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**Ngũgĩ wa' Thiong's I Will Marry When I Want (1977) and
Athol Fugard's My Children! My Africa! (1990): A Brechtian
Reading**

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Abstract:

This research paper deals with the theme of social protest in Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) and Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* (1990). To develop our issue, we have adapted some principles from Brecht's theory of Epic Theatre. Our work is composed of two Chapters. The first one discusses the various "Epic Theatre" techniques that the two authors employ in the chosen plays to transform their respective theatre into a means for social change and protest. We have noticed that both Ngugi and Fugard rely on Brechtian techniques to alienate their audiences. The second is a thematic analysis in which we tried to demonstrate the literary elements of James Ngugi and Athol Fugard, with much focus on oppression, exploitation, and the impact of capitalism. This is in addition to the character's political engagement. Through our analysis of the two plays, we have found that the two authors use theatre for the benefit of their people in order to awaken their consciousness by giving them a real representation of life.

Keywords: Brechtian Epic Theatre, Oppression, Exploitation, Capitalism.

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I- Introduction

Drama has been defined as a mirror of the society, for, like any other art forms, with all its genres is used not only for entrainment but also it is a way through which all the realities are exposed, and the social and political issues that any society may experience are revealed. The piece of research under study is entitled “Athol Fugard’s *My Children! My Africa!*” and James Ngugi’s *I Will Marry When I Want*, a Brechtian reading”. Our aim through conducting this research is to study those two plays and discuss both of them as epic theatre plays in order to understand how and why the two authors rely on it to reveal their countries political issues.

It is commonly known that Africa has been always seen as a land of endless resources to explore freely by the West, and that its people suffered from colonialism and imperialism. In order to justify colonialism, imperialists use a lot of propaganda against the colonized. Especially in literature, through what is known by “colonial discourse”, in which they describe African people as savages and non-civilized and that the Westerns go to Africa because they have a mission to civilize the Africans. Many literary texts such as novels, plays, and poetry were written in this context. The majority of those literary works were based on themes of discrimination, racism, exploitation, and slavery. However, many African intellectuals such as James Ngugi, Mohamed Dib, and so many others have used their literature to answer the colonial literature through what is termed as postcolonial literature.

It can be argued that most African countries even nowadays are still suffering from what is known as Neo-colonialism. In fact, many independent countries are still dominated economically by foreign companies that belong to the colonizers to steal their wealth. In addition, in 1950, Apartheid was announced by the official government. Therefore, this law was based on separation of races in order to, according to some analysis, decrease their political power¹. In addition, the Blacks who constitute the majority of South African people,

were dominated by the few whites. Furthermore, for a black citizen to travel from one city to another, or to find a job, he must own a “pass law”.²

From this point of view, James Ngugi and Athol Fugard deal with social and political issues such as Poverty, Capitalism, Oppression and many other themes related to them. Because as John Paul Sartre says: “By speaking I reveal the situation by my very intention of changing it...the committed writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and one can reveal only by planning to change”.³

Despite the fact that there are some writers who believe that art and particularly literature should be used just for pleasure and entertainment, and agree with Aristotle’s position about art, there are others who do not share the same idea. They believe that drama should be used in educating society. The best example of those who support this view is Bertholt Brecht. Because of being influenced by Marxism, he considers that theatre should be useful to teach people about those political and social problems caused by colonial governments and later by local governors in post-independent eras in some countries aiming to prepare them to change. Therefore, Ngugi and Fugard are considered as writers who have engaged to defend the poor and the oppressed, they also aimed to develop an attitude towards capitalism, imperialism through theatre. Ngugi summarizes in a few words his mission through writing when he says:

I want to see a world without prisons and detention camps. I want to see a world without homelessness and starvation. I want to see an end to the logic behind modern development, that in order for one to be, others musts [sic] cease to be. I want to see an end to the assumption that, in order to for a thousand millionaires or billionaires to be there have to be a billion poor.⁴

Consequently, we have chosen this kind of research to see how the respective authors we deal with have relied on epic theatre to complete their mission towards their peoples and communities.

Review of the Literature:

I Will Marry When I Want and *My Children! My Africa!* have received a wave of critical attention soon after they were performed. In reality, both plays are criticized from different perspectives. To start with, in an article entitled “*The Dialectic of the “Self” and “Other” in Athol Fugard’s My Children! My Africa! As a Post-colonial play*” written by Sahar Abdul-Ameer Haraj Al-Husseini and Haider Liaque Hashem, the two authors have discussed Fugard’s play *My Children! My Africa!* and exposed the racial conflict between Blacks and whites. They show the real picture of the suffering of Thami and Auntie’s society in comparison to the Whites which have been described in the second scene of the play by Isabel in her monologue.⁵ This quotation illustrates the racial issue and the remarkable difference between the Whites and the Blacks. It indicates injustice and exploitation.

