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## **Kenyan and Algerian Literary Connections** **Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Kateb Yacine**

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# الروابط بين الأدبين الكيني و الجزائري نقوفي و ثينقو - كاتب ياسين

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Comparative literature falls into two broad categories of studies. The first category is called analogy studies or the study of literary affinities, whereas, the second is referred to as the study of influences or indebtedness. Analogy studies are mostly concerned with the exploration of the psychological, social, political and economic contexts or backgrounds of literary creation across societies. They seek to explain how writers living in societies widely separated in terms of time or space, manage to write in identical ways about more or less similar themes. Similarities between works are traced to diffusion of literary ideas and forms from one cultural area to another as a result of factors like education, colonialism, trade and other contacts. Studies of literary influence or indebtedness, unlike analogy studies, explain similarities between works of literature on other grounds than those related to background or contexts.

The majority of academic work in African comparative literature to date has mostly been done within the framework of influence type studies. It is because all African authors belonging to what is commonly called Modern African Literature have come under the influence of Western authors. This influence is the outcome of the humanist education they have received in western-type schools, which they received during the colonial period.

Of the two brands of African comparative literature we have mentioned above, the influence type of study stands out most prominently. Indeed, it is so prominent that two authors of Modern African literature namely Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah have not hesitated to denounce what they call “colonialist criticism”. Through their public pronouncements, Achebe and Armah, each in his own way, have tried to put an end to a re-appropriation of Modern African Literature through

the inducting process of always trying to find the “origins” of African literary works in Western Literature.

The problem with the influence type of study in African literature is that they defeat their purpose by being confined within a limited body of data in terms of both space and time. African authors coming from what is formerly called “French Zones” of influence are compared to their French counterparts. Those issued from “English Zones” are put in the companionship of English authors. Jean Marc Mouras explains this confinement as follows: “In the Francophone background of studies, the majority of academics involved do not speak English very well, and therefore, have little access to the Anglophone body of work”. (Mouras. 1992. 08).

Such a tendency in influence types of study in African comparative literature has resulted in the separation of African authors into dubiously delimited zones of cultural and literary activity. The confinement and restriction have reduced also the comparison between African authors, especially those coming from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

One of our purposes in this research is to break away from the deadlock of the influence type of studies predominant in African Comparative Literature by carrying out an analogy study on two African authors, namely Ngugi Wa Thiong O from Kenya and Kateb Yacine from Algeria. If we have chosen to undertake this comparative study within the analogical type of Comparative Literature, it is because there are no indicators whatever that either of the two authors have come into contact with each other.

To our knowledge, no comparative study has been done between Ngugi and Kateb even though each of them has received quite a substantial volume of criticism. The two authors have lived far from each other, in two distinct and different

corners of the African continent, Europe and America. In addition, all the works we have consulted so far, do not reveal any influence of Kateb on Ngugi or vice versa. This can be explained by the fact that Kateb's works have not been translated into English. The lack of contact between the two writers lies also in the fact that Ngugi belongs to the Anglophone background related to the Anglo American universities, while Kateb is linked to what is known as the Francophone background of studies. The influence type of comparative analysis is, therefore, not relevant to our study of Ngugi and Kateb. Indeed, no public pronouncements have evidenced that one of them has influenced the other.

Our analysis will focus on two novels and four plays. Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat (1967) and Kateb's Nedjma (1956) will be compared in terms of literary affinities. In drama, Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi (1976) and I Will Marry When I Want (1982) will be compared to Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé (1954) and Mohamed, prends ta valise (1971).

The choice of this corpus is justified on the following grounds: Ngugi's and Kateb's works cannot be covered in the space of a Magister dissertation like this one. Doing otherwise would be considered over-ambitious. However, the circumscription of the corpus to the works mentioned can be further justified by the fact that they are most comparable in both form and content.

Since the corpus of our study involves novels and plays, we shall draw from some theories of novels and plays for our analysis. As regards the theories of the novel, our study will rely on Marxist Criticism and the foundations of our approach are based on the „Reflectionist Model” of the Hungarian thinker, Georg Lukàcs described especially in his book, The Theory of the Novel (1920), translated into English in 1971. Lukàcs insists on art as a representation claiming that life itself is

the criterion for artistic beauty. Art grows out of life and creativity produces it; the fidelity and depth of this reproduction is the true measure of artistic perfection. He also argues that literature, in general, and the novel, in particular, is the most effective means of throwing light on the problems of social life, and an excellent weapon in the ideological preparation of the democratic revolution that people expect. For Luckas, the best literature examines the structure of interrelated parts of reality that he calls „totality in a correct form, which is to be found in the works of Honoré De Balzac, Walter Scott or Léo Tolstoy. The works embody knowledge of the contradictory content of capitalist society as it develops. Lukàcs based his reflectionist model on a central basis called „typicality or the concept of „type . By this term, he means that the truth is in the reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances. (Lukacs. 1971: 60).

We shall supplement Luckacs s theory by appealing to the theoretical guidelines and critical approach of Northrop Frye provided in his The Secular Scripture. A Study of Structure of Romance (1982) to show that Ngugi s A Grain of Wheat and Kateb s Nedjima contain some elements of romance. Frye s theory includes some features like mystery, the use of myth and love story theme.

In relation to drama criticism, we intend to appeal both to Aristotle s Poetics and to Bertold Brecht s theory of the Epic theatre. The choice of these methodological frameworks is necessary because both Ngugi and Kateb shift their emphasis from Aristotelian dramatic theatre to the epic theatre. In Aristotle s Poetics, the Greek philosopher defines tragedy as “a serious dramatic performance, complete, of a certain magnitude, and embellished by different forms” (Cf. Murray and Dorsch. 1965: 06).

In the 1970s, Ngugi and Kateb shifted their interests from the tragic to the Epic theatre of Bertold Brecht, as part of their commitment to spur people into action to change their societies. Unlike Aristotle, Brecht refutes the illusion of the Greek theatre and notes that events and people are more important than the plot because they contribute to the change that occurs in society. Brecht develops drama as a social and ideological forum for the Marxist cause, where individualism has no place. For Brecht, drama is a “shield against colonial and neo-colonial indoctrination, more controversially, as a weapon of class struggle and the metaphor that needs to be put in a historical context”.(Cf.Bartram,Waine.1982: 83).

The German dramatist rejects Greek tragedy on the ground that it stood beyond the dilemma of nearness to life. For him, life is not organically absent from modern drama. One of the salient features of the Brechtian theatre is the “Verfremdungs Effekt,” or the “alienation effect”, a technique that constantly reminds the audience that they are in a theatre. The spectator is an observer who judges, assesses and draws his own conclusions and then is motivated to react on what he has experienced on the stage. Therefore, importance is given to historical events and social issues that are part of the spectator's own existence.

The outline of our comparative study will be divided into four chapters. The first will be devoted to the contexts in which Ngugi and Kateb have produced their novels. Some references to the British colonisation of Kenya will be necessary to relate the coloniser's oppression and dispossession that led to the increase of violence through the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s. Similarly, the Algeria described in Nedjima is that of French colonisation, characterised by the expropriation of peasants from their fertile lands and the large-scale repression that reached its peak during the events of 8 may 1945.



Throughout the second chapter, we shall show that any attempt to understand the two works, makes it necessary to consider the biography of the two authors and connect their own worlds with their social relations and moral qualities. Our first task will be to show how the two writers' involvement, directly or indirectly, in the popular struggles are rendered in their literary creations. Reference will be made to the biographical elements that unite the two writers. In so doing, we shall attempt to provide answers to some questions such as how the two authors' childhood influenced their adult lives.

The third chapter will deal with the comparison of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma at the level of form and content. Our analysis will be carried out by a comparison of characters, structure and mode of writing. The task will be to find the extent to which their received western education and literatures have influenced their way of writing. Emphasis will be put mainly on the use of some techniques, which echo modernist writings. The question worth to be raised is to know if the two novels fall in the modernist writing category or not, knowing that A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma are rooted in the Kenyan and the Algerian legends, folktales and popular myths.

Another feature of importance useful to be discussed in the two works of fiction is Ngugi's and Kateb's use of elements of romance. For such a purpose, we shall try to explore the two novels in order to single out some items relevant to romance, such as the quest, mystery and love story.

The last chapter will be concerned with Ngugi's and Kateb's commitment to rehabilitate their cultures. In turning to their African sources, the two writers stopped to use the language of their oppressors and see drama as the best medium to share their ideas and their preoccupations with the masses. Theatre becomes for both

Ngugi and Kateb a means to make their works accessible to a wider African audience.

At the beginning of their careers as playwrights, Ngugi and Kateb were fascinated by the tragic theatre based on heroism. Our efforts will be concentrated to show how Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb's Le Cadavre encerlé are inspired from the Greek tragedy as it is described in Aristotle's Poetics. Our purpose is to demonstrate that these plays are conceived as tragedies. It is also our intention, in the same chapter, to explore the political, economic and social circumstances, which led the two playwrights to uncover the ills and the sufferings of the peasants and workers, caused by the neo-colonialists. As part of their commitment to the betterment of life in their societies, Ngugi and Kateb stressed satire rather than tragedy. Our aim will be to examine Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise in order to identify some features of Bertold Brecht's epic theatre.

Nevertheless, to study and to explore the political, social and psychological convergences between Ngugi and Kateb adequately, it will be necessary, in addition to the selected novels and plays, to refer to other works produced by the same authors when necessary.

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Contemporary criticism has dismantled the bridges connecting novels to their historical world and the biographies of their authors. Hence, some modern formalist theories have focused attention on individual works as independent units of meaning. These critical approaches to literature, like American New Criticism or Russian Formalism, believe that literature obeys its own laws in a way far from representation, reference or historical context. It follows also, from this assumption that contemporary critics are opposed to the critical practice of bringing biographical data or elements to bear on the interpretation of a literary work.

However, in African literature, it is impossible to miss out the fact that commitment and realism still hold their grounds especially in novels. The necessities of political engagement and the urgency of the situation make it impossible for an African writer to swerve or break away completely from a certain literary utilitarianism. In this regard, the South African critic, Lewis Nkosi says: "Modern African writing has its origins in the politics of the anti-colonial struggle and still bears the marks of that struggle". (Nkosi. 1981:1, quoted in M. K. Booker. P.21).

In our view, the formalist theory cannot be applied with regard to our study of Ngugi Wa Thiong O and Kateb Yacine. The main argument lies in the fact that the two writers neither elevate their art above the pains and the traumas of their societies nor conceive their literary works outside their historical, socio- political, and cultural contexts. In fact, Ngugi's and Kateb's bitter and painful experiences of colonialism had a profound effect on their imagination and led them to engage with their countrymen's struggle for independence. As committed writers, their fictions are affected by politics and can be included in what can be called "anti-colonialist narratives", where writers are regarded as militants, fighting in their own way the foreign occupation.

In the present chapter, we are concerned with the analysis of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma. The two novels were written during the turbulent period of colonial transformation in Africa in the 1950s and the 1960s. At that time, many African movements, fighting for independence, emerged in some African colonies. As products of that time, Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma reflect the realities of British and French domination and express the deepest aspirations of their authors for freedom and independence.

#### I - Historical Similarities. Land Expropriation in Kenya and Algeria

Our analysis of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma can produce comprehensive results, unless we try to place these works of fiction in their historical contexts. In other words, our examination of the novels brings to the fore the necessity to link them to their historical circumstances in which they were produced. In so doing, we shall trace back from the beginning the British colonisation of Kenya and the French conquest of Algeria.

It is worth noting, however, that it is not our concern to analyse the history of Kenya or that of Algeria. Rather, our purpose is to select some historical facts, referred to or focussed upon by the two authors in the two selected novels. By comparison of the events, described by Ngugi and Kateb in their respective novels, we shall attempt to show the similarities between the two struggles by drawing some parallels between the British and French motives, the causes of their presence in Kenya and Algeria and the way in which the two settler colonies coped with colonialism. We may put more emphasis on some historical events such as the Mau Mau rebellion and the 8 May 1945 uprising and the causes that propelled these

revolts. Our insistence on these rebellions is justified by their relevance, their importance, and their respective impacts on the two writers.

However, assuming that we are concerned with the Kenyan and Algerian affinities, as the title of our topic indicates, our chief purpose will be, then, to seek for analogies rather than differences between the two struggles. Emphasis will be placed, thus, on the Kenyan and Algerian's common history of resistance against foreign intrusion, their long and continuous fight for national independence and freedom from oppression. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to claim that these revolts are identical and deny the differences that may exist between them. The Algerian revolt involved a large amount of participation, co-operation and co-ordination among people, which is not the case for Kenya where the revolt was partial.

#### 1-a- The Land Issue in Ngugi's Novel

The Kenyans' colonial experience of land confiscation can be compared to the extensive expropriation of the Algerians of their fertile lands. As colonies of settlement, the colonial regimes naturally seized the "tribal" lands. Consequently, the effects of land alienation on the two societies were long, deep and enduring.

In A Grain of Wheat, the history of the British colonisation of Kenya forms the cornerstone of the narrative. At the very beginning of Chapter one, Ngugi embraces the whole contemporary history of his country and traces the history of the movement for freedom. He starts from "the arrival of the white men with guns". He particularly refers to the early days of Waiyaki, the protest of "Harry Thuku, and the birth of the party". Ngugi mentions the "detention camps", and "the Emergency Period" too. To grasp fully these events and have an adequate understanding of the content of the novel's narrative, we need to go back to the first British settlements

and colonisation of Kenya which started during the last decades of the nineteenth century, when European countries especially Britain and Germany, began to colonise an area of the British East Africa now called Kenya.

Before dealing with the British colonisation, we think it worthwhile to note that, long before the British presence in Kenya, the country had been a coveted by foreign powers, in order to lay hand on its fertile lands, its ivory and its wild animals. The Bantu people, the Arabs, the Portuguese, and the British conquered Kenya. Foreign western intruders started their intrusion as explorers, peaceful traders, and missionaries and finally became colonisers at the end of the 19th century. That period marked the beginning of most of Kenya's contemporary political, social and cultural troubles; all of them were linked to the land expropriation.(Cf. Davidson.1978: 87).

The conquest had its roots in the Berlin Congress of 1884/1885 when the European powers partitioned Africa in zones of interest under their political control. The British expansion in Kenya began with the conquest of 1887. The British Imperial East African Company, a trading organisation under government control, rented the land from the sultan of Zanzibar, who ruled over the area. A year later, Great Britain obtained a concession for all the country, which became a British Protectorate. In 1896, the Land Acquisition Act, allowed the colonial administration to acquire lands for a railway line. Meanwhile, Europeans, living a „fin-de-siècle economic and social crisis realised that the sparsely populated land promised political and economic opportunities. The British government issued a Land Ordinance Act in 1902, allowing the white settlers to acquire lands in Kenya by expropriating the “natives” off their lands. (Maloba.1998:10).

In 1915, another Ordinance Act increased the power of the colonial governor who was given total authority to: “grant, lease or otherwise alienate, on his Majesty’s behalf, any Crown lands for any purpose and on any terms as he may think fit”. The Ordinance not only stopped the expansion of the natives by reducing their lands, but also forced them to live in reserves after establishing boundaries in the Gikuyu Highlands. The problem of expropriation and the British policy of land confiscation and the deprivation of the Kikuyu of their land holdings was the major cause of violence and rebellion. (Ibid. 26).

In 1920, Kenya became a colony state. The British settlement increased prominently and the white settlers were given all the economic and political tools to dominate the local populations. Basil Davidson elucidates the foreign settlers’ power as follows:

In colonies where white settlement was comparatively large and long established as in Kenya and in Algeria, the white minorities, although numerically small, had been encouraged by their “motherlands”, France and Britain to regard themselves as residuary legatees of imperial power. (Davidson. 1994: 178).

Davidson also indicates that by 1915, white settlers occupied about 4.5 million acres of excellent Kikuyu lands and they focussed their attention on the central part of the Rift Valley, taking the lands of the Kikuyu that they legitimated by the fact of not having the rightful ownership over the land. (Davidson. 1978: 118).

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi describes the Kikuyu as an organised society and claims that its radical disruption was caused mainly by the intrusion of foreign political and cultural forces through land confiscation. Kihika, one of the main characters, voices the extensive expropriation of the Kikuyu peasants as follows:

whether the land was stolen from Gikuyu, Ubabi or Nandi, it does not belong to the white men (...)The white man owns hundreds and hundreds of acres of land. What about the black men who squat



there, who sweat dry on the farms to grow coffee, tea, sisal, wheat and yet only get ten shilling a month. (P.85).

The importance of land for the Kenyans can be explained by the fact that the economy of the “natives”, before the coming of Europeans, was based on few things. They had no system of currency. So, wealth was measured in terms of land, sheep, goats and cattle, as Ngugi states in his novel, Weep Not Child (1965): “A man with tattered clothes but has at least an acre of red earth was better off than the man with money”. (Ngugi.1965: 19).

Besides the material benefits, the land has a spiritual importance for the Kikuyu. It is the soul of all the tribe. Its members work it according to the tribal norms, following its social organisation based on help. But the white man changed the order in his attempt to “civilise” the “natives”. The confiscation of land, the introduction of currency, and the concept of taxation resulted in the destruction of the traditional customs and the social order of the tribe. This issue is widely discussed in a book by the prominent political leader and president of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, frequently mentioned in A Grain of Wheat.

Kenyatta's anthropological book Facing Mount Kenya (1938), describes the importance of land and the deep attachment of the Gikuyu to it. The second chapter of the book, entitled “Land tenure”, evidences the twofold importance of land as a “mother” who feeds her people by being a source of material goods and a link that binds the Gikuyu to their ancestors. The natives regard the land as the foundation rock on which their tribal economy stands and is the only effective mode of production that they have. The result is that there is a great desire in the heart of every Gikuyu man to own a piece of land on which he can build his home, and from which he and his family can get the means of livelihood. The Gikuyu people depend entirely on the land which supplies them with the material needs of life and through

which spiritual and moral contentment is achieved. Communion with the ancestral spirits is perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe are buried. The connection of land with the ancestors was made physical, according to the Gikuyu tradition, in the shedding of blood during the rituals of circumcision undergone in the adolescence (Kenyatta.1938: 22,54).

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi mentions the “conscription of labour into the white men s lands” and “taxation”(P. 61,218). The two practices are related to the economic system, which prevailed during the colonial period. Once the British colonial authorities had expropriated many Gikuyu families off their lands, they attempted to force them into a situation where they would have nothing to sell but their labour. The landless farmers were forced to do hard work on the whites farms at low wages. It was a manner adopted by the settlers to achieve complete domination over the “natives”.

The politics adopted by the colonial government during the labour crisis following the end of the First World War was harsh and heightened the sufferings of the Kenyan populations. The colonial government imposed taxes, called Poll and Hut taxes, which had to be paid in cash by Kenyan farmers from their works on the whites plantations.(P.62). Through tax system, the colonial authorities secured a monopoly of cheap labour or even forced labour. Because of the wartime deficits, the colonial government doubled Hut and Poll taxes and tried to impose the „Kipande , referred to in A Grain of Wheat as “a pass-book”(P.146). „Kipande was an employment card with the holder s fingerprints that the „natives had to carry constantly outside the reserves. The white settlers justified the measure, as a means aimed at keeping track of their workers and cutting down crime. (Maloba.1998: 46).

## b- Land Dispossession in Kateb's Novel

In much the same way as in Kenya, Algeria was a subject to many invasions and conquests. In Nedjma, Kateb refers to the series of conquests and the long and enduring struggles of the Algerian people against the successive foreign intruders. For instance, Rachid, one of the protagonists of the novel, says: "Tandis que se succèdent les colonisateurs, les prétendants sans titre et sans amour...." (P.175). Kateb uses the memories of his characters, mainly, Lakhdar, Rachid and Mustapha to show that Algeria was an ideal target for many invaders. He went back to the earliest times of the glorious and heroic deeds of "les guerriers Numides" and the struggle of Jugurtha, a prominent Berber leader who had fought relentlessly the Roman oppressors. (P.102). The reference to the French conquest of Algeria is voiced by Si Mokhtar, one of the protagonists through his narration of the story of Keblout. The tribe was oppressed because of its involvement in the rebellion, and its members challenged French power by refusing to abandon their lands. Si Mokhtar describes the way in which the tribe was harried by the French conquerors (P.126).

The French conquest began in 1830, when the French troops landed on the shores of Algiers and took hold of the capital. Once the French soldiers had satisfied their rage of plunder, they began to secure their gains by penetrating further into the interior. In 1834, Algeria became a French „department and was declared as an integral part of France and a territory for settlement. (Cf. R.Oliver.1967: 128).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Algeria had already been ruled for many years as a French territory and the French colons, living in Algeria, preserved their civic rights. For example, they elected their own „députés to the National Assembly in Paris and exercised a steady pressure on French politics. As a French „department , Algeria s political authority was placed under a Governor General, a

high ranking-officer, invested with civil and military jurisdiction responsible to the Minister of War. The French policy that prevailed at that time was known as “le régime du sabre” whose purpose was to reduce the local populations to economic, social and political inferiority. (Lacheraf. 1978: 48).

In the second section of his novel, Kateb alludes to the large-scale confiscation of cultivated lands, which followed the crushing of many local resistances in Algeria. For instance, Rachid's and Mourad's fathers had been victims of land confiscation.(P.72) The process of land expropriation is widely discussed in Roland Oliver and J.D Fage's book, A short History of Africa where the two authors state:

In 1840, General Bugeaud embarked on a policy of relentless expelling Algerian tribes and replacing them by European colonists. But, even this drastic policy could not provide a final answer to the problem facing the French, because it was clearly impracticable to push all the Algerian tribes into the Sahara. (Oliver. 1967:128).

Land alienation was restricted mainly to the fertile plains of the Tell, which receive regular quantities of rain. As a reaction to land confiscation, many rebellions rose against the French occupation. In Nedjma, Kateb praises the „échec plein de gloire” of the revolt organised by Abdelkader and regards him as a hero, “L'homme de plume et d'épée, seul chef capable d'unifier les tribus pour s'élever au stade de la nation”(P.96). The author mentions also the outcomes of the “tribal revolts”, and Bugeaud's ruthless reprisals in expropriating a great number of Algerian families off their lands in favour of the foreign settlements. (P. 72).

The confiscation of land became extensive after the crushing of the local revolt in Kabylia led by El Mokrani in 1871. The French colonialists confiscated 500,000 acres of “tribal” land, reducing the local populations to misery and hopelessness and placing the region under what was known as “le Régime

d'exception". The bad situation that prevailed at that time was worsened by a disastrous drought, which had struck Algeria in 1866, ensuring several years of starvation, famine and pestilence. (Lacheraf. 1978:18).

At the political level, in nearly a similar way as in Kenya, an extensive civil power was granted to the colonial government. The latter began "une mise en valeur" of the colonised areas by investment and gradual establishment of an economic infrastructure especially in the matter of road building. The deprivation and denial of any political power to the „indigènes" were the main reasons that gave birth to protest. In this context, Mohamed Harbi asserts that Algerians became mere users of land, or tenants who may be displaced at will for the benefit of the French settler:

Avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, les colons ont accaparé les terres les plus riches et plus productives (65 pour cent de la production agricole). Le capitalisme français, qui contrôle les banques, le commerce et l'industrie, a le monopole du marché algérien. L'encadrement du pays est presque exclusivement Européen. (Harbi. 1980: 7).

As the occupation continued, the French colonial State had not only a total domination of the Algerian economy, but sought also to assimilate the Algerian population by spreading the French language and forbidding the teaching of Arabic. The fact is denounced in Nedjma through Rachid's father, a teacher of Arabic "suspendu à plusieurs reprises, puis révoqué pour n'avoir pas tenu compte des sanctions" (P.147). The colonial effort of assimilation, as Mohamed Harbi explains, is due to the various ways the colonial State used to undermine the "native" culture and to promote its own. Harbi sums up the French attempt to assimilate the Algerian population as follows:

La séparation de la religion et de l'Etat est appliquée au christianisme et au judaïsme, mais non à l'islam dont les muftis, imams, etc, sont

nommés et révoqués par l'administration coloniale et non pas soumis au contrôle des fidèles (...). La langue arabe, persécutée, a été déclarée en 1939 langue étrangère au pays. (Harbi. 1998: 91).

Unlike the British, the French colonisers were obsessed by a desire to inculcate, even in a compulsory way, their language, traditions and culture to the Algerian populations. In this respect, Harbi writes :«l'Etat colonial exerce une emprise totale sur les activités culturelles et religieuses de la communauté algérienne pour déraciner, par la francisation, la culture arabe et l'islam». (Harbi.1980: 9).

## 2 - The Rise of Nationalism in Kenya and Algeria

Initially, the Algerian and the Kenyan nationalists were implicated in organised political activities, but not in the struggle for independence. In both countries, nationalism began with some western educated leaders who used new concepts such as political representation, reforms, self- determination and self-government. Some of them used also new organisations that transcended traditional society. The goals and the objectives of the new elite were to achieve independence within the framework of the colonies created by colonial powers. Moreover, the claims of the Algerian and the Kenyan politicians were not to overthrow the colonial regimes, but rather to require more extensive participation in decision-making and administration.

With regard to Kenya, political considerations began to usurp the place of prominence formerly occupied by economic problems after the First World War. Hence, important political developments were taking place. The protest came first from people who suffered most from land grabbing. The “natives” who had participated in the First World War carried on the discontent. These people were

aware that colonialism could be defeated through organised activities. To represent the tribes grievances, some political organisations started in the 1920s and the 1930s. A class of young Africans educated in colonial schools, as was the case in many African colonies, generally led the protest. This generation was promoted into the colonial and missionary institutions, but only to a certain point. They were given a chance to get an education in the British and missionary institutions but they were excluded from political or economic participation. Consequently, they started to organise themselves in associations which opposed land alienation, compulsory labour, tax increases and wage cuts. (Maloba.1998: 46).

One of the first figures of nationalism in Kenya, cited repeatedly in Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat, was Harry Thuku, a clerk in Government service who founded the Young Kikuyu Association in 1921. The members of Thuku organisation demanded mainly African representation in the Legislative Council. They based their protest on some important issues, such as the Kipande card, the doubling of Hut and Poll taxes and the reduction of wages paid by settlers, mainly after the First World War. (Ngugi.pp.12, 66,218).

But, as soon as Thuku tried to expand his organisation to other parts of Kenya, he was sacked from his job, arrested and deported to the remote northern frontier district (in the coast of Mombassa) in 1922. The British detained the leader, hoping that the organisation would thereby collapse. But the arrest of Thuku did not prevent other political groups to spread widely among the Kikuyu who saw the arrest of their leader as a direct attack against their economic and political interests. To show their discontent, they organised a general strike in Nairobi. The police fired upon the demonstrators and the strike ended with the massacre of some demonstrators. But repression did not stop the protest. Resistance continued

against the low wages and the prohibition of coffee production by Africans. (Cf. Davidson. 1978: 159).

In 1925 the Young Kikuyu Association was renamed as the Kikuyu Central Association, which really got a boost from the female circumcision controversy in 1928. The conflict between the missionaries and the “natives” started when the Christian Missions in Kenya tried to ban the custom of female circumcision as part of their “civilising mission”, while the Kikuyu considered it as a ceremony followed by singing and dancing rituals. They saw it as a happy event where all the tribe took part. The disagreement between the two conflicting parts sharpened in 1929 and increased the resentment against European missionary control. The “natives” saw that there was no need and no use at all for the “modernity” and the destructive policy of the colonial authorities. For the Kikuyu, the aim of the mission was “to uproot the Africans”, by destroying the entity on which the tribe was built. The abolition of the surgical element in the custom meant to the Gikuyu the denial of the whole traditional ritual. The initiation of boys as well as girls, in Kenyan society, is looked upon as a deciding factor in giving a girl or a boy the status of womanhood or manhood. (Cf. Kenyatta.1938: 128).

