes spoken in different communities in the post-colonial world.

Another concept explored by Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths is "place and displacement" which they consider as a "major concern in post-colonial literatures"². They argue that dislocation caused by imposed migration, enslavement, or the removal for indentured labour generate a crisis of identity. Also, it may cause cultural denigration because of the oppression

of colonized people's culture and language. Thus, Ashcroft's et al., assume that there is a gap between the new place and the colonized language, within the same context, they say:

This gap occurs for those whose language seems inadequate to describe a new place and for those whose language is systematically destroyed by enslavement, and for those whose language has been rendered unprivileged by the imposition of the language of a colonizing power³.

It means that the experience of the new place demand a language which will allow the new settlers (the colonized) to express their state of being under oppression.

Moreover, they have also distinguished three types of linguistic groups within the post-colonial discourse. The first is "*the monoglossic groups*", which are those single language societies using "english" as a native tongue. The second is "*diglossic groups*" which are those in which a majority of people speak two or more languages, and "english" has been adopted as the language of administration (government or commerce). The third is "*polyglossic*" or "*poly-dialectical communities*", which occur principally in the Caribbean, where a multitude of dialects interweave to form a linguistic continuum. The latter occurs when two or several linguistic varieties mingle without defining geographical limits. In fact, these three types are the result of the various ways in which the English language has been employed by different communities in the post-colonial world.

In addition to this, Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths pointed out one of the strategies of appropriation in post-colonial writing which is "*untranslated words*". For them, the use of this device is to convey a sense of cultural distinctiveness, as well as to illustrate the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts. The reader is obliged to look for the meaning of the untranslated words and go beyond the text so that he/she will know more about the culture.

Another point used by Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths is the binary relationship between “*colonizer and colonized*”. The approach derives from the works of Franz Fanon (1925-1961) and Albert Memmi (1920). Such issue tackles important questions like the possibility of decolonizing a culture, what does this imply, and how it should be achieved. In fact, the critics do not agree on the issue, because some stress on the need to recuperate the pre-colonial language and culture after getting independence. However, others think that this is impossible because there is what is called cultural syncreticity. The latter means the combination of different forms of beliefs and practices. Then, they sustain that this cultural syncreticity is a characteristic feature of all post-colonial societies and this mixture is the source of their strength. Thus, the debate between theories of pre-colonial cultural recuperation and those which suggest that post-colonial syncreticity is fruitful emerges in a wide number of places. As Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths stated:

For the most resolute of these critics, colonization is only a passing historical feature which can be left behind entirely when ‘full independence’ of culture and political organization is achieved (Ngugi 1986). Others have argued that not only is this impossible but that cultural syncreticity is a valuable as well as an inescapable and characteristic feature of all post-colonial societies and indeed is the source of their peculiar strength.⁴

Finally, the last issue that I will take from ***The Empire Writes Back*** is “abrogation and appropriation”. Here Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths assume: “language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the center and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place”⁵. From the quotation, the critics want to say that post-colonial writers should take the language of the center and remould it in another language which is suitable to the colonized place. Then, in order to do so, they distinguished between two different processes. The first is the abrogation and rejection of the imperial culture (language, beliefs,..). The second is the appropriation of the English language and remoulding it to new usages as Raja Rao(1908-2006) puts it “to convey

in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" ⁶. Then, these two elements are among the strategies of striking back to the center; and among it's working techniques we find, glossing, untranslated words, syntactic fusion and code-switching.

b) Materials

1. Summary of Fugard's The Island (1973)

The Island, is a play set in Robben Island which is crowded with political prisoners from South Africa who opposed the Apartheid System installed in their country by the British. Winston and John are two cellmate-prisoners who share a close friendship that helps them to survive despite the brutal conditions in prison. The two cellmates spent their time in rehearsing Sophocles' play "*Antigone*" which echoes the South African situation where people were oppressed by ruthless rulers similar to Antigone who was oppressed by King Creon. Also, Fugard demonstrates the resistance of the prisoners to the segregation exercised on them while coming to the prison and inside Robben Island. In fact, the deportation of the opponents of the system from South Africa to Robben Island caused isolation and alienation to them, though they strove to keep their dignity under the white regime. Therefore, the two main characters John and Winston are striving through their language, and identity in a prison like island.

2. Summary of Walcott's The Sea at Dauphin (1954)

The Sea at Dauphin is a play about St. Lucian fishermen who defies every day the dangers of the sea in order to survive the hard life on the Dauphin Island. The fishermen live in a confined poor island struggling the colonial effects on this territory by the richness of their language. Indeed, Derek Walcott uses both French Patois and English Creole dialects as the native's languages and it proves their connection to their cultural identity. However, the islanders live squalid conditions in Dauphin Island, so that they feel as if they are in an open-air prison. Therefore, the confinement makes them feel great despair and the character of Afa is the most affected by this situation. Thus, in the play he is presented as being selfish,

alienated, and feels no compassion towards anyone because of the squalid situations they live inside the island.

3. Summary of Synge's Riders to the Sea (1904)

Riders to the Sea is a play portraying the fate of a poor Irish peasant family living on an island in the West of Ireland. It provides a window into the life of the people in ancient times in an archaic Aran community untouched by modern life. Maurya and her family strive to survive on an isolated island which makes them live as in a prison. Since they cannot go beyond the monstrous sea which provides them food, at the same time, takes their lives. Then, it depicts the islanders' struggle with colonial presence in Ireland through language. In fact, J.M. Synge uses the Gaelic language all over his play to demonstrate the resistance of the peasants to colonialism to keep their identity in an open air prison.

End Notes

1. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.
2. *Ibid.*, 8.
3. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 9.
4. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 29.
5. *Ibid.*, 37.
6. Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (New York: New Directions, 1938), VII.

III) Results and Discussion

A. Results

From my analysis of John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin*, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*, I have noticed that the three plays can be analyzed in a postcolonial study. They turn around a similar point which is the life on an island and the hardships experienced by the people during and after colonization. In fact, the three authors share the same colonial experience in different countries, so the plays deal with the resistance of the islanders to colonialism from its beginning and even after independence.