My Children! My Africa! is analyzed by Gacem Mohamed in his Master’s dissertation entitled *Social Protest in Athol Fugard’s Sizwe Banzi is Dead (1972) and My Children! My Africa! (1989)*. He argues that commitment is the audience's alienation and serves as an effective way to convey commitment. As he says: “the South African playwright borrows some Epic techniques which aim at alienating the audience and prevent it from being lost in emotions.”⁶ While some Epic techniques such as direct narration, episodic structure, interruption and many others serve to alienate the audience from the play.

Another critic on Ngugi’s *I Will Marry When I Want* is made by S.A. Van Der Smit in her master dissertation entitled *Ngugi Wa’Thiongo and Kenyan theatre in focus*. He demonstrates in his third chapter, Oppression and Exploitation as the Main Themes in the play. He says: “In his plays, Ngugi mirrors the despair and disillusionment of the oppressed in Njooki’s song.”⁷ He also continues with another illustration about exploitation by saying: “It is an appropriate way of describing the new ruling elite’s oppression and exploiting of the

peasants”⁸. By saying this, the author shows the injustice of colonization and its exploitation of Africans particularly.

I Will Marry When I Want is also viewed by Dawlat Sami Yassin in his dissertation entitled *Revolutionary Postcolonial Drama: Ngugi Wa’Thiongo and Saadallah Wannous*. He demonstrates realism as the main concept in drama, especially in epic theatre. In order to better understand the causes of injustices and the strategies for resistance, Ngugi uses his theatres as a representation of various realities in society in order to send a message to the audience and make them conscious about social struggle; his primary objective is to bring a change in society. According to the author, Ngugi has “the conviction that resisting injustices and bringing about change start with the recognition of the very reality of oppression”.⁹ He says: “Ngugi makes his audience participate in the making of the play before the performance”.¹⁰ The latter illustrates the participation of the audience in the play.

I Will Marry When I Want is discussed by Andrew and Dr. Philomina in their article entitled *Merchandise the Girl-Child: An Angel of Reading Ngugi Wa’Thiongo and Ngugi Wa’Mirii’s I Will Marry When I Want, Efua Sutherland’s The Marriage of Anansewa and Sembene Ousmane’s Xala*. In this article, the author shows through Ngugi’s play and the other ones how the girl-child is exploited by society in general and by her parents in particular and considered as an object to merchandise for financial benefice of her parents. In African societies, people do not send their daughters to school, but they keep them at home for “suckling infant, cooking...”¹¹This article claims that the future of a girl is related to the benefit of the entire family. Andrew and Dr Philomina argue:

In the case of Gathoni in *I Will Marry When I Want*, her mother, Wangeci, for example, persists in insisting that she marries, as though the parents are tired taking care of her. The urgency for her to get a husband appears to have overshadowed her invaluable domestic and economic support to the parents.¹²

Both Gathoni’s parents insist on the marriage of their daughter to a rich husband because of

their personal interests.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The review of the literature on James Ngugi and Athol Fugard reveals that the two chosen plays, *My Children! My Africa!* and *I Will Marry When I Want I Want*, have been the research of several studies on their own. To the best of our knowledge, no research has been done so far to compare the two authors being discussed in order to understand their commitment and protest. Therefore, the main objective of this dissertation is to compare and contrast Fugard and Ngugi's commitment in a single research. To complete our work, we are going to study Through Brechtian Epic Theatre, the social and political situations in which Athol Fugard and James Ngugi created their plays, and their motivations for creating each play, and any possible connections shown by those plays.

Methodological Outline

Our dissertation has four components on a methodological level. We have defined theatre of commitment and protest in the 'Introduction' section and reviewed some writings on Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* and Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want*. The issue and the working hypothesis were then raised. After that, We have summarized Bertolt Brecht's theatrical theory of "*Epic Theatre*," which was developed in a collection of chapters edited by John Willett and titled *Brecht on Theatre* (1957), in the "Methods and Materials" section. The biographies of James Ngugi and Athol Fugard are included in the materials section, together with summaries of *My Children! My Africa!* and *I Will Marry When I Want*. The focus of the "Result" section is on the findings of our study. We have two chapters in our "Discussion" part. In the first, we have discussed several techniques that the two writers follow and to make their works theatres of protest in the Brechtian sense. The second chapter will focus on the analysis of the themes discussed in the two plays as well as the character analysis in terms of political commitment from an epic theatre perspective.

End notes

¹ My Children My Africa!, Study Guide, <http://parksquaretheatre.org>.

²Ibid.