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi also refers to the birth of the Kenyan Kikuyu Independent Schools (P.18), which Kenyatta and many teachers founded after they had left the mission. The Kenyan teachers established their own schools and freed them from the influence of the Church. Kenyatta, as a leader of these Independent School Associations, was fully involved in the growing political movement. He led the Kikuyu against the Christian Mission s campaign to prohibit female circumcision and came to prominence as a secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association, the principal representative of the Kikuyu at that time. The organisation formulated the



people's demands on cultural self-determination and claimed equal economic rights from the colonial authorities. They launched their own newspaper Muigwithania, edited by Kenyatta, and set up their own independent schools too. (Kenyatta.P. 263).

In 1929, Jomo Kenyatta was sent by the KCA members to London in order to lobby the British politicians, especially the Labour Party, who might sympathise with the Kikuyu claims regarding the land. The event is referred to in A Grain of Wheat (P.218). The politicians could also help to counter the pressure and influence, which the white settlers tended to exercise on the Kenyan government. When Harry Thuku was released from detention in 1931, he formed a moderate party, which quarrelled bitterly with the Kikuyu Central Association. The Kikuyu nationalists, therefore, were unable to present a unified front against the foreign ruler and settlers. The divergences among the nationalists suited naturally the British affairs. (Maloba.PP.48- 49).

Between the two World Wars, the colonial authorities set up an administration, prone to violence in order to put down the nationalist resistance. At that time, Peter Koinange, the son of a prominent family returned from the U.S.A in 1939 and led the nationalist movement. He established the Kenya Teacher's Training College with other teachers. Peter Koinange and some other nationalist played a major role in building independent movements and nationalist ideas (Olney.1973: 102).

In Algeria, the beginning of political awareness, as Kateb writes in Nedjima, began in the 1920s by people who had gained access to French education, known as „the educated few“. Algerian nationalism had its origins in the period following the First World War. The protest came primarily from the Algerian working class in France. The Algerian immigrants started to show their anger against the everyday

racism expressed by French. The nationalist movement included a small and influential group of Algerians who earned their living in the industrialised French sectors. Among the group, we can find those who had served in the French army during the First World War. The Algerian nationalists were prepared to consider permanent union with France, provided the rights of Frenchmen were extended to intellectual elements of Algeria. Such was the case with the organised “Young Algerians” led by Emir Khaled, the grandson of Abdelkader, the leader of tribal insurrections, captured and exiled in 1847 (Harbi. 1998:108).

As late as the 1930s, all Algerian nationalist groups were prepared to accept gradual reformist tactics, eschewing illegal actions. Their main concerns were to ban the unequal taxation, broaden the franchise, build more schools and protect the Algerians property. The nationalists sought for equality and asked the government for equal labour rights and the abolition of travel restrictions to France. (Harbi.1980:11).

However, the first nationalists to call for independence were the North African Star (Etoile Nord Africaine) members. Their claims were more proletarian and radical in orientation since they preached nationalism without nuance. The movement took an organisational form among the Algerian workers in France in 1926 under the leadership of Messali Hadj and was widely supported in Algeria as well. The Communist Party militants, who advocated the freedom of the press and schooling in Arabic, also joined the movement. In 1937, Messali turned from the Communist ideology to nationalist outlook and returned to Algeria to organise the urban and peasant masses. In the same year, he founded the Algerian People s Party (PPA). (Ibid. P.13).

Like Kenya, Algeria suffered from similar political restrictions and oppression because the French colonial authorities refused any reform issued by integrationist or nationalist organisations. They dissolved the North African Star, in 1929 and arrested its leader, Messali Hadj. But his arrest did not stop the continuation of the nationalist movement. The PPA gained widespread support until it was banned in 1939.(Ibid.PP.19-21).

In Nedjma, Kateb refers also to 1942, the year corresponds to the date of Nedjma s marriage with Kamal. (P.67). With regard to Algerian nationalism, the date matched the alliance of some assimilationist Muslim leaders and Ferhat Abbas, to the French side. The nationalists were ready to join the Allies, during the Second World War, in freeing their homelands, but demanded the right to call a conference of Muslim representatives to develop political, economic and social institutions for the Algerians “within an essentially French framework”. In the same year, Ferhat Abbas shifted from his assimilation tendency and full integration with France to self-determination. He drafted the Algerian Manifesto in 1943 to be presented to the Allies and to the French authorities. The political organisation called for an agrarian reform, the recognition of Arabic as an official language on equal terms with French, the recognition of civil liberties and the liberation of political prisoners of all parties. As a response, the French administration instituted a reform in 1944, granting full citizenship to 60, 000 people, among whom, military officers, decorated veterans, university graduates, government officials and holders of the Légion d'Honneur. (Harbi.1980.PP. 26- 27).

### 3 - Guerrilla Warfare in Kenya and in Algeria

The large number of Kenyan former service men, who had fought for Britain, came back from Asia. They brought with them new political thoughts, the knowledge of nationalism as well as the skills of the guerrilla warfare. Ngugi alludes, in A Grain of Wheat, to the thousands of Kenyan returning detainees and fighters from military fronts who found that their lands were forfeited and redistributed to the loyalists (P.83). Deprived of their holdings, the former soldiers directed their efforts to the recovery of their land by forming associations such as the Kikuyu Provincial Association, the Kikuyu Land Board Association or Kenya Central Association. Whatever differences the Kikuyu had, the land issue was the one on which all of them agreed. The organised groups worked, prepared petitions, undertook court cases and lobbied not only on the government but several commissions from Britain inquiring the land issue. Their efforts were, however, fruitless. (Cf. Maloba. P.40).

In addition to the discontented former service men, the growing poverty led to the rise of new workers unions who struggled for political rights in rural areas. The squatters were increasingly frustrated as the white settlers occupied most of their fertile land. Thus, the growing poverty, the political and economic exclusion led to anger and despair on the part of the poor who joined the urban proletariat in Nairobi and the radical wing of the unions there. The marginalized groups saw violence as the only path to get their independence. They first organised general strikes in Mombassa in 1947 and in Nairobi in 1950, as Ngugi points out in A Grain of Wheat (P.180). The demonstrations were followed by a ruthless repression and the recourse to counter-violence was inevitable.

Apart from the economic problems, one of the main formative elements in shaping the rebellion was that Kenyans were not allowed to organise politically.

Because of the increasing agitation, all forms of protest were outlawed in Kenya. The KCA was suppressed and part of it went underground. The colonial government suppressed the KCA newspaper, and harassed the association by restricting greatly its activities and raiding its offices in search for evidence of subversive activity by the police. In 1952, the KCA was banned and its leaders jailed.(Cf.Davidson.1978: 263).

The lack of any peaceful solution made it certain to Kenyans that an armed force maintained the colonial rule. Consequently, they were convinced that the only way to dislodge it was through armed resistance. Hence, in the 1950s, Kenya lived in a climate of tension, and many ingredients favoured the formation of the revolution and the outburst of what was known as the Mau Mau rebellion.(Ibid. 264).

The Mau Mau revolt, as Ngugi writes in A Grain of Wheat, began in the 1950s and found its roots in the Gikuyu tribes, which were mostly hurt by land confiscation. It was an uprising of peasants against colonial domination, its policies, and its agents. The peasants began to “take the oath”, leaving their homes and families in the direction of the forest, raiding and killing British settlers, mutilating their cattle and burning their farms. The acts were intended to instil fear into the settlers so that they would leave the country, and the Gikuyu regain their lost lands. The Mau Mau survived as a secret society and became a fighting force, as its members were able to get supplies and help from many sources. (Ibid.85).

From the beginning of the revolt, the British refused to see any legitimate reasons for the uprising. The Mau Mau fighters were called bloodthirsty savages and all means were used to demean the movement. The settlers and the colonial government, for instance, portrayed the rebellion as: “The welling up of the old unreconstructed Africa, which had not yet received sufficient colonial enlightenment

and discipline, the insurgents proved that colonialism still had a job to do". (Slaughter. 1991: 3).

Algeria experienced almost the same turmoil during the same period. The main historical event which forms the central theme on which Kateb Nedjma is based is undoubtedly the uprising of May 1945, which occurred nearly a decade before the beginning of the Algerian Revolution. The author refers to the event repeatedly and gives a vivid picture of the rebellion. Kateb moves the narrative back in time and presents the events of 8 May 1945, making Nedjma a highly political novel that goes well beyond a mere evocation of adolescent experiences. Politics is much part of the texture of Mustapha's adolescence world.

To explain fully the social and political unrest, which prevailed in Algerian society from 1944 to 1945, Redouane Aïnat Tabet provides an analysis of the different crises experienced by the different layers of the Algerian society. In his book entitled Le 8 Mai 45 en Algérie (1987), the author explains that the situation was fuelled in part by a poor wheat harvest, shortages of manufactured goods and severe unemployment rate. At the political level, the Algerian nationalist claims, even for civic and political equality, were suppressed and repressed. The crisis penetrated every aspect of life and the signs of an approaching storm were all too apparent. (A.Tabet.1987: 29).

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, a large demonstration was organised by the Algerian nationalists. The demonstration was allowed to be held in Sétif in the same day, but on condition that the nationalist flags or placards were not displayed, but the demonstrators ignored the warning. Therefore, gunfire resulted in the death of a policeman and many demonstrators, and a full-scale riot followed. The army and the police responded immediately by conducting a prolonged and systematic raking over the

suspected centres of dissidence using military aeroplanes, to repress the civil populations. During the week following the uprising, the French authorities continued the use of violence to squash the revolt and stop the emergent independence movement by issuing a series of repressive and harsh measures. The party of Les Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté (AML) was outlawed and 5,460 Algerians were arrested, including Ferhat Abbas, who deplored the use of violence from the two sides. (Ibid. 85 - 86).

In the aftermath of the Sétif unrest, Algerian nationalism witnessed many quarrels for leadership and efforts to unite all the political trends came to failure. Ferhat Abbas who gained the support of Messali Hadj in forming the Friends of the Manifesto and Liberty (AML) failed and the alliance of the Muslim leaders did not last long. In 1946, F. Abbas, who in 1934, had doubted the existence of Algerian fatherland wrote: "The Algerian personality, the Algerian fatherland which I couldn't find in 1934, I find them today". He founded the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto,(UDMA), abandoning the alliance with the (AML) and called for a free secular and republican Algeria, federated with France.(Cf.S.N.Boudiaf and M. L. Maougal.2004: 152).

At the same period, Messali Hadj formed the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, MTLD, committed to unequivocal independence and opposed Abbas's proposal of federation. The supporters of the party attempted to promote Messali's concept of independence contrarily to the advocates of moderate autonomy. The nationalist efforts to combine their forces were a failure. (Harbi. 1980: 31).

The disunion of the Algerian nationalists is represented in Kateb's Nedjma by the separation of the four characters at the end of the novel. Mildred Mortimer and

Jean Dejeux have drawn a parallel between the leaders disagreement and the characters dispersion.(Cf. Mortimer.1990: 87).

Kateb s Nedjma, which ends before the beginning of the Algerian Liberation War but its author gives prominence to collective action rather than to leadership and individual heroism: « plus de discours, plus de leader, de vieux fusils hoquetaient » (P.52). The fact can be linked to that period when the Algerian nationalists rejected any mere reform of existing structures and institutions because they were convinced that these reforms could yield national unity and change. This conviction gave birth to a radical organisation and to relentless struggle for independence. Members of the PPA, an outlawed party that continued to operate clandestinely, formed the radical group who created secret political cells throughout Algeria and paramilitary groups in Kabylia and the Constantine region. The emergence of the advocates of revolution began their work as a secret organisation (OS) in 1947. They were obliged to do military operations since political protest through legal channels was banned. The situation was fuelled by the rigged elections of 1948 for an Algerian Assembly that made it clear that the peaceful solution to Algerians problems was not possible. (Harbi.1998: 69).

Although the Algerian war started officially in 1954, the nationalists attacks had started earlier. In 1950, the French police discovered that the robbery of the Oran post office had been the act of the Secret Organisation (OS), led by Ben Bella. The group, whose opposition to the French colonisation became increasingly radical, began to prepare the revolution. It was known as the Revolutionary Committee of Unity and Action (CRUA). Nine nationalist leaders, known as the „Historical Chiefs , namely; Hocine Ait Ahmed, Mohamed Boudiaf, Belkacem Krim, Rabah Bitat, Larbi Ben Mhidi, Mourad Didouche, Moustapha Ben Boulaid, Mohamed



Khider and Ahmed Ben Bella, led the organisation. In 1954, the Secret Organisation became the National Liberation Front (FLN) and assumed the responsibility for political direction of the Revolution that rested on the National Liberation Army (ALN), a military branch, which conducted the war for independence. (Ibid.71,72).

No matter what the similarities between the Mau Mau revolt and the Algerian revolution, the former cannot be put on a pair with the latter for some reasons. The Algerian Liberation War was one of the bitterest and longest anti-colonial wars ever waged in Africa. It was characterised by the stubbornness of the French to retain the country and the determination of the Algerian people to achieve liberty. On the contrary, in Kenya, the war started in 1952 and finished in 1957. It did not last a long time and did not involve, as much participation as in Algeria. The fiercest opposition to the colonial authorities in Kenya was limited to the Kikuyu tribes. Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore maintain:

In East Africa, discontent with European rule still assumed mainly tribal form. The history of nationalism in Kenya, for example, is largely the history of Kikuyu dissatisfaction and resistance. The number of the Kikuyu was increasing rapidly. Their natural path of expansion out of the forests around Mount Kenya was blocked by the European settlers. Many became squatters and farm labourers on European estates, while others left the land and joined the growing number of the unemployed in Nairobi. (Oliver, Atmore. 1967:169).

We do not mean, however, that the two wars for independence are totally different. The struggle in Kenya bears some resemblance to that of Algeria in many aspects. First of all, freedom fighters in both Kenya and Algeria used nearly the same tactics and had the same objectives. Both adopted guerrilla warfare based on surprise attacks, sabotage, derailment of trains and many other acts of violence. The guerrillas were known for their use of unorthodox military tactics to fight on small scale, using sudden raids and limited actions against military forces. Within a

short time, the acts quickly spread to urban centres where the fighters used sudden attacks against the French and British interests.

In both countries, the two colonial governments reacted ruthlessly to quieten the insurgencies. As a response to the growing protest and the rising violence, the colonial forces destroyed the main urban cells of the Algerian Liberation Army (ALN). It was followed by intensive bombardments, massacres of the civil populations and the burning of villages. In 1955, the majority in the French National Assembly voted a State of Emergency in Algeria. The French State was compelled to mobilize 400,000 troops to repress the mounting violence. The French colonial government's reaction was characterised by massive dispossession, imprisonment, torture and execution of hostages. (Harbi. P.126).

In its attempts to crush the insurgency and to separate the fighters from their network supplies, the French army was given power to establish „a regrouping policy or „settlement camps that can be paralleled to „villagisation in Kenya. Villages were surrounded by barbed wires under searchlights where the villagers were compelled to respect the curfew. Anyone suspected of collaboration with the rebels was directly sent to detention camp, which spread over the two countries. In addition, the use of torture and brutal interrogation methods to get information from detainees were common coin in Kenya and in Algeria. A description of some of the practices used is provided in Nedjma through Lakhdar's arrest. (PP.55-56). In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi describes the torture of Kihika by the Special Branch to get some information about the other Mau Mau fighters (P.17).

In Algeria, the anxieties engendered by the French defeat in Indochina led the French soldiers to wage a campaign of repression against the FLN and its collaborators. The French soldiers had suffered a deep humiliation at Dien Bien Phu

and were determined to get revenge on the “Viets” in Algeria. They established a system of repression, which included concentration camps like the famous “Ferme Ameziane” in Constantine where over a hundred thousand of Algerians, died and disappeared. In the same farm, the use of torture enabled the French soldiers to gather information about the plans of the war. But, the cruel oppression and repression stiffened the Algerian resistance and reinforced the yearning for independence and increased popular support of the FLN. (Cf.Vidal-Naquet.1982: 119-120).

Unlike the Mau Mau, the F.L.N succeeded in building and maintaining mass participation. By 1956, even the most formerly assimilationist leader Ferhat Abbas adhered to the F.L.N. The organisation was led by intellectuals and educated men such as Abane Ramdane, Khider Mohamed or Ben Mhidi Larbi. For the Algerian nationalist leaders, the element of spontaneity was reduced and a great deal of effort was directed to organisation and education, i.e. the politicisation of the peasants. Though censorship was set in place on a large scale, the nationalists were able to convey their encouragement through clandestine newspapers such as El Moudjahid or the magazine entitled El Djeich. The FLN succeeded to maintain its power and to convince people through an information network glorifying the struggle of the nationalists and inciting them to continue their mission to the end. In one of the articles, we can read: « Le fellah est devenu lieutenant ou capitaine, il a l'intellectuel sous ses ordres, il y a un nouveau visage dans l'unité nationale qui se forge dans la lutte». (Mandouze. 1962: 92).

The F.L.N organisation proved its efficiency in 1956 when the representatives of various insurgent groups met at the Soummam Congress to form the national council of the Algerian Revolution (CNRA). The Soummam meeting organised the

revolution and created military ranks and six administrative districts. The ALN intended to co-ordinate the revolutionary activities of numerous small-armed groups that developed during the previous two years. The military department of the executive co-ordinating committee of the CNRA controlled the ALN. In 1958, a provisional government was established in Tunis. The guerrilla warfare at home was followed by diplomatic activity abroad, mainly in the United Nations Organisation. After the Evian negotiations, Algeria gained its independence in 1962. (Cf. Harbi.1998: 173, 175).

Our examination of the background and the context in which Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma were written, lead us to reach some conclusions. First, by putting emphasis on the main historical events referred to in A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma, we have noticed that both writers give a great importance to the past and trace the nationalist movements for independence from their very beginnings to the outburst of the revolts.

Second, we have established the way in which the Kenyan and the Algerian peoples had lost their lands, and how they had been subjected to compulsory work for the British and French settlers against low wages. We have shown also how the situation of the „natives“, in both countries, worsened during and after the First World War because of the various restrictive measures and taxes. In the two countries, the unbearable conditions had been the formative circumstances that gave birth to protests, the emergence of nationalist ideas, and the outburst of rebellions.

The Algerian and the Kenyan political awareness went through comparable steps; assimilation, rise of nationalism, and war for liberation. The Algerian and the Kenyan nationalists followed nearly the same path, hoped for similar victories and had to pay, to a certain extent, the same price for independence.

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It is true that many critical movements of the twentieth century have tended to ignore, demean and place the biography of the author on the periphery. This new wave of literary criticism, to borrow the words of T.S Eliot, has given more importance to the study of the text as „an autonomous art object . Following this assumption, Roland Barthes wrote an essay entitled, “The Death of the Author”(1981). In this essay, he claims that it is not the author who speaks, but language. For Barthes, neither writers nor readers should attach high importance to personality or biography. He writes: “ To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text; to furnish it with a final signified and to close the writing”. Barthes assumes that the author is no more than the instance of writing. This is exemplified with the „I , in a text that is a single instance of saying „I , it denotes, according to the critic, a subject rather than an individual and its referent is irrelevant to understand its function in the text. Therefore, the disconnection of writing from its source or author, releases the text from an anchor, an imposed limit and opens an indefinite range of possible readings. Therefore, to give writing its future, adds Barthes, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author (Cf. Lodge.1983: 171).

Following Roland Barthes assumption, Michel Foucault, in his essay “What is an author?” agrees that the discussion of authorship does not need to relate to the individual person or source. Foucault argues, however, that the task of criticism is neither to link the work to its author, nor to reconstruct through the text a thought or experience. Critics should rather analyse the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the role of its internal relationships. (Ibid.198).

But the above way of looking at texts is challenged by some other critics, such as René Wellek and Austin Warren. The two critics stress the importance of

biography on the basis that it explains and illuminates the work of art. The biography also helps the reader to gain a better understanding of a work of fiction. Even when a work of art contains elements that can be surely identified as biographical, these elements will be so rearranged and transformed in a work that they lose all their specifically personal meaning and become simply concrete human material, integral elements of a work. (Wellek and Austin.1949: 78).

In spite of very plausible arguments in support of the view that a writer's biography should not be considered in the analysis of a literary work, in our view, it is not sufficient to approach a work of fiction without reference to its creator and the background in which it is set. The biography of the author enriches, in a way or another, our understanding as well as our appreciation of the literary work. It is impossible to make a complete separation between a work of art and its creator when the biography of the latter is directly linked to the circumstances of its writing, as it is the case of Ngugi's and Kateb's works.

Our main concern here is to show the extent to which Ngugi and Kateb are bound to the social backgrounds in which they grew up. In so doing, we shall attempt to provide answers to some questions such as how cultural and historical events and contexts influenced their careers and shaped their works of fiction, and how Ngugi and Kateb reconstructed imaginatively the subject's inner life on the basis of available external evidence and rendered them in their novels.

One of the common features between Ngugi and Kateb is their maternal worlds. Like Kateb, Ngugi spent his childhood in a complex cultural milieu that mixed indigenous traditions with practices imposed by the colonial rulers. Both grew up to painful maturity through various life experiences, more or less similar, in a colonial world.



Ngugi Wa Thiong O, formerly known as James Ngugi, was born in Kamiriithu village near Limuru in Kenya in 1938. His family was very large. Ngugi was the fifth child of his father's third wife. Ngugi's father, Thiong O Wa Nducu, like a great number of Kikuyu families had been expelled from his land, after the British Imperial Act of 1915 and was, therefore, compelled to work on the white man's plantation. During the Mau Mau revolt, Ngugi's family was directly involved in the revolt and paid a heavy price for that in the Emergency Period. (Jan Mohamed. 1983: 186).

In fact, British soldiers killed the author's deaf and dumb stepbrother, as Ngugi described it faithfully through Gitogo's death in A Grain of Wheat. British soldiers shot him, while he was running to see his old mother Wumbi. (Pp.4-5). In addition, Ngugi's older brother, Wallace Mwangi, joined the movement. His parents were arrested and tortured. The author relates the tragic event in his Detained. A writer's Prison's Diary (1981). He says: "My mother in 1955, had to bear three months of torture at Kamiriithu Home guard post because my elder brother had joined the Mau Mau guerrillas". (Ngugi. 1981: 109).

Nearly the same development occurred in Kateb's early life since he rose in a milieu of high political instability. Kateb came from a more secure and respected background, very little affected by misery and poverty. His childhood was very happy. He was surrounded with love and care and grew up in security. His father was a lawyer and a man of a double culture, speaking Arabic and French fluently. But Kateb's life was to be transformed into a nightmare because of the political troubles he endured at an early age. Since he grew up in a period marked by the rise of political consciousness, Kateb took part in the demonstration of 8 May 1945. Like many other demonstrators, he was imprisoned for four months without trial, and underwent harsh interrogation methods by the French police for his participation in

the nationalist demonstration. The circumstances of this dramatic event are echoed in Nedjma through Mustapha's memories and his personal diary (P. 222). When Kateb was released from prison, he found his father in hospital, suffering deeply from tuberculosis. Kateb's mother, who thought that her son was shot, became crazy and was put in the psychiatric hospital of Blida. The tragic event and its profound impact are summed up by Kateb himself, saying: " Marqué dans ma chair et dans ma tête; séparé de ma mère, enfermée par ce qui a été la tragédie du 8 Mai 1945". The author's mother, Yasmina, is referred to as Ouarda, Mustapha's mother. Kateb used to name her, „la rose noire . (Mediène.1998: 55, 183).

Kateb felt the shock of the riots intimately because the French army killed several friends and members of his family. The list of victims included his grand father whom he loved so much, as is mentioned in Nedjma (P.77). Kateb's traumas did not come to an end. In September of the same year, he learnt that his beloved cousin Nedjma had married during his imprisonment. Thus, 1945 was "une année pleine de deuils" as Kateb confessed to his friend Benamar Mediène. Kateb was very affected by all these misfortunes, which led to his restless state of mind and his wandering around the world. (Khelifi. 1990: 10, 25)

Apart from the similarity in family background and early childhood, the next common feature worth to be compared, is their school itineraries. Initially, Kateb and Ngugi went to religious schools before following a colonial education. Both were exposed to western culture and were fascinated by western prominent writers. They were attracted to literature and wanted to become writers at an early age.

Ngugi started his education in a Missionary school under the direction of the Church of Scotland before entering an Independent School, run by some educated nationalists such as Kenyatta, after the 1930s. In Independent schools, national

traditions and culture were taught from a Kikuyu perspective, as we have mentioned before. Ngugi did well at school and eventually attended Alliance High School in Kenya and Makerere University in Uganda. At that time, he read works of William Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw, Lord Alfred Tennyson and William Wordsworth. Therefore, some western models dominated his education and it was at that time that he started his career as a writer. (Cf. Cook.1983:15).

Kateb's school route began in a Koranic or religious "madersa" before his father put him in a French colonial school. But, unlike Ngugi, Kateb was not a good pupil at school because his main interest was poetry. He did not like mathematics and frequently missed his history lessons, he considered mere lies. Kateb usually liked to say "Mes ancêtres, c'est Keblout et non les Gaulois!". He attended Eugène Albertini College in Sétif till 1945. Kateb left school when the bloody repression, which followed a popular uprising, put an end to his education. After that period of trouble, Kateb's father tried to force him to continue his studies, but in vain. (Chaalal.2003. P: 42).

Although Kateb left school very early, he read extensively and became increasingly aware of the injustices of the colonial system in which he lived. This awareness became central in his writings. His involvement in the demonstrations and his imprisonment provided him with an important material to his literary works.

Another basic similarity between Ngugi and Kateb lies in their early interest in writing. Both tried their hands at different genres and enjoyed some literary reputation. Kateb owed his fame to Nedjma, while Ngugi's success was established by the publication of A Grain of Wheat.

Ngugi's career started as a teacher of literature in 1964. By that time, he had finished the initial versions of his two novels, Weep Not Child and The River

Between before he moved to the University of Leeds to follow his studies. The background of Ngugi's two first novels was the Mau Mau revolt, a theme that will be recurrent in his third novel, A Grain of Wheat, published in 1967. A decade later, Petals of Blood was published, followed by Matigari. Ngugi did not only write novels, plays and short stories, but also wrote children's books that focus on Kenya's history, oral traditions and folktales. Moreover, he gained a substantial reputation as an intellectual and a theorist of the postcolonial condition. His works include collections of essays among which Moving the Centre (1986), Writers in Politics (1981) and Decolonising the Mind (1986). Ngugi's work, as an essayist, covers a large area of topical issues among which stand out literary criticism, problems confronting the Africans, commentaries and interpretations. Ngugi discusses the question of culture, colour, race and racial relations in and outside Africa.

Unlike Ngugi, Kateb did not finish his studies and did not have the chance of getting a permanent job. Kateb's father died in 1950 and the author was then obliged to provide food for his two sisters and take care of his sick mother. Therefore, he was compelled to do many jobs to earn his living. He started working with Alger Républicain, where he inserted abstracts of his forthcoming novel Nedjma. Kateb's literary production began with poetry in 1946 with the publication of a collection of poems entitled Soliloques, followed by Nedjma, Le poème ou le couteau. In 1951, he stopped his collaboration with Alger Républicain and left for Paris to look for a job, as a great number of Algerians did at that time. In France, Kateb worked as a grape picker, a builder, an electrician, „a scrivener“, and a farm worker with Malek Haddad to earn his living. Meanwhile, Kateb was introduced to a dense network of artists and writers living in Paris, such as Bertold Brecht whom Kateb met in 1955. He had been also familiar with Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de

Beauvoir. Nedjima, Kateb's first and most known novel was published in 1956. Another novel entitled Le Polygone étoilé, dealing with the same themes and characters as Nedjima, was published a decade later. (Khelifi.1990: 32).