Indeed, post-colonialism is a term coined to designate the impact of colonialism on all culture that experienced it from its beginning till nowadays. Therefore, as Synge, Walcott, and Fugard experienced the colonial period; through their works they explain how the native islanders resisted domination and marginality through their language, culture and identity in a prison-like island. From my first reading of the plays I have noticed that the language used by the writers is a mixture between the native language and the language of the colonizer. It has been used to show how the colonized knew how to resist the colonizer through language. Then, the setting of the plays shows the isolation that reigned inside the islands because of colonialism so that the islanders feel as if they live in an open-air prison or a prison-like island. Added to this, the culture of the colonizer is present in the plays because when they invade a nation they impose to the indigenous people new ways of life, consequently the colonized lose their cultural identity. Also, the fact that there are deportations and displacement of slaves from one territory to another, it creates identity crisis since the new comers are not costumed with the new territory and the different cultures combined in that territory.

I understand from this that *Riders to the Sea*, *The Sea at Dauphin*, and *The Island* can be considered as personal diaries of their respective authors because they describe the lives of their respective people under colonialism and the way they strive to survive repression. Thus, the post-colonial literature is mainly written by authors who have experienced colonialism.

B. Discussion

In the process of writing my dissertation, I have divided my discussion section into three parts. The first one will undertake the way the colonized use language just to answer back the colonizer either by using the English standard language or by remolding it to create their specific language. Also, it is important to point out the fact that even though the natives had endured squalid conditions, they had resisted the colonizer and they are never rendered mute. Furthermore, the second section will tackle the image of the prison-like island and its significance in the three plays. The characters are presented as being confined in an open-air prison that made them feel isolated, and depressed. Also, the impact of displacement on the colonized is very important since they cannot adapt themselves to the new territory or new culture. Finally, the last idea that I wanted to develop in the last part of my discussion, is identity crisis and its effects on the colonized. The appropriation of the colonizer's culture through language and religion is what generated cultural denigration. Because of the imposed language and religion, the colonizer spreads his culture. In addition to this, another important cause to identity crisis is the policies and the violence of the oppressors. All these ideas will be discussed in the light of Ashcroft's et., al book "*the Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature*". (2002).

Section One

Language as a means of Resistance

Introduction

The use of language in its spoken and written forms is essential to human civilization. The colorful uses of language such as metaphors, puns, and riddles provide richness to the culture of people. When one population overruns another or when a land is invaded continuously, people of that land often strive to protect their language. Since, control over language is one of the means of domination; the natives are mainly confronted to the loss of their native language. However, the colonized use a kind of dialect which represents their language mingled to the language of the center. By doing so, they write back to the colonizer and denounce the oppression. Thus, John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), and Athol Fugard's *The Island* (1973) are among the important works that display well the use of dialects in post-colonial cultures.

In *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Synge uses English that is modeled with the Gaelic speech to demonstrate the richness and the heightened poetry of the Irish. By the experience he lived in the Aran Islands, he found the language through which he expresses the attitudes of the islanders. Similarly in *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), Walcott uses the French patois language mixed with Anglophone Creole to demonstrate the life of the islanders in the island. In fact, the Caribbean is known for being a melting pot of various cultures due to either the importation of foreign labor or enslavement. Then, in *The Island* (1973), Fugard uses also some Zulu words mixed with the English language that constitute a kind of English language that remind the language of South Africans.

As it is stated above, control over the colonized language is among the important ways of oppression because through it an imperial power may last forever. For instance, the British colonialism has spread the Standard British English all over its colonies; by the way it has had control over those nations. However, in some countries that experienced the British colonialism, the natives knew how to create another language periphery so as to go out of the powerful center which is the Standard English inherited from the colonizer. As a result, various “englishes” grew up in the post-colonial world shaped by the oppressive discourse of power. For instance in *Riders to the Sea* (1904), Synge uses the Gaelic language spoken by the Irish, and this language is a periphery to the standard British English. Also, in *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954) the fact that Walcott uses French patois and Anglophone Creole means that the St. Lucians have created their own language periphery with both the French and British empires’ languages. However, in *The Island* (1973), Fugard uses directly some words of Zulu language and the English language so as to express well the situation of the political prisoners in Robben Island under the Apartheid system. Thus, through time these different “englishes” became either official languages or considered as dialects.

Moreover, the three plays can be classified to three different linguistic groups within the post-colonial discourse. As it is stated in Ashcroft’s et., all theory *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), there are monoglossic, diglossic, and poly-dialectical groups. Firstly, the language used in *Riders to the Sea* can be classified within the monoglossic groups. The latter concerns those single language societies using “english” as a native tongue, because in the play I found that Synge uses only the Gaelic language which is the only language spoken by the Irish instead of the Standard English. For example when Maurya asks where is Bartley she says: “where is he himself” instead of saying just “where is he?”¹. Secondly, *The Sea at Dauphin* can be classified and put within the poly-dialectical communities. This category occurs in the Caribbean where a multitude of dialects interweave to form a linguistic continuum². Thus, in

the play, I found that Walcott used two distinct dialects; one is the French Patois and the other is the English Creole, and this is due to the French and British colonial influences that the Caribbean knew. For instance, the play begins with the salutations of Gacia to Afa in French Patois “bon matin, boug”³ which means “good morning, man”. Then, when Augustin speaks with Afa, Walcott uses the Anglophone Creole: “...when white rum scald you tongue, is not you tell this old man he can come?”⁴. Comparing to the two discussed plays, the language used in *The Island* belongs to the diglossic community. The latter, means that in these communities the majority of people speak two or more languages but they make “english” as the language of administration⁵. For instance; from the beginning of the play I noticed that Fugard uses some Zulu words in the dialogues such as the expression “Nyana we Sizwe” which is repeated through the play. It is also called cushioning which is one of the techniques of language so as to rehabilitate their culture. Also the words “ja, broer, ag” are repeated within the dialogue between John and Winston. This insistence in the use of the natives’ dialects or the various “englishes” in these plays is due to the fact that, the three playwrights want to express well the hardships and the oppressive life of the colonized inside their land also to rehabilitate their culture.

Moreover, while reading the three plays I have noticed that the three playwrights differed in the way they used translated and untranslated words in their works. For example Athol Fugard and John Millington Synge did not use translated words so as to explain the words written in Creole or dialect. As it is stated in Ashcroft’s et., all theory *The Empire Writes Back*, this device is used to convey a sense of cultural distinctiveness, as well as to illustrate the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts⁶. As a result, the reader has to look for the meaning of the words so as to understand more, by doing so he/she has to go beyond the text to know more about the culture. However, Derek Walcott has used translation all over his play in order, may be, to facilitate to the reader the understanding of

the St. Lucian culture and the way of life in the country. Thus, he often makes his characters paraphrase their French Creole phrases into English equivalents. Even though he has been influenced by Synge when he wrote *The Sea at Dauphin*, he distinguished himself by the use of translated words then, this technique is also called parataxis.

