W. B. Yeats described Synge as 'an ardent Home Ruler and Nationalist'. Synge's series of twelve articles on Connemara published in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1905 make Synge's socialist and anti-colonialist politics unmistakable. In the final article ('Possible Remedies'), after suggesting various economic and social reforms, Synge concludes:

> Most Irish politicians scorn all merely economic or agricultural reforms ... if Home Rule would not of itself make a national life it would do more to make such a life possible than half a million creameries. With renewed life in the country many changes of the methods of government, and the holding of property, would inevitably take place, which would tend to make life less difficult even in the bad years and in the worst districts of Mayo and Connemara.

*(CW II, 341–3)*

Although Synge has long been a national icon, it is only in recent decades that critics such as Shaun Richards, Declan Kiberd, Gregory Castle and P. J. Mathews have fully addressed the significance of Synge's anti-colonialist politics to his drama, prose and poetry. In discussing Synge as a postcolonial writer, this essay seeks to build upon the work of such scholars and will also draw attention to his influence on and similarities with later postcolonial
writers from Africa, Australia and the Caribbean. The term ‘postcolonial’ is here used more generally to refer to writers who, following the colonisation of their country, confront and are affected by the consequences of colonialism, consequences which are not only economic and social, but also cultural and linguistic. In Synge’s case I will often refer to him more specifically as an ‘anti-colonial’ writer, since his drama and essays address the situation of a colonised Ireland seeking to free itself from physical and cultural domination by England.

When Synge resigned from the Association Irlandaise he explained to Maud Gonne, ‘I wish to work in my own way for the cause of Ireland, and I shall never be able to do so if I get mixed up with a revolutionary and semi-military movement’ (CI, 47). ‘Working in his own way’ entailed writing plays, essays and poetry, as well as involvement in the construction and management of a national theatre. Nevertheless, like many anti-colonialist writers, he reveals in his work a degree of anxiety about the relative merits of words rather than military weapons as a means of liberation, an anxiety which is also reflected in his desire to balance ‘realism’ and poetry or ‘joy’. Seamus Deane has remarked that Synge’s plays are ‘dateless, dislodged from history’, and thus ‘“poetic” not “realistic” plays’. But it is important to point out that historical specificity is at least partially present in some of the plays, and that those plays often dramatise or seek to reconcile the conflict between the ‘poetic’ and the ‘realistic’.

Indeed the issue of authenticity and ‘realistic’ representation is central to much anti-colonial writing and appears as a central concern in the famous manifesto composed by Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn announcing the aims of the Irish Literary Theatre. Similarly, the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe has said that what he set out to do with his first novel was counteract the misrepresentation of Africans by novelists such as Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary, to tell their story ‘from the inside’, and to remind his readers that ‘African peoples did not hear of civilization for the first time’ (CW II, 53). As the Martinican writer Frantz Fanon argues, the colonisation of the mind goes hand in hand with the physical occupation of a country, and it is the role of artists and intellectuals to decolonise the mind and restore a colonised people’s belief in the validity of their own culture. For Fanon, as for the founders of the Irish Literary Theatre, the question of giving voice to marginalised or subaltern groups is a more thorny and controversial one, as demonstrated by the violent reaction to the first performances of The Playboy of the Western World, and later to Sean O’Casey’s The Plough and the Stars. The hostile reactions by Irish audiences to these plays brought to the fore the core issues relating to representation in a colonial or postcolonial society: Who has the authority to represent the indigenous people? Who are to be recognised as representative of the nation and its people? In what language and through what media should they represent themselves?

Synge’s writings offer a series of evolving responses to these questions. His ‘Autobiography’ records that soon after reading Darwin in his early teens and relinquishing ‘the Kingdom of God I began to take a real interest in the Kingdom of Ireland. My politics went round from a vigorous and unreasoning loyalty to a temperate Nationalism, and everything Irish became sacred’ (CW II, 13). His early notebooks record inscriptions in Irish from monuments and tombs, as well as his reading of The Children of Lir and the St John Gospel in Irish. One might be reminded of the character Haines with his notebook and interest in Irish folklore, through whom Joyce presents in Ulysses a satiric view of imperialists in search of the primitive, but Synge’s diaries reveal a deep and thorough pursuit of Irish literary traditions as well as contemporary spoken Irish.