Ngugi shares with Kateb the influence of some western writers. Ngugi was a great admirer of Joseph Conrad, as Kateb was of William Faulkner. Ngugi and Kateb neither denied nor sought to hide the influence of western writers. Indeed, they have often referred to the literary debt they owe to modernist writers such as Joseph Conrad, William Faulkner James Joyce and others. In this respect, Ngugi, for instance acknowledges the influence of Joseph Conrad upon his works and says:

The shifting point of view in time and space, the multiplicity of narrative voices, the narrative within a narrative, the delayed information that helps the revision of a previous judgement- so that only at the end with full assemblage of evidence, information and points of view, can the reader make full judgement-these techniques had impressed me. ( Ngugi. 1986: 76).

Ngugi's indebtedness to Western models is evidenced in his experiment with the form in A Grain of Wheat. Ngugi imitates Conrad in the complex handling of characters, the use of interior monologues and the disrupted plot. The narrative of A Grain of Wheat moves back and forth across the duration of the action in flashbacks.

Similarly, during his stay in Paris, Kateb read the literary works of that time. American novels were considered his models. Kateb got in touch with the works of William Faulkner. (Gontard. 1985:22). Other western writers such as Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Joyce and Sophocles also influenced Kateb, who recognised his indebtedness to these writers and confessed it as follows:

Qui a créé cet Algérien et cet écrivain, qui l'a aidé le premier? On dit que c'est Rimbaud...oui, c'est vrai mais ce n'est pas tout, mon maître spirituel c'est Cheick Mohamed Tahar Ben Lounissi (...) et je le fais

vivre dans le roman Nedjma sous le nom de Si Mokhtar.  
(Abdoun.1983: 114)

Furthermore, Kateb adds:

Je vois en Joyce un père spirituel. Mais le véritable héritier de Joyce, c'est Faulkner. Joyce est allé trop loin dans le sens d'une littérature cérébrale qui peut à ce moment-là amener toutes les associations possibles et de ce fait, risque de tomber dans le formalisme. Mais, il y a quand même une sorte d'héroïsme à pousser la forme jusqu'au bout. J'admire cela chez Joyce, indépendamment de ses idées réactionnaires, anti-patriotiques, de même que chez Faulkner.  
(Gafaiti.1983: 24).

The modernist writers' influence on Ngugi and Kateb is apparent in their use of modernist techniques and complex structures. We shall show it in the second part of the present dissertation.

Ngugi and Kateb, the Journalists

The similarities between Ngugi and Kateb can be lengthened to include important careers in the press. Ngugi contributed to many newspapers. First, while teaching literature at Makerere University of Uganda, Ngugi founded and became the editor of a student journal entitled Penpoints. The newspaper was devoted to creative writing where the author inserted a number of short stories and many articles. Moreover, before he left for England in 1964, Ngugi took a part-time job as a reporter for the Daily Nation and wrote many provocative articles in a special rubric called „I see it myself“. Ngugi's articles were reformist and treated many political issues inside and outside his country. Through his journalistic writings, Ngugi denounced the neutrality of African countries and their subordination to the great powers. These countries, according to Ngugi, should have taken position to end with the different forms of subjugation. (Cook.1983: 16-17).

Ngugi travelled widely around the world, attended a large number of meetings and gave many lectures. He visited Syria, the U.S.A, the former U.S.S.R and many other countries. Ngugi was present during the meeting of African and Asian writers in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, where Kateb Yacine was rewarded with the Lotus Prize in September 1973. (Ngugi. 1981: 120).

Similarly, Kateb's activities as a journalist, a reporter and a columnist for different Algerian newspapers accompanied his political activism. His career as a journalist started in 1948, by writing many articles, published in Alger Républicain, an anti-colonialist newspaper, frequently banned by the colonial authorities. Kateb contributed also in the cultural rubric to the magazine Liberté, published by the Algerian Communist Party, with Henri Alleg, Mohamed Dib and Malek Hadad. (Mediene. 2003: 50).

Like Ngugi, Kateb travelled a lot around the world. Many events mentioned in Nedjma are documented in Kateb's own life history. One of the happenings is the author's travel to Mecca and Sudan with his friend and mentor Tahar Ben Lounissi. The latter was an active nationalist companion who was to become Si Mokhtar in Nedjma. The outline of the voyage as told by Rachid in the novel (P117), traces faithfully Kateb's own trip to the Congo on board "Le Providence". Kateb visited and stayed in countries sympathetic to his leftist beliefs. There, he continued to crusade for justice by giving numerous talks and conferences, describing the evils of colonialism and promoting the resistance of the Algerian nationalists. He visited the Soviet Union, Vietnam where he stayed as a writer for a time. (Kateb.1999: 45-49). Back to Algeria in 1960, Kateb contributed to Afrique-Action, which became Jeune Afrique. A couple of years later, he regained his place in Alger Républicain. In 1967,

he launched Le Chameau prolétaire, a satiric supplement to Algérie Actualité, but the newborn supplement appeared only in three issues.(Cf. Khelifi.1990: 57).

As journalists, Ngugi and Kateb aired their views and opinions. Newspapers served for the two authors as vehicles to express nascent nationalist feelings and as media to criticise any form of injustice. Both advocated the right to free expression and worked against the censorship and harassment that often prevailed in their countries in the postcolonial period.

Another no less important similarity between Ngugi and Kateb is, without doubt, their leftist ideology. The Marxist literary circle, that gathered around Ngugi's teacher, Arnold Kettle, influenced the Kenyan writer. His stay in Leeds from 1964 to 1967 constituted an important phase in the development of his Marxist thought. He managed to free himself from the influential political regime that kept him blind to the plight of the masses.(Cf. Ngugi.1993: 08).

The impact of Ngugi's Marxist leanings is evident in A Grain of Wheat. (Cf. Jann Mohamed. 1983: 209). His view of violence resembles Fanon's. In "concerning violence", Fanon argues that the long history of violence wrought upon the colonial peoples by their masters can be overcome only by violent revolt on the part of the former victim of colonialism. For him, the colonial subjects must rise up in violent rebellions of their own. (Fanon. 1956: 101,102).

In addition to the espousal of Fanon's conception of violence, Ngugi believed in a collective class struggle, based on the Marxist ideology. In Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross, I Will Marry When I Want and Matigari, the author shows a strong sympathy for the working class and urges the workers to organise themselves and react against the oppression of their capitalist bosses.



Marxism influenced KatebYacine too. His Marxist militancy was due mainly to his interaction with poor militant workers and Dockers. During the Algerian Liberation War, he was sympathetic to the Communist Party. Kateb s admiration for the Vietnamese people and his friendship for Ho Chi Minh, led him to write L Homme aux sandales de Caoutchouc in 1970. Kateb had also a great sympathy for some Communist leaders such as Marx, Lenin, Mao and Stalin.

In his literary outlook, Kateb s Marxist militancy started with his articles and poems he wrote in the 1950s. Among the poems, we can cite, « la chanson d amour pour la fille des prolétaires », « aux mains durcies au service du capital ». Other poems were dedicated to Nazim Hikmet, “le poète de l internationale socialiste”. In addition, we may notice also Kateb s Marxism in his plays, which deal with the poor workers and their struggle for a better life.

In addition to their Marxist leanings, a parallel can be drawn between the two writers in terms of their pronouncements regarding some issues. Ngugi was influenced by the Pan-Africanist and socialist ideas that were wide currency in Africa during the sixties and the seventies. Therefore, he usually proclaimed African nationalism as „a liberating force and denounced the African subordination to the world powers. He urged also the African countries to take position vis-à-vis the different events and considered neutrality as awkwardness. Concerning some international issues, Ngugi sided with the Palestinians and South Africans struggles against oppression and expressed openly his disappointment towards the inability of African nations to construct a united front against the western hegemony. (Cf. Ngugi.1981: 98).

Likewise, Kateb glorified the Vietnamese struggle, which succeeded to overcome one of the greatest imperialist powers. He expressed also in a

straightforward way, a harsh critique towards the Arabs and African countries failure to end with their conflicts and free the oppressed people in Palestine. In 1977, he wrote a play entitled Palestine Trahie in which the playwright put on the stage the massacres of Palestinians by the Israelis, mainly in Dir Yacine and rehearsed artistically the Israeli War of 1973, including the lack of an Arab project to help this oppressed people. (Awal.1992: 86).

Political independence for Ngugi is not sufficient but must be followed by economic and cultural liberation to improve the lives of the poor and alleviate their misery. In his own words, he affirms the following: “No country can consider itself politically independent as long as its economy and culture are dominated by foreign interests”. (Ngugi. 1981: xiv).

Likewise, Kateb thinks that his country is not totally independent because national liberation for him is not totally achieved. He states: “La libération nationale ! La libération nationale, peut-on dire qu'elle est achevée? Sur le plan politique peut être, sur le plan économique pas tout à fait, sur le plan culturel encore moins ». (Awal. 1992: 85).

### Ngugi and Kateb, the Playwrights

To the list of the similarities above, we may add that Ngugi and Kateb turned to drama as their primary concern. Both of them see theatre as the best medium to reach a larger audience on the one hand, and a means of stirring people immediately and dynamically on the other hand. Through their various plays, the two playwrights attempted to reinterpret their nation's history and culture in a way that combines their political visions and the preoccupations of the masses. They view the

peasants and workers as the main agents for social change. Kateb explains the role of the theatre, saying:

La première tâche du théâtre, c'est le combat politique, le combat pour la révolution, pour changer notre société, pour améliorer nos conditions de vie, pour élever le niveau culturel des gens, pour combattre l'obscurantisme. A ce moment là, le théâtre est vraiment compris comme une arme de combat. (Chaalal.2003: 108).

In fact, having settled their scores with colonialism, Ngugi and Kateb broaden their critique of neo-colonialism and capitalism and their views veer more and more to the masses. Both gradually progress in the direction of popular theatre. This commitment to art led them to form community theatre groups and became most and foremost concerned with the welfare of the masses, as we shall make it clear throughout the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

Ngugi's career as a playwright began with Black Hermit in 1968. The Trial of Dedan Kimathi followed eight years later in 1976. During that time, Ngugi's commitment to art and community led him to chair the Cultural Committee of the Kamiriithu Community, a group that ran a public theatre. He also participated in theatre groups in villages, which performed some of Ngugi's indicting plays such as I will Marry When I Want and Mother Sing for me. These plays portray the political corruption in Kenya and the people's struggle to define an identity in spite of years of harsh political and social transition. The plays were the main cause for Ngugi's detention without trial and his long exile. I Will Marry When I Want, for instance, created a stir within the ruling class about the advisability of allowing peasants and workers to see a depiction of corruption and poverty in Kenya. The governmental authorities banned all the performances and demolished the public theatre as Ngugi was suspected to indoctrinate students with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. He

was also accused to prepare them to overthrow the elected government in Kenya. (Cf. Ngugi. 1981: 128).

After release, Ngugi did not only lose his job at the university, he and his family also suffered from frequent harassment. Ngugi discussed his persecution by the Kenyan authorities in his book entitled, Detained. A Writer s Prison Diary (1981). A year later, Ngugi was forced to remain in England where he had heard that he would be arrested if he returned to Kenya. In the same year, the author wrote Matigari, which he published in 1986. The book became an underground success in Kenya. As a reaction to its clandestine publication, the Kenyan authorities waged a campaign to route out the ghost leader Matigari, a man said to be inciting revolutions throughout the Kenyan countryside, before they discovered that he was a mere fictional character. (Ngugi.1998: 16).

For his part, Kateb was initiated to the theatre by his mother. As the playwright s sister says: « Elle lui narrait des contes, lui chantait des opérettes et comme elle avait le don du mime, elle lui jouait des personnages burlesques, elle était à elle seule un véritable théâtre». (Chaalal.2003: 21).

Kateb s career in the theatre began with Le Cadavre encerclé, first published in the French magazine Esprit in 1954. The play was reworked and inserted in a collection of plays written in a trilogy under the title Le Cercle des représailles (1959). Kateb s later plays turned to different concerns. For instance, Ho Chi Minh is the hero of L homme aux sandales de caoutchouc (1970). The play reflects the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against Western hegemony. In 1971, Kateb founded a theatre troupe called “ Le Theatre de la Mer , which later changed its appellation to become L Action Culturelle des Travailleurs. L ACT, which was associated with a group of workers, had a powerful impact on people. Mohamed,

prends ta valise was produced by this group of workers in a training centre in Birkhadem, in Algiers, then, it was performed abroad.

Kateb s Mohamed, prends ta valise was one of the works Kateb was proud of because it attracted an unexpected number of spectators. It aroused an enormous enthusiasm as it was staged in Algeria and abroad. The play also paved the way to other popular plays such as La Guerre de deux mille ans (1974), Le Roi de l'Ouest (1977) and Palestine Trahie (1977). One of the reasons why Kateb s plays have been so popular is that they provided moral lessons and were performed in the everyday language of ordinary people. (Cf. Arnaud. 1986: 586).

Kateb s plays were seen as subversive and provocative by the authorities, and the government was afraid of their impact on people. Therefore, Kateb was completely banned from the Algerian radio and television, “pour l'empêcher de conserver tout son militantisme et sa redoutable combativité”, testifies the journalist and friend of Kateb Yacine, Mohamed Said Ziad in an interview with us (05/10/2005). In 1978, l'Action Culturelle des Travailleurs was dissolved as the authorities stopped to grant funds to the troupe. Consequently, Kateb Yacine was forced to leave Algiers to direct the theatre of Sidi Bel Abbes. Because of accommodation difficulties and isolation, he was constrained to quit his homeland and live a nomadic life in several foreign countries. After a long period of wandering and „nomadism , Kateb came back and settled in Algeria until he died in 1989.

What comes out from our discussion of Ngugi s and Kateb s careers in drama reveals that they somewhat converge. Ngugi and Kateb are comparable in their involvements in popular theatres and the major trait that characterises Kateb s plays is the struggle of the working class against capitalism and imperialism. The same

characteristic dominates Ngugi's plays too. The similarities are reflected in the themes of their plays and in the way they are performed.

It is true that Kateb did not experience life in prison, Ngugi experienced, but because of the explicit militancy of his plays, Kateb met many difficulties and obstacles. Instead of prison, Kateb suffered from isolation and total blackout or what the playwright himself qualified as "une conspiration du silence".(Awal.1992: 35).

The outline of Ngugi's and Kateb's biographies shows clearly that the more we read about these two authors, the more we notice how their lives seem to have passed through nearly the same stages, and their lives converge at the family, educational, professional and ideological levels. The two authors relied on some of their own experiences and those of their families to flesh out their fictions. Ngugi uses some fragments taken from his own experience and mixes them with other events, experienced by his family and countrymen. He acknowledges the use of biographical data in his literary works and maintains:

A novel is not a product of imaginative feasts of a simple individual, but the work of many hands and tongues. A writer just takes down notes dictated to him by life among the people, which he arranges in this or that form (...). Nobody writes under circumstances chosen by him and on material invented by him.(Ngugi.1981: 08-09).

Similarly, Kateb finds inspiration in his own life and inserts his personal thoughts in his novel. He uses the memories and collective experience of the main characters in Nedjma, to recreate the bloody repression of 8 May 1945. Through Mustapha's memories, and his personal diary, Kateb evokes the 8 May uprising that ended in bloodshed which traumatised Kateb, and had a lasting effect on his personality. In this respect, Jean Dejeux writes: "L'œuvre de Kateb (...) contient son expérience et celle d'amis. Il est clair, en tout cas, que nous retrouverons en elle des aventures du poète lui-même». (Dejeux.1978: 216).

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Throughout the first chapter, we have examined the contexts in which A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma have been produced. Emphasis has been put on Ngugi's and Kateb's use of some historical facts as a background of their works of fiction. In doing so, the two writers narrated historical events and mentioned names of historical places and organisations. To these cited facts, they added imaginative treatments by introducing some fictional events and characters.

In the second chapter, we have tried to show that A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma are almost autobiographies because of their authors' inclusion of some biographical elements in relation to their childhood, their school itineraries, and some of their adult experiences.

In the present chapter, we shall try to examine how historical and biographical ties, such as those mentioned previously, provide the basis for a close textual analysis of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma. Through an examination of the two works, we shall attempt to identify some distinctive formal features of Ngugi's fiction and see whether these features can be found in Nedjma. To achieve this purpose, we shall compare the two narratives in terms of characterisation, mode of writing, structure, narrative techniques and themes.

### Critical Review and Summary of the Two Novels

According to Felix Mnthali, Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat came into being because of the dramatic political, social and cultural transformations caused by colonialism in Kenya. Ngugi's novel can be regarded as one of the most incisive and personalised examinations of the colonial situation, and its effects on both individual and community. The critic also points to Ngugi's quest for identity through the use of some historical facts and real events. Ngugi's powerful historical contextualisation of

the struggle for freedom that helps the reader to realise the depth of the motives of those who struggle for their liberation. The struggle is portrayed, according to the author of the essay, as something much deeper than a war between blacks and whites. It is a struggle for land and a struggle for human dignity (F.Mnthali. 2004: 39)

Likewise, W.J.Howard in an essay published in The Critical Evaluation of African Literature (1973) indicates that Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat has two flaws. Ngugi's treatment of the colonials, and a mis-interpretation of historical facts. For Howard, Ngugi's use of historical facts aims mainly at providing the reader who is unfamiliar with the history of Kenya with a background to understand adequately the novel. Ngugi did not ignore the condition of his war-torn country because his fiction in general, and A Grain of Wheat in particular, examine the roots of brutality, injustice and oppression. At the same time, Ngugi explains how some social forces, which affect the individual, leading him very often to deterioration and destruction concludes the critic (W.J.Howard. 1973: 118).

Like, Ngugi's reviewers, Kateb's critics, namely Christiane Achour and Jacqueline Arnaud have noted that Kateb blends fiction with the history of Algeria's long and enduring struggle against foreign occupations. In Nedjma, Kateb praises the Algerian resistance and revolts against the colonial presence and reports his own experience, thoughts and visions. Christiane Achour and Jacqueline Arnaud also argue that Nedjma is grounded in its author's personal experiences and his historical, socio-political and cultural environment.

In her Anthologie de la littérature algérienne (1990), Christiane Achour stresses Kateb's intense commitment to defend the cause for which his country was fighting. By reference to his early work, namely the conference given in Paris in 1947, under the title, "Abdelkader et l'indépendance de l'Algérie", Achour affirms that Kateb is

motivated by a sense of commitment to social change. He uses history as a means of resistance against French oppression. The conference shows also Kateb's political awareness and his early engagement. Achour writes:

A un peuple déstructuré, déstabilisé, il (Kateb) propose un modèle, une image valorisante d'un passé ayant pour action sur le présent (...) la conclusion ne laisse aucun doute sur l'objectif du jeune militant et situe d'emblée ce texte dans l'essai de la résistance. (Achour. 1990: 48).

In the same vein, Jacqueline Arnaud, Kateb's friend and biographer, wrote a major critical analysis. In her second volume, La littérature maghrébine de langue française (1986), and L'œuvre en fragments (1986) devoted to Kateb Yacine, Arnaud indicates that the author's fictional works are anchored in the history of his country. In her analysis of Nedjma, Jacqueline Arnaud puts emphasis upon Kateb's references to history by stuffing his novel with historical dates. Kateb alluded mainly to the beginning of Algerian nationalism in 1920s and from this date, he went back to the Roman, the Arab and the French conquests. The historical references are based on the writer's vision and are deliberately expressed through the various characters' memories and narrative in flashbacks (Arnaud. 1986: 102).

It follows from the above discussion that the primordial feature of the normative convergence between Ngugi and Kateb lies in their experience of colonialism that shaped their creative works. As writers, they relate their imagination to their particular universe of experience in all its existential concreteness, narrating the tensions that traverse their countries. In this respect, Georg Lukàcs in his Theory of the Novel, focuses on the fact that the novel tries to capture human life as a totality in spite of contemporary alienation. The assumption grows out of the premise that art is an instrument to counter fragmentation by establishing a link between the inner world of men and the other reality. (Cf. Lukàcs. 1971: 71).

Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma fit Lukàcs' argument that a novel is effective if its author is able to present the various aspects of society as parts of an integrated "totality". Lukacs explains that the process of totalization, whatever the attitudes and ideology of the author, counteracts the tendency of capitalism to compartmentalise human experience into disconnected and incompatible fragments. One of the main aspects of this phenomenon, for the critic, is the ability of the novelist to maintain connection between public and private spheres. The link is established through the creation of characters who are distinct individuals and "typical" representatives of larger historical forces. (Ibid.P.85).

Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat was written after 1963. But, the story of the novel is based on the few days preceding the celebrations of Kenya's independence. The novel forms a loose sequence of snapshots that record Kenya's history from the time of the initial colonial encroachment to the outburst of violence and the years of emergency. Ngugi depicts the war as a destructive force. He also traces the characters' relationships with the „hero of the revolution“, Kihika, hanged by the colonial authorities. The author sums up the novel as follows:

In A Grain of Wheat, I look at the people who fought for independence. I see them falling into various groups. There were those who thought the white man was supreme. They saw no point in opposing that, which was divinely willed...there were others who supported the independence movement and who took the oath. Of these, some fought to the last, but others, when it came to the test, did not live up to their faith and ideals. They gave in. Finally there were those we might call neutrals - you know, the uncommitted. But these soon find that in a given social crisis they can never be uncommitted. (Howard. 1973: 112, 113)

With regard to Kateb's Nedjma, the novel was published in 1956 and is based on an episode of Algerian history. The story of the novel is about four characters caught in an inescapable sphere of violence. Rachid, Lakhdar, Mustapha and Mourad live in Bône. Nedjma, Kamal's wife, the daughter of a French woman born of wedlock,

obsesses all of them. The novel is also a narrative of an intra-clan conflict against the background of violence and disunity inherent to the Algerian society under the French domination and colonial rule. In an answer to Djamel Amrani, a journalist and Kateb's friend, concerning the content of his novel, the latter says that Nedjma is about:

Une société en état de crise larvée et saisie de brutales poussées de fièvre va lever le défi et se relever après 132 ans d'opprobre et de séisme colonial. Sur fond de cadre politique finement et fermement dessiné, il y a Nédjma et une histoire d'amour.  
(Le Matin du 29/ 10/1992. P. 14)

### A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma: A Comparison of Characters

The first common element between A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma in terms of characterisation is without doubt Ngugi's and Kateb's use of group characters, which hold nearly the same role. In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi, for instance, shifts from the tribal hero and the typical western focus on an individual protagonist of his two first novels in favour of an "ensemble cast" of different characters from different social backgrounds.

Likewise, Kateb fills Nedjma with a group of characters issued from different social layers, which englobe the Algerian society. Kateb makes them, at the same time, members of a single community. Even the secondary characters in Nedjma are defined largely through the kindness, generosity, and the support they provide to others in time of need. What also connects the characters of the two novels is the fact that they interact with each other and their experiences are used as a focal point to allow their authors to trace the rise of anti colonial resistance in their perspective-colonised societies. The two novels are then presented as a sort of a web, linking the private lives of the various characters to historical events and vice-versa. In so

doing, Ngugi and Kateb show how the colonial domination and oppression shape people's lives and bring to the surface their strengths and weaknesses. Ngugi's and Kateb's characters are depicted as individuals with distinctive characteristics and personal stories, but they are also representatives of large social and historical situations. This conception of characters is reminiscent of Georg Lukàcs's notion of "typicality". The argument is that protagonists in effective and eminent realist novels, says Lukàcs, achieve their connection between public and private realms essentially through the technique of "typicality", that is by the creation of characters who are distinct individuals and "typical" representatives of large historical forces. (Quoted in Forgas.1982. 142).

Lukàcs's argument is particularly relevant to the way in which Ngugi and Kateb carefully connect the large public events of their narratives with the private experiences of specific individuals. This is done by interweaving the life histories of individual characters from a variety of backgrounds with one another and with the history of Kenya and Algeria.

The study of A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma reveals also some resemblances between some characters. Three pairs of characters, which show certain similarities with one another, can be singled out. They are essentially Mugo - Rachid; Mumbi-Nedjma; and Kihika-Lakhdar. In addition to the three pairs of characters, our comparison will also include the way Ngugi and Kateb conceive some of the British and the French characters.

Rachid - Mugo

Our reading of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma shows that the portrayal of Mugo resembles that of Rachid since the two characters can be compared in several aspects. The similarities between them stem from their family

backgrounds. As children, both were victims because they were orphans and were adopted by their relatives. Both characters were compelled to bear the burden of their unhappy childhood and are haunted by their remembrances and memories. As adults, they become aloof and reserved. They are depicted as mysterious, overwhelmed with confusion and despair. Mugo and Rachid are comparable also in terms of their lack of social commitment, their individualism and their disturbed states of mind.

It is noticeable from the very beginning of A Grain of Wheat that the portrait of Mugo is shaped by his inner fears and personal frustrations. His silence along with memories of his boyhood experience with a drunken aunt still haunts him and shapes his perception of things (P.7). As an adult, he is circumscribed within a marginal position because he is reluctant to take part in the Mau Mau rebellion. Mugo's loneliness and isolation are amplified by his participation in the murder of Kihika. His involvement in Kihika's murder led to his state of confusion and unrest, which he voices as follows: "If I don't serve Kihika, he will kill me. They killed Rev Jackson and Teacher Muniu. If I work for him, the government will catch me. The white man has long arms. And they'll all hang me". (P.194).

Though at the beginning of the novel, Mugo is seen by people as a national hero and a symbol of anti-colonial struggle because he shelters Kihika and did not confess the oath. At the end of the narrative, people discover the other side of Mugo, that of a worthless man who strangled the hero of the revolution, Kihika. (P.223). Thus, the misleading image of Mugo's heroic deeds makes him, to paraphrase the words of Danielle Stewart, a false saviour, a sort of false Christ-like figure. (Stewart.1988: 32).

In Nedjma, the same role seems to be devoted to Rachid. Kateb gives a full description of this character's strange physical appearance, state of mind and tormented personality. Like Mugo, Rachid is conceived as a distinct character, different from the others. Unlike Lakhdar and Mustapha, Rachid is not a nationalist militant and did not take part in the revolt of May 1945. Rachid's isolation arises mainly out of his father's mysterious death. The latter was assassinated in unknown circumstances, leaving four widows and many children of whom Rachid was the last one (P.146). Thus, the tragic event and the depressing knowledge surrounding his father's obscure disappearance weigh heavily on his mind and display a lack in Rachid's personality. As Mugo, Rachid is haunted by past memories, which emerge as an oppressive factor (P. 85).

As his Kenyan counterpart, Mugo, Rachid has been involved in the murder of Si Mokhtar. He himself confesses in Nedjma to the public writer: " Je suis mêlé à trop de morts, trop de morts ..." (P.174). Of course, such an expression does reveal the inner state of trouble that Rachid feels. Thus, Mugo's loneliness, isolation and hesitation matches Rachid's insignificant and futile life, as the protagonist himself expresses it: " Je me sentais comme un morceau de jarre cassée, insignifiante ruine détachée d'une architecture millénaire" (P.166).

The similarities between Mugo and Rachid are reinforced by the fact that both of them are attached to their loneliness and isolation and stand as outsiders in their respective communities. In A Grain of Wheat, Mugo's encroachments are close to Rachid's confinement in closed spaces such as prison and a room in a hotel. Rachid lives in a sort of "société secrète mi-nécropole, mi-prison". (Kateb. P.160). In order to escape his loneliness, Mugo finds refuge in religious fantasies and reveries. (P.25). For his part, Rachid resorts to an excessive use of drugs to forget about his



failure to cope with his environment.(P.164). One of the striking scenes in Nedjma, which exemplify Rachid's delirium and hallucination, because of the effect of hashish, is apparent in his inability to distinguish between things after the murder of his companion, Si Mokhtar. (P.134).

The next convergence between Mugo and Rachid is that both characters have a mythical connotation with their ancestors. If Mugo in A Grain of Wheat is connected to the legendary Kikuyu prophet and seer Mugo Wa Kabiro, Rachid is linked through Si Mokhar to the legend of Keblout. He is constantly haunted in his dreams by the founding ancestor of the Keblouti tribe. (P.126).