Furthermore, the three plays share another similarity which is the appropriation of the English language with the native one. According to Ashcroft's et., all book, post-colonial writers should take the language of the centre and use it in a certain discourse adapted to the colonized place. As it is illustrated in *The Sea at Dauphin*, the English language is present in the play, but there are two other dialects (French patois and Anglophone Creole) which are mingled to the language of the center. Thus, due to the presence of cultural hybridity in the Caribbean, the colonized do it in a purpose of adaptation to the colonized place. In a similar way, in *The Island*, Fugard used this in order to demonstrate that the prisoners kept their own language but use also English to adapt themselves with their present situations inside the prison.

However, language in post-colonial societies is characterized by complexity, hybridity, and constant change that rejected the assumption of a linguistic structure or code which can be described by the colonial distinction of 'standard' and 'variant'. Each language is 'marginal'; and each language emerges out of conflict and struggle. Then, the post-colonial text brings language and meaning to a discursive site in which they are mutually constituted, and at this site the importance of usage is inescapable⁷. Thus, the way language is used in post-colonial texts is very important, because through it we can dominate and mainly fight domination in order to exist. As Fanon said in the chapter one of his book *Black Skins White Maskes* (1986) entitled "**The Negro and Language**", "to speak is to exist for the other"⁸, because the language is not only the act of speaking and articulating words but it vehicles a culture and a whole world by which we exist and affirm ourselves.

Within the same article **“The Negro and Language”**, Fanon states that: To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is.⁹ This citation claims that the fact that the Antilles Negro wants to master the language of the colonizer is not only a fact of submission and subordination, but it is also a matter of interest if he/she wants to open doors that are always closed to him/her because he/she is colonized or considered as a nigger. Also, the quotation proves that if the colonized masters the language of the colonizer, at the same time he adopts his culture. However, in *“An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theatre”* (1996) by Brian Crow and Chris Banfield, they sustain that “Fanon has given relations between black and white, and the white recognizes the humanity of his black interlocutor by the degree of his mastery of the white language”¹⁰. This means that the colonized will never be recognized as a complete human being with his own language because his language, culture, and history are not recognized.

Furthermore, in the same book *“An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theatre”* (1996), the two authors claim that:

[...]colonial subjugation robbed the indigenous writers of their own voices, reducing them to mimicry or silence. Only gradually, according to this line of thought, did post-colonial writers throw off their linguistic and cultural chains, re-appropriating the language of subjugation and reforming it to become an authentic expression of their own experience.¹⁰

From the above quotation the two authors claim that the indigenous language has suffered with the colonial oppression, but the post-colonial writers knew how to manage the use of their own language and the language of the center by re-appropriating the latter and remoulding it so as to express their own experiences. In fact, this is the case with the plays of Walcott, Synge, and Fugard, where all of them have used both their own languages which

they blend with the language of the coloniser for the purpose of expressing the oppressed life of their fellow people.

Then, there are many playwrights who think that the language of the center is a window to the vast world. In this context, the Indian playwright Badal Sircar (1925-2011) has stated:

To us, it [i.e. English] is not a neutral language. It is associated with the British imperialist rule over our country. By rights and by nature I should feel aversion to it. Yet this language has been more of a medium of my education than my own language -and for me this language has been a window to the wide world. Hence, logically, I should be thankful to it¹¹.

It means that the English language has a positive role in educating the indigenous people. Since the colonizer has brought schools to the colonized, it allowed them to have an eye over the world. In this sense, Derek Walcott has a certain similarity with Badal in the use of the English language and his insistence on translating the English Creole and French patois in his play. This is a sign of the complexity of using language in the post-colonial literature. Also, the quotation above shows that the British colonialism brought something positive which is education through language that permitted to the colonized to have an eye over the world.

According to the “**Post-colonial Reader**” (2003) edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, there are several responses to the dominance of the imperial language. However, there are two distinctive processes in the decolonization of a culture either by rejection or by subversion.¹² The former consists of radical rejection of the English language by its use in writing, or the refusal of the submission to dominance. By doing so, they restore and regain the ethnic and national identity which is rooted in the mother tongue. But, other writers think that the use of English language may help the resistance to imperialism, so in this way, it is the subversive strategy by which the process of decolonization may be successful because the writer uses the colonizer’s means of oppression (language) to get complete freedom. Indeed, *Riders to the Sea*, *The Sea at Dauphin*, and *The Island* are exposing the second alternative which consists on the appropriation of the English

language so as to resist domination and writing back to the colonizer. Indeed, this process of language adaptation establishes a medium which broke the issue of a “standard language” and installs the “periphery variations” of language as the new spoken form of a people.¹³

Ironically, imperialism encouraged the development of drama, thus the post-colonial stages became significant spaces from which one can articulate linguistic resistance to imperialism. Indeed, the fact that the indigenous native languages are allowed to be performed on the stage helps the process of decolonization. As it is stated in Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins’s book “**Post-colonial Drama: Theory, practice, and Politics**” (1996):

The staging of various extant indigenous languages, for instance, gives rise to renewed debate over the authenticity of the Queen’s English—the ostensibly pure version of the highly impure and derivative language of English—helping to destabilize colonial authority.¹⁴

Thus, once again it is proved that the resistance through language is among the main and reliable means to achieve independence. So, the language used in *Riders to the Sea*, *The Sea at Dauphin*, and *The Island* are illustrating, the resistance of the indigenous to the imperial power. By the use of the English Creole and French Patois dialects in *The Sea at Dauphin*, the Zulu language in *The Island*, and Gaelic language in *Riders to the Sea*, demonstrates the devotion of the playwrights to affirm the colonized autonomy, dignity, and identity. Added to the fact that language functions as a medium through which meaning is filtered, it also acts as a cultural and political system, and thanks to the post-colonial stage that this medium can be used and exploited to enunciate such system.¹⁵

Adding to this, as I have stated it in the beginning of this chapter, the post-colonial writers should appropriate the English language with the native one by taking the language of the centre and use it in a certain discourse adapted to the colonized place. However, by doing so, they contribute to the indigenising of the English language because the grammatical, lexical, and syntactical forms of the Standard English are deviated. For instance in *The Sea at*

Dauphin, the dialogues between the characters are made basically in English but not in a complete Standard English;

Afa: Eh heh, we bound to go, because nobody going; when is nice even women going.

Agustin: fish know wind too, Afa, come bet today fish hiding?

Afa: Eh bien, stay home and make garden with you woman!