Nevertheless, some of Synge’s works, including The Aran Islands, draw on strategies and assumptions inherent in anthropological studies produced by colonialists in the nineteenth century. In writing about his quest for the most ‘primitive’ form of Irish society, as he leaves Inis Mór for Inis Meáin, ‘where Gaelic is more generally used, and the life is perhaps the most primitive that is left in Europe’ (CW II, 53), Synge reveals the contradictions which marked much of the Celtic Revival as well as cultural nationalist projects in other anti-colonial movements. As Gregory Castle remarks, the anthropological strategies employed by Synge and Yeats, with theories of cultural difference and the role of a distanced ‘objective’ observer, was ‘at once complicit with and hostile towards a tradition of representation that sought to redeem Irish peasant culture by idealizing or essentializing its “primitive” social conditions’. In other words, there is the danger of endorsing a Celticism comparable to the Orientalism analysed and denounced by Edward Said. Similarly, the Senegalese poet and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor celebrated négritude, an essentialised view of African culture, influenced by the studies of the German anthropologist Frobenius, and through invocations of a simple pastoral world far removed from metropolitan France or Dakar.
Although one can discern the influence of nineteenth-century anthropological strategies and assumptions in Synge's decision to visit the Aran Islands and his observations about the customs, beliefs and stories he encountered there, his series of essays also challenges anthropological discourse. For whereas traditional anthropology deploys a discourse which assumes the mantle of objectivity and authority invested in an outside observer who describes a society 'frozen in time', Synge mingles autobiography with description, and reveals himself as a changing persona in a changing rather than a static society. Moreover, the difficulty in articulation and communication is shared by the author and his subjects alike, as Synge moves towards greater eloquence in Gaelic, and the islanders gain greater confidence in their ability to be heard and understood by him. What emerges through the wealth of anecdotes and stories that Synge begins to hear and translate is almost the opposite of the dichotomy Seamus Deane analyses so persuasively in his essay, 'Dumbness and Eloquence', where the Irish language as the 'language opposite of the dichotomy Seamus Deane analyses so persuasively in his anecdotes and stories that Synge begins to hear and translate is almost the to be heard and understood by him. What emerges through the wealth of eloquence is linked to the specificity of the real is silenced, and the English language 'as the language of the possible' emerges as eloquence. But that liberation into the 'reality and joy' of Irish is confined within the pages of The Aran Islands, and also confined within the English language. As Deane points out, the movement from dumbness to eloquence is itself the theme of some of Synge's most powerful plays, and particularly The Playboy of the Western World, where the theme of the real is suppressed, and the realm of the possible, where Christy is made a man 'through the power of a lie', is given full rein.

The Aran Islands is remarkable not only for its concern to capture the voices of the islanders, but also for its refusal to sentimentalise them. It also famously provides the source for many of Synge's plays, and like them seeks to represent a quintessential 'Irishness' rather than a symbolic Ireland. Paradoxically that representation of 'Irishness' is linked to the specificity of place, a mapping of a particular area, whether it be each of the islands, or the evocation of Wicklow or Co. Mayo. As Edward Said points out, 'If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical in it.' In anti-colonial poetry, drama and fiction the emphasis on the agrarian world, on the 'peasantry', is not merely an inheritance from Romanticism, although it is in the case of Yeats and Syngé inflected by it, for what is being expressed is not simply a generalised relationship between man and nature, but a claim that a people and the land they inhabit or from which they have been dispossessed belong to one another. The unity between people and place is emphasised by Synge's Aran Islands essays through his detailed descriptions of their clothes, their movements, their livelihood, their landscape. In the plays it is the imagery of the local landscape and of agrarian life which links the people to the land, and which enriches their speech. Similarly in their fiction and drama the language of Chinua Achebe's, Wole Soyinka's and Derek Walcott's characters expresses a consciousness which is fashioned by a way of life which is grounded in a particular place and climate within Nigeria or St Lucia. Throughout their speech the everyday similes, metaphors and proverbs they use draw on the vegetation and animal life specific to their location.