In addition to their common mythical dimensions, Mugo and Rachid were arrested and put in prison. Mugo alludes in A Grain of Wheat to the period of time he spent in detention camps (P.131). Rachid refers also to the period of detention as an army deserter (P.179). But, prison did not alleviate the two characters suffering. At the end of the two narratives, Mugo and Rachid manage to have a sort of relief. To illustrate the point, Mugo comes to a rest, he had longed for, once he avowed in public his involvement in the murder of Kihika. In a similar way, Rachid, in Nedjma, comes close to happiness when he returns to his ancestral homeland with Nedjma and his mentor Si Mokhtar.

Finally, we may say that Mugo and Rachid can be linked through their similar tragic fate. Mugo prepared himself to pay for his crime by death while Rachid lost Nedjma and his companion Si Mokhtar, and was chased from his ancestral world.

Kihika - Lakhdar

If Mugo and Rachid function in A Grain of Wheat and in Nedjma as anti heroes, Kihika and Lakhdar are conceived as heroic figures. Among the numerous

characters that people the two novels, the most important ones are Kihika and Lakhdar respectively because many indications point to the fact that they are idealised symbols. They also stand for their countrymen's longing for liberation and freedom. Kihika and Lakhdar can be linked in terms of their common scorn of colonialism and their discontent towards the existing order in their respective societies. The order seems to bear all sorts of injustices that characterised the colonial period. Kihika and Lakhdar are conceived as quintessential figures of resistance in a struggle for political and cultural determination. Like Ngugi's most admirable figure, Kihika, Lakhdar is fully engaged in his country's liberation and is extensively involved in the revolt by taking part in the 8 May uprising. Through their participation in the two revolts, Kihika and Lakhdar are faithful to their ideals and stand as an expression of the respective moralities of struggle against colonialism and all forms of domination. The nationalist commitment of Kihika is evidenced through his rejection of the colonial education (P.87), a rejection that can be paralleled to Lakhdar's expulsion from school because of his participation in the 8 May demonstrations (P.49).

Another common trait between Kihika and Lakhdar is that both favour rebellion and can be linked in terms of their heroism. Like Kihika who is a Mau Mau fighter "a son of the land, the hero of deliverance" (Ngugi. P.14), Lakhdar was victim of torture and experienced degrading and inhuman punishments.(Kateb.P.56) This description equals Ngugi's description in A Grain of Wheat of Kihika's torture (P.17).

Kihika's and Lakhdar's thoughts account for the social and political conditions, which prevailed in their respective countries during World War II. The period of history is associated with the rise of discontent and the two characters are located within this form of atmosphere loaded with violence. They reveal the conflict

between the colonised and the coloniser. Thus, Kihika and Lakhdar are not historically significant types in themselves but vehicles for presenting “typicality”, i.e., the fusion between the specific individual and the general. Therefore, Kihika’s and Lakhdar’s commitment forces admiration and reminds the reader of what Georg Lukàcs calls “typical characters” because they are typical of the historical situation of their classes and are presented as being bound up in a general dialectical movement of history.

Beyond the common elements between Mugo and Rachid, Kihika and Lakhdar that we have singled out above, the resemblance in characterisation between Ngugi’s A Grain of Wheat and Kateb’s Nedjma include also some common points between Mumbi and Nedjma, Ngugi’s and Kateb’s main woman characters.

#### Nedjma - Mumbi

Throughout our reading of the two fictions, we have observed that Mumbi and Nedjma are granted a symbolic and a mythical status through which their authors convey their attachment to their ancestral traditions and values. The position as well as the role the two characters are given is significant because both Mumbi and Nedjma are placed in the centre of a web of relationships and are endowed with a powerful influence on the male protagonists. Nedjma and Mumbi clearly have their authors’ own sympathy, as is obvious from the way the two stories are worked out.

Mumbi’s beauty can be compared to Nedjma’s and the male characters covet both for their good and attractive looks. The two women attract considerably the male characters, but in a different manner. Mumbi’s influence is positive while Nedjma’s impact is negative.

In A Grain of Wheat, Mumbi is conceived as brave, resilient, resourceful and morally a courageous woman that mediates the conflict between the male characters. She is Kihika's sister, Gikonyo's wife, and the mother of Karanja's child. Mumbi is also the confessor of Mugo and exerts such an influence on him, that he confesses his crime. In this regard, G.N. Sharma notes: "Mumbi exercises a wholesome influence on the other characters, arousing them to a better knowledge of themselves. The open honesty with which she told her own story to Mugo made him ashamed of his morbid secretiveness".(Cf. Jones.1979: 173).

Ngugi refers to Mumbi's physical force, her good looking, and her strength of mind, which allows her to face the hard times of the Emergency Period (P.143).

For her part, Nedjma is constantly present and is central to Kateb's novel. Though she does not appear frequently in the narrative, she never disappears from the centre of the action. As an illustration, Nedjma is absent in the first section and appears briefly in the second. She is mainly present in the third section and briefly in the next one. She is absent in the fifth part and reappears briefly in the sixth section. Yet, despite her brief appearances, Nedjma exercises a hypnotic influence upon the male protagonists. "Nedjma dont les hommes devaient se disputer non seulement l'amour, mais la paternité (P.169). The four male protagonists covet Nedjma and all of them want to gain her heart. She is conceived as an object of desire and conquest for the male characters whose only purpose is to possess and subject her.

Another common trait between Mumbi and Nedjma is that both are symbolic figures. In A Grain of Wheat, Mumbi symbolises fertility, regeneration, and stands as the spirit of a new Kenya. She belongs also to the Kikuyu mythology and embodies the primeval "mother" of the tribe, endowed with force and wisdom (P.11) Similarly, Nedjma's presence as a myth and a symbol is central to the structure of Kateb's

fiction. She stands for Algeria “La patrie perdue” and the search for Nedjma equals a quest for a restored country in a mythical manner (Cf. Mortimer. 1990:89).

Next to their common symbolic and mythical connotations, Mumbi and Nedjma can be compared through their unfaithful behaviours to their husbands. Mumbi betrayed her husband by giving herself to Karanja from whom she becomes pregnant. Hence, from the first part of A Grain of Wheat, we are presented with the couple Mumbi-Gikonyo in conflict because of a child's birth while the husband was in prison (P. 29). Like Mumbi, Nedjma engages in an adventurous relationship with Lakhdar while her husband Kamel was on the way to Constantine to see his sick mother (Kateb. P.232). In spite of their betrayal and unfaithfulness, the two characters assume their responsibilities over the social order and both enjoy a dignified position. Thus, instead of blaming them for their acts, we cannot avoid feeling a great sympathy towards the two women.

What preceded brought evidence about the close conception of Mumbi and Nedjma. Nonetheless, the two characters remain different and fulfil distinct roles in the two novels. If Mumbi stands for regeneration and hope, Nedjma on the contrary, is conceived as a cursed person wishing to enslave men. She is “une femme faite d'adversité”, “une fleur irrespirable”, “une étoile de sang jaillie du meurtre”, and “l'ogresse qui mourut de faim après avoir mangé ses trois frères” (P.169). Nedjma causes the loss of every person who dares approach her. Unlike Mumbi, Nedjma is the generator of conflicts, rivalries and hate between the four protagonists. She becomes the target of jealousy and envy. Nedjma is the main cause of Rachid's instability and wandering, “La fille de ma propre tribu que je poursuivais instinctivement de ville en ville , confesse Rachid to the public writer (P.167).

Therefore, the possession of Nedjma is doomed to failure. Even her recuperation by the tribe was achieved with the murder of Si Mokhtar, presumably her father.

### Comparison of the Foreign Settlers

Ngugi's portrayals of some British settlers, in A Grain of Wheat can be compared to Kateb's representation of the French "colons" in Nedjma. In both novels, the foreigners are described in their most negative aspects. Ngugi and Kateb create some scenes that show colonial cruelty, such as excessive economic exploitation, repression and cultural domination.

With regard to A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi portrays Margery and John Thompson, Dr Lynd and Mrs Dickenson as wicked characters whose lives are told succinctly. As an illustration, Ngugi conceives Dr Lynd as an "ugly spinster", Van Dyke as "a fat drunken metrological officer with homosexual tendency" (P. 34). He uses also John Thompson and Dr Lynd to expose certain patterns of colonial improper and to show that the relation between the white settlers and the natives is limited to giving orders and executing without comment (slave-master). The physical and moral domination are exemplified through Karanja who cannot pronounce a word in front of Thompson (P.35). In addition, Dr Lynd expresses racism and violence in a straightforward way through her feeling and thoughts about the Kikuyu (P.40). Ngugi uses the dog, which jumps on Africans, as an illustration, of Dr Lynd's racist attitude. (P.39).

In Nedjma, Kateb's portrayal of the French characters is not less satirical than that of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat. Most of the French characters, in the novel, do not only embody exploitation and repression, but they are also described in an unpleasant way and are shown as villains. Like Ngugi, Kateb creates some

situations in which antagonism and exploitation are the most apparent features in the relationship between Europeans and Algerians. They are brought out most vividly in the opening scene of the novel. Lakhdar escapes from prison because of an offence against his French employer. The scene is followed by another example of exploitation in a construction site where Algerian workers are exploited, overworked and badly paid by Mr Ernest, a foreman who mistreats his labourers. “Y a qu à faire ce que je dis. Vous travaillez dix heures. On vient le samedi ” (P. 41).

In addition to the above common features between the British and the French colonialists in general, a parallel can be drawn between John Thompson and Mr Ricard, the old “Pied Noir”. For instance, both characters are portrayed in an ambiguous and ironic manner. Thompson’s daily life is, to a certain extent, comparable to that of Mr Ricard. Both are feared by the „natives , stand for power and typify the colonial domination.

In A Grain of Wheat, Thompson is endowed, on his arrival to Africa, with power and an “ability to deal swiftly and effectively with Africans”. But the man, who is always correctly dressed, knows how to behave and never allows himself to get drunk, is the main cause of “the hunger strike that ended with eleven deaths”(P.46). At the end of the novel, Thompson does not only fade into an inglorious retirement, but also degenerates and reaches “ the edge of madness”. His madness is apparent when he grinds his teeth at night and says: “eliminate the vermin”(P.134). David Cook notes that Ngugi’s deep examination of Thompson’s psyche shows apparently the influence of Joseph Conrad. The degeneration of the British administrator echoes Kurtz’s “the horror, the horror» in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. (Cook. P.77).

The description of Thompson in A Grain of Wheat appears to have a close affinity with the conception of Mr Ricard in Nedjma. Kateb’s portrayal of Ricard

blends irony and ridicule. If John Thompson embodies for Ngugi the most odious form of political authority, in Nedjma, Ricard represents the worst form of exploitation and repression. Throughout Kateb's novel, we may notice that Ricard is portrayed in an unpleasant way and he is inflicted with many defects. He is ridiculed and described as follows: " Bien que tout lui appartienne en propre et qu'aucun associé n'ait surnagé avec lui, M. Ricard persiste dans l'étrange travaillisme primitif qui lui tient de doctrine (P.15). He is brutal, always drunk, a "propriétaire en rupture de ban" whose wealth does nothing, but isolates him and increases the number of his enemies. He is also "taciturne, cupide, mal accoutré" (P.14). The ironic tone reveals Kateb's sarcastic attitude towards the French master. Ricard is conceived as excessively strict, cruel and stands for the type of the colonialist who always favours violence. Kateb depicts Ricard's monstrosity the day of marriage when he beats the Arab servant so badly that Mourad reacts violently by killing him. (P.24).

The analogy between the use of violence by Ricard and the violent reaction of Mourad can be linked to what Fanon puts forward in his The Wretched of the Earth as "terror counter-terror, violence counter-violence". Fanon argues in "Concerning Violence" that the native reacts violently towards injustice, oppression and the circle of hate from which emanates the violence of the oppressor. Fanon maintains that counter-violence is a cleansing force because it frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction. It makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. (Fanon. 1961: 70).

Kateb's insertion of Mourad's deliberate killing of Ricard in his own house the day of his wedding is a means to destroy the illusion that the white men are not vulnerable. As Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal notes, Mourad's murder is nothing but



an answer to Albert Camus's L'Étranger where Meursault kills an unknown Arab in a beach in Algiers in 1942. (Cf. Maougal. 2004:46).

From the discussion above, we can conclude that Ngugi's conception of his characters in A Grain of Wheat resembles that of Kateb's in Nedjma. However, the resemblance in terms of characterisation does not come alone in the two novels and can be followed by an important affinity between Ngugi's and Kateb's works of fiction at the level of mode of writing.

### Comparison of Modes of Writing

As we have already mentioned in the first chapter, Ngugi and Kateb received a western education, and were influenced by canonical and emergent forms of western literature. Therefore, it is not surprising that the two authors draw inspiration from western models and construct their fictions in the modernist way.

One of the primordial features of modernist aesthetics is undoubtedly its obsession and fascination with formal matters and technique. Malcolm Bradbury and John Fletcher note, in their essay entitled "The Introverted Novel", included in Modernism (1985) that the modernist novel sets forms over life, pattern and myth over the contingencies of history, the power of the fictive presides. The best art does not report; it creates. (Bradbury & Fletcher.1985: 406-7).

With regard to Ngugi, in his initial attempt to prove a capability to master western culture, the author chooses a modernist mode of writing, following somewhat on the footsteps of modernist writers such as Joseph Conrad. In so doing, he departs from the realist mode of his two first novels. Instead, he draws upon the experimental forms as well as the strategies of Modernism, which were after all, originally intended to put an end to the conventions of 19th century realism.

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi inserts an array of literary devices, such as a complex and an unusual structure, a broken plot, interior monologues and flashbacks. Moreover, Ngugi's use of ambiguous characters, such as Mugo and John Thompson, recalls some typical Conradian figures like Razumov, one of the main characters of Under Western Eyes. (Cf. Mnthali. 2004: 38).

Yet Ngugi's desire for change and his search for a new style, begins by a fascination and an imitation of the old writings as Roland Barthes suggests in his Le degré zéro de l'écriture (1953). Barthes states that even though a writer can assert his freedom by choosing a mode of writing that suits his purposes, in his beginnings, he can never develop a new style without gradually becoming a prisoner of someone else's writing. Barthes maintains: "L'intellectuel n'est encore qu'un écrivain mal transformé, et à moins de se saborder et de devenir à jamais un militant qui n'écrit plus (...) il ne peut que revenir à la fascination d'écritures antérieures". The return to old models, adds Barthes, "se manifeste par une servitude invisible dans les premiers pas". (Barthes.1953: 43, 66).

The same argument holds true for Kateb who transcends realism through modernist linguistic experimentation in the manner of some modernist writers such as William Faulkner and James Joyce. Mildred Mortimer sums up Kateb's rejection of the established norms and conventions as follows: "Kateb experiments with form and language. He explores myth, probes the unconscious, ignores chronology and forces the reader to struggle with the text in an attempt to achieve clarity". (Mortimer. 1990:86). In our view, Mortimer's critical evaluation is right because the formal strategies of Nedjma are so complex that they make the book difficult for most readers.

## Comparison of Structure

The first modernist common feature of A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma is their similar structure and design or the way Ngugi and Kateb build their respective novels. Yet assuming that critics use the term pattern in various senses, we think it worthwhile to explain what we mean by “pattern” on the basis of E.M. Forster’s theoretical approach.

In his book Aspects of the Novel (1927), E.M.Forster makes the difference between “Plot”, and “Pattern”. For him, plot appeals to our intelligence while ,pattern appeals to our aesthetic sense. It makes us see the book as a whole. Forster compares the pattern of a book to a house design. (Forster.1927: 134,146). E. M. Forster and many modernist critics put stress on the fact that a novel should be of “pattern” in which the sensibility of the central characters consorts and co-operates with the consciousness of the author to produce form. It is the making of the pattern and wholeness, note Bradbury and Fletcher, which makes art into an order standing outside and beyond the human muddle, a transcendent object and a luminous whole. (Bradbury & Fletcher. 1985: 407- 408).

Ngugi’s A Grain of Wheat and Kateb’s Nedjma do not have a plot. Rather, they have several plots. The two narratives are presented to the reader in an episodic way, designed to present a view of the disruptive life during the war. As such, the two novels centre on the episodic nature of the action and take their interest mainly in what they progressively reveal from the description of some characters. They are presented as individuals with their own histories, desires, and needs rather than from a sequential arrangement.

In A Grain of Wheat, the narrative is divided into four parts; each of them is introduced by an Epigraph. In the first part, Mugo is presented with his psychological

breakdown. The second part is composed of five chapters; each of them carries a function. Here, we are provided with the portrait of the different characters inside a society in trouble caused by the Emergency. The author focuses on Karanja's admiration for the white men. Chapter eight reveals Karanja's attitude and his kindness to Mumbi. In part three, Mugo is admired for his courage shown in Rira Camp. In the fourth part, we have a description of "Uhuru" Day. The novel ends with a note of hope with the reconciliation of Gikonyo and Mumbi.

The controlling design of A Grain of Wheat is symmetry. The first part looks like the last. Episodes and characters are paired, in such a way that they give the reader an impression of "déjà vu". For instance, the Mugo of the beginning is as lonely as the one we meet at the end of the narrative. Similarly, Gikonyo and Mumbi in the first part of A Grain of Wheat inform Mugo about their problems. As the novel closes, they are still with their marital problems, which they try to solve. In addition, Ngugi's depiction of the "trio" Mumbi, Karanja and Gikonyo is as dramatic before the State of Emergency and after. In the beginning of the novel, the two men were running to win Mumbi's love. In the end, the reader comes to see both Karanja and Gikonyo racing again. (Cf. Mnthali.2004: 38).

A similar pattern is discernible in Nedjma. The novel is divided into six sections and each of them is composed of twelve or twenty-four chapters; each of them is independent from the other. The division is indicated through Roman letters. The first, the second and the fifth sections contain twelve chapters while the third; the fourth and the last are cut into twenty-four chapters each. The first part of Nedjma is put in its historical context characterised by tension and violence. Hence, to present a view of life during the war, Kateb begins his narrative with Lakhdar's escape from prison after hitting his French boss, Mr Ernest. Another happening

inspired from a violent real life follows the scene. Mourad, Lakhdar's brother, while attending the wedding of Ricard, kills the latter because of his beating of an Arab servant. Mourad is, then, sent to prison where he meets Rachid, arrested after a street fight. In the second part, the four protagonists work in a construction site where the attitude and the behaviours of the different characters are described. The third part opens with Mourad's description of Rachid's arrival to Bone with Si Mokhtar. Then, Rachid narrates in a long way the history of his ancestral tribe Keblout, as Si Mokhtar told it to him. However, the important event with which this part ends, is the kidnapping of Nedjma by Rachid and Si Mokhtar and their return to the ancestral world. In part four, the narration is taken up to Nadhor after the rapt where Rachid, Si Mokhtar and Nedjma are found. The narrative ends with a return to the beginning of the novel, mainly with the four protagonists drinking in a room, before they separate, thinking of the missing friend, Mourad.

In spite of the fact that Kateb's narrative is told in a complicated and unchronological manner, Nedjma has a coherent structure enhanced by some devices such as the journey motif, dreams, memories of the past events and psychological conflicts. Kateb's Nedjma is given coherence by a dominating element of the war and its ramifications on the characters.

Therefore, despite the episodic arrangement of events, Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma have a pattern that gives them coherence. It lies in the way Ngugi and Kateb hold together the different parts by the event of the war and its disruptive effects on the characters.

#### Multiplicity of Viewpoints

A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma display some other stylistic similarities in terms of narrative technique. By narrative technique, we mean the methods adopted

by Ngugi and Kateb for the presentation of characters and action that revolve mostly around point of view. The perspective form by which the two novelists present their material can be classified under two broad categories: the first and the third person points of view.

In A Grain of Wheat, the story is narrated in the third person singular through dialogues that tell about a situation of high intensity. Ngugi uses a narrator who is a member of the Thabai community and whose voice is different from that of the author. In addition, Ngugi refers to villagers as “they” to denote some degree of detachment between him and his subject. Furthermore, the different characters express their experiences and feelings using the first person singular. But, there are instances when the omniscient narrator reflects the views of the collective, i.e, the “we” voice, by identifying himself as one of them. We may single out passages where the narrator changes his status from an outsider (omniscient narrator) into a participant involved in the action using the inclusive first person plural possessive “our”. The key example, which illustrates the author’s intrusive voice, his inclusiveness and shared identity in A Grain of Wheat is when Ngugi describes the villagers in chapter fourteen as follows: “We saw the following morning as we went into the field near Rungei, where the sports and dances to celebrate “Uhuru” were to take place”(P.204). The influence of this kind of narration, as David Cook notes, is manifested by the author’s dual position as both an interpreter and judge of experience. (Cook.P.81).

The same stylistic method is to be found in Nedjma where Kateb relies on the multiplicity of viewpoints. The first part of the novel is narrated in the third person singular “he”, what is also called “le récit objectif”. The story and events introduce the protagonists with a description of the violence and hostility that reign in a

colonial society. In the second part, however, the third person is alternated with the use of the first person "I", also called "le récit subjectif". Kateb uses two narrators, one seems omniscient, the other "I" of characters, mainly Rachid in his journey into his own self and Mustapha's diary. What is interesting to observe is that, as Ngugi, at times, Kateb's omniscient narrator describes himself as a member of the community and we feel that the writer does not adopt the position of an outer observer, standing above the characters and their experiences against the social norms. It is, on the contrary, the voice of the writer who tries to become one member of the community or their spokesman. We also feel the implication of the narrator towards what is narrated. (Kateb.P. 57)

It seems clear by now that A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma share an alternation between the first person and the third person narrative voices. This is done on purpose to establish a connection between private and public experiences.

### Use of Flashbacks

Having dealt with the design and the narrative technique, the similarities between A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma with the modernist novels are reinforced by Ngugi's and Kateb's incorporation of flashbacks as a common technical device. The two narratives are not chronological because they contain a series of flashbacks that reconstruct the history and the lives of the two authors through the memories of the characters and their consciousness.

In A Grain of Wheat, the story lasts four days and four nights, but through lengthy flashbacks, the narrative moves to the past then back to the present and each shift to the past makes the present actions and behaviours clearer. Mugo, for instance evokes in the very beginning of the novel his quarrels with his aunt about

the missing money (P.7). Gikonyo's reminiscences, in prison, his youth, and his love to Mumbi follow it.(P.29). Furthermore, in a long flashback, Mumbi recollects her past memories to narrate the harsh conditions of the Emergency Period (P.143).

The same technical device can be observed in Nedjma. By using flashbacks, Kateb organises his novel as a journey into the past, which the reader undertakes with the main guidance of the notes written by Mustapha in his journal and Mourad in prison. The reminiscences make the whole structural movement of the novel unsteady. For instance, Lakhdar, on his way to Bone by train, evokes the historical event of 8 May 1945 and narrates at length the circumstances of his detention and his torture (PP.47-56). A return to the present describes Mustapha's encounter with Nedjma. Meanwhile, Mourad, in prison, tells about an unknown traveller and gives a long realistic description of Bone. In his diary, Mustapha narrates the story of his childhood, his family and his friends. (PP.101-103). Mustapha's reminiscences provide the reader with fragments of Kateb's own early life, his experiences, including that of his family members. In addition, a portrait of Kateb's friends is imaginatively re-created by Mustapha, and is part of the fictional elements of the novel. The purpose in so doing, according to Jacqueline Arnaud, is to provide the background of the hero's early life and to comment on the oppression of colonialism. (Arnaud.1985: 227).

### Use of Symbolism

The next modernist feature, integrated in A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma, is Ngugi's and Kateb's use of symbolism. In the manner of modernist fiction, the two novels are heavily marked by symbols, which emanate from their titles. According to modernist philosophy, the novelists must transcend history that is regarded as



degenerate and replace it by symbolism. In their view, a work of art must be poetic and symbolic and aims at looking for the lost reality of the past. It intends to search for and find the artistic means for its recreation. (Cf. Bradbury & Fletcher.1985:405).

The title of A Grain of Wheat is highly symbolical because it symbolises fertility, regeneration and rebirth represented by Kihika. He is “the grain which must die in order to be reborn”. He is the one who sacrificed himself so that many others would live. Kihika reinterprets Christianity in order to encourage Kenyans to unite and fight, and if necessary to die so that all Kenyans can live free. He stands for the will of the Kenyan people for social justice and liberation. The grain must die in order to be regenerated.(Cf. Cook.P.69).

To the two mentioned examples, we can add the use of images to express certain emotions or an idea such as hope. As an illustration, the idea of hope is symbolised by the writer's most persistent use of the water symbolism. In the beginning of the novel, the image of water is negative and oppressive because it increases the anxiety of Mugo: “the drop fattened and grew dirtier as it absorbed grains of soot” (P.1). However, the image of water in the end of the novel becomes purgatory and positive. It represents the rain that will clean and purify the soul of Mugo from the sin of his betrayal of Kihika. Rain is also used to water the grain of wheat, the symbol of rebirth and regeneration of the Kikuyu society. Next to water imagery, the train symbolises the advance of colonialism while the stool is a symbol of hope and reconstruction. Through Gikonyo's acceptance of the child and his reconciliation with Mumbi, the carpenter promises his wife to carve a stool which stands for hope and a better future.

Like his fellow Kenyan writer, Kateb employs symbolism, which suggests that Nedjma is steeped in modernist aesthetics. As its title indicates, the book is clearly

influenced by European Modernists who depend upon powerful symbolism, capable of interpretations in many ways. Nedjma symbolises the first political party, the North African Star (ENA) founded in 1926 by Messali Hadj in France, which claimed a total liberty for Algeria. Nedjma stands also for the woman Kateb loved or his own mother. Finally, Nedjma symbolises Algeria, “L Algérie déchirée depuis ses origines, et ravagée par trop de passions exclusives”. (Arnaud.1985. P.255). Kateb resorts to an excessive use of images and symbols to convey the atmosphere of violence, which prevailed in his society. He uses some concrete objects or things to express some ideas. “Prison” and “Cell”, in Nedjma, symbolise not only confinement and separation of Arabs from the French, but they are also symbols of oppression and repression. Kateb also uses some insects as threatening symbols. For instance, “ants” and “flies” stand for the idea of invasion and conquest. They are symbols of colonisation and expropriation. Moreover, the image of the “spider”, which terrifies Rachid in prison, can be compared to Mugo’s fear of a drop of water. The use of symbolism, in Kateb’s Nedjma extends to include the recurrence of crime and the use of violence. This is made concrete by the author’s use of a knife.

From the illustrations provided above, it seems obvious that both Ngugi and Kateb use symbolism and imagery extensively in their fictions.

### Use of Interior Monologue

Besides an extensive use of symbols, Ngugi’s and Kateb’s respective portrayals of their characters seem to fit the modernist mode of writing. The aspect can be illustrated mainly in the two writers’ focus on their protagonists’ consciousness and their similar recourse to the use of interior monologues. The

technique can be defined as a mode of narration, which reproduces the character's half-conscious thoughts and sensations without any authorial intrusion.

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi takes an in-depth interest in characterisation and examines the varied psychology and complex mental and emotional life of his characters. Thus, a great deal of interest is given to the depiction of people's hidden lives, their fears, hopes, loves and hates. The author looks deeper at the inner worlds of the characters. He describes their secrets and their longings, which impel them to take certain actions in spite of themselves. For instance, Ngugi scrutinises the mind of Thompson, probes his deepest thoughts about his departure and highlights the character's deception and sadness. (P.38).

The same technique is noticeable in Nedjma where we may observe that the stream of consciousness, the diaries and the reminiscences of the main protagonists complement the flashback narration. The technique shifts increasingly the centre of the reader's interest in favour of the character's stream of thoughts. For instance, Rachid reports his memories of the past and his experiences. The remembrances can be read like a continuous flow of thoughts, which run through many pages. Rachid returns to the past and narrates how he met Nedjma in a hospital. It is followed by Rachid's trip to Mecca with Si Mokhtar. (P.117). Furthermore, Rachid's interior monologue describes also his return to his ancestral world of Nadhor with Nedjma and Si Mokhtar. (P. 127).