Agustin: Make garden! Cooyon! Is only you one who know current? Is only you have need to work like nigger? Only you who brave? They have bigger than you on the sand under the sea, they have brave we don't hear yet is food for fish. Cooyon!¹⁶

In this passage, the structure of the sentences is not built on the basic rule of the Standard English syntax. For example, in the sentence 'we bound to go, because nobody going; when is nice even women going' Walcott uses the present continuous, but he did not use the auxiliaries "is, are". But, in a complete Standard English we say 'we bound to go, because nobody is going; when it is nice even women are going'. Then, in *Riders to the Sea*, there is the use of possessive pronoun in an inappropriate way according to the rules of the standard English. For example, in the play Maurya says: 'where is he himself?'. Here the word "itself" is not correctly used but according to the Gaelic language it is true used. However, in *The Island*, there is a slung used by John and Winston with some Zulu words, as for example when John says: "that you, Scott? Hello, man! Guess who! ... You got it! You bastard! Hell, shit, Scott, man ... how things with you?"¹⁷. Even if the words of this quotation are unmistakably in English Fugard uses the slung which is the informal style of the English, language as a formal way, by which the language of the colonizer was deformed. Then, when John says: "Hell, ons was gemoer vandag! (A weak smile.) News bulletin and weather forecast".¹⁸ Here he has used Zulu words as a sign of the influences of the Zulu on the language of the centre, in order to indigenise it. Indeed, the postcolonial theatre has successfully staged those language peripheries and has freed the language of the colonized indigenious.

Conclusion

From all what has been said in this section, the issues of language are not avoidable in post-colonial literatures. The way language is used by the colonized is so important to point out because through it the colonized resist the domination of the colonizer. Whether in their indigenous language or by the use of the language of the colonizer, this supposes that the native has never been rendered mute but spoke off. Therefore, postcolonial writers seem to be able to communicate what they wished to their audience. So, by writing back to the oppressor, they determine the importance of their existence.

End Notes

1. John Millington Synge, *Riders to the Sea* (Boston: John Luce and Company), 21.
2. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helena Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 38.
3. Derek Walcott, 'The Sea at Dauphin', in *Dreams on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Ferrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1970), 46.
4. Walcott, *The Sea at Dauphin*, pp.
5. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 38.
6. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 36.
7. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helena Tiffin, ed., *The Postcolonial Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 300.
8. Fanon Frantz, trans., 'The Negro and Language', in *Black Skins White Masks* (New York: Grave Press, 2008), 17.
9. Fanon, 'The Negro and Language', in *Black Skins White Masks*. 38.
10. Brian Crow, and Chris Banfield, *An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre* (London: Cambridge, 1996), 7.
11. Crow, Banfield, *An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre*, 7-8.
12. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Postcolonial Reader*, 283.
13. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Postcolonial Reader*, 284.
14. Helen Gilbert, and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, and Politics* (New York, 2002), 166.
15. Gilbert, and Tompkins, *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, 167.
16. Walcott, *The Sea at Dauphin*, 50.
17. Fugard Athol, *Township Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 205.

18. Athol, Township Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island, 196.

Section Two

The Image of the Prison-like Island and its Significance in the Three Plays

Introduction

After being invaded, islands became territories of exploitation and the islanders are taken as slaves upon whom oppression and hegemony are exercised. Time after time, the invaders become colonizers so the lands are transformed into prisons. Since the natives live in bad and squalid conditions, they feel a great isolation inside the island. In fact, the imposed migration to populate more these territories and the removal for indentured labour creates the feeling of loneliness because they are separated from their families, the lands where they lived, and their habits and customs. However, this situation raised a strong will inside the people to write about their living conditions in order to describe their isolation. Within this context, Derek Walcott, John Millington Synge, and Athol Fugard are among the writers who experienced and saw the impact of colonialism on their people and native lands.

Moreover, the islands in general become recurrent images in literature from the times of discoveries because the imperial power was looking for new territories and strategic geographical areas in the sake of enlarging and empowering their territories. So, they encouraged the “seadogs” to go and discover lands as it was the case during the Reign of Elizabeth I in Great Britain in order to invade them and add them as a support to their powerful empire. Indeed, the new discovered lands were almost so far, and sometimes isolated from other regions, as it is the case with islands, therefore among the first who wrote about these territories were the invaders who were either amazed by the splendour and richness of the lands or the indigenous life of the inhabitants there. As a result, the literature based on the exploration of new lands or islands is called “literature of exploration”, and discovery. However, through time these territories were colonized by the invaders and the

native people were dominated and oppressed. As a result, the colonized people tried to resist the colonizer despite all the hard living conditions and one of the ways of resistance was writing back to those colonizers. Therefore, many writers emerged from the colonized islands to denounce oppression and the marginal life they endured because of the colonial presence there. As Harry Garuda stated in his article **“The Island Writes Back”** (2001), since the unexplored territories as islands represent greediness for explorers, the natives are colonized, and the literature which emerge from this point is the literature of exploration and colonialism¹. Consequently, the writers who lived and endured the colonial presence and domination in their own lands wrote about their own experience of colonialism and its effects on their people even after independence.

According to the selected plays, *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), *Riders to the Sea* (1904), and *The Island* (1973) they illustrate very well the squalid life and sordid conditions in a prison-like island for instance. In *The Sea at Dauphin*, Walcott described the poor life of the St. Lucian fishermen which was based on only what the sea can provide to them. Besides, he also described the desperate behaviour of Hounakin an old fisherman who wanted to go to fish with Afa and Gacia, but in reality he wanted only to drown himself in the sea. Then, Afa was also disappointed and fed up when he came back from the sea with the dead Hounakin, because lot of men were already drown in the sea, and this was due to the rocky land which was not suitable for farming, thus the islanders were obliged to fish. Similarly, in *Riders to the Sea*, Synge described the same situation which represented the sea as a monster which destroyed every person who dared to flee the island for a better life. As it is shown through the play, Maurya lost all the men of her family in the sea and it lasts for her only one son who perished at the end even though she forbade him to go to Donegal because she knew that he will not come back safe. From the two plays, it is made clear that the islanders were kept in prison since they cannot go beyond the sea, and their life was so harsh, restricted and poor

that the feeling of isolation was inevitable for them. Compared to the two plays, in *The Island*, the island in question is the real prison. John and Winston the main characters of the play were jailed in Robben Island situated in South Africa. Through them, Fugard illustrated the racial segregation experienced and endured by the political prisoners in South Africa inside the prison under the established apartheid system. At the beginning of the play, John and Winston were digging over the sand then fill wheelbarrows, and empty them where other men were digging². So, the interminable and harsh labour shows the ill-treatment, and the routine of the prisoners, so it made them feel desperate.