Here we may note the contrast between Synge's drama and that of Yeats (though not his poetry), a contrast which also relates to their concept of resistance to colonial domination and misrepresentation, and Yeats's concern to show Ireland as 'the home of an ancient idealism'. Whereas Yeats sought to dramatise 'noble' and 'heroic' figures such as Cuchulain and Deirdre as equivalents to the knights and ladies poeticised in Tennyson's Arthurian Idylls of the King, Synge rejected what Stephen Mackenna termed 'a purely fantastic, unmodern, ideal, spring-dayish, Cuchulainoid National Theatre' (CL, 74). Synge regarded the emphasis on martial heroics in the elevation of Cuchulain as a perpetuation of imperial values and constructions of masculinity, while also 'unmodern' and unrelated to 'the fundamental realities of life' (74). Edward Said has argued the relevance of Fanon's analysis of the necessity of violence in a liberation struggle to an understanding of the invocations of violence in poetry and drama by Yeats. More relevant to Synge's staging of Irish society under the condition of colonisation, however, is Fanon's analysis of the tension, the dreams of muscular prowess, the aggression against one another which marks the 'natives' hemmed in by colonial powers. Compare Fanon's description of the colonised's psyche with Jimmy Farrell's celebration of Christy Mahon's achievements in The Playboy:

... and he after bringing bankrupt ruin on the roulette man, and the trick-o'-the-loop man, and breaking the nose of the cockshoat-man, and winning all in the sports below, racing, lepping, dancing, and the Lord knows what! (CW IV, 133)

Fanon writes:

The first thing the native learns is to stay in his place, and not go beyond certain limits. That is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing ... that I span a river in one stride ... During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning.

Fanon believed that a violent rebellion could be cathartic, and indeed necessary. However, as Declan Kiberd argues, Synge was a pacifist who, like Sean O'Casey later, rejected the glorification of physical force embraced by Patrick Pearse and the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Maud Gonne's Irish National Theatre, even though his plays could be read as political statements. The Playboy of the Western World, for example, is remarkable not only for its concern to capture the...
He reads _The Playboy_ as both a realistic representation of the cruelty and brutality Synge observed in peasant societies and a mock-heroic version of the Cuchulain cycle, providing an ironic commentary on two aspects of the Celtic Revival – the glorification of ‘a heroic past, which can have existed only in men’s imaginations – the other dedicated to an equally spurious vision of the western peasant as a kind of secular Gaelic mystic’.15

Indeed the first two plays Synge wrote for the National Theatre Society may be understood as critical responses to the nationalist heroics and abstractions embodied in _Cathleen ni Houlihan_, written by Yeats and Lady Gregory, and performed to great acclaim in 1902. Whereas _Cathleen ni Houlihan_ is a symbol of an abstract Ireland, an allegorical figure who calls upon young men such as Michael to sacrifice their lives in order to redeem her, Maurya in _Riders to the Sea_ bitterly laments the loss of Michael and her other sons; she is a metonymical rather than a metaphorical character who is not redeemed and made younger by their deaths, but broken and made older. Her final words, ‘No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied’, are surely an ironic reminder and refutation of Cathleen ni Houlihan’s promise, ‘They shall be alive for ever.’16

_The Shadow of the Glen_ also places a woman at the centre of the drama, and here too a young man called Michael is at first romanticised as her redeemer. But in this play it is a male stranger and homeless wanderer who enters the house and disrupts the constrained domestic security of Nora and her elderly husband, and it is Nora who makes the choice to leave the house and follow him to an early death in the open air, rather than suffer the indignity and suffocation of her present situation. Here Synge suggests that the liberation of Ireland will be meaningless for women unless it also involves liberation from an oppressively patriarchal society in which, for economic reasons, women are imprisoned by loveless and sexless marriages to older men.17

While Synge’s early plays involve an implicit dialogue with the kind of cultural nationalism represented by Yeats in _Cathleen ni Houlihan_ and _On Baile’s Strand_, _The Playboy of the Western World_ contains more explicit references to Ireland’s situation as a colonised and occupied country. Pegeen speaks of her fear of the ‘loosèd khaki cut-throats’ (British soldiers) who roam the country, a phrase censored from the first production of the play together with all other phrases ‘derogatory to the army’.18 The play is set in Mayo, with specific references to Castlebar, Ballina and Crossmolina. Mayo was the birthplace of Michael Davitt and of the Land League, and there are also allusions to political crimes linked to opposition to landlords and evictions when Pegeen recalls ‘the like of Danane Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler, or Marcus Quin, God rest him, got six months for maiming ewes’ (CW IV, 59). Mayo was also the birthplace of John MacBride, who contested a parliamentary by-election there while absent fighting in the Boer War, and there is an allusion to him when Philly suggest that Christy’s crime may have been that he ‘went fighting for the Boers the like of the man beyond, was judged to be hanged, quartered and drawn’ (71). As Nicholas Grene points out, an earlier draft of the play made the reference more explicit: ‘Maybe he went fighting for the Boers the like of Major MacBride, God shield him, who’s afraid to put the tip of his nose into Ireland fearing he’s be hanged, quartered and drawn.’19 The play is thus historically and geographically located as a site of antagonism to colonialism, an occupied territory where the locals dream of escape and redemption. In such locations, Fanon writes, the people make heroes of those who are ‘prosecuted by the colonial authorities for acts ... directed against a colonialist person or colonialist property’.20