³ Jean Paul Sartre, *what is literature? And other essays* (United States of America: Harvard University press, 1988), 37

⁴ Los Angeles Review of books, an interview with Ngugi WA' Thiongo: <https://lareviewofbooks.org>

⁵Sahar Abdul-Ameer Haraj Al-Husseini and Haider Liaque Hashem, University of Al-Qadisiyah: *The Dialectic of the "self" and "other"* (Al-Qadisiyah: Article September 2016)

⁶Gacem Mohamed, 'Social Protest in Athol Fugard's *SizweBanzi is Dead* (1972) and *My Children My Africa* (1989)' (Master diss., Université Mouloud Mammeri Tizi Ouzou: 2014/2015), 42

⁷S.A. Van Der Smit, 'NgugiWa'Thiongo and Kenyan theatre in focus.' (diss., The university of Namibia: October 2007), 228

⁸Ibid.

⁹Dawlat Sami Yassin. *Revolutionary Postcolonial Drama: Ngugi Wa'Thiongo and Saadallah Wannous'* (A dissertation, The university of Houston: August 2020), 142

¹⁰Ibid,

¹¹ Andrew and Dr Philomina, Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana: *Merchandise the Girl-Child: An Angel of Reading NgugiWa'Thiongo and NgugiWa Mario's I Will Marry When I Want, Efua Sutherland's The Marriage of Anansewa and Sembene Ousmane's Xala* (Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana: Article September2022)

¹²Ibid.

II- Methods and Materials:

This dissertation's objective is to explore Bertholt Brecht's Epic theatre in order to read and study Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* And James Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want*. Therefore, we have to make a brief summary of Epic Theatre including the basic concepts and techniques that we will rely on in our discussion.

1. Methods

Epic Theatre

This theory was introduced by the German poet, playwright, and theorist Berthold Brecht (1898-1956). We should first underline that Brecht was influenced by Karl Marx' ideas, as a result, he believes that theatre has to be political and anti-capitalist. Brecht once said: "when I read Marx' Capital I understood my plays"¹. He argues: "the essential point of epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to feelings than to the spectator's reason"². His objective from theatre is to make social change. According to Brecht, theatre "becomes an affair of philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished not just to explain the world but also to change it"³. Consequently, it must be popular, which means to address itself to the proletarians and the poor. It must be addressed to "the people who are not only fully involved in the process of development but are actually taking it over, forcing it, deciding it"⁴. It must also address to the broad masses and to be intelligible to them.

Theatre must also be realistic, which means, it should make a true representation of life. Brecht opposed to the traditional characteristics of realism of Balzac and Tolstoy. According to him, the two latter make an illusion of reality. Brecht argues: "our conception of realism needs to be broad and political, free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention"⁵. Theatre needs to be dialectical and didactic, which means provide the audience with contradictions in order to stimulate him to think about the events. Brecht believes that:

“this way of subordinating everything to a single idea, this passion of propelling the spectator along a single track where he can look neither right nor left, up nor down, is something that the new school of playwrighting must reject”⁶.

Brecht rejects “Catharsis”. For him, the audience must keep in mind that he is only watching a play. He distinguishes between epic theatre and dramatic theatre as the following table shows:

Dramatic Theatre	Epic Theatre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Plot -implicates the spectator in a stage situation -wears down his capacity for action -provide him with sensation -experience -the spectator is involved in something -suggestion -instinctive feelings are preserved -the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience -the human being is taken for granted -he is unalterable -eyes on the finish -one scene makes another -growth -linear development -evolutionary determination -man as a fixed point -thought determines being -feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Narrative -turns the spectator into an observer, but -arouses his capacity for action -forces him to take decisions -picture of the world -he is made to face something -argument -brought of the point of recognition -the spectator stands outside, studies -the human being is the object of the inquiry -he is alterable and able to alter -eyes on the course -each scene for itself -montage -in curves -jumps -man as a process -social being determines thought -reason

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In order to do so, Brecht introduced some techniques such as ‘Verfremdungseffekt’ (in German) which means alienation effect or v-effect, inspired from the Chinese theatre. This technique aims to Distance the audience from the stage and make him aware that he is watching a play as much as the actor who also must be aware of being watched. Alienation effect includes:

A –Direct Narration

According to Brecht, Both the actors and the spectators have to drop the assumption that there is a fourth wall which separates them from each other and the

consequent illusion that the stage action is taken place in reality and without an audience, as a result, this will make it possible for the actor to address the audience directly.⁸

This is what makes the audience not empathize with the characters on stage and adopt a critical vision of what is happening. It is a technique through which he wanted to attract the spectators' attention that what he is seeing is not a real experience but a picture of the world.

B-Episodic structure

Brecht prefers an episodic plot over a linear one. He thinks that scenes in a play should not be interrelated to each other, each one stands for itself.⁹The key objective of the episodic structure is to keep the audience from giving in to their emotions. They are reminded that what they are seeing is only a collection of play scenes. The episodic structure aims to prevent the audience from succumbing to emotion.