As a conclusion, we can say that some modernist devices and strategies are embedded in A Grain of Wheat as well as in Nedjma. Yet the two novels cannot be regarded as merely modernist fictions. Both are different to some extent from the modernist novels for many reasons.

First, one of the major themes of modernist writers is alienation, which can be explained as a state of man's incompatibility with his milieu. The theme is also integrated in Ngugi's and Kateb's respective works of fiction, but not in a similar way as modernist writers do. The theme of alienation in both novels is caused by colonial oppression. The disintegration of the character's dream of bliss by realities of oppression is noticeable in the two novels through the characters of Mugo and Rachid. But all indications point to the fact that the two characters are compelled by their environments to lead an alienated life.

In A Grain of Wheat, Mugo, the most alienated character in the novel, suffers from loneliness, but he is far from resembling the heroes of modernist novel. Mugo neither celebrates his loneliness and isolation nor seeks to deny his society. He is sad because of his impotence. He cannot take a messianic role nor seek redemption in art. Mugo's isolation is oppressive until the day he confesses his guilt and achieves his self-discovery by his return to his community and expiation.

The same point holds true for the characters of Nedjma. All indications show that the characters in the novel are directly involved in an inescapable conflict against the oppressive milieu in which they live. All of them try to escape it through a return to the past. Kateb introduces the theme of alienation in Nedjma and much of the loss arises from Rachid's loneliness, isolation and apathy (P.159). Rachid is remote and uninvolved in the troubles of his society. Kateb shows him locked in a universe of confinement and solitude. From the beginning, Rachid is marked by an almost total absence of family relations and as he grows older, he becomes more and more estranged from his community. Rachid's tormented vision stems also from his addiction to hashish.

We may say that the alienation conveyed in A Grain of Wheat and in Nedjma is neither that of idealistic or spiritual soul which triggers the situation of conflict nor that of artists or intellectuals who have detached themselves from a way of life which they see corrupt and contaminating.

The second reason which differentiates A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma from modernist novels is that the latter are characterised by despair and hopelessness, while Ngugi's and Kateb's fictions are full of hope. The characters of the two novels struggle to live free as Mumbi says in A Grain of Wheat: "We have the village to build" and "children to look after" (P.242). Hope is expressed also at the end of the novel through the reconciliation of Gikonyo and Mumbi.

Nedjma too is not entirely bleak and suggests hope, a hope that emanates from the title of the novel. The name Nedjma means star in Arabic. The star shines and reflects the light in order to illuminate the other stars and satellites. In the novel, Nedjma illuminates the path to liberation and freedom, and symbolises great expectations for a better future. Maurice Nadeau is to the point when he notes that Nedjma is part and parcel of a stellar universe around which other stars gravitate. (Quoted in Mortimer. 1990:89).

What distinguishes A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma from the modernist writings is also the autonomous status of the narrator. In the two novels, there are some instances where the two narrators represent the collective voice. Ngugi uses a narrator; a member of the community, but the voice of the author is heard from time to time, denoting a sort of intimacy with the community. Some instances show the author as one of the group. For example, "Most of us from Thabai first saw him at the New Rung'ei Market (...) As we, the children, used to sing". (P.178). Ngugi's inclusiveness is evident when he mentions also the day Kenyatta returned from

England: "We saw the man in the rain". Here, Ngugi considers himself as one of the villagers addressing his reader by "you". Therefore, we may deduce that Ngugi does not really succeed to dissociate himself from his characters as modernist writers do.

Kateb in Nedjma uses flashbacks and Rachid's interior monologues to distance himself from his characters (PP.117- 127), but the reader feels that the author has not succeeded in detaching himself from them. This is explained by the fact that Nedjma is somewhat an autobiographical novel based on Kateb's own traumatic experiences. An example to illustrate this point is Kateb's comment and his idealisation of his characters, especially, Lakhdar (P.53).

Both Ngugi and Kateb lack distance and have been criticised for not detaching themselves from their works, by failing to achieve what T.S.Eliot calls: "the impersonality of the author". Ngugi and Kateb alternate between public and private experiences. This kind of link was precisely obliterated in modernist writing; as Gikandi writes:

The modernist novel has failed to encapsulate the totality of the African experience. The modernist novel is a fiction of crisis. The novelist is not concerned with specific social modes, he is concerned more with the symptoms rather than the social-historical dynamics of our experience. The reality of his novel is thus limited to the perception of a character who lives on the periphery of a society he would like to negate entirely.(Gikandi.1987: 134).

In the light of all that has been stated, it is clear that Ngugi and Kateb are influenced by modernist writers and find inspiration in their writings. This is apparent because of the two authors' use of some devices and techniques that are associated with modernism. However, there is sufficient material in the two novels indicating that the used techniques can still be interpreted as legitimate attempts to counter the European cultural domination. Ngugi and Kateb oppose the slavish imitation of western forms and ideas and are informed with a deep concern and

intense engagement towards their popular culture. In A Grain of Wheat and Nedjima, Ngugi and Kateb borrow from traditional oral sources. The borrowings occur in the use of history, African symbols, proverbs, language, myths and legends.

### Use of Orature and Folk Culture

The Europeans tended to see Africa as a “tabula rasa” that needed to be filled by European concepts and ideas which, in their view, were the only forms of knowledge and culture worthy of being transmitted. Therefore, much of African literature often has been a reaction to the conception of the African universe depicted as a negation of history in European literature. For Ngugi, the role of the African writer consists first and foremost in correcting the images of his world defined by European languages from the total grip of Eurocentrism. The task can be done mainly in reviving past history found in oral traditions and in the memories of old people. (Ngugi. 1993: 22). Thus the use of some elements from oral traditions becomes a means to African writers to reclaim their lost heritage through an appropriate use of the cultural and linguistic tools available to them.

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi's debt to the Kikuyu traditions are many and some elements from oral tradition are used to counteract the attraction of western civilisation and culture by fighting against a feeling of inferiority. The new style is evident in the copious use of Gikuyu words and phrases such as “Uhuru”, “Jembe” or “Shamba”. The words occur in the characters' conversations and are often written without translation. This can be added to various songs and proverbs inserted in the novel. For instance, Mumbi recalls some of the songs, which the villagers sang to sustain their spirit when doing hard work during the Emergency Period (P.144). For the sake of granting his fiction an African flavour, the author deliberately inserts also

some Kenyan patriotic songs. They are used to affirm a particular authenticity and a cultural identity.

Similarly, Kateb's Nedjma is grounded in the Algerian traditional oral sources. We may observe that many aspects of the novel reveal Kateb's borrowing from the popular mode of speech and appealed to oral culture, which is evidenced in the dialogues of the characters.

One of the most striking aspects of Nedjma is the language in which it is written. Though parts of the narrative are conveyed in conventional French, the texture of the novel consists primarily of some instances of colloquial spoken forms of Arabic that reflect the linguistic consciousness of the Algerian workers. Kateb's reliance on the informal language includes short expressions, idiomatic rags and tatters of everyday speech. His use of some vernacular expressions such as "va donc lui chercher un drap, si ça peut servir à son enterrement" (P.33), "laisse le puits couvert"(P.179) and "ça nous donne envie de courir, comme les vaches au moment de Tikouk" (P.198), challenges the notion that standard and formal French can be used for the construction of the verbal art. It is also a way for the writer to reject the idea that the vernacular is a debased mode of expression. Kateb's recourse to the vernacular in his characters' conversations, which spills over into the narration, marks the author's refusal to establish a linguistic boundary between these levels of discourse. In other words, Kateb's appeal to Arabic dialect is not a mere exercise of style. It has powerful social and political implications involving a potentially subversive engagement with the long history of cultural domination of Algeria.(Cf. Kaye and Zoubir.1990:119).

The adapted language is used to fight the war for recognition and Kateb is engaged in showing how to remake or change language; which implies a rejection of



what is perceived as the dominant and dominating culture. The technique reminds us of Michael Bakhtin's dialogic model discussed in his study of Rabelais and his World (1984). Bakhtin's concept of dialogue rejects any authority on the part of one culture or another suggesting a democratic encounter between them. (Cf. Macey. 2000: 28).

Kateb's subversive use of the French language may either be considered a nationalist attitude and an expression of his non-conformism with the dominant French culture. In this respect, we agree with Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal who considers Kateb's Nedjma as

un texte pétri d'arabité avec des réminiscences et des revendications amazighes plus au moins manifestes. L'inscription de cette arabité dans la littérature katébiennne est tellement forte et si flagrante, qu'elle semble faire de cet écrivain francophone, le plus arabisé et le plus arabophile des écrivains algériens. (Maougal. 2003: 46).

The linguistic texture in Nedjma is supplemented by the periodic insertion of patriotic songs like: "De nos montagnes s'élève la voix des homes libres". (P.217) which reinforces the thematic material of the narrative and suggests a strong connection between the novel and Algerian culture.

### A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma as Historical Narratives

If modernist literature is known for its fascination with technique and its disengagement from historical reality, we may observe that the most common feature of A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma resides in their authors' use of history as primary material. The use of history proves that Ngugi and Kateb do not imitate blindly the elitist conceptions of the western modernists because they draw heavily upon their respective countries' folk culture and endeavour to repudiate the

colonising culture in order to unearth and develop their indigenous heritage through the use of history.

A notable feature of this heritage, extensively exhibited by Ngugi in A Grain of Wheat is, without doubt, his preoccupation with the Mau Mau revolt. By using history as a framework, Ngugi deliberately counters the myth fostered by colonialism that the Mau Mau movement is purely evil. In a counter argument, Ngugi presents the Mau Mau as a heroic response to colonial oppression, instead of an outbreak of native African savagery. In so doing, Ngugi grants an important historical and legendary dimension to the struggle, postulating that the Mau Mau is the highest expression of people's commitment to the economic and political struggle. (Ngugi.1981: 20).

Throughout the narrative of A Grain of Wheat, the Mau Mau fighters are considered "heroes of deliverance, local sons who were courageous enough to challenge the oppressive state and its agents"(P.16). They challenged the colonial state laws in order to dismantle not only its economic exploitation, but also its political oppression and racism (P.203). Ngugi refers to names of leaders such as Waiyaki, Thuku and other warriors who joined the long line of resistance (P.83). To illustrate the extent to which Ngugi glorifies the Mau Mau revolt, we may refer to his overvaluation of the fighters. For instance, Kihika, the „black Moses” who recalls Dedan Kimathi, the legendary Mau Mau leader, is endowed in A Grain of Wheat, with a great knowledge of history, religion and philosophy. (P.88).

Moreover, in one of his political essays, Ngugi compares the Mau Mau fighters to Prometheus who stole the fire from gods and lighted the path for liberation. For the author, the Mau Mau fighters are symbols of resistance and their

struggle is also paralleled with the war waged by David against Albion Goliath. (Ngugi.1981: 111).

Correspondingly, Kateb's Nedjma is based on an episode of the history of colonial Algeria. This historical moment to Kateb is obvious enough and provides a clear example of the fact that history is shaped by the struggle of ordinary people against their oppressors. The novel is set in the period before the Second World War and Kateb employs a tremendous quantity of historical details, which are fused with the historical material concerning the 8 May 1945 uprising. Kateb dramatises the events through the intervention of several characters that embody the different attitudes to that historical situation. Each move is interpreted in relation to the great mythical or actual heroes of the past. The names of figures such as Abdelkader, Jughurtha are sufficient enough to evoke the glorious past struggles. Equally important is an obvious parallel between Nedjma's fictional narration and the history of Algeria on the one hand, and Kateb's youth experiences on the other. As we have already mentioned, Kateb's adult life was psychologically conditioned by memories of his youth, especially that of the uprising of Sétif in 1945. The experience refuses to vanish from his mind and remains a central theme and motif in the novel. In the fifth part of Nedjma, Kateb provides a complete depiction of the event from the eruption of violence with "le Porte drapeau s'éroule" to Mustapha's grand father, "vieux montagnard debout sur sa mule, qui tirait sur les gendarmes"(P.52), including the ruthless outcomes of the revolt, the days following the uprising. Kateb reports similar situations and happenings such as imprisonment, torture, and death (P.118). Jacqueline Arnaud qualifies the description as "la force de vérité". The young Kateb was shocked by the violence used by the French police and was very affected by the number of people killed during that period of troubles. (Arnaud. 1985: 208).

Like Ngugi, Kateb uses history to serve his ideological purpose by presenting the revolutionaries as a model of heroism and resistance. Kateb does not only favour rebellion towards the colonial system, but also praises his people's revolt and celebrates their communal resistance through his reference to Abdelkader and his followers who fought long and well. Though Abdelkader and his companions failed, as was the case of the Mau Mau fighters, they remained a model of heroic collective resistance. Kateb's interest in the communal aspect of the rebellion is written as follows:

Le peuple était partout, à tel point qu'il devenait invisible, mêlé aux arbres, à la poussière, et son seul mugissement flottait jusqu'à moi ; pour la première, comme à Sétif, je me rendais compte que le peuple peut faire peur (...) Et la foule se mit à mugir. Attendre quoi ? Le village est à nous (P.51).

In order to understand fully the first outburst of nationalist violence, reference to the 1 May 1945, seems important. During that day, many nationalist leaders resolved to mark the approaching liberation of Europe with demonstrations and claimed their own liberation. The Friends of the Algerian Manifesto (AML) organised demonstrations in twenty-one towns across the country to support the claim and to ask for the freedom of Messali Hadj, the leader of the Algerian People's Party (PPA). They mainly required the recognition of their right to independence after having contributed to the defeat of Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The demonstrations led to the eruption of violence in some localities, including Algiers and Oran, leaving four casualties and dozens of injured that day. (Harbi.1980: 29).

The tragic event was without doubt a source of inspiration for Kateb, who stresses the continuity of the struggle and shows the power and the will of the Algerians to end with oppression. For him, "la répression, loin de briser l'élan

populaire, ne fera que le pousser dans la voie d'une lutte encore plus déterminée et plus consciente".(Abdoun. 1983: 40).

It follows from the discussion above that Ngugi and Kateb covered a broad historical period. Ngugi's novel centres on the Mau Mau Rebellion of the 1950s, while Kateb's Nedjma is based on the 8 May revolt of 1945. Ngugi's use of history focuses on recapturing a local national culture based on a re-constructed past. To achieve his purpose, the author constructed a tale of heroic deeds and glorious past. Likewise, the different illustrations indicate the extent to which Kateb inserts some facts and formal devices to describe the Algerian resistance. Therefore, the two narratives can be regarded as the expression of events quite parallel to their moments. They are products of the period of high political tensions that characterised the two societies at a specific period of their respective history.

Ngugi and Kateb did not content themselves with the use of history. Both explored other ways of affirming their respective identities. In their common quest for a close identification with their respective peoples, they incorporated folk traditions and myths into their artistic works as an act of cultural rehabilitation.

### Use of Myth

Ngugi's and Kateb's attempts to re-valorise their cultures led them to restore the traditions and customs of their ancestors that the colonialists discredited. The appeal to myth becomes then an integral artistic device to subvert certain elements of a foreign imposed culture. In other words, Ngugi's and Kateb's use of myth can be seen as a way of finding a detour around the forms and formulations of the colonial culture, which aims to trivialise or to ignore the whole traditional mode of life and its spiritual framework.

Sticking to Northrop Frye's explanation provided in his The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance (1982), myth takes root in a specific culture. One of its functions is to explain a culture. Myths transmit a legacy of shared allusion to that culture. Frye adds that they are part of a society's knowledge of itself, the understanding of its traditions, its customs as well as its situation in the world. (Frye.1982:09).

Myth, as we shall make it clear, is deeply embedded in A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma. Ngugi's and Kateb's use of their ancestral myths are based on the legends of the Kikuyu and the Keblout transmitted orally from a generation to another. The two authors' appeal to myth is also a way to deny the colonial discourse, which presents the African people without history. Reference to tribal origins and institutions is vital to restore the Africans to their history. Myths serve to remind the two communities of their ancestors' heroic deeds, their customs and traditions. In this regard, Basil Davidson notes:

African writers use myth to counteract colonialism and its politics of divide and oppress, create an identity and restore self confidence and pride in that identity and its historical evolution. It is a nationalistic myth derived from ancient sources as from modern ones, foreign and native. This myth of the ancestors is recognised as standing in the line of succession back to the power without beginning. Their office is to channel this power, which enhances life, protects all generations and guarantees the future to living men. (Davidson.1994: 49).

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi took advantage of the dual heritage of the African novel by combining the resources contained in his African Kikuyu mythologies with conflicts over the land question, which dominate the colonial history. The Kikuyu creation myth plays an important role in Ngugi's novels. Ngugi resorts to African mythology from which he displaces the Mumbi Kikuyu myth to associate it with the main woman character, Mumbi. In so doing, he tells the story of the Creation and

emphasises the connection between people and the land of Kenya (P.153). The myth is directly linked to the Kikuyu legend of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the founding ancestors of the Kikuyu community. The story tells that Gikuyu, the founder of the tribe and Munkuyu, also called Marugu created Gikuyu and Mumbi under the big tree, situated in the Mountain of Brightness. It is said in the creation myth that God took the very first man and woman, Gikuyu and Mumbi, to the highest ground and handed to them the land. The myth is what binds the tribe into a “Kyama”, a sort of a secret society, which seeks to repossess the land lost to missionaries and colonial invaders to its real owners, the Kikuyu people. (Cf. Olney.1973: 45).

It may be important to note that Ngugi does not only draw from the Gikuyu mythology, but also borrows from Christian myths, which constitute the framework of the novel. The use of Christian faith is apparent in the characters reference to Christian concepts to express their fears, dreams and aspirations (P.76). The author makes use of the Biblical imagery and verse from the Exodus, St John s Gospel and Revelations that serve as epigraphs for the novel. Moreover, A Grain of Wheat is constructed on people s suffering and their sacrifice to free themselves from the constraints and pain caused by the colonial oppression. The situation is equated to the destiny of the children of Israel in their struggle for peace and freedom, illustrated in Ngugi s own words: “ The destiny of the Israelites and their struggle against slavery is similar to the Gikuyu people s experience of colonisation”. (Quoted in J. Wilkinson.1992: 130).

Ngugi also attributes the deity s name to Kihika who symbolises the messianic figure of the Christ. The comparison of Kihika to the Christ can be read in the letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, followed by the Verse of St John. In the

passage, Kihika is compared to a seed that must fall to the ground and die in order to give birth to a corn of wheat.(P.201).

We may add another reference to the Bible, in Chapter Three, when General R, a character in A Grain of Wheat refers to Kihika's crucifixion and compares him to Jesus. Kihika's desire to sacrifice himself for the good of the others is voiced in the novel as follows: "But a few shall die that many shall live. That's what crucifixion means today", makes him a true Christ (P.191).

However, Kihika selects a new emphasis in his favourite biblical quotation and modifies it to relate a communal revolutionary situation. He does so by insisting that Christ should be understood in Kenya not as an individual, but as a collectivity. This is evidenced mainly in the passage proposing a multiplicity of Christs, " Christ is not one person. All those who take up the cross of liberating Kenya are the true Christs for us Kenyan people".(P.85). In the same context, Ngugi's recourse to the Judeo- Christian mythology is also exemplified in A Grain of Wheat through the comparison of Kihika to Moses. The analogy reminds us of the Jewish leader's visions and his career, leading his wandering people in a quest for freedom and peace in the promised land of Canaan. If the mythical figure was ordered by his God to ask Pharaoh to let the slaves (the children of Israel) to go out of Egypt across the desert, Kihika, the Kenyan leader is given the task to lead the Gikuyu people to liberty. (P.191).

In relation to Kateb's Nedjma, the fact of writing in a colonial situation is an act of restitution, which demands a process of reversal, the reconstruction of identity, which can be reflected in the cultural, formal and linguistic reintegration of his Nedjma. Therefore, in all that Kateb has written and said, one sees a strong sense of cultural nationalism and a continuous reaction against the overwhelming



presence of European culture. Two reasons may be advanced for Kateb's use of the myth of the ancestors in Nedjma. First it is a way to describe the values of the ancestors and negate the myth of savagery fostered by colonialism. Second like Ngugi, Kateb is involved in a process of reviving his cultural heritage to demonstrate that Algerians are not a people without culture. So the use of myth has an ideological connotation against depersonalisation and aims to valorise Algerian culture. In other words, in Nedjma, myth is used against the manifestation of a historical order established by colonialism to denigrate and deny the French cultural superiority. Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal is right to write that the incorporation of myth in Nedjma: "vise à résoudre le problème des origines identitaires" which will be replaced by: "une épopée historique dans laquelle la question des mythes fondateurs de la personnalité collective et de la conscience sociale va se régler". (Cf. Maougal.2004: 42).

The myth of Keblout is linked to a tribe situated in the East of Algeria, in a region called Nadhor, situated about 30 Kms from Guelma. There are two versions about the legend of Keblout. The first version says that the members of the clan were from Morocco. They immigrated to Algeria and settled in Nadhor where their mosque was built. The second version, provided by Kateb himself, says that the tribe came to the Maghreb with the Beni Hillal from Spain. They crossed Morocco and settled in the East of Algeria.

In Nedjma, Kateb's mythical foundation is based on the legend of Keblout, which he recreates to describe pre-colonial Algerian society, complete with legal, religious and social organisations, which worked for order and equity. The society is not necessarily inferior, but of equal value with the European one. The myth tells that before the French invasion, the Algerian society was characterized by a tribal

life. The tribal order was based on Islamic traditions, which recommends the strong holding of the family honour, and forbids the loss of land. Besides the respect for the land, according to Rachid and Si Mokhtar, the Kebloutis were known for their long resistance against foreign intruders and any one who sells his land or abandons it is cursed and doomed to death. (P.142). The nostalgia for the old order with its values and customs is apparent in Kateb's reference to some religious feasts and rituals. Among all the ceremonies, we may single out Lalla Fatma's and Nedjma's visit to the temple of a Saint, written in Mustapha's diary. This ritual worship of visiting temples and offerings for saints is widespread in Algeria. Women trust the elders whose prime concern is to maintain a peaceful and prosperous society (P.232). The inclusion of the scene is to demonstrate the presence of an indigenous legal system that is an integral part of the Algerian life, beliefs and values. Northrop Frye indicates that one of the major social functions of myth is to explain, to rationalise and provide the source of authority for rituals. (Frye.1982: 55).

As a conclusion, we may deduce that Kateb's and Ngugi's use of myth veers between being an opposition device against acculturation and a tool to rehabilitate their respective cultures. The two authors' insertion of these rituals and myths highlights the fact that colonialism has not destroyed local pre-colonial customs and traditions. As Charles Bonn suggests, Kateb's Nedjma "renverse, ainsi, le rapport du même et de l'autre en posant comme exotique l'univers colonial". (Bonn. 1986: 53).

### Romance in A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma

The comparison of the two novels can be carried further to include some common elements of Romance, which are mainly the theme of love story, the idea of the quest and the element of mystery. To analyse the different features of

romance, we shall use Northrop Frye's theory as he developed it in The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance (1982).

The reading of A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma as romances lies in their authors' recourse to mythology. Beside the use of myth, the reader may also observe that A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma contain the quest theme, which is characterised by the characters' journey for a self-understanding and a search for the past. There is relevance to Frye's assumption that the normal form of romance is the quest story, which reflects an individual or collective journey for self-understanding and a search for one's identity and origins. The idea of the quest is inherent in romance and there is always something of nomadism that shapes the structure of this genre. (Frye. 1982:89).

In A Grain of Wheat, the biblical myths provide an important material for Ngugi's novel. The quest of Moses is reinterpreted through Kihika's actions. The longing of the Kenyan black leader for liberty resembles western quest myth, including the historical search for the legendary Promised Land. The strong desire for liberation in the novel can be paralleled with Moses in the myth, which relates the story of the Jewish leader's wanderings in the desert of Egypt in quest for freedom and peace in the Promised Land of Canaan.

In Nedjma, the quest for cultural identity is a central subject. It is suggested mainly by Rachid's determination to look for his past and origins. Yet in Kateb's novel we have a double quest. The first one is Rachid's and his mentor Si Mokhtar's pilgrimage to Mecca. The second is that of Rachid, Si Mokhtar and Nedjma's quest to the ancestral world of Nadhor. The two quests end in failure because in the first journey, the two characters did not reach the Holy Land while the second quest finished with the mysterious murder of Si Mokhtar and the expulsion of Rachid from

the ancestral world by Mabrouk, the Negro guard of Nadhor. But, some critics, such as Mildred Mortimer, do not accept the hypothesis of Rachid's failure. Mortimer observes that Rachid's quest is not completely a failure since it provided him with knowledge about his past and origins. Instead of uncovering the murder of his father, Rachid's trip to Mecca as well as his return to Nadhor allowed him to get information from Si Mokhtar, about his ancestors and discover his cultural heritage. (Mortimer.1990: 178). Rachid's quest and his desire to recreate the ancestral world can be equated with Kateb's individual journey to self-understanding, a model that he sets forth for a collective voice, for the Algerian nation (Ibid.99). This interpretation has been certified by Kateb himself when he affirms: "Le sens de toute mon oeuvre est de retrouver le passé. Une quête d'un passé capable de libérer le présent . (Le Figaro Littéraire.1967. N° 26).

The theme of the quest in Nedjma is also discussed by Marc Gontard, who compares Rachid's nomadism in the two mythical cities of Bone and Constantine to the wandering of Joyce's characters in the labyrinthine city of Dublin (Gontard.1985: 85). Gontard adds that "l'angoisse d'une errance qui ramène au point de départ" echoes clearly the universe of Joyce. To support his argument, Gontard quotes Kateb who explains the theme of the quest in Nedjma and says: " Nedjma, comme l'Algérie, est une femme qui se cherche, qu'on cherche. Actuellement, la recherche n'est pas encore finie". (Ibid.110).

Next to the quest theme, one of the most marked features of Romance is mystery. According to Northrop Frye, the author of a Romance must not only use mystery in his narrative, but has also to build his story in a complicated way to increase the curiosity of the reader and to impel him to continue reading until he reaches the "solution". Frye argues that in the general area of Romance, we find

highly stylised patterns like the detective story, which are also conventionalised as to resemble games. (Frye. 1982:22).

With regard to A Grain of Wheat, the mystery revolves around the murder of Kihika, the revolutionary hero whose murder took place during the Mau Mau revolt (P.17). A close and unknown friend has betrayed Kihika and the two last men to see him were Mugo and Karanja. Throughout the novel, some characters, such as General R. and Lieutenant Koinandu contribute to the gradual building of Karanja's guilt while Mugo is regarded as a hero. He was the man who made Thompson kneel, as opposed to Karanja, who kneels before the white boss. Because he was seen as a hero, people went to see him in order to convince him to deliver a speech on Independence Day. The mystery and the suspense continue until the mask falls with the confession of Mugo to Mumbi in a state of trance. Following this, Mugo divulges his secret in public during the "Uhuru" day ceremony. It is in the end of the novel that people discover that Mugo was the betrayer of Kihika. (P. 223).

In Nedjma, the events revolve around two mysteries. The first concerns the murder of Rachid's father and the death of Si Mokhtar. Each of the two characters, "morts dans l'incertitude" (P.169). The second secret evolves around the birth of Nedjma. In fact, the mystery and the enigma lie in the fact that Nedjma is a daughter of a French mother and of an unknown father, who may be Si Mokhtar or Si M'hamed, Kamel's father. Therefore, Nedjma is either a sister or a cousin of her own husband. She may also be a sister of Rachid's or a daughter of Si Mokhtar's. What is noticeable is that in both cases, the reader does not have the key of the two mysteries.

In addition to the quest theme and the element of mystery, romance, from Northrop Frye's perspective, finds also its expression in a love story. For the critic,

one of the most important features of Romance is a love story accompanied by exciting adventures, which can be regarded as a foreplay leading to sexual union. The narrative of Romance, argues Frye, is usually characterised by irregular sexual activity and one of the recurrent themes in Romance is incest (P.24). These features can be found both in A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma.