For Synge, as for Yeats and Joyce, Ireland was ‘the servant of two masters ... an English and an Italian’.21 Pegeen and the drinkers at the shebeen where the play is set are as scornful of Shawn Keogh’s subservience to Father Reilly and Rome as they are admiring of Marcus Quin and Daneen Sullivan. As in many anti-colonialist works, the plot revolves around an Oedipal conflict between father and son, or between father figures and a younger generation, in which the values of the father are seen as harsh, materialistic and sterile, and are in turn linked to the values of the colonising power. Such father/son conflicts recur, although with significant variations, not only in Yeats’s drama such as _On Baile’s Strand_, and Joyce’s fiction, but also in Chinua Achebe’s novels _Things Fall Apart_ and _Arrow of God_, and Wole Soyinka’s plays, _The Lion and the Jewel_ and _Kongi’s Harvest_. In all of these, as Seamus Deane remarks of _The Playboy_, ‘the Law of the Father has been broken and then reinaugurated’.22 These works stage not only an internal conflict but also resist the patriarchal authority of the coloniser’s world view, his representation of the native as savage and inarticulate, and the weight of his literary and dramatic traditions.

In many anti-colonial works, including _The Playboy_ and _The Shadow of the Glen_, the conflict also centres on a woman who becomes symbolic of the nation who is to be redeemed, the motherland. Eavan Boland has written of her need as a woman writer to combat ‘the association of the feminine and the national – and the consequent simplification of both’.23 But such an association of the feminine with the national is not limited to Irish literary and oral cultures. The Senegalese poets Léopold Senghor and David Diop, as well as many Ghanaian and black South African writers, assert their loyalty to a symbolic Mother Africa, portrayed as the embodiment of African tradition. In Derek Walcott’s epic poem _Omeros_, Helen becomes symbolic of his native St Lucia, desired by coloniser and colonised alike.
But some postcolonial writers also reveal an ambivalence about the role of the son who is nourished by his community and then leaves it, in order to 'go romancing' and 'telling stories of the villainy of Mayo, and the fools is here' (CW IV, 173). The theme of the 'prodigal son' who deserts his home and becomes Christianised or Europeanised surfaces in the poetry of Senghor and Christopher Okigbo, the plays of Soyinka, Nguni and Ama Ata Aidoo, and the novels of Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi Awoonor. Thus, like The Playboy, with its reconciliation of father and son at the end, Chinua Achebe's first novel, Things Fall Apart implies a similar reconciliation in that it is a celebration of the anti-poetic and inarticulate father and warrior Okonkwo by the poetic and articulate descendant of a akin to Okonkwo's son Nwoye. In this sense, both works reconcile 'reality' and 'joy', and Okonkwo, like Old Mahon, represents the 'reality which is the root of all poetry'. As I have argued elsewhere, that reconciliation is, of course, qualified by the ending of each work which leaves the lions thrown to the Christians. And in that qualified reconciliation is suggested the paradox of these and many other postcolonial works that it may be only when the sons have become alienated or Christianised that they can affirm the pagan culture of their fathers. The paradox of this affirmation of their traditional societies by the sons also involves the paradox that they write in the language of the coloniser, a language which as Stephen Dedalus famously remarked is 'his before it is mine', and which has either been used to silence the indigenous language or to represent the native as inept and childlike in his deviation from the metropolitan standard. As a consequence language itself and the power to speak often become a significant focus of the work. Christy's movement from his father's definition of him as a 'dribbling idiot', too timid to speak to a woman, to a 'likely man' (143) who delights and woos Pegeen with his eloquence and peasant characters, removing them from the inarticulateness or blarney of the mine', and which has either been used to silence the indigenous language or to represent the native as inept and childlike in his deviation from the metropolitan standard. As a consequence language itself and the power to speak often become a significant focus of the work. Christy's movement from his father's definition of him as a 'dribbling idiot', too timid to speak to a woman, to a 'likely man' (143) who delights and woos Pegeen with his eloquence and peasant characters, removing them from the inarticulateness or blarney of the home but altered to suit its new... surroundings'.