In fact, according to Fran Lisa Buntman's book "*Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid*" (2003), she expressed on the prisoners jailed there and the cause of their condemnation. She says:

...Under apartheid, however, Robben Island, often called the Island, was the prison in which most black male political prisoners who opposed the apartheid regime were incarcerated from 1962 to 1991. ... The Island had the largest concentration of political prisoners over the longest period of time during apartheid rule³.

From the quotation we understand that Robben Island is a historical site of great opponents of the colonial government of that time in South Africa. As a result, Fugard's play *The Island* is produced to show the hardships that the South Africans endured inside it because of the apartheid system. John and Winston play roles of prisoners jailed because they rebelled against the oppressive system, and the fact that they were rehearsing Sophocles play "Antigone" to show their resistance and strong will in the liberation of the South Africans from colonialism.

More than that, from the titles of the three plays, it is clear that the island and the sea signify an encounter either with death or confinement. Both *Riders to the Sea* and *The Sea at Dauphin* explore the nature of the sea and the mysterious compulsions it has on the islanders

in general and the fishermen in particular. In fact, Walcott's play is concerned with Caribbean fishermen, the precariousness and the uncertainty of the profession and the bitterness they feel about the hostility of the physical and social environment. In both plays, the sea is depicted as a harsh, elemental force whose destructiveness flows more than ebbs. Also, the sea constantly reminds the islanders of its potential force through its winds as well as waves. "There's a great roaring in the West, and it is worse It will be getting when the tide's turned to the wind,"⁴ says Nora in *Riders to the Sea*. In *The Sea at Dauphin* "The sea is very droll [,] papa. But it not making me laugh. Some say this sea is dead fisherman laughing. Some say is noise of all the fisherman woman crying. Sea in Dauphin never quiet. Always noise, noise. It will not make you laugh, old man, every night it getting whiter"⁵. Compared to these two plays, *The Island* is not concerned with the hostility and danger of the sea but with the hostile life they lived in the prison with Hodoshe, "They do not run fast enough. They are beaten... Winston receiving a bad blow to the eye and John spraining an ankle. In this condition they arrive finally at the cell door. Handcuffs and shackles are taken off".⁶ Here the author described the squalid situation of the prisoners in Robben Island which caused isolation.

In fact, the colonial domination is the main cause of the isolated natives. If they did not practice injustice on the islanders by robbing their lands, their languages, their cultures, and identities; they could live better with their own practices. However, the three plays counteract the colonial view of the dominated islanders as primitive, savage, and uncultured people. They show the colonized struggling against overwhelming odds to survive and maintain dignity even in defeat. In this context, *The Island* portrays well the way the prisoners try to survive even inside the prison. For instance when Winston and John rehearsed Sophocles play "Antigone", which consists on Antigone's will to accomplish the funeral rituals of her dead brother Polyneices who was killed by their brother Eteocle. But, the new king Creon decided to honor Eteocle and disgrace Polyneices. Thus, Antigone decided to

break the king's law because there is no one who can forbid a burial of a man and the king was just a simple human being who had no right to decide it as Winston (Antigone) stated it "you are only a man Creon" ⁷. So, the fact that they interpreted Sophocles' play is a sign of resistance to the injustices that the South Africans endured because of apartheid, because no one has complete control over another person since God has created us equal.

In *The Sea at Dauphin* and *Riders to the Sea*, the impact of colonialism is not explicitly explained because there is no sign of the presence of the colonizer in the islands. But, if we refer to history, the Caribbean and the Aran Islands in Ireland knew centuries of colonialism. The former is shared between the French and British colonialism, and the latter saw a parade of invaders and the last one was the British Empire. These various and hostile colonialisms brought desolation to the islanders because each invader has its own political, economic, and social profits in this place. But, the natives did not give up their struggle against the colonial force in order to keep their dignity. I distinguish it in *Riders to the Sea* where Bartley wants to cross the rough seas to go to Connemara in order to sell a horse. Also, in *the Sea at Dauphin* Afa and Gacia struggled against the sea to survive. Even the appellation they gave to their boat is "Our Daily Bread", which means that without the sea they will starve so even if the sea is dangerous they confront it at the expense of their life.

Furthermore, the isolated places make the people feel themselves as in prison, on the one hand, they are alienated from the other regions and on the other, they are enduring the colonizers' effects. For instance, in *Riders to the Sea*, Irishman is so isolated and far from Donegal that it is the travelers who tell them how far away country Donegal is.

NORA: (*Giving her a knife*)

I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

Cathleen: (*Cutting the string*)

It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago-the man sold us that knife- and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal ⁸.

It is clear that the place is isolated from other regions, so they live isolated lives. If a stranger comes by, they remember not only what they bought from him but exactly what he said because they do not see many people coming from other regions, and distance is measured in the time needed to walk it. In *The Island*, it is clear that the prisoners are handcuffed and confined in cells where they do not have access to anything, and if they go out of the prison they go to the beach so as to work. At the end of Scene One, John has taken a mug and uses it as a telephone and starts to dial to New Brighton to get news about his family and friends,

John: that you, Scott? Hello, man! Guess who! . . . You got it!
You bastard! Hell, shit, Scott, man [...] how things with you?
No, still inside. Give me the news, man ... you don't say! No,
We don't hear anything here ... not a word ... What's that?
Business is bad? ... You bloody undertaker! People aren't dying
Fast enough! No, things are fine here...⁹.

This simulation demonstrates the alienation and incarceration of the prisoners inside the prison in the Robben Island without any news of their people. Additionally, in *The Sea at Dauphin*, Afa is shown exasperated by their conditioned life to the sea without any compassion and any benefit. He declares,

Afa: ... I borne and deading in this coast that have no compassion to grow food for children, no fish enough to buy new sail, no twine. Every day sweat, sun, and salt, and night is salt and sleep, and all the dead days pack away and stink is dauphin life¹⁰.