In Ngugi's novel, the love story is identified through the relation between Gikonyo and Mumbi. The liaison begins in an idyllic way. It ends because Mumbi in an instance of unconsciousness gives herself to Karanja, her husband's rival. At the end of the novel, the relation between the couple sees a sort of revival, after Gikonyo's acceptance of Karanja's child. The novel ends with reconciliation between Gikonyo and Mumbi.

To Gikonyo and Mumbi love story, can be added another relation of sincere love between Wambuku and Kihika, a love story which fails because of the war. We may also refer to the adultery, which links Margery Thompson to Dr Van Dyke. The wife of the British official John Thompson shares a relation with Van Dyke she met at Githima. Margery Thompson's unfaithfulness is due to her husband's inability to fulfil his wife's needs. (P.50).

With regard to Kateb's novel, Nedjma is a love story based on a competition of four men to get the affection of the same woman called Nedjma. The beauty of the woman obsesses all the male characters. But, none of them can obtain her love. Nedjma is married to her cousin Kamel. During the absence of her husband, Nedjma engages in an adventurous relationship with Lakhdar and shares a love affair with him. While staying in Nedjma's room, Lakhdar discovers a portrait of an unknown soldier, probably another lover of Nedjma (P.229).

In addition to Nedjma's furtive infidelity, Kateb's fiction provides the reader with some other irregular and excessive relations. Nedjma is also the story of an obsessive love, colonial incestuous violence and ambiguous genealogy. The incestuous link emanates from the adventures of Si Mokhtar with Nedjma's mother, the French woman he shares with Kamel's father, Sidi M'hamed. The incestuous relation is made clear by Rachid, when he says:

Ainsi, Mourad, Nedjma et moi, notre tribu mise en échec  
répugne à changer de couleur, nous nous sommes toujours  
mariés entre nous, l'inceste est notre lien, notre principe de  
cohésion depuis l'exil du premier ancêtre, le même saint nous  
porte irrésistiblement à l'embouchure du fleuve passionnel.  
(P.176).

To the different adventures of Si Mokhtar and Sidi M'hamed, we can add their relations with prostitutes. Sidi M'hamed has been found in a car, assassinated in a company of a prostitute.(P.80).

Moreover, what compels the reader to consider A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma as romances is their authors' conception of characters which fall into two categories: the heroes and the villains. This characteristic is one of the distinctive features of Romance, following the approach provided by Northrop Frye. (P.50).

In A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma, many examples illustrate Ngugi's and Kateb's representation of these two sorts of characters. Ngugi describes his characters in relation to their reaction towards the rebellion. There are those who fought the coloniser by taking the oath like the hero Kihika, admired for his loyalty and courage and those who did not take part in the revolt like Mugo. Ngugi presents him in such a manner he cannot be condemned for his betrayal. The reader feels pity and compassion towards him.

Ngugi's condemnation falls on those who collaborated with the coloniser, and Karanja is one of them. The latter succeeded to get many privileges from the white

colonialists as a reward for his loyalty. However his collaboration makes of him a villain who compromises his manhood and self-respect to serve the oppressor. He takes advantage of the power he got from the white master and makes Mumbi pregnant, betraying his old friend Gikonyo.

In addition to the home guard Karanja, Ngugi portrays the British colonialists in general and John Thompson in particular as villains and odious characters, which typify all sorts of oppression and domination. Thompson, for instance, is cast in a mock- heroic mode to expose the vanity of the imperialist. He stands for racist arrogance, paternalism, and greed, which are the motive for the colonial invasion of Africa.

The same argument holds true for Nedjma where Kateb uses Lakhdar and Mustapha as heroes who participated fully in the process of their country's liberation.(P.218). Opposite these two characters, stands Rachid, the anti-hero of the novel but not a villain. However the role of the villain is attributed to the French "colons", and particularly to Mr Ricard and Mr Ernest. The two characters embody exploitation and repression that appear in their attitudes towards the local population.

The final results of our examination of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma can be summed up as follows; firstly, we have advanced the idea that the two novels can be compared in terms of characters. Our argument has been supported with examples, illustrating the analogies between some characters.

Secondly we have shown that Ngugi's and Kateb's fictions were classified in the modernist type of writing because of the two authors' use of techniques akin to modernist writers. Ngugi and Kateb were involved in a quest for style and wanted to affirm their individual talents in African literature by giving importance to form and



language. However we have demonstrated that both Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma cannot be considered as merely modernist novels because of the priority that the two authors accord to their respective countries' history and their borrowings of some elements from their folk culture and oral tradition. Ngugi and Kateb also engage history in their fictions. Thus war and rebellion are important motifs that govern the reading of A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma. This is to show the writers' visions of their respective history of their countries. Ngugi's intentions are to shed light on some hidden parts of history in order to correct them. The writer revises the myth fostered by colonialism. That is why we can consider the novel as a re-inscription of history, and Ngugi can be regarded as a judge and an interpreter of his society. Kateb describes in a realistic way the 8 May uprising. The experience is derived from the author's own life and that of his friends and countrymen.

Thirdly in their attempt to reconstruct their African heritage, both Ngugi and Kateb draw from their native cultures through their appeal to folktales, legends and myths. Finally, we have reached the conclusion that both novels contain some characteristics of romance. In the light of all that has been said, we may conclude that A Grain of Wheat and Nedjma can be regarded as historical romances.

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In the previous chapter, we have compared Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma in terms of literary affinities. We have reached the conclusion that they share the "dilemma" of some African authors whom by "cause or accident of history" use the language of the oppressor in their writings. But, in spite of Ngugi's and Kateb's indebtedness to western forms, models and use of foreign a language, both still strive to recover and rehabilitate an African aesthetics. Both of them are prompted by the desire to initiate a discourse of resistance and to re-present the history of their countries and cultures to correct the misrepresentations of the colonial discourse. Ngugi's and Kateb's efforts to regenerate their respective cultures is evidenced in their appropriation of various elements from African folklore and oral traditions like myths, legends and folk tales.

In this third chapter, we intend to take the stylistic and textual analysis a step further, by including some affinities between Ngugi and Kateb, the playwrights. Our analysis will deal with Ngugi's plays The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and I Will Marry When I Want, which we consider as the most comparable to Kateb's Le cadavre encerclé and Mohamed, prends ta valise. For such purpose, we shall try to demonstrate that both Ngugi's and Kateb's dramatic works spring from nearly the same sources, and are inspired by the same kind of thoughts and influences. In addition, both playwrights experiment with various styles of dramatic presentation to determine which forms are the most suitable vehicle to convey their messages to the masses.

At the start of their careers, Ngugi and Kateb used the conqueror's tongue in their plays. They were under the influence of the Greek classics and patterned their plays in a way, which recalls the Greek tragedy. The two playwrights showed an interest in the tragic form and wished to try it as a mode of expression. This is

mainly because of their experience of the war and the immense suffering resulting from it. In this regard, Kateb says: “ Nous avons vécu un cataclysme, une révolution, ce n est pas rien”(Awal.1992: 88). Kateb and Ngugi explain human suffering in terms of social, political and psychological factors.

Ngugi s The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb s Le Cadavre encerclé will be compared in terms of structure, characterisation and the use of the chorus. The chief purpose is to identify, in the two plays, some tragic elements akin to classical tragedy as Aristotle formulated them in his Poetics.

After the independence of their respective countries, Ngugi s and Kateb s plays witnessed a shift mainly in terms of themes explored. Both showed a commitment to the social and political turmoil of their respective countries. The change can be explained by the fact that the post-independence period saw the emergence of social class contradictions, a development that has disappointed and has shocked the two playwrights and has compelled them to create artistic works expressing disillusionment with the postcolonial society. Ngugi and Kateb, like many other African writers, showed their profound disappointments with their post-independence societies through their move from the corrective stance of colonial misrepresentations to more domestic issues and matters. Ngugi, for example, explains his concern, in his book Moving the Centre, where he writes:

The writer started taking a more critical stand against the anti- national and anti-democratic, neo-colonial character of the ruling regimes. He began to connect these ills not just to the moral failings of this or that ruler, but also to the perpetuation of imperialist domination through the comprador ruling classes in Africa . (Ngugi. 1993. P.70).

Similarly, Kateb s life, like that many African writers was shaped by promises of change with the overthrow of the French colonial regime. Then, came the shock of the abuse of power, corruption and injustice. Kateb s disillusionment with his post

independent Algeria arose from the fact that the Algerian Independence in 1962 brought little improvement in the lives of the masses. Kateb says:

Les écrivains doivent avoir le courage d'exercer leur critique sur la Société actuelle, une société libérée du joug colonial mais qui s'enfonçait déjà vers des ténèbres d'un autre âge ». (Quoted in EI Watan, 03/03/2005).

Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta Valise, are the outcomes and expressions of their authors' disillusionment. In their analysis of the social ills, which continue to plague their respective societies, there is an implied search for the basis of a new and more equal social system. At the level of form, Ngugi and Kateb did not content themselves with the tenets of classical tragedy. They appealed to a number of experimental strategies reminiscent of Bertold Brecht's Epic theatre.

Comparison of The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Le Cadavre encerclé

Kateb wrote Le Cadavre encerclé during the Algerian Liberation War, whereas, Ngugi co-authored The Trial of Dedan Kimathi after the independence of Kenya. Though produced in different historical periods, the two plays can be linked in terms of their themes, their contents and their forms. Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé, share a common tragic sensibility. However, before looking for some tragic elements, which may be found in the two plays, it is useful to define the theory of tragedy, as formulated by its Greek theorist, Aristotle.

Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy

In his book entitled Poetics, Aristotle regards tragedy as the most highly developed form of poetry concerned with high-ranking persons. It is an imitation (mimesis) in a dramatic mode of an action that is serious, "complete, and of some

magnitude". Tragedy is also a manner of looking and a way of interpreting life. For Aristotle, tragedy discloses man's character and thought in "language endowed with pleasurable accessories". The imitated action is accompanied with incidents, which evoke in the spectator pity, fear and serve to achieve the catharsis of such empathy. Aristotle argues that in its elementary form, tragedy must create and heighten the audience's feelings and emotions. In this respect, tragedy cleans the heart through pity and terror, purging the audience of their pity and worries by making spectators aware that there can be nobility in suffering. (Cf.M.Heath.1996: 10).

Aristotle indicates that the essence of tragedy is struggle and conflict, closely linked to parental relationship as family or clan. Tragedy shows us a mortal engaged in an unequal struggle with destiny. The conflict reaches its tragic issue when the tragic hero perishes. Tragedy ends sadly with the downfall of the main protagonist. It is the flaw (*harmatia*) or the defect of the hero that leads to his downfall. The tragic hero does not fall into misfortune because he deserves it, but because of a mistake in his character. In other words, the fall, notes the Greek philosopher, is not due to vice, villainy or depravity but rather to an error (*hubris*), essentially linked with sin or a violation of moral law, whether human or divine. All tragedies exhibit the omnipresence of an external fate which contrives for the main character to be punished (*nemesis*) because he does not live in tune with nature. (.Draper.1980: 46).

For the Greek theorist, the quality of a perfect tragedy is determined by its six constituents, which follow the order of their importance. Tragedy must not only have an orderly arrangement of the parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude, for beauty depends on magnitude and order, adds Aristotle. These parts are namely: plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle and song. Two of these parts constitute

the medium of imitation, one the manner, and the three others the objects of imitation.( M.Heath. P.11).

The plot, which Aristotle defines as the „arrangement of the incidents is the most important constituent. Aristotle considers it as the soul of tragedy. His argument for the primacy of the plot over characters lies in the fact that „tragedy is not an imitation of persons, but of actions and life . To support the argument, Aristotle indicates that an outstanding person is not necessarily successful. For him, the prize in a competition is not deserved by a man with best health conditions but to the one who comes first. Aristotle argues also that tragedy is impossible without plot, but possible without characters. The emotions which tragedy aims to evoke are responses to success and failure. Therefore, good and bad fortune depends on action and not on character. A tragic plot is to render an ideal action in terms of stage event and may succeed in this without having recourse to character. (Ibid.12).

However, for Aristotle, a well-constructed plot must neither start nor end haphazardly. The events must be continuous and unified, i.e. tragedy should have a beginning, a middle and an end appropriately connected. The series of events must be unified and self-contained. The plot must also have sufficient scope to include a change from bad fortune to good or from good to bad. The change must be the result of a sequence of necessary connected events.

Aristotle suggests two kinds of plots: simple and complex depending on two elements, which are Reversal (peripetia) and Recognition (anagnorisis). He describes the simple plot as one in which the action is „continuous and in which the change of fortune takes place without reversal of the situation and without recognition. A complex plot is the one in which a change in the action is accompanied by peripetia or recognition or both. These two elements, which are



distinctive to a complex plot, make a sequence of events particularly effective and produce astonishment, wonder and amazement.

Reversal can be explained as a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, i.e, the outcome of actions will be other than what had been expected. Reversal involves astonishment, amazement and shock, which are caused mainly by the inversion of the expected outcome of some actions. Aristotle picks out an instance of how events in a tragedy can take an unexpected turn. The instance is exemplified by Oedipus's discovery of the terrible truth about his parentage. The messenger, who brings the news of Oedipus's real parentage, intending to allay his fears, brings about a sudden reversal of his fortune, from happiness to misery, by compelling Oedipus to recognise that he murdered his father and married his mother. (Ibid.18).

Recognition is a change from ignorance to knowledge, which produces love or hate between persons. The reversal and recognition not only determine the complexity or the simplicity of the plot but also produce either pity or fear or both. Aristotle argues that the most effective tragic plots are those, which arouse pity or fear by containing the elements of reversal, recognition, and suffering.

Tragedy should contain an action that involves destruction, extreme agony and death. Suffering is used to evoke fear and terror because the goal of a tragedy is not suffering, but the knowledge that issues from it. The fear is not the misfortune which threatens another person. It is the fear, which arises in us from the similarity of our position with that of the sufferer. What makes the events appear terrible and pitiable, adds Aristotle, is when people inflict harm on those who are „closely connected to them or when suffering arises within close relationships. It can also be

possible when someone commits an ignoble act without knowing it, i.e. through ignorance. (Quoted in "Aristotelian Tragedy", by G.E.Lessing, in Draper.P.99).

Next to the plot, Aristotle includes character that holds second place. Aristotle considers:

Tragedy is an imitation not of human beings but of action and life of happiness and misery, which are realised in action; the goal of life is an action, not a quality. Men owe their qualities to their characters, but it is in their actions that they are happy or the reverse. And so the stage figures do not act in order to present their characters, they include their characters for their actions. ("Aristotelian Tragedy", by Jones, in Draper. P.57).

Even though Aristotle gives primacy to plot over characters, he recognises the contribution, which they make to the quality of tragedy. Thus, characters are included for their actions and should be adequately relevant to four requirements; goodness, appropriateness, likeness and consistency. Seen from the Aristotelian point of view, characters are persons who are above the common level and should be as virtuous as possible. Tragedy should involve admirable persons, well in their kinds and are better than ordinary individuals. Each character should have appropriate virtues, be of high status and of good morals. Characters should be also of a certain life likeness. In this respect, Aristotle compares poets to painters. While producing the distinctive form of the original, painters make a likeness, which is true to life and yet more beautiful. They make the portraits better looking through the combination in their portraiture of likeness and idealisation. The last of Aristotle's requirements for character is consistency, which means that the main character should always keep to the same principles and have a regular pattern, i.e, he should be an excellent model to follow.

The third constituent in the Aristotelian order is „Thought or „Reasoning that includes the effects, which must be produced by language. It consists of the speech

the character uses to frighten another with the intention to produce emotions such as fear, pity and anger. Next to thought and reasoning, the fourth element enumerated by Aristotle is diction. Tragedy is composed in language made pleasurable through the choice of words and utterances, which evoke fear, terror, pity and anger.

Of the remaining distinctive features of tragedy, the chorus holds the chief place. Tragedy, in Aristotle's view, is composed in a language made of melody and rhythm. It is written in verse and some parts of it are sung. Songs are described „as the most important source of pleasure , to which can be added the spectacle and lyric poetry. (M.Heath.P.31).

Having explained what tragedy is and enumerated its basic constituent parts according to Aristotle's conception of tragedy, our chief purpose is to show these elements through the analysis of Ngugi's and Kateb's selected plays.

#### Tragic Features in Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé

Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé was written in a period characterised by repression and terror. Those turbulent times, as we have already indicated, had a great impact on Kateb's life. Therefore, the author was convinced that tragedy was the ultimate way to represent the bitter reality and to portray the Algerian revolution: «Actuellement, en Algérie, nous vivons une tragédie et c'est ce que j'écris». (Gafaiti.1990: 30).

The play, then, imitates that bitter reality and provides a realistic picture of the Algerian resistance against the French domination. Its central action revolves around the war, making of Le Cadavre encerclé, a drama on colonisation and alienation. Kateb's play finds its source of inspiration in the Algerian tragedy, and

projects a picture of characters caught in an atmosphere of violence. In fact, Le Cadavre encerclé can also be regarded as the tragedy of Kateb himself. But the question, which we shall try to answer in the course of this part, is, what makes Kateb's play a personal tragedy.

The structure of Kateb's play corresponds to what Aristotle calls „a defective plot because it is lyrical rather than linear. The main protagonist, Lakhdar moves from monologue to another, expressing his suffering, pains and obsessions. The various emotions are part and parcel of the author's feelings and his reactions to the external reality. In addition, lyricism dominates the action through Kateb's use of some flashbacks, to depict episodes in the history of the Algerian people's struggle for liberation. The device reinforces the tragic mood and interrupts the logical progression of the action. In the course of the play, Kateb refers to the eve of the demonstration of May 1945 and its preparation.(P.26). The scene is followed by the description of the demonstration itself (P32). Furthermore, a flashback is used to tell about Lakhdar's childhood, his arrest, and torture in prison. (P.48).

A close reading of Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé reveals also that its plot is complex because it contains the three elements required by Aristotle's „complex plot. As we have already mentioned, a complex structure, from Aristotle's point of view comprises three elements: reversal, recognition and suffering. These elements are infused in Kateb's play.

First, the reversal of situation occurs when Tahar murders Lakhdar. The main protagonist is supposed to be killed by the French soldiers during the street gunfire or by the police during his arrest and torture in prison. However, unexpectedly, Lakhdar perishes stabbed by Tahar, his stepfather (P.56). Yet the reasons for the crime remain unexplained in Le Cadavre encerclé but they are provided in Kateb's

La Femme sauvage where the reader comes to know the reasons, which led Tahar to commit his act. (Arnaud.1986: 314).

Second, an instance of recognition is detected at the end of the play. Lakhdar's vision, in the beginning, is that of the grandeur of his people, but in the end, he experiences total disillusionment, suffering and failure. Lakhdar, who is determined to abolish his suffering when the play opens, recognises in the end that he has only intensified it since his courage, that of an isolated, self-questioning hero leads to his fall and death (P.63). Lakhdar does not only die, he lives long enough to see his people for whom he dreamt only greatness, defeated by the oppressor and he, himself to be murdered and betrayed by Tahar, the traitor.

To these two elements can be added suffering, which is prominently provided in Kateb's play. Fear and terror are conveyed through the pain and the cries of Lakhdar in prison (P.53), the deafening noises of aeroplanes, gunfire, cacophonous sounds of gongs, the lamentations of the chorus, and the yapping of the malefic birds. (P.63).

The other distinctive mark, which makes Kateb's play a tragedy, lies mainly in the way he conceives the main protagonists of the play. Kateb's major characters are endowed with great political awareness. Lakhdar's, Mustapha's and Hassan's commitment to the Algerian revolution can be equated with the determination of Kateb's generation to free themselves from colonial domination during and after the Second World War. The characters participated in the demonstration, were imprisoned and tortured like Kateb and some of his friends. From the very title of the play, Le Cadavre encerclé is a revolutionary cry of defiance, an affirmation of existence, and accusation of the oppressor, depicted as a compelling force in the actions of the protagonists.

It is a tragedy because of its conflict-based structure. The possibility of conflict is announced from the beginning of the play. Mustapha explains the antagonism between the old generation represented by characters such as Tahar, the lawyer and the orange salesman. These characters believe that colonisation is positive and they are completely disillusioned about the possibility to get rid of the oppressor's dominance. They are not only passive and accept the French intrusion as an inevitable fate, but they refute any kind of change or revolution.

In contrast to the old characters, the young generation represented by Lakhdar, Hassan and Mustapha, are totally determined to fight until independence. Far from being impelled by a sense of despair, the young characters are positive in their determination to rid the Algerian people of the shackle of French tyranny. It is the conflict between these two generations that gives Le Cadavre encerclé its dramatic structure and a sense of tragedy.

Next to the conflict between the resigned old generation and the committed young one, the play is based on a hero, caught in a sharp conflict with the noble ends and the ignoble means that constitute tragedy. Lakhdar wrestles not with his family or his immediate personal concerns, but with the complexities of the world in which he struggles to survive. Kateb puts emphasis on the protagonist's struggle to escape the atmosphere of violence in which he is trapped. The atmosphere of gloom and terror is announced from the very first scene that shows the main protagonist, Lakhdar, dying and his corpse surrounded by other Algerians, victims of the French repression. The resurrected man, writhing on the floor, addresses the audience as "a jury", in a long monologue, and tells the story of colonisation. (P.17) At the midpoint of the play, there follows a „reflection scene“, in which Lakhdar evokes the events of 8 May 1945, including his detention and torture by the French

police. (P.47) Comparable to Kateb's own tragedy, Lakhdar experiences the torment of a deeply divided self, torn between his love for Nedjma and his commitment to the nationalist cause. Lakhdar is conceived as a source of antagonism. He creates hate and jealousy between Nedjma and Marguerite. Lakhdar's predicament lies in his acute awareness of the fact that in his just rebellion, he is forced to abandon his personal obsessions. But even if he is torn between practical politics and his personal emotions, his desire for a better society, which does not capitulate to the tyranny perpetuated by colonialism, is shown through his reconciliation with Mustapha. (P.43).

Analogous to some Greek tragic heroes, right from the beginning of the play, Lakhdar emerges as a man who is impelled by a noble ideal, that of giving his people their lost sense of identity, and a distinct cultural personality.(P.32). Lakhdar is also conceived as an admirable leader, an organiser of the demonstration. He is committed to the liberation of his country and is convinced that only blood sacrifice can redeem his country (P.26). Kateb's main protagonist, Lakhdar, fights to preserve something greater than himself: "C'est un canon qu'il faut pour m'abattre. Si le canon m'abat, je serai encore là".(P.18). Lakhdar objects with vehemence to the situation in which he finds himself. He does not accept his fate meekly; he cries against oppression and has consented to sacrifice his life so that others may derive joy in a free life.(P.31). His heroism is evidenced in his unquestionable commitment and self-sacrifice. He stands for his people's struggle and resistance.

Finally, like a tragic hero, Lakhdar is incapable of changing his fate and his death intensifies the overall atmosphere of tragedy. Therefore, caught in a terrible conflict, Lakhdar is compared to a scorpion encircled by flames, in a moment of despair, returns its sting against itself and accepts death. Lakhdar's death on an

orange tree (P.59) can be equated with the death of Prometheus, the titan who was chained to a rock, and beaten to death for stealing fire from the Gods.

Lakhdar is not the only tragic figure. Kateb presents other tragic characters, each one in his way, contributes to convey a tragic picture. As Lakhdar, Mustapha and Hassan think that liberty can only be real through action and concrete achievement (P.47). They take part in revolutionary activity to deliver the country. All of them are united by unmistakable assertion of solidarity around common values such as justice and liberty. That is why they fight to change the political conditions.

Turning from male to female characters, we observe that all of them sustain the weight of the tragic experience that inspires the play. First, we see the lonely Nedjma, “vouée à la nuit solitaire” and “l’amante en exil” with a black veil (P.20). She suffers from her love to Lakhdar and struggles to recover it. She is regarded as a source of conflict that creates rivalry and hate between Lakhdar and Mustapha. The other woman character, which conveys a sense of tragedy, is Marguerite. She suffers from her father’s oppression and is victim of the war circumstances (P.42). Marguerite takes part in the Algerian struggle, and symbolises the fringe of the French people, which was involved in the Algerian revolution, people such as Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean-Marie Domenach, Jean-Paul Sartre, Robert Barrat and many others. For Kateb, Marguerite is the most tragic character in the play because she is “la véritable victime”. (Quoted in L Action de Tunis, 28 Avril 1958).

The overall atmosphere of tragedy is conveyed by Lakhdar’s and Mustapha’s mothers. The two characters are the best representatives for all Algerian women. They incarnate maternal suffering and sacrifice, and both are in quest after their prodigal sons. For instance, Lakhdar’s mother typifies woman as a sufferer, a victim of her environment and stands as a symbol of sacrifice. The tragedy of Lakhdar’s



mother begins with her husband, killed in company of a prostitute (P.27), and is intensified when her son, Lakhdar abandons her when he went to work in France (P.57). She has been let down by life and by Tahar, her second husband, to whom she feels only hate and disdain. She suffers and accepts the sacrifice because it is her destiny to suffer. Kateb offers a tragic description of Mustapha's mother who thought that the French soldiers had killed her son. The belief was a hard blow that Mustapha's mother sinks profoundly in tragedy, becomes mad and loses touch with the real world. The two characters recall the tragedy of Kateb's own mother.

We may say that the suffering and calamity that affected Lakhdar, extends far and wide beyond him to involve the other characters of the play.

The chorus provides another element of tragedy in Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé. The author incorporates songs and music to depict psychic pain and fragmentation of his characters (P.63). Although the words and the music are borrowed, the adaptation of the play in terms of content and instruments is ingeniously creative and strongly rooted in Algerian culture. Kateb uses the chorus as an „alternative discourse and a cultural signifier which acts as one of the few means of political resistance available to the colonised Algerians. The voice of the chorus incites the freedom fighters to redeploy in the mountains, to gather their forces, and to come back more powerful than before (p.60). The chorus represents the voice of the Algerian people and functions as a national consciousness that not only sides with the freedom fighters but also incites the Algerian militants to continue their struggle for liberation.

As a conclusion, we may say that Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé contains some features akin to classical tragedy. These features range from the structure of the play, the conception of the main protagonists as tragic figures to the use of the

chorus. All these elements contribute to heighten the sense of the tragic in the play. Kateb stuffs his play with great sorrow, an essential ingredient in tragedy and a source of tragic emotions, especially pity.

Yet, it is worth noting that Kateb's play breaks away from some of Aristotle's rules for Greek tragedy. In fact, through the illustrations above, we have shown that Kateb's Le cadavre encerclé differs from the Aristotelian tragedy in emphasis. The difference lies in the fact that Aristotle regards lyric poetry as the least constituent of tragedy while Kateb's play is dominated by lyricism and parts of it are written in verse. From the examples provided above, we have also demonstrated that Kateb's personality is at the centre of the play. The ungraspable sadness of Lakhdar is made up of pains, and each prospect of fulfillment turns out to be an illusion that seems to be part of Kateb's personality. The play reveals an aspect of the author's psyche and a recreation of his existential moments, whether inherent in memory or immediately experienced moments. Therefore, we may conclude that Le Cadavre encerclé is not strictly an Aristotelian tragedy. It is rather "a lyrical tragedy" based mainly on its author's feelings and his reaction to the reality, which prevailed during the Algerian Liberation War.

### Tragic Traits in Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi

The narrative of Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi evolves around an action of a historical magnitude. It centres on the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s. The revolt takes the form of a heroic attempt by the leader Kimathi to challenge the oppressor, to unite his people and instil in them a sense of pride and dignity. Ngugi dramatises the last days of the Mau Mau hero before the British executed him in 1957. Kimathi's story produces an exceptional calamity and ends with the death of

the hero. Through the ideal representation of Kimathi, Ngugi celebrates the socio-economic causation of communal violence and describes the revolt as heroic.