In the Prefaces to his 1922 and 1931 anthologies, The Book of American Negro Poetry, the poet and academic James Weldon Johnson cited the example of Synge with particular reference to the creation of a language which moved away from the limitations and connotations of the kind of minstrel dialect which had in the past been used to represent African-American speech, a dialect which in his view had 'only two main stops, humor and pathos':

What the colored poet in the United States needs to do is something like what Synge did for the Irish; he needs to find a form which will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without, such as the mere mutilation of English spelling and pronunciation. He needs a form which is freer and larger than dialect, but which still holds the racial flavor; a form expressing the imagery, the idioms, the peculiar turns of thought, and the humour and pathos too, of the Negro, but which will also be capable of voicing the deepest and highest emotions and aspirations, and allow the widest range of subjects and the widest scope of treatment.

Johnson himself moved away from the dialect employed in his first collections of poems to 'a form freer and larger than dialect', but still holding 'the racial flavor' in his powerful collection of poems, God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse. His Preface to this collection reiterates the points made and the example of Synge given in the Preface to his anthology.

Although not completely disowning his earlier dialect poems, Johnson gives reasons for eschewing dialect in God's Trombones. This collection seeks to convey the power and eloquence of traditional Negro sermons, which 'were all saturated with the sublime phraseology of the Hebrew prophets and steeped in the idioms of King James English .... It was really a fusion of Negro idioms with Bible English; and in this there may have been, after all, some kinship with the innate grandiloquence of their old African tongues. Here and in Johnson's quest for 'a freer and larger form' there is a potential comparison with Synge's invocation of the Elizabethan dramatist and other writers who live 'where the imagination of the people, and the language they
use, is rich and living', allowing a writer 'to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form' (CW IV, 53). Synge’s concern to capture ‘a popular imagination’ which will exist for only ‘a few years more’, before ‘the harvest is a memory only’ (54), is also comparable with Johnson’s sense of the importance of encapsulating a world that will soon disappear. He concludes his Preface thus: ‘The old-time Negro preacher is rapidly passing. I have here tried sincerely to fix something of him.’

Synge’s drama has also been a significant influence for the Caribbean poet and dramatist Derek Walcott. In a 1980 interview Walcott spoke of his identification with Irish writers:

I’ve always felt some kind of intimacy with the Irish poets because one felt that they were also colonies with the same kind of problems that existed in the Caribbean. They were the niggers of Britain. Now with all that, to have those outstanding achievements of genius whether by Joyce or Beckett or Yeats illustrated that one could come out of a depressed, depraved, oppressed situation and be defiant and creative at the same time.

Like Synge’s first play, When the Moon Has Set, Walcott’s early plays were written in a literary and elevated form of standard English, although he tended to choose historical figures such as Henri Christophe as his subject. In later plays Walcott, like Synge, ‘sought out the poor as an adventure, as an illumination, only to arrive where ... back in the bleached, unpainted fishing village streets everywhere seemed salted with a reek of despair, a life, an illumination, only to arrive where ...’

And then the whole question of dialect began to interest me. 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 and gotten beauty out of it, a beat, something lyrical. Now that was inspiring, and the obvious model for The Sea at Dauphin. I guess I knew then that the more you imitate when you are young, the more original you become. If you know very clearly that you are imitating such and such a work, it isn’t that you are adopting another man’s genius; it is that he has done an experiment that has worked and will be useful to all writers afterwards. When I tried to translate the speech of the St Lucian fisherman into an English Creole, and that was a totally new experience for me even if it did come out of Synge.

First produced in 1954, The Sea at Dauphin is, like Riders to the Sea, a one-act tragedy. It is set near the St Lucian village of Dauphin, and is a play in which the ocean and poverty are antagonists faced with stoicism and dignity by the fishermen who mourn those who have been drowned at sea. Unlike Synge’s play, The Sea at Dauphin foregrounds the words and activity of men rather than women; and accordingly the language is less lyrical, the temper more aggressive and bitter; for example in this speech by one of the main protagonists, a 40-year-old fisherman named Afa:

And this new thing, compassion? Where is compassion? Is I does make poor people poor, or this sea vex? Is I that put rocks where should dirt by Dauphin side, man cannot make garden grow? Is I that swell little children belly with bad worm, and woman to wear clothes that white people use to wipe their foot?

This is drama that is a response to Synge rather than an imitation or translation of him, marking not only the comparisons with Synge’s representation of the Aran Islands, but also the differences between the language, histories and attitudes of the Irish and West Indian islanders. As Sandra Sprayer remarks, Walcott is thus ‘in dialogue with other texts that are themselves in dialogue with the colonizer’.