Moreover, displacement has a great impact on the alienation of the colonized in an open-air prison. According to Bill Ashcroft's et., al theory, *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), place and displacement or dislocation caused by imposed migration, enslavement or the removal for indentured labor causes crisis of identity or cultural denigration¹¹. These causes contribute to the desolation and misery of the displaced people, but they found a way to fight against it so as to keep little from their culture by the language. As I have mentioned it in the previous section, among the means of resistance in post-colonial countries, there is language. The appropriation of the language of the colonizer and the language of the native helps them to

feel themselves as if they are at home. Even if their adaptation to the new territory is not easy, they do not give up. In *The Island*, Winston and John told how was the deportation of the political prisoners from South Africa to the prison of Robben Island. In the first sights of the island, it looks pretty with all the mist around it¹², but as they jumped off onto the jetty, they knew that it is may be the last time that they would see South Africa. So, Winston said “Farwell Africa!”. Similarly in *The Sea at Dauphin*, the Caribbean is known for the damning number of deported slaves from Africa and other regions to the islands. For instance, in the play, Afa is described as being African, Gacia told him: “You leave something in Africa”¹³, and Hounakin is an old East Indian. Thus, those deported are displaced into another territory which is completely different from theirs either in the climate or the geography. So, the first feeling they prove is desolation and isolation that is why they feel as if they are in prison.

Conclusion

To conclude this section, the three plays are dealing with the confinement of the islanders in a prison-like island because of colonialism and its effects. Therefore, the colonized is isolated, deprived from his freedom and the sea can be seen as playing the role of the colonizer since they are fighting against it to survive, but at the same time it plays the role of the food supplier. Moreover, the effects of displacement on the colonized are very important because the new arrivals are suffering in the process of their adaptation to the new territory and culture. Thus, the image of the prison-like island is very significant in the plays since the characters are described as being in an open-air prison.

End Notes

1. Harry Garuda, 'The Island Writes Back: Discourse/ Power, and Marginality in Wole Soyinka's *The Swap Dwellers*, Derek Walcott's *the Sea at Dauphin*, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*', *Research in African Literatures* 32 (2001): 64. Viewed on 12 January 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820807>.
2. Fugard Athol, *Township Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 193.
3. Lisa Fran Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3. Viewed on 08 January 2014. http://www.books.google.dz/books/about/Robben_Island_and_Prisoner_Resistance_to.html?id.
4. John Millington Synge, *Riders to the Sea* (Boston: John Luce and Company), 19.
5. Derek Walcott, 'The Sea at Dauphin', in *Dreams on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Ferrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1970), 57.
6. Fugard, *Towship Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island*, 195.
7. Fugard, *Towship Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island*, 226.
8. Synge, *Riders to the Sea*, 30.
9. Fugard, *Towship Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island*, 205.
10. Walcott, 'The Sea at Dauphin', 53.
11. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helena Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8.

12. Fugard, *Towship Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island*, 215.
13. Walcott, 'The Sea at Dauphin', 61.

Section Three

Identity Crisis and its Effects

Introduction

Today, it is said that colonial age is over, and the new age is called postcolonial. But, the effects of colonialism can still be observed on post-colonial countries and it opened a big wound in the psychology, culture, and identity of the colonized people¹. Thus, among the major themes tackled in the works written in the post-colonial period is the crisis of identity of the colonized peoples and the important impacts of colonization on the indigenous. Indeed, after the end of World War II, many colonies became independent, and art, literature and cultures of the indigenous people flourished². Then, colonial cultures and characteristics of what mixed with indigenous traditions, gave way to a new type of work, which is called “the postcolonial text”³. However, the cultural diversity disconnected the colonized from their original selves, they do not know exactly who they are and where they belong because they show the characteristics of both their own cultures and the Western one. For this reason, many postcolonial writers emerged to clarify and point out the effects of colonialism on the psychology of the colonized, and their identities. Therefore J. M. Synge, Derek Walcott, and Athol Fugard are among these postcolonial writers.

The cultural chaos and identity crisis, place and displacement turn into issues of central concern in postcolonial literature. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s theory *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), it is at the point of displacement that crisis of identity emerges.⁴ As a result of the imposition of Western style and culture on indigenous ones, and the meeting of two different cultures, generates a great clash leading to an internal conflict in the psychology of indigenous people. As for example, Walcott’s play *The Sea at Dauphin* is the most appropriate illustration to the impact of displacement caused by imposed migration,

slavery or indentured labor. As the setting of the play shows, Dauphin Island in the Caribbean, the latter is known for its cultural heterogeneity brought by both colonialism and the various and different deported people to these lands. Thus, the fact they landed in a new territory far from their people and culture creates confusion in their minds. In the play, the first element by which the identity crisis points itself is the language, because the playwright used two distinct languages; one is the English Creole while the second is the French Patois, and it causes identity crisis since the people of this island no more speak their own language. Also, this can be seen as a result of their adaptation to the new place, in order to appropriate it as theirs. Moreover, as it is stated in Chris Bongie's book "*Islands and Exile*" (1998) "the Caribbean is a place with no stable cultural origins"⁵, this means that the cultural diversity of the Caribbean makes it as if it has no specific origin, that causes psychological perplexity.

While comparing the three plays, I have noticed that they all tackle identity crisis since the three islands experienced years and years of colonialism, therefore it is evident that the prominent result of the domination is cultural denigration. Indeed, language can be considered as the most important component which designates identity crisis. As I have explained in the first section of my dissertation, the appropriation of the language of the center by the colonized is the major element of resistance to the colonizer's domination. However, by doing so, they contribute to the loss of their own language spoken before the coming of the colonizer. Furthermore, language is a pillar of identity and culture, as Fanon stated it in his book *Black Skins White Masks* (1986): "to speak is to exist"⁶, because the language is not only the act of speaking but it vehicles a culture and a whole world by which we can exist and affirm ourselves. Therefore, if the colonizer appropriates or masters the language of the centre he/she appropriates also the culture of the colonizer as a result, they were divided between two cultures and here it causes cultural denigration.

Moreover, in the three plays there are many aspects of the appropriation of the center's culture. For example, in *The Sea at Dauphin*, Afa and Gacia are sharing American cigarette "Gacia: [...] like me. Cigawette? [Offers Afa a Cigarette] American"⁷. This is a sign of the influence of the colonizer's culture and their way of life. Also, in *The Island* there is the influence of the Westerners way of life, as for instance, while imagining John's release from the prison Winston says: " [...] eating grapes, and oranges... they will change your diet...at night you will play games... Ludo, draughts, snakes, and ladders"⁸. The way Winston describes the future life of John out of the prison reflects the South Africans influence by the colonizers way of life and the adoption of the colonizer's culture. Also, in the two plays the characters are taking alcohol "rum and cooldrinks" which belongs to the Westerners culture, and this is another sign of the cultural influence on the colonized. Furthermore, in *The Sea at Dauphin*, the cultural influence is not only due to the appropriation of the culture of the centre but also the variety of cultures which coexist within the Dauphin Island. Due to the deportation and displacement of many slaves from all over the world especially from Africa to the Caribbean, creates the fusion of different cultures. The latter, generates confused minds, and in this context Chris Bongie in his book "*Islands and Exiles*" (1998) points out that the island is a metaphor of an identity in exile and this island can be taken as the new place of a double identity⁹. It means that, when the cultural differences coexist within one place "island", the latter can be thought to be a place of the new generated identity.