Ngugi structures The Trial of Dedan Kimathi in three movements, divided into a number of self-contained scenes. The opening scene in a courtroom introduces the conflict between the main protagonist, Kimathi, “chained, in the dock and guarded by heavily armed soldiers”(P.3) and his enemies. The scene is very important because it shows the conflict between the indigenous insurgent and the British soldiers. It does not only deal with the first confrontation between the two opponents, but reveals also the causes of conflict from which the whole action of the play develops.

The plot of Ngugi's play is not linear. The organisation of events develops gradually around some selected facets of the mythical figure's life story. But, the playwright inserts some flashbacks to depict wartime scenes. One of them shows a guerrilla meeting, in Nyandarua forest, where Kimathi and some generals judge two British prisoners and some Black collaborators. The court scene, in which the main protagonist is charged in his prison cell, follows it. What emerges, then, from our analysis of the play's structure is that it corresponds to what Aristotle calls „a defective plot because of its distorted and episodic sequence of events.

In The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, Ngugi uses the main character, Kimathi, to celebrate the notion of heroism. But before focussing on heroic tragedy, it is worth highlighting concisely the concept, as it appears in Dorothea Krook's essay, “Heroic Tragedy”, included in R.P.Draper's Tragedy. Development in Criticism (1980). According to Dorothea Krook, the core of a heroic tragedy lies in the playwright's ideal representation of the tragic hero. Krook writes that this sort of tragedy:

expresses itself in a spontaneous delight in people; a rich, bright curiosity about the world; a keen responsiveness and

receptiveness to all impressions; and often a gaiety, a good humour, which does not diminish, but on the contrary reinforces and intensifies its profounder distinctions of mind and spirit of the tragic hero. (Krook in Draper.1980: 189).

Krook's definition can be applied to Ngugi's play in the sense that it evolves on the personality of Dedan Kimathi, a person of high public importance, the instigator of the Mau Mau revolt in the 1950s. As an exceptional political activist, he carries within him a touch of greatness. Most of the dialogues make of him an even more powerful symbol of resistance to British oppression. Ngugi elevates Kimathi to the rank of folk heroes such as Moses who, it was believed, would free his kinsmen from slavery and would lead them to freedom in the Promised Land.

Like tragic heroes, Kimathi engages in a conflict, which stirs not only sympathy and pity, but also a feeling of pleasure and respect. Kimathi is endowed with power and courage; which excites astonishment and exhorts admiration through his indestructible will to liberate his country. Ngugi's hero possesses many other virtues such as the passion for justice and a moral sensibility, which can be added to his great capacity of suffering. Kimathi's strength and endurance are shown through the various temptations offered by many characters to corrupt him and all of them fail to divert Kimathi from his engagement to get his people rid of colonial domination. (P.40).

Moreover, Kimathi emerges also as a proud nationalist hero, a dedicated fighter and a prominent organiser, who speaks eloquently (PP.65-70). He is totally engaged in his people's liberation struggle and is ready to sacrifice himself. In a way that echoes the Greek heroes, Kimathi shows an immense courage and significantly, a genuine solidarity with his people, as he affirms: "My leader is the people". Kimathi's uncompromising Kenyan nationalism is evidenced by the fact that

“He so hated the sight of Africans killing one another, that he sometimes, became a little soft with our enemies” (P.62).

Kimathi's softness is fatal in the sense that it leads to his flaw and contributes, in some measures, to the disaster in which he perishes. Indeed, without destroying the moral principles of the movement, which are too dear to him, Kimathi is a tragic hero because he is victim of his beliefs and his choice. His tragedy derives from the antagonism between the moral demands and the practical requirements of the revolution. His clemency and his indulgence to some collaborators, including his brother Wambararia, helped the British to capture him. As a prisoner, he is offered the possibility of reprieve that he rejects, and is finally executed. Kimathi's generosity of spirit in forgiving the traitors can be seen as a basic error on his part, which is central to his downfall.

Yet, Kimathi's death does not constitute a loss, but fulfilment and victory. His execution is transcended by a drive towards a mythical immortality, i.e. Kimathi's execution is transmuted into moral triumph because his heroic death becomes a powerful tool for anti-colonial activists. His grandeur remains undiminished and he becomes an icon of the Resistance.

The next element of tragedy, which is identified in Ngugi's play is the playwright's appeal to the chorus. The people who occupy the stage with their songs, dances and mimes convey a sense of tragedy. The songs are entirely performed in Gikuyu. From the very beginning of the play, two groups of men and women voice the community's power and resistance. The large cast of Kikuyu and Swahili singers, through their songs, look to the end of the imperial rule. The chorus voices the Kenyan resistance to colonial exploitation from the slave trade to plantation history. The songs celebrate also the rebellion against the white colonial

government (P.05). The dances and music are rooted in Ngugi's native culture and aim also to show mainly the brutal and mindless oppression inflicted on Kimathi (P.47). The songs and music recall both wartime and the history of Black slavery. At the end of the play, the chorus sings the grandeur and heroism of the Kenyan people's resistance to exploitation and domination. The chorus functions in the play, as Gilbert and Thompkins note, as a mode of empowerment for the oppressed characters and emerges as a locus of the struggle in producing and representing individual and cultural identity. (Gilbert- Thompkins.1996: 242).

Moreover, an atmosphere of terror, sadness and pity is conveyed through the scene of "A chain of exhausted slaves, roped onto one another" with their "heavy whipping"(P.18), the noises of jeeps, the bursts of machine guns, rough kicks, slaps, whiplashes and children weeping. (P.6).

It can be said, therefore, that Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi includes some elements, which echo the Aristotelian tragedy. These features are evident in the playwright's conception of the main protagonist as a tragic hero, in the structure of the play, and mostly in the author's incorporation of songs and dances, through the use of the chorus.

What comes from our examination of the two plays is that Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé are tragedies where, no one can afford to laugh while witnessing intense suffering and torturous frustrations of the masses caught in a tragic war situation. It is precisely this conception of the two plays as tragedies, which provides striking similarities and a ground for an interesting comparison.

It is important to note that if Ngugi and Kateb have dwelt on classical tragedy to write their respective plays, their orientations are, however, different. Both plays

differ from the Aristotelian conception of tragedy. As we have mentioned before, Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé is a tragedy based on its author's feelings and experience, which makes it "a lyrical tragedy", while Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is built on its author's reaction to an external reality and his attempt to change the vision of it through an ideal representation of Kimathi; which makes the play "a heroic tragedy".

Comparison of I Will Marry When I Want with Mohamed, prends ta valise

The parallels between Ngugi's and Kateb's dramatic works go beyond the cited analogies to include some affinities in their use of some features provided to them from Epic theatre. After the independence of their respective countries, Ngugi's and Kateb's used a new dramatic form to involve and relate the audience to the bitter reality of the daily life. The new dramatic form led them to appeal to some techniques akin to the Epic theatre of Bertold Brecht. The theatre is constructed, in the words of its leading theorist Bertold Brecht, first and foremost, to explore social and political problems in a satiric way, to raise the consciousness and to encourage people to struggle in order to change the world and better their lives.

Before turning to the analysis of the two plays in order to show the extent to which the epic features can be perceived in Ngugi's I Will Marry when I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise, it seems useful to explain what the Brechtian Epic theatre is and the way Brecht expounds his theory.

## Brecht's Theory of Epic Theatre

The Epic theatre is associated with the dramatic theory, which was formulated by the German playwright – director, Bertold Brecht, in the notes to his play entitled Rise and Fall of the City of Mahoganny (1930). At the heart of Brecht's theory, lies mainly the process of alienation, the *Verfremdungseffekt*, which consists of some devices that remind the viewer that he is being presented with a demonstration of human behaviour in scientific spirit rather than with an illusion of reality. Brecht, in his theory, indicates that a theatre should provide a process of alienation, which he regards as the basis of all understanding. In one of the essays entitled, "Qu'est-ce que le théâtre épique?" included in Essais sur Brecht (2003), Walter Benjamin explains that Brecht's Epic theatre departed from the conventions of theatrical illusion and puts emphasis on some characteristics, which makes it different, if not opposite to the tragic theatre of Aristotle. (Benjamin.1969: 147).

Brecht makes a difference between „the dramatic theatre and „the epic theatre. He compiles a list of contrasts between his theory and the Aristotelian form of drama on three major areas; the structure of the play, the conception of the hero, and the spectator. All of these three aspects are linked by what Brecht calls the idea of process, which aims to distantiate the audience from the performance. (Bartram. Waine. 1982: 32).

With regard to structure, Brecht rejects, most and foremost, the linear development, the evolutionary determinism ensuring that one scene makes another, and breaks down „the evolutionary inevitability. Instead of the inextricable interrelation of scenes where nothing could be suppressed, Brecht proposes a series of loosely connected scenes that avoid illusion and often interrupt the story line to address the audience directly with analysis, argument or documentation. The



process is achieved on the stage through Brecht's use of a technique called „Direct Narration“. In the course of the performance, the action is told rather than acted out. Hence, protagonists narrate, explain, using gestures, intonation and facial expression to show overall attitudes of one character towards another. (Benjamin. 2003: 46).

The plot, adds Brecht, should move in curves and jump, leaving each scene for itself and each episode to stand independently. The German theorist refutes the Aristotelian structure because its causality and coherence involves the audience's emotions in the experience of the characters, and thereby, fosters a passive acceptance of the existing order. As an alternative, Brecht observes that the epic theatre, through its structural inconsistencies, distances the audience from the play and encourages a critical judgement. It should be also didactic and capable of provoking change in society and its social order.

Brecht attacked also the prevailing conception of the hero endowed with innate characteristics that cannot be altered by circumstances. He argues that the consequent irresolvable conflict between the „fixed“ hero and the world, which is the core of classical drama, is inappropriate and unrealistic. In its place, the German theorist posited a hero subject to alternation and development, adaptable to society by his actions, which aim to change the society. Brecht refuses also the idea of „thought“, which determines the social being, i.e. man as unchangeable. The idea is replaced, in the epic theatre, by a social being not only „changeable“, but is able to bring about change. Brecht's view derives from Marx's premise that human being determines consciousness and not the reverse. (Cf. Batram. Waine.1982: 33).

In practice, Brecht shows the actors' alienation to their performances on the stage by the use of a device, called „Role Playing“, or „putting it in a show“. Actors

are given instructions to keep a distance between themselves and the characters they represent. They should disregard inner life emotions while emphasising stylised external actions as signs of social relationships. The actor presents a character, but does not represent himself. Brecht maintains that the role of the performer is:

L'acteur doit montrer une chose et il doit se montrer lui-même. Il montre naturellement la chose en se montrant et il se montre en montrant la chose. Bien que l'un et l'autre coïncident, cette coïncidence ne doit pas faire disparaître l'opposition entre les deux. (Benjamin. 2003: 45).

Brecht satirises the classical form of theatre, which keeps the eyes on the end of the play, insisting on suggestion and appealing to emotion, which implicates the spectator in a stage situation and wears down his capacity for action. Rather, Brecht encourages “Reason and Argument”, which on the contrary, keeps the eyes on the course of the performance. The technique insists on argument and appeals to reason. It aims also to turn the spectator into an observer and arouses his capacity for action as well. The spectator, for Brecht, cannot be regarded as just a passive recipient of a description of circumstances but as an active and integral component of the total process of the play. (Bartram.Waine. 1982: 41).

To avoid identification and empathy, Brecht inserts, in his epic theatre, some cinematographic methods. One of them is called „Interruption Technique”, through which alienation is done by the interruption of the happenings. The aesthetic method serves to delay and paralyse the emotions of the audience. It causes the disappearance of the catharsis, and eliminates the identification with the performers. According to Brecht, interruption is one of the fundamental devices in producing astonishment rather than empathy. Instead of identifying with the characters, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function.

A key example, taken by Walter Benjamin, from Brecht's theoretical writings may illustrate the point and make it more understandable. Walter Benjamin speaks about a family dispute. A mother was just about to seize a bronze bust and hurl it at her daughter; the father was in the act of opening the window in order to call a policeman. At that moment, a stranger appears in the doorway and is confronted with the situation as with a startling picture: troubled faces, an open window, and the furniture in disorder. The objective here is to block the spectator's emotional responses and hinder his tendency to empathize with the characters and become caught in the action. The device aims also to force the spectator to think objectively about the play in order to reflect on its argument, to understand it and to draw conclusions. (Benjamin. 2003: 150, 242).

In sum, it has become evident by now that Brecht's approach of epic theatre is characterised by its rejection of the Aristotelian structure and unities, conception of characters and the role of the audience. Brecht rejects totally the Aristotelian tragedy because of its inevitability and the fatalistic attitude it engenders on the spectator. As an alternative, Brecht proposes a dramatic form based on discontinuous actions, unidealized characters and concrete historical motivation. Brecht calls his new form „the critical comedy“, which is set in proletarian milieu, among ordinary people and has as its subject matter their everyday concerns and preoccupations.

Now that we have explained the principles, which govern the Brechtian theory of epic theatre, our intention is to identify some of its elements in Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise. However, to better understand the different aspects of the comparison; we shall deal with the context in which Ngugi and Kateb shift their emphasis from tragedy to drama based on satire,

by presenting short contexts and brief summaries of the two plays.

The independence of Kenya and Algeria was accompanied by much optimism. The new emerging States dreamt of utopian societies based on unity, liberty and equal share of the national resources and wealth. But in the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s, Ngugi and Kateb, came to a clear and profound understanding that independence has brought little improvement to their societies. Therefore, disillusion caused by „the stolen hopes and the „betrayal of the revolution inspired both Ngugi and Kateb to tone down the enthusiastic trust in the ideals of freedom, equality, and happiness theorised by the nationalist leaders. It was in the atmosphere of disillusion following their countries independence in the 1960s that Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise were written. The two authors sought to denounce the rampant corruption, the social injustice and the abuse of power, which threatened to annihilate all hope of individual existence and freedom.

The circumstances and events stirred Ngugi's and Kateb's hopes and concerns and inspired the dystopian world they depicted in their respective plays.

### I Will Marry When I Want. Context and Summary

The advent of Kenya's independence altered Ngugi's perspective. The proliferation of political parties with different ideologies favoured fractional and leadership rivalries. The clashes and the disagreements between the leaders of the political parties resulted in a great feeling of regionalism, which dominated the political scene, and the nation's „collective interests was forgotten. (Cf. Ogot. Ochieng.1995: 118).

The Kenyan regime, which had promised a drastic break with the British colonial rule and had professed commitment to “African Socialism”, ruled the country otherwise. The slogans and the rhetoric of the politicians did not match the reality experienced by people. In the 1970s, the Kenyan government opted for market economy, a path towards capitalism. Thus, the promises to the peasants and the working class have been broken repeatedly. (Cf. Davidson.1978: 307).

The theatrical space of Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want is used for uncovering the abuse of power, which marked the post-independent era. The play deals with the dilemmas of individuals faced with the complexities of life amid the dramatic changes brought in the Kenyan society by colonialism and its post-colonial aftermath. The narrative of the play evolves around a class struggle between the rich family of Ahab Kioi and that of Kiguunda, a poor farmer. The conflict starts when Ahab Kioi wants to take the peasant's meagre holding for a construction of an insecticide factory. Their disagreement is intensified by the disastrous love affair of their children, Muhuni and Gathoni. Muhuni makes Gathoni pregnant and abandons her. In the course of the play, Ngugi treats the private concerns of his protagonists within a broadly public political framework. In so doing, the playwright denounces how the „nouveaux riches“, make their money by exploiting farmers. Satire in the play can be summed up by the fact that the rich obtain more and more power and wealth while the poor get poorer and deprived.

#### Epic Features in Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want

Ngugi's I Will Marry When I want follows the pattern Brecht uses to structure his plays. Ngugi's play is divided into three acts. The first one contains one long scene; the second consists of two scenes while the last one has three. However, the

arrangement of events is disrupted by flashbacks. For instance, after a dispute between Wangeci and her daughter, the Kiguundas recall the happy days of the pre-Emergency period (P.19). This flashback is not the only one in the play. Kiguunda recalls the hard times of the Emergency (P.27). Furthermore, Gikaamba evokes the harsh working conditions that led to the 1948 workers strike in Nairobi. He evokes also the history of solidarity, which the peasants created in their resistance to colonial oppression, and refer to the organisation and unity that existed during the struggle for liberation (P.68). From the illustrations discussed above, we may say that the structure of the play is unlinear and episodic.

What connects I Will Marry When I Want to the Brechtian epic theatre lays also in the way Ngugi conceives his characters. There is no longer any central character, no conflict of love and hatred, and no holiness and wickedness. In the play, a whole class of peasants and workers replace the individual hero and there is no heroism in the depiction of individual characters. Rather, the play is populated with downtrodden peasants and workers, who are dialectically opposed to the high class of owners and exploiters. The characters assume the role of victims, opposed to tyrants who fall into two broad categories; the oppressing ruling class characters, which include religious personages, businessmen and traders and the oppressed and exploited common man, i.e. the underpaid peasants, the unjustly imprisoned workers, the suffering masses and the doubly exploited women.

From the very beginning of I Will Marry When I Want, Ngugi describes the harsh life of the poor peasants in Kenya who fought against the British occupation. After independence, the same people return once again to the intolerable state of pitiless capitalist exploitation (P.42). Kiguunda, the farmer, and Gikaamba, the factory worker stand for the majority of the Kenyan proletariat, victims of

exploitation, poverty and abuses of power that continue to plague the Kenyan society during the post-independence period. Both characters say that the coming of independence brought little improvement to the lives of most people (P.39). Thus, they become participants in the class struggle against capitalist exploiters and their terror. (P.19).

In contrast to the deprived and poor people, we can find Ahab Kioi and his partner Ikuu Wa Nditika, members of the „business group , and a coalition of Kenyan businessmen who have come together to gain control of their country s economy and protect foreign interests. Ahab Kioi, Ikuua Wa Nditika as well as Samuel Ndugire are to Ngugi epitomes of the successful grafting of western hypocrisy and wickedness. They represent the class of „petty accumulators and corrupt civil servants of foreign interests who use religion as a tool to fructify their wealth and to protect their personal interests. (P.76). Ngugi puts the Kenyan bourgeoisie on the same footing as the colonialists. The newly emerging elite, of which Kioi, Nditika and Ndugire have become part, employ methods similar to or worse than that of the coloniser (P.33). They are westernised bourgeois who grab the wealth of the country, and who serve as „watch dogs , the interests of their former oppressors. As an illustration, in order to get the only piece of land of Kiguunda, Ahab employs powerful skill of persecution and mental torture to convince the farmer (P.49). Ngugi s description of these characters is full of sarcasm and irony. He denounces the characters worship of material things. Their hypocrisy is held up to ridicule. For instance, Ngugi depicts Nditika as “a man with a belly as huge as that of a woman about to deliver”(P.75). Ngugi s sharpest criticism is often expressed in an interrogative form, like “Have you even seen any tycoon sweating except because of overweight?”. The question aims to provoke the reader s thought rather than merely

to express the playwright's own condemnation. Furthermore, Gicaamba, the factory worker mocks the corrupt, selfish, and repentant bourgeois class obsessed with money (P.61). In addition to structure and characterisation, three other features of the epic theatre are reflected in Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want. They are namely Direct Narration, Interruption, and Reason and Argument.

One of the principles that govern the epic theatre, according to Brecht, is "Direct Narration" also called "direct story telling". The technique distinguishes the epic theatre from the Greek theatre in the sense that it enables the characters on stage to avoid audience identification and stimulates its desire for change. Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want includes many instances of "direct narration". First, Wangeci addresses directly the audience and tells about the troublesome period of Emergency. She narrates the years of British oppression and stresses the courage of the Kenyan woman and her resistance (P.26). Two other instances exemplify Ngugi's recourse to direct narration. One can be detected when Kiguunda tells the audience about his people's bitter experience of British repression during the years of Emergency. He voices it as follows:

The emergency laws became very oppressive.  
Our homes were burnt down. We were jailed.  
We were taken to detention camps.  
Some of us were crippled through beatings  
Others were castrated. Our women were raped with bottle.  
Our wives and daughters raped before our eyes!.(P.27).

After a short pause, Kiguunda pursues his narration and glorifies the courage of the Mau Mau leaders and their vehement resistance and struggle against British oppressors. Another instance of direct narration is voiced by Gicaamba, who tells about the price paid by the Kenyans for independence to find themselves under the yoke of a new form of colonialism based on exploitation.(P.71).



Another feature of the epic theatre as catalogued by Brecht is “Interruption”. Some interruption scenes find concretisation in Ngugi’s I Will Marry When I Want. The technique is used in the scene, which shows Kiguunda and his wife in a moment of joy and happiness. The two characters remember their happy days of the pre-Emergency Period. They dance and sing with a group of musicians, accompanied with musical instruments. Suddenly, the voice of singers and the instruments stop abruptly. The dancers quit the stage and Kiguunda and his wife remain frozen in the act of dancing (P.25). The next instance of „interruption is singled out when Kiguunda and Wangeci discuss a serious matter, which concerns their land. Unexpectedly, a knock at the door creates panic. Kiguunda and Wangeci run to order their house. When they open the door, they see their poor neighbours, Gicaamba and his wife Njooki, not the expected rich guests (P.31). Ngugi uses also an interruption technique in the scene where the Kiguundas and their neighbours sing with the chorus about poverty and excessive exploitation of peasants and workers. Suddenly, the action is interrupted by a knock at the door. All the characters turn their eyes and remain immobile (P.42).

There remains one further feature of the Epic theatre that Ngugi inserts in his play. It is the “Reason and Argument” technique that can be explained as a dialectical confrontation between characters. It is included in the epic theatre to provoke debate, logical argumentation, subsequent reconciliation, and synthesis. The device enables also the audience to examine and then criticise the various issues being presented on stage. The debate evolves around all the contradictions of an unjust society that contains „two nations : one of the well off, juxtaposed with another of deprived and miserable people. These two extremes are shown through luxurious cars, big shops and boutiques side by side with congested hospitals,

crowded schools and „sprawling ghettos. At the end of the dialectical confrontation between characters, the issues are resolved and the audience is invited to get rid of its passive acceptance. Brecht notes that the juxtaposition of extreme wealth with extreme poverty should not be shown as either fixed or acceptable, but as unjust, pertinent and abhorrent (Cf. M.Esslin.1985: 560).

The principle of “Reason and Argument”, which Brecht ascribes to the epic theatre, is prominently integrated in Ngugi’s I Will Marry When I Want. The playwright presents moral problems and reflects contemporary Kenyan social realities. Ngugi makes it apparent that the independence of Kenya marks the beginning of an international capitalist order, so detrimental to the Kenyan peasants. (P.76). From the beginning of the play, Ngugi appeals to Brecht’s „Reason and Argument technique to emphasize the gap separating the rich from the poor. As an illustration, Ngugi uses the device in his description of Kiguunda’s house: “One room mud-walled house with fading white ochre. Inside, there is a pile of rags on the floor, which serves as a bed for his daughter Gathoni. The only room is also a kitchen since there is a pot put on three stones, where the Kiguundas cook their food”(P.03).

The description of Kiguunda’s house is juxtaposed to Ahad Kioi’s house. The rich man lives in a big well-furnished house, equipped with sofa seats, T.V radiogram, plastic flowers on a table full of all sorts of dishes.(P.74).The second instance of „Reason and Argument lies in the fact that Kiguunda is so poor that he cannot pay the fees for the schooling of his daughters Gathoni while all the big schools, the best jobs, the large shops, the wide farms, coffee plantations, the wheat fields and the ranches are all reserved to the children of the rich. Gicaamba, the factory worker, voices the wide gap, which separates the rich from the poor as follows:

When they rich people get heart attacks and belly ulcers.  
Their wives can rush them to the hospitals in Mercedes  
Benzes.(P.37).

The same character juxtaposes the privileges of the rich with the deprivation of the poor. He tells:

Poor who have only dispensaries,  
Which sometimes have no drugs.  
Sometimes people die on the way,  
Or in queues that last from dawn to dusk (P.38).

Allusion to social contradiction can be identified through Ngugi's description of how Ahab Kioi and his wife Jezebel are dressed: "Kioi wears a very expensive suit with a hat and a folded umbrella for a walking stick". Similarly, Kioi's wife is dressed in a very expensive suit and jewellery (P.42), whereas the Kiguundas put on rags and tatters. (P.03).

Ngugi's Use of Folklore in I Will Marry When I Want

The next feature with which Ngugi maintains a close affinity with Brecht is his appeal to his native folklore. Ngugi stopped using English and shifted to his mother tongue. The act for him is a sort of return to African sources in order to erase the traces of colonialism. In this regard, Ngugi assumes in Decolonising the Mind (1986) that African writers should express themselves in their native languages in order to reach the African masses that are incapable to read or write in English. In his book Moving the Centre, Ngugi affirms:

We, African writers are bound by our calling to do for our languages what Spencer, Shakespeare and Milton did for English, what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian, indeed what all writers in world history have done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them, which process later opens the languages for philosophy, science, technology and all the other areas of human creative endeavours. (1993. P.22).

Ngugi wrote I Will Marry When I Want in his mother tongue. For the playwright, the use of the Gikuyu language is a fundamental step in the political struggle against class system since it is identified with peasantry and labourers. The moving away from a theatre addressed exclusively to an English elite to a popular theatre can be regarded as a sufficient evidence of such commitment. In his use of his mother tongue, Ngugi aims to empower and celebrate the culture of the masses. The same principle is indissolubly associated with Brecht's theatre in the infiltration of dialects or what Brecht called the cultured jargon. (Bartram.Waine.P.76).

In Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want, the Kikuyu folk art forms the cornerstone of the play. Many elements from the Kikuyu oral tradition are inserted in the different characters' conversations and dialogues. In order to re-assert the validity of his native culture and identity; the playwright incorporates many expressions from the Kikuyu „terroir“. The spread of some passages like “A flower is robbed of the colours by the fruit it bears!”(P.29), “The antelope hates less he who sees it than he who shouts its presence”.(P.39) or “ Who puts on dancing finery knows how he is going to dance in the arena”(P.18) convey a typical Kikuyu flavour.

Some of the expressions have a social function and are pregnant with meaning, when we put them in their political and social contexts. For instance, to denounce the bribery of the Kenyan black elite, who protects the gains of their white masters, Gicaamba refers to an old Gikuyu saying: “If you rob a monkey of a baby it is holding, you must first throw it a handful of peanuts.(P.33). Another sentence is voiced by Gicaamba to stress the exploitation and the misery of the workers: “We are the pot that cooks without eating”.(P.29).The sentence paraphrases Ngugi's own words, the peasants produce, and the rich dispose.(Cf. Ngugi. 1998:111). The use

of such expressions appeals the audience's intelligence to think objectively, understand the utterances and draw conclusions.

The other striking and consistent link with Brecht is prompted by Ngugi's incorporation of the Chorus, which has a double function in the play. It is the symbol of the ancient Kikuyu culture. In devoting more than a quarter of stage time to songs and music, Ngugi demonstrates his knowledge of the details of his country's history. He also exercises his talent to render historical accounts by making them interesting through anecdotes and proverbs. The music is rooted also in the experience of the unprivileged and is used as a vehicle of the peasants' protests against imperialism. The singing and ceremonial forms by the characters and the chorus, recall Brecht's Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930). In a three pages address, the chorus sings the problems of Kenya's poor social classes and voices the exploitation endured by the Black women and her involvement in the Mau Mau struggle (P.26).

Comparable to the epic theatre, the chorus in Ngugi's play is not used to impart abstract or concrete knowledge. It rather aims to provoke human thought and invites the spectator to think, to judge and then to act. As an illustration, a procession enters the stage to sing the freedom of Kenya (P.25). It is followed then by another singing and dancing scene of workers, which expresses the workers suffering, their poverty and their struggle against imperialism. (P.42). Ngugi also appeals to the traditional „Muthirigu dances and songs of the 1930s to voice people's rejection of forced labour, their disgust with cultural colonialism, their uncompromising opposition to political oppression, and their strong condemnation of the Kenyan collaborators with the colonial occupation. The play contains also some Marxist slogans sung by the chorus.(P.68-73), which serve to induce a critical frame in the mind of the spectator.