Walcott’s later plays, as well as his concept of the role and impact of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop he directed, continue to reveal the influence of Synge, although the dialogue becomes a conversation including other playwrights such as Genet, Soyinka and Brecht. Ti Jean and His Brothers dramatises a folktale which mingles African and European elements, drawing on the rituals of oral story-telling. A Dream on Monkey Mountain, like The Playboy, dramatises the movement from dumbness to eloquence, an eloquence made possible ‘by the power of a lie’.

Another West Indian dramatist who has entered into dialogue with Synge is Mustapha Matura, who in 1984 wrote The Playboy of the West Indies. Matura was at this point already an established writer, the author of at least a dozen plays, and so he enters into dialogue with Synge at a different point in his career, and one for whom Synge’s play works not so much as a formative influence as an analogy. (Like Brian Friel, he has also relocated Chekhov to his native island.) In an interview in the New York Times Matura explained that he wrote the play ‘because I’m constantly trying to understand the character of Trinidad and the Trinidadians. They are enormously resilient: they will be down, but they will always tell you a joke or offer a drink.'
That mirrors the Irish.  His version of the play is almost a line-by-line translation into a West Indian patois, with the same storyline of a supposed parricide lionised by the deprived (and slightly depraved) patrons of a small Trinidadian village rum shop. Perhaps the most significant change is his refashioning of the Widow Quin into an obeah woman named Mama Benin, who challenges the playboy’s story (he is called Ken in this version) mainly because it lacks authentic detail, and tells Ken, ‘Yer not telling de story right yer no.’ As Tobias Döring argues, ‘this battle for authorship and authenticity’, together with the explicit references to the theatricality of the scenes and the two audiences on stage and in the theatre, emphasises the play’s status as an adaptation. Other critics have found the characterisation, especially of Mama Benin, all too stereotypical, and lacking in depth and compassion with which Synge represents Pegeen and the community that Christy leaves bereft. Matura’s comparison of Trinidadians and the Irish quoted above might lead one to accept such a critique. Döring, however, sees the use of such stereotypes or prefabricated images as a deliberate strategy, ironically playing with ‘the common images in which West Indians, just like the Irish, have been captured and controlled. Instead of presenting Trinidad’s society in its richness and diversity, the play partly transfers European clichés to the Caribbean text but marks them as such transfers.

Matura’s *Playboy of the West Indies* was first written and performed for the Oxford Playhouse, and so for a largely white metropolitan audience for whom the comparisons between different sets of stereotypes constructed within England may be both distanced and recognisable. A more recent version of *The Playboy* by the Irish novelist Roddy Doyle and Nigerian-Irish dramatist Bisi Adigun was first staged at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 2007, marking the centenary of the first production of Synge’s *Playboy*. In this version the translation is not so much in terms of two different colonised peoples – although Christy becomes a Nigerian refugee in Dublin – but in terms of rural and urban Ireland, and the contrast is between a remote rural society at the turn of the twentieth century and a globalised urban Dublin at the turn of the twenty-first century. And in this case a Dublin audience reacts not to the de-sentimentalised representation of Irish peasantry, but to a particular urban community and language already made familiar through Rody Doyle’s novels. Thus this translation was met not with shock or dismay but seeming recognition and delight, and the use of swear words so disquieting for the Abbey audience 100 years ago, merely produced giggles and titters from a twenty-first-century audience. Pegeen’s final grief-stricken line ‘Oh, my grief, I’ve lost him surely. I’ve lost the only right yer no.’42 As Tobias Döring argues, ‘this battle for authorship and authenticity’, together with the explicit references to the theatricality of the scenes and the two audiences on stage and in the theatre, emphasises the play’s status as an adaptation. Other critics have found the characterisation, especially of Mama Benin, all too stereotypical, and lacking in depth and compassion with which Synge represents Pegeen and the community that Christy leaves bereft. Matura’s comparison of Trinidadians and the Irish quoted above might lead one to accept such a critique. Döring, however, sees the use of such stereotypes or prefabricated images as a deliberate strategy, ironically playing with ‘the common images in which West Indians, just like the Irish, have been captured and controlled. Instead of presenting Trinidad’s society in its richness and diversity, the play partly transfers European clichés to the Caribbean text but marks them as such transfers.

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11. Ibid.
14. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 52-3.
20. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p. 69.
32. Ibid., p. 9.
33. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 17.
44. Ibid., p. 92.