More than this, in *Riders to the Sea* and *The Sea at Dauphin* there is an important presence of religion. It is due to the Christian missionaries whose goal is to spread the Christian faith in all the British colonies. In Synge's play the characters are seen as being naïve and accepting their bad situation as if it is a norm, and they are very attached to religion. From the very beginning of the play, the words "God and priest" are mentioned as for example: "Cathleen: She's Lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able" and

then “Nora: The young priest is after bringing them. It’s a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal”¹⁰. So, here Synge fixed the religious spirit of his characters, and demonstrates their involvement in Christianity. However, some critics like Denis Donoghue’s article “*Synge: Riders to the Sea: A Study*” (1955) affirms that there is a conflict between Catholicism and the Pagan religion practiced by those who are neither Christian nor Jews¹¹. Thus, for him Synge’s use of Catholicism implied by the colonizer is just to point out the religious conflicts in the region. Comparing to *The Sea at Dauphin*, there is also reference to religion since Walcott has been influenced by Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* he also referred to the Christianity brought by both the French and British colonizers. In this play, Walcott has also used words like “God”, “Priest”, and “Père”, to show the presence of Christianity in the Dauphin Island and the organization of the funerals of old Hounakin as for Bartley in *Riders to the Sea* as the Christian faith dictates it. But, in *the Sea at Dauphin*, the character of Afa is presented as being atheist because he does not believe that this religion preaches peace and love in the name of God. Then, he thinks that the white God instead of love, offers a predatory chain of conquerors that oppress his people:

God is a white man. The sky is his blue eye,
His spit on Dauphin people is the sea.
Don’t ask me why a man must work so hard
To eat for worm to get more fat. Maybe I bewitch.
You never curse God, I curse him, and cannot die,
Until His time¹².

Then, when a woman from Dauphin speaks about the dead Hounakin, she says that he has nothing and P. Lavoisier the priest told her: “He has God...” and Afa answered:

God! [*He turns and empties the fish pail on the sand.*] That is God! A big fish eating small ones. And the sea, that thing there, not a priest white, pale like a shark belly we must feed until we dead[...]¹³.

It means that Afa is against the presence of the Whites in their land and the religion they practice is not as fair as they pretend, for him the Whites are only sharks who are exploiting

the islanders and the island's richness. Therefore, from these two plays we distinguish that the religious presence, in the two islands, is due to colonial needs and domination because by introducing the religion of the colonizer, they contribute to the colonization of the islanders and if they succumb to this, it contributes to the loss of their cultural basics as for the funerals. Then, this causes identity crisis because little by little they forget their own old practices.

In addition to this, in Fugard's play *The Island*, the characters are in prison for a long time that they forgot the cause of their condemnation and even their struggle against colonialism. As Winston says: [...] John. I've forgotten why I'm here. And John replied: You put your head on the block for others¹⁴. It means that they are in prison in the sake of freeing their people from the colonizer. But, Winston answers: Fuck others, Fuck politics, and fuck our ideals¹². Here the author demonstrates the harassment of the prisoners from their resistance to the colonizer because they endure lot of hardships and oppression from the colonizer that sometimes they think about giving up their fighting. The harassment causes the loss of their desire to accomplish freedom, so through this they contribute to the loss of their own identity.

Furthermore, while speaking about identity crisis in post-colonial literature; it is more interesting to tackle this aspect according to the psychology of the characters of the three plays. Because of colonial effects, the colonized suffer from some identity troubles which result in an identity crisis. As, for instance, in Walcott's plays *The Sea at Dauphin*, he points out the state of Afa; the protagonist of the play, who always questions the real existence of God and how he could endure such atrocities on human beings while they are supposed to live together in harmony. Also, Afa is presented as being pessimist of his life and existence in Dauphin Island, he is always complaining about their situation and the other characters describe him as being selfish like a stone without heart and compassion for the other islanders. For instance Augustin declares:

You don't have no woman only? You don't have no love, no time, no child, you have a whole where man heart should be, you have no God, no dog, no friend, that is why Dauphin afraid you, because you always enrage, and nobody will give help of the hand...¹⁵

The unbearable life on the Dauphin Island draws Afa in a state of isolation that makes him lose complete sympathy toward his friends and entourage. However, the situation is not the will of Afa but it is caused by the oppression and domination of the colonizer. More than this, in Fugard's *The Island*, the two characters John and Winston oppose each other because John is presented as a militant to the cause of the South Africans he is always encouraged and obliged Winston to take part in their engagement and resistance in the prison in particular and to the colonizer in general. However, Winston is described as not being really involved in their liberation cause as for example when John tries to rehearse with him Antigone's play at the beginning he was against and thanks to John's insistence on him and his explanations of the importance of the play on their situation that Winston accepted to do it. Then, at the end of Scene Three, Winston expresses a kind of jealousy of John's release from the prison and he affirms clearly that he is no more concerned with the freedom of the South Africans. Also, the fact that he forgets the reasons that encloses him for many years in prison makes us think that he is lost whether to resist the colonizer or to give up. Therefore, crisis of identity plays a role on the psychology of the characters in the fact that they are lost either because of cultural diversity or colonial imprisonment.

In addition to the language mixtures and the imposed religion, the policies and the violence of the oppressors are also the result of the identity crisis. In order to keep control over a territory, the colonizer exercises various means of violence and oppression such as, unjust imprisonment, high taxes for paying, and harsh laws to obey. Fugard's *the Island* shows more examples of colonial oppression, in it the playwright shows how the black prisoners are treated inside the prison during the Apartheid system in South Africa. Without

forgetting to point out, the significance of the play because it portrays the imprisonment of the South African president Nelson Mandela for 27 years at Robben Island. Also, the play demonstrates the political oppression exerted on the Blacks in South Africa as for instance, the fact that John and Winston rehearse Antigone's play to denounce the policies of repression of the colonizer. Since it is important to know that during the Apartheid, the blacks in South Africa were strictly controlled, they cannot move inside the country without a passbook or "book of life" and if they don't have it, they were punished by imprisonment or extreme torture. Thus, in the play John is imprisoned because he has cut off his passbook denouncing the policies of the whites. Then, at this period there was the policy of "Separate Development" made by the Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd which means that the white minority has more privilege on the black socially, politically, and economically.¹⁶ Therefore, the result of such oppression and harsh policy is the denigration of one's identity since the blacks are confined and marginalized they reject their own identity and culture.