It follows from what we have said above, that the use of indigenous elements such as native language, songs and dances, in Ngugi's play are not simply ingredients added to a fundamentally western drama form, but inform the whole concept of the play as a heroic recitation. The plot that forms a framework for musical and ritual passages tells how an unjust colonial past had led to an unjust neo-colonial present, i.e. the expropriation of land by the white settlers continued after independence through a ruthless elite.

### Mohamed, prends ta valise: Context and Summary

Like Ngugi's, Kateb's shift from dramatic to epic theatre arises from his disillusionment *vis a vis* the political situation, which prevailed in post independent Algeria. By the time he wrote Mohamed, prends ta valise, nearly similar political and socio-economic conditions as in Kenya prevailed in Algeria. When independence came in 1962, people found themselves face to face with governments who ruled arbitrarily and allied themselves with Western interests, in general, and with those of the former coloniser (France) in particular. Algeria continued to be dependent economically since little had been done in the way of diversifying its major industries. When it came to supporting the needs of its population, the Algerian new administrative class was perceived as being greatly interested in supporting its own needs and those of its European collaborators.(Cf. Harbi.1980:378).

It is this period of the Algerian history that Kateb stages to expose the paradoxes and disillusionment of the Algerian independence.

Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise offers a bleak picture of post- colonial Algeria, a world of corruption, exploitation, injustice and political manipulation. Kateb's play is conceived as a comment on the contemporary aberrations of the

political scene in Algeria as well as in the world. It is also a suggestive relevance to various African and world dictatorships. The play warns against two types of oppressions which newly independent countries face; the risk of becoming puppets in the hands of super powers and the victims of their own leaders. The play contains the most salient experiences and deeply felt concerns of Algerian workers. Kateb play examines the paradoxes, which characterise the Algerian society emerging from a history of the French colonisation, traces the causes of emigration to France and depicts the emigrants hardships before and after Algerian independence. Like Ngugi, Kateb thinks that independence neither changed anything in the daily life of workers nor relieved their suffering since they still suffer from exploitation, degrading status and racist scorn. The main protagonist of Kateb's play, Mohamed, an Algerian emigrant who makes trips between Algeria and France, illustrates this bitter situation. In both countries, he is heavily exploited and badly paid.

#### The Epic Features in Mohamed, prends ta valise

Kateb owes to Brecht the manner in which he structures Mohamed, prends ta valise in order to relate it effectively to his audience. The way in which Kateb proceeds to the treatment of his subjects recalls the methods and the techniques of Brecht in the sense that the final purpose is to elicit as many opinions and appeals to the audience's thinking and reaction for a social change.

At the level of form, Kateb uses an episodic plot where fairly realistic scenes with improvised dialogues are interspersed with direct addresses to the audience, accompanied by revolutionary songs and dances. Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise is totally improvised, with no written text and only a broadest sketch of the story. The result is that the play does not progress logically in the tradition of

classical plays. Rather, the narrative consists of a series of vastly disconnected episodes. (Cf. Baffet.1985: 132- 133).

Mohamed, prends ta valise is presented without acts, there are just scenes. The message is conveyed in a multitude of self-contained episodes united not by causal continuity but by subtle correspondences and contrasts in themes, characters, and incidents performed in colloquial prose dialogues. For instance, the play opens with a conversation between the Mufti, the Missionary and the exploiter. All of them talk about the African richness and the misery of its people (P.208). The scene is followed by a quarrel between Generals about a chicken. Each of them claims that the animal is his own property. In the next scene, we can see Aicha, the servant with a baby on her back and a red floor cloth. She cleans and complains about her daily hard work (P.218). Few lines further, the scene shows the Exploiter, the Mufti, Boudinar and the Caid eat and talk, then the Mufti proposes to Mohamed to work in his farm.(P.220). The play ends by a conversation between Aicha, Attika and Visage de Prison, whose conversation turns around their excessive exploitation by the coloniser and by the Mufti after independence (P. 221).

From the examples provided above, we may say that the construction of Kateb's play is modelled on the Brechtian way in the sense that Kateb jumps from one scene to another and from one matter to another through disconnected, independent and episodic scenes.

Mohamed Prends ta Valise shows a marked influence of the epic theatre in the way Kateb conceives his various characters. The play is filled with protagonists who are neither complex nor highly individualised. Rather, they are conceived as figures, which offer opportunities for some degree of caricature. The characters have no psychological profundity. What is important in the narrative is the



observation of the eccentricities and the scandalous behaviours of the characters that embody controversial ideas.

Kateb concentrates the dramatic action in the circles of the petty bourgeois with a definite class relation. In this sphere, there are managers, owners and their relations on one side, and the populace, represented by Mohamed, his wife Aicha and other workers, on the other. The three „Gandours , representatives of the Algerian higher authorities, represent the rich category. Among them, we can find Boudinar (a rich businessman), “qui vend les bras et les cerveaux” and whose main purpose is to gather money by exploiting the workers (P.310). Next to him, stands the Mufti (Holy man), a selfish and unscrupulous character, who uses corrupt and dishonest tactics to keep his high social rank. He does not feel ashamed but continues to exploit Mohamed and his wife. The Mufti is supposed to symbolise chastity, honesty and truth but in Mohamed, prends ta valise, he cheats, lies (P.327) and shares a sexual affair with his servant Aicha (P.325). He also bribes the Caid and „the gendarme with presents (P.225). In addition to this, the Mufti tries to conceal his corruption, treachery and vices behind a façade, called religion.

Beside the Mufti, there is the Cadi (representative of justice), who represents the ruling elite, and is corrupt to the core. To maintain his high rank in the society and for various other reasons, the Cadi negotiates and sides with the French bosses on the back of the Algerian people (P.308). He takes also side with the wealthy Boudinar in the unjust trial against Mohamed. (P.274). The three bourgeois create sharp class distinctions between the rich and the poor. They also try to convince the public that they are defending people s interests in speeches, but in facts, they only defend and protect their own interests.

In much a similar way as Ngugi, Kateb does not only ridicule his bourgeois characters, but makes them also acknowledge their cynical determination to hide behind religion. Kateb describes the rich class's greed to gather money and spend it in luxury hotels such as Moretti (P.315). He degrades also the representatives of the bourgeois class, which he considers both oppressive and ridiculous to shock the audience and stir its consciousness.

Throughout the play, many examples show the profound sarcasm mixed with black humour with which Kateb mocks these typical bourgeois emphasis on ownership. For instance, mockery pervades the scene of the Mufti who drinks wine. To ridicule the character, Kateb not only lets him drink wine, but also allows him to say that the Koran contains a secret verse, which allows Holy men to drink ... (P.327). At the end of the play, Kateb turns all the „Gandours to ridicule when they lost the negotiations with the French managers (P. 315). The play ends in a scene where the Mufti, the Cadi and Boudinar are beaten and humiliated by Mohamed and Aicha.

We notice then that Kateb's bourgeois characters are criticised and mocked for their eccentric and scandalous behaviours, as characters do, in the epic theatre. Kateb's portrayal of the Mufti as an archetype of eccentric behaviour undermines the grandeur of people who use religion to keep and protect their interests. To block the audience's emotional responses, and to hinder its tendency to empathize with the characters and become caught up in the action, Kateb appeals to Brecht's Direct Narration, Interruption, and Reason and Argument techniques.

Mohamed, prends ta valise maintains a close affinity with Brecht's theatre through Kateb's recourse to „Direct Narration technique that makes the actors address directly the spectators. The first instance of „direct narration shows

Mohamed facing the audience. The character introduces himself as a poor orphan and explains why he is called Mouh Zitoun. The appellation comes from the fact of stealing olives from the garden of his brother Boudinar (P.216). Another instance of direct narration shows Aicha, the main woman protagonist in the play, with a baby on her back. She tells the spectator about her daily hardships, her tasks of cleaning, sweeping, and cooking. Her employers harass her sexually and she is compelled to accept the advances to keep her job. (P.218). Furthermore, Mohamed faces straightforwardly the audience and says:

Je vous présente la Goundour.  
Chaque gandoura y tient un rôle.  
L'une en soie, l'autre en tussor.  
Tandis que moi je suis tout nu (P.219).

Direct narration is used also when Mohamed arrives in Paris. He narrates directly to the audience his difficulties to cope with the hostile environment of Paris. He tells about his wandering to find a hotel where to spend the night. He informs the audience of the racist attitude of the woman he met and asked for help (P.278).

The next element, which Kateb draws from the epic theatre, is the "interruption technique". The device is used in the scene, which shows Aicha playing with her boss, the Mufti. She climbs on his back. The religious man sings:

O Aicha, fille du prophète.  
Allons, ne fais pas la bête,  
Viens dans mes bras, on fait la fête.

While the Mufti is singing, Mohamed enters abruptly on the stage and finds his wife on the back of the Mufti. As a reaction to the shocking scene and to the scandalous behaviour of the Mufti, Mohamed sings:

Je n'ai plus à me prosterner,  
Je n'ai plus à prier, ni à jeûner,  
Je n'ai plus à m'amouracher,  
Me voilà cocu. (P.223).

The passages in verse quoted above are used in such a way as to raise the spectator's point of view, to stir his feeling of disgust and push him to react.

The "Reason Argument" technique, which is inserted in Mohamed, prends ta valise, comes straight from Brecht's epic theatre. The characters voice their conflicting opinions to shock the audience into awareness of the unjust social system, which perpetually condemns the poor for the profit of the rich. (P.276). As an illustration, the couple, Mohamed and Aicha represent the extent of suffering and pain that has gone into the production of oil, which is denied to them. Despite the richness of their country, they are excessively exploited by the coloniser and by the bourgeois class after independence. Mohamed, like Ngugi's central character, Kiguunda, expresses his sadness because the independence did not change his miserable situation (P.267). To escape his poverty, Mohamed travels to France as an emigrant. There, he is given all the risky jobs. Mohamed's boss dismissed him and he comes back to Algeria after fourteen years of exile with a flute in his suitcase (P. 302). Kateb uses the contrast between the rich and the servants to portray the class stratification and the wide gap separating the well off from the deprived.

Mohamed tells about the contrast as follows:

J'en ai marre de toutes ces richesses  
Qui me passe sous le nez !  
Ou qui me tombent sur la tête.  
Ils spéculent sur le vin et le pétrole  
Et moi, ils m'ont oublié sous le tonneau.(P.313).

The scene can be juxtaposed with Boudinar when he says:

J'ai grand besoin de tous ces veaux.  
Je vends les bras et les cerveaux  
Et ça m'rapporte et tout va bien.(P.310).

Similar to Brecht, Kateb's use of the techniques above aim to expose the contradictions and the inconsistencies of situations and characters in order to induce a critical frame of mind in the spectators.

### Kateb's Use of Algerian Folklore

Kateb's choice of Popular Arabic in Mohamed, prends ta valise represents the interests of the majority and defies those who refuse to acknowledge spoken Arabic as a language in its own right. The recourse to spoken Arabic as dramatic medium, takes an increasingly subversive dimension that Kateb explains as follows:

Tant que j'écrivais en Français, ce n'était évidemment possible que pour une frange, les gens qui lisent cette langue. Mais, ce n'est pas ça le peuple algérien. Le peuple algérien, il fallait le toucher dans sa langue, celle qu'il parle tous les jours, c'est à dire le berbère ou l'Arabe populaire. (Gafaiti.1986 : 10).

In Mohamed, prends ta valise, Kateb's appeal to the Algerian vernacular recalls Brecht's very similar strategy of incorporating dialects and jargons. Kateb uses a poetic language, endowed with an anecdotal style, and coated with moral overtones. The language is fragmented into small units, which seem incoherent and meaningless at times. Kateb inserts also some slang words like "tubards", "z ami", "tu goules", "tissor" and "bougnole", which are widely used by the lower classes. There are many sentences, which are slang phrases that are direct rendering of Algerian popular Arabic. They occur in the characters' conversations, such as: « Je ne veux plus de ces couscoussiers pour empester mon car » (P.279), « Prends garde à tes moustaches » (P.294), « parce que je n'ai pas d'épaules » (P.229), and « mon frère n'a pas de nez » (P.264). Concerning the reproduction of popular spoken expressions, Kateb says:

Cette floraison de gens, auxquels on a donné la possibilité de

s exprimer et qui dans leur jargon, donnent vie à la langue, créent des milliers de vers, les récitent à des analphabètes peut- être, qui eux, sont les réceptacles de cette culture que nous voulons créer.  
( L'Orient. 24 Mars 1967).

The passages we have quoted from the play reveal the linguistic simplicity of the expressions, but hide a complex web of meaning when we consider the utterances in their political and social contexts. Moreover, Kateb's play is also characterised by the use of some phrases in verse, and the repetition of some words. Typical examples of repeated words include „misère and „noir (P.391). This is done on purpose to stress the hardships of workers and to appeal the audience's thoughts.

A final feature in Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise, which is reminiscent of the Epic theatre, is the author's use of songs and dances. In the Brechtian theatre, songs and dances are used, as we have already mentioned, to „interrupt the play in order to reduce the audience's emotional involvement in the characters so as to highlight the theatrical debate. Songs and dances are also incorporated into the plays to comment on the action.

In Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise, the use of singing and dancing is a sort of „rapport between the audience and the actors on the stage. Kateb's incorporation of the chorus aims to heighten the audience's awareness of the unjust environment in which they live (P.272). The chorus sings from the outlook of the working class, and above all, speaks to its ear and eyes and let it be clearly understood that this class is the only social force which will confront and come to grips with neo-colonialist bourgeoisie (P.336). The chorus preaches liberation and the end of colonialism. (P.264). Songs are also commentaries of the capitalist exploitation and a denunciation of some abuses. They express the workers' yearnings for release from poverty and colonialism. (P.336).

It follows from what we have said above that Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise, owes a lot to the Brechtian Epic theatre on the ground that some epic devices are integrated in Kateb's play. Kateb's indebtedness to Brecht ranges from the way he structures his play, the infusion of some techniques like the direct narration, interruption, reason and argument, and the linking of scenes by folk songs and dances.

We can readily see from all that preceded that Brecht's Epic theatre has proved an important basis for Ngugi's and Kateb's plays. Although completely different in intention, the Brechtian techniques have been identified in the form of Ngugi's and Kateb's plays. As a concluding statement, we may say that Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise are predominantly epic plays.

Our field of research in the present chapter leads us to draw the following conclusions. First, our analysis of Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé show a strong influence of the classical tragic theatre on the two playwrights. This is made apparent by showing that the two plays are patterned to a certain extent on the Greek classical tragedy. It is evidenced in the two playwrights' conceptions of their central characters as tragic heroes, their plays structure and their recourse to the chorus.

Secondly, through our analysis of Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise, we have reached the conclusion that both Ngugi and Kateb did not content themselves with the material provided to them from the Greek theatre. Rather, they exploited some technical features provided to them from the Brechtian Epic theatre. From the various illustrations suggested above, we have tried to make it clear that I Will Marry When I Want and Mohamed, prends ta valise

have several performative and ideological qualities, which make them deal with experimentation and adaptation and can in a number of ways be compared to Brecht's plays. In addition, the two playwrights display a high degree of historical consciousness that is deeply embedded in their plays and that constitutes a vital aspect of their outlook.

Thirdly, Ngugi and Kateb share an underlying conviction that the local languages, Gikuyu and popular Arabic are the only languages that can convey effectively the experiences and cultures of the Kenyans and the Algerians for the stage. The conviction is evidenced in Ngugi's and Kateb's relentless effort in urging the Africans to regenerate their cultures through the use of African languages. However, the point, which needs to be mentioned, is that Ngugi's and Kateb's drama does not strictly follow the similar pattern of Brecht's Epic theatre. In fact, if Brecht addresses the European audiences, Ngugi and Kateb convey an African atmosphere through very skilful use of singing, dancing and miming. The elements help to reinforce the ritualistic and festival like aura, that is typically African.

Finally and most significantly, we may say that there is a nearly similar development in Ngugi's and Kateb's drama in the sense that both of them started with tragedy and moved to the Brechian epic theatre.



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All throughout this modest dissertation, we have tried to provide the possibility of drawing together two authors, who belong to socially different backgrounds and hold distinct personalities. By scrutinising the historical events presented in Ngugi's A Grain of wheat and Kateb's Nedjma, we have reached the conclusion that though socio-politically and culturally distant, the Kenyan and the Algerian histories of struggle for liberation converge in many aspects. The two struggles are comparable. Firstly, in spite of the distance that separates Kenya from Algeria, the two countries passed nearly through the same phases to gain their independence. Secondly, the effort to get rid of foreign oppression started in both countries with constitutional reforms. Thirdly, militant nationalism, through rebellion and guerrilla warfare, followed.

Our study devoted to the context in which the two artists produced their literary works has revealed that the two novels presented striking similarities as regards the period in which they were set in and the concerns Kateb and Ngugi sought to express. In other words, Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma exemplify their authors' high concern with the situation of revolt. For instance, Kateb's depiction of the 8 May uprising appeared as a motto of Nedjma. Similarly, in A Grain of Wheat, we have observed that Ngugi was deeply concerned with the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s. Ngugi's interest in the Mau Mau movement was embodied in his celebration and unquestionable support of the revolt, which was evidenced also in his idealisation of the Mau Mau freedom fighters.

By drawing parallels between the two authors' lives and careers, we have observed that the biographical similarities and the personal motivations, which shaped Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjma, converge too. The convergences stem from their colonial education, which led to their inevitable

influence by some western prominent writers. The influence is discerned in A Grain of Wheat and Nedjima in the two authors use of foreign language and the incorporation of some modernist techniques, which are reminiscent of some modernist writers such as Conrad, Faulkner, Joyce and others.

We have shown also that both Ngugi and Kateb tried their talents as journalists. Throughout our examination of some articles written by the two authors, we have reached the conclusion that Ngugi and Kateb share an uncompromising stand against colonialism, neo-colonialism and its instruments of domination and exploitation. We have alluded to the two authors influence by the Marxist ideology and its impact on their thinking and literary expression. The Marxist influence is apparent in the two writers insertion of „workers and „peasants in a class struggle. Ngugi's and Kateb's works of fiction are affirmations of their beliefs in the revolutionary potential of the dispossessed peasants and workers in Kenya and in Algeria to overthrow the colonial and the neo-colonial rules and create societies based on justice and equality.

Our textual study of Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjima has shown that the resemblance of the two novels range from their common structures and their characters. Although the two fictions contain some modernist traits, they are not merely modernist novels. Many reasons have been advanced for such an assumption. Unlike the archetypal modernist characters, which try to affirm themselves by justifying the need to despair, the protagonists of A Grain of Wheat and Nedjima try to overcome their doubts. In addition, Ngugi's and Kateb's literary works are rooted in the Kenyan and Algerian legends and popular myths.

In spite of Ngugi's and Kateb's use of a foreign language, they managed to combine the African cultural forms to give their novels authenticity. For instance,

Ngugi's characters in A Grain of Wheat express their thoughts and feelings in their native culture. They speak English but think in Kikuyu. Their language is full of terms and idiomatic expressions and adheres to traditional African beliefs. Similarly, Kateb's protagonists express ideas anchored in the Algerian culture in French. The characters borrow heavily from the universe of the Algerian culture to authenticate his writings. In addition, Ngugi's and Kateb's use of the language of the coloniser aimed to articulate anti-colonial ideas.

Moreover, Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat and Kateb's Nedjima contain some elements of romance like mystery, the use of myth and the love story theme. These elements are infused in the two novels and that is why they can be considered as historical romances. We have seen that the two authors developed from the novel to drama. Their common evolution is directly linked to their engagement to reach large audiences.

Ngugi's and Kateb's affinities in drama show themselves in some common features in their careers. Both of them started their careers as playwrights with tragedy. Yet, throughout our study of Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé, we have attempted to provide as much evidence as we can to argue that Ngugi's and Kateb's plays contain some distinctive features of the classical tragedy. The two plays reflect the highly wrought emotional atmosphere of the war years. The two playwrights convey with special intensity, the internal conflicts, tensions and terror, which are the fundamental elements of classical tragedy. However, through some illustrations from the two plays, we have tried to make it clear that Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé do not confirm strictly to the Aristotelian rules of tragedy since

Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé is a lyrical tragedy while Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is a heroic tragedy.

Moreover, the affinity between Ngugi and Kateb finds its expression in their shift from Aristotelian theatre to Brechtian epic theatre, as a result of political and social changes, brought about by the confluence of factors such as their ideological commitment to rehabilitate their national cultures. Their ideological instances and their roles as intellectuals towards their societies and towards the outward world are reflected in their works. The shift is due also to Ngugi's and Kateb's desire to be understood by the masses.

The advent of independence did not only alter Ngugi's and Kateb's perspectives but also made their works increasingly committed. The commitment is apparent in the two playwrights' anatomising of the troubled events and developments of their countries. Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise exemplify such an assertion.

Our analysis of the two plays revealed that Ngugi and Kateb shifted their emphasis from the tragic to the Brechtian epic theatre. We have discussed and shown the relevance of Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise to the Brechtian epic theatre on the following grounds. First, in the two plays, it is often difficult to discern a continuous plot line. Characters do not develop: they are deliberately built as eccentric and contradictory. All the „unrealistic effects are replaced by „realistic long monologues including gestures addressed directly to the audience. Second, the two plays follow the model of Brecht, which is characterised by the economy in staging, the lack of emotions, illusion and identification through the interruption and the insertion of songs and music. The constant use of songs and music, which include the audience's participation by

means of the refrain are, according to Brecht, a fundamental weapon in the political struggle.(Batram-Waine.1982:173).

Another common feature between Ngugi and Kateb, worth to be mentioned, is their deployment of comic techniques, mainly apparent in the dialogues of the various characters. The techniques, according to Brecht, helped to establish comedy as a serious genre. That is why, in his “Das Theatre alsportliche Anstalt”, Brecht insists that theatre should provide fun and laughter because a comedy is the best means to reflect the social contradictions and allows the audience to think and react to provoke change in society. (Ibid. 172).

Next, what Ngugi and Kateb get from the epic theatre is a working example of the Marxist political theatre, which aimed to instruct and induce change through rational and scientific analysis. Ngugi and Kateb began expressing their aversions to capitalism, imperialism and the exploitation of the poor. They were influenced by the ideology of Marxism, which is shown in the two playwrights empathy to the working class and its struggles.

Therefore, we may conclude that Ngugi and Kateb found an inspiration and a relevant example in the Brechtian epic theatre, which they subsequently developed along their own lines. Finally, both Ngugi and Kateb like Brecht appealed to folklore. Their approach of language is identical. Both of them used, in drama, their mother tongue and believed that the use of foreign languages distanced them from their people. Therefore, they opted to write plays in their mother tongues. For instance, Kateb preferred to use popular Arabic rather than writing in French. Likewise, Ngugi stopped writing in English in favour of the Gikuyu language.

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# Chapter One

## Historical Background

# Chapter Two

## Biographical Similarities

# Chapter Three

## Literary Affinities

# Chapter Four

## Similarities in Drama

## Declaration

I hereby attest that all the ideas contained and developed in this dissertation are mine. All the sources and references are faithfully acknowledged and are provided at the end of each chapter of the present work.

Mrs N. GADA

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# Abstract

The following dissertation is a comparison of two outstanding authors in modern African literature; Ngugi wa Thiong'o from Kenya, East Africa and Kateb Yacine from Algeria, North Africa. At the basis of the research is a belief that a commonality of experience and interests can lead writers belonging to different cultural backgrounds and geographic areas to write in a similar way and about similar themes. Indeed, colonial policies are such that contacts between East Africa and North Africa were scarce if not totally impossible during the Colonial Period. In the literary field, these contacts were short-circuited by a colonialist criticism that has continued to deal with African literature within "zones of influence" marked off during the Colonial Period.

We have attempted to break away from these "zones of influence" by establishing linkages between a North African writing in French and an East African writing in English. This dissertation contains four chapters; the first chapter deals with the similarities of the contexts. The second treats personal histories that gave birth to literary affinities between Ngugi and Kateb the novelists. In the third chapter, we have carried further our analysis by drawing parallels between the two novels in terms of their narrative structure, characterisation, plot and themes. One of our conclusions is that these novels are modernist in the sense that both writers are involved in a quest for a personal style, a style that is most evident in the deployment of some modernist techniques such as flashbacks and interior monologues. In addition, the two novels contain some elements from the oral tradition. The fourth chapter is devoted to the analysis of Ngugi's and Kateb's shift to drama. Two stages are distinguished in the careers of Ngugi and Kateb as playwrights. In the first stage, Kateb and Ngugi abided to some extent by the principles of the Aristotelian tragedy but they also introduced new elements that made of Kateb's Le Cadavre encerclé, a lyrical tragedy, and Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, a heroic tragedy. In the second stage of their dramatic careers, Ngugi and Kateb moved to Brechtian epic theatre still in response to the need to keep in touch with the people. The two works studied in this part of our dissertation are Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want and Kateb's Mohamed, prends ta valise.

The final conclusion that can be drawn from this comparison is that "zones of influence" that Eurocentric literary criticism has maintained after the departure of colonial powers should be blasted. We hope that this dissertation has contributed in a way to this breaking of literary barricades.



# Introduction

Conclusion

## Résumé

Ce mémoire est une comparaison entre deux éminents auteurs de la littérature africaine moderne; le Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o de l'Afrique de l'Est, et l'Algérien Kateb Yacine d'Afrique du Nord. Notre recherche est fondée sur notre croyance qu'une expérience et des intérêts communs peuvent mener des auteurs issus de cultures et d'aires géographiques différentes à écrire de manière similaire sur des thèmes identiques. En effet, les politiques coloniales étaient telles que le contact entre l'Afrique de l'Est et l'Afrique du Nord étaient rares, sinon impossibles. Dans le domaine littéraire, ces contacts ont continué à être court-circuités par la critique colonialiste qui a continué à confiner la littérature africaine dans des « zones d'influences » tracées pendant l'ère coloniale. Dans notre travail de recherche, nous avons essayé de briser ces « zones d'influences » en établissant des liens entre un auteur francophone d'Afrique du Nord et un auteur anglophone d'Afrique de l'Est.

Ce mémoire contient quatre chapitres. Le premier traite de la similitude des contextes. Le deuxième se base sur les histoires personnelles qui ont contribué à l'émergence des affinités littéraires entre Ngugi et Kateb, les romanciers. Dans le troisième chapitre, nous avons approfondi notre analyse en tirant des parallèles entre les deux romans au niveau de leurs structures, personnages, et leurs thèmes. Ces deux romans sont de type moderniste dans le sens où les deux auteurs sont impliqués dans une quête de style personnel, un style qui est plus apparent dans le déploiement d'outils et de techniques littéraires modernistes. Le quatrième chapitre est consacré à l'analyse de Ngugi et de Kateb après leur adoption du quatrième art. Il est suggéré que le choix du théâtre comme mode d'expression est dû essentiellement à la tentative de Ngugi et de Kateb d'entrer en contact avec les masses. En premier lieu, Ngugi et Kateb se sont conformés à un certain degré, aux principes de tragédie Aristotéenne. Mais, ils ont également introduit de nouveaux éléments qui ont fait du Cadavre encerclé de Kateb une tragédie lyrique et de The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, une tragédie héroïque. Dans la deuxième étape dans leur carrière dans le théâtre, Ngugi et Kateb ont adopté le théâtre épique de Bertold Brecht, toujours comme une réponse aux besoins de contacts avec le peuple. Les pièces de théâtre étudiées dans cette partie de notre mémoire sont respectivement I Will Marry When I Want de Ngugi et Mohamed, prends ta valise de Kateb.

La conclusion finale qui peut être tirée de cette comparaison est que les « zones d'influences » que la critique littéraire Eurocentriste a maintenu après le départ des forces coloniales devraient éclater. Nous espérons que notre travail a contribué modestement à briser ces barrières littéraires.