Furthermore, the colonial invasion of new territories and islands everywhere in the whole world creates as Seodial Franck Deena said in his book entitled "*Situating Caribbean Literatures and Criticism in Multicultural and Postcolonial Studies*" (2009): "European's entrance and presence in the Caribbean forced a massive and most cruel genocide of the natives"¹⁷. It means that before the coming of the colonizer, there are people who already lived in that region, they have their culture, way of life, history and the intrusion of the colonizer destroys the identity of the natives by imposing new rules and habits on the native citizens. Thus, the three plays The Island, The Sea at Dauphin, and Riders to the Sea, demonstrate how the European colonialism created identity conflicts inside the colonized mind.

In Brian Crow and Chris Banfield's book "*An Introduction to Post-colonial Theatre*" (1996) they assume that:

Some subjugated peoples, the Australian Aborigines for example, have been so Culturally devastated by white invasion that many of its members have virtually lost all connection with, and sustenance from, their cultural heritage. But in colonized societies with rich indigenous cultures (for example West Africa or India) that remained largely intact- whatever the colonialists may have wished or done- not only was cultural identity not lost, it has served as a potent weapon in the struggle for independence and liberation.¹⁸

The quotation above expresses that any people who experienced colonialism suffers from it. Either they lose completely their identity and cultural heritage, or they use their rich and mixed indigenous culture to counter-attack the colonizer for independence.

Conclusion

From all what has been said in this section, identity crisis is among the important effects of colonialism on the colonized. Place and displacement and the appropriation of the colonizer's culture through religion and language are the first steps that generate cultural denigration of the colonized. It means that since the oppressor vehicles the oppressed and dominates him, by imposing his own language he imposes his culture and with his religion he also spreads his culture. More than this, identity crisis is not only the result of language mixture and the imposed religion but also it is due to the policies and the violence of the oppressors. Therefore, the characters of the three plays are seen as abandoning their own cultural identity and their fighting is sometimes instable; they are not completely convinced by their cause because in some cases they are questioning the validity of their struggle.

End notes

1. Bharatender Sheoran, 'A Dilemma of Caribbean Populace: Post-Colonial Conflicts and Identity Crisis in Derek Walcott's Plays', *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities* 1(2014): 1.
2. Sheoran, 'A Dilemma of Caribbean Populace: Post-Colonial Conflicts and Identity Crisis in Derek Walcott's Plays', 2.
3. Mohanram Radhika, and Gita Rajan, ed., *English Post-coloniality: Literatures from Around the World* (London: Greenwood, 1996), 4.
4. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helena Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8-9.
5. Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 23.
Viewed on 27 June 2014.
http://books.google.dz/books/about/Islands_and_Exiles.html?id=juC7vaxM_80C&redir_esc=y.
6. Fanon Frantz, trans., *Black Skins White Masks* (New York: Grave Press, 2008), 17.
7. Derek Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Ferrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1970), 47.
8. Fugard Athol, *Township Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 218.
9. Bongie, Chris, *Islands and Exiles* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 18.
10. John Millington Synge, *Riders to the Sea* (Boston: John Luce and Company), 17-18.
11. Denis Donoghue, Synge: Riders to the Sea: A Study, *University Review* 1 (1955), 25.
Viewed on June 18th, 2014. <http://jstor.org/stable/2550432g>.
12. Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*, 61.
13. Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*, 73.

- ^{14.} Athol, *Township Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island*, 221.
- ^{15.} Athol, *Township Plays: Nogood Friday, Nongogo, The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island*, 221.
- ^{16.} Ron Oj Parson. 'Sizwe Banzi Is Dead' *Court Theatre* (2010): 4. Viewed on 2 June 2014. http://www.courttheatre.org/pdf/guides/Sewi_study_guide.pdf
- ^{17.} Seodial, Frank, Deena H. *Situating Caribbean Literatures and Criticism in Multicultural and Postcolonial Studies* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 1. Viewed on 06 June 2014. http://books.google.dz/books?id=QTdW4EE7ga4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=situating+caribbean+literature+and+criticism+in+multicultural+and+postcolonial+literature&hl=fr&as_scl=QWj1 .

General Conclusion

Through my analysis of John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin*, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*, I have noticed that these plays can be analyzed through a postcolonial perspective. They turn around a similar point which is the life of islanders on confined islands under colonial effects. In fact, as Synge, Walcott, and Fugard lived during the colonial period, through their works they wanted to explain how the native islanders resisted domination and marginality through their languages, culture and identity in a prison-like island. So, the plays deal with the resistance of the islanders to colonialism from its beginning till after independence.

As it is stated in Ashcroft's et al., book *The Empire Writes Back*, postcolonialism is a term coined to designate the impact of colonialism on all the cultures that experienced colonialism from its beginning till nowadays. Therefore, from my reading of the plays I noticed the language used by the writers which is a mixture between the native language and the language of the centre demonstrated how the colonized knew how to resist the colonizer since it is through language that we exist. Furthermore, the setting of the three works gives the image of the suffering of the islanders in an island that resembles to an open-air prison. On the one hand, it gives an eye on the isolation that reigned inside the Aran, Dauphin, and Roben islands and the effects of the bad situation on the islanders. As a result, the effects and influences create identity crisis in the colonized or indigenous people. On the other, due to cultural influences through language, religion or displacement; the psychology of the colonized suffers from colonialism, and there must be crisis of identity. Added to this, identity crisis can also be the result of the policies and the violence of the oppressor.

Finally I came to the conclusion that, Walcott, Synge, and Fugard have succeeded in denouncing the oppression of the colonizer and its effects on a colonized nation either during domination or after independence. They focused mainly on the resistance of the colonized and

also on its drawbacks on the psychology and identity of the colonized. Also, the three works can be considered as diaries of a colonized people who experienced the hardships and the squalid life imposed by the colonizer in their respective countries. This is my modest way of analyzing and looking at this interesting topic of postcolonial issue in the three plays and I would like to advise more students to tackle it with other perspectives and hypothesis. However, the three plays are not limited only to the presentation of such post-colonial issue, it also investigates other categories of comparison such as the place of women in post-colonial cultures.

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