C-Interruption

This technique reinforces Alienation Effect. For Brecht, actions should be interrupted by song and music and vice versa in order to provoke astonishment in the audience rather than empathy.

2. Materials

Athol Fugard's Biography

Athol Fugard is a South African playwright and stage director, born on June 11, 1932, in Middleburg (South Africa) from an Anglo-Irish father and an Afrikaner mother. Despite the fact that he is from a white race, he is one of the few intellectuals who wrote against apartheid, racism, and segregation in South Africa. During his career, he wrote several plays which had a great impact in the denouncing violence, segregation and so on. Those themes and issues are the most dominant in his plays, such as *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972), *Master Harold and the Boy* (1982), *my Children! My Africa!* (1989), and many others.

Summary of *My Children! My Africa!*

My Children! My Africa! Is a two-act play published in 1990. It contains three characters who are: Thami Mbikwana, a black student at Zolilie high school, Anela Mylatya, informally called Mr M, who is a Black teacher at Zolilie high school and Isabel Dyson, a white African student from Combedo high school.

In the first act, the play begins with the three characters on the stage. Mr M is moderating an interclass debate between the two students about the equality of education between men and women, which Thami is opposed to while Isabel is in favour of. Despite Thami's popularity, it is Isabel who is declared the winner of the debate. After the debate, the two students engaged in a conversation that results in their friendship. This is what stimulates Mr M to think about another competition on in which Isabel will join along with Thami to show that even in the apartheid era, people from different races can work together toward a common goal. Isabel accepts with enthusiasm. A few days later, Thami and Isabel have started to prepare for the competition until the day Thami decided to give up with it and join the comrades in the boycott of the school. He informed both his teacher and his teammate about his decision. Mr M goes to school and is against the boycott because he believes that words and education are the only keys to social and political change and that the change can not happen by violence and arms. He wants Thami to keep coming to school and divulges that the government has told him to denounce and write the names of students who boycott the school. Thami consider Mr M a traitor to the anti-apartheid movement. Soon, the community violently rises against the government and Mr M describes his horror at what he sees: a policeman attacking and arresting his students, in a monologue. Then Mr M rings his school bell in the classroom and calls out the students' names. A rock suddenly shatters the schoolhouse's window, and Thami comes to inform him that the leader of the protest movement (The comrades) wants to kill him because he is a police informant. Mr M does not

deny what he does and says that he refused to take the money that the police officer has offered him. Thami tries to find a way to save his teacher. However, the latter refuses and says that he is ready to die for his values. He goes outside, where an angry group of people have killed him.

Thami meets Isabel for the last time to inform her that he must leave the country because the police want to jail him. Isabel is devastated about Mr M's death, she cannot understand why he is assassinated by his community. Thami tells her about Mr M's betrayal and that they killed him in self-defence. But they still admit they love Mr M even if they disagree with his ideas. The play ends with Isabel alone, paying her respect to Mr M and she promised that she will dedicate her life to fighting for equality and justice in South Africa.

A Biography of Ngugi Wa' Thiongo:

Ngugi Wa' Thiongo or James Ngugi is one of the great African writers. He is Novelist and playwright who was born in Kenya on January 5, 1938. He wrote many novels in which he denounces both colonialism and neo-colonialism. He is famous by his *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Weep Not Child*, *The River between* (1965). He wrote also plays such as *The Black Hermit* (1962), and *I will Marry When I Want* (1977), first written in Gikuyu, with Ngugi Wa' Mirii.

Summary of *I Will Marry When I Want*

The first act begins with Kiguunda and Wangeci in their home waiting for their guests Ahab kioi Wa'Kanoru and his wife and discussing the reason for the wealthy family's visit. At the same time, Wangeci who is busy preparing food for their guests is talking about their small salary and difficulties of life, and arguing with Gathoni who they think she becomes unrespectful because of being influenced by modernity. Then Gicaamba and Njooki have come. Gicaamba is a radical person who talks about the oppression of the Kenyan people by the foreigners and the Kenyan authorities, and the way religion is used to exploit people. The

two leave as the rich arrive with their friends Ndugiry and his wife Helen. They have invited Kiguunda and Wangeci to join the church and have a blessed marriage, but Kiguunda shouts them out. After the Kioi leave, Wangeci and Kiguunda have discussed about what has been said to them, thinking that Kioi wants to refer to Gathoni's wedding with their son. In spite of being warned by Gicaamba and his wife, they go to inform Kioi about their decision to have a Christian wedding. They ask Kioi to lend them some money to pay for the ceremony. Kioi accepts to loan him money from the bank, using the title deed as collateral. Kioi and his wife were happy to hear the news, but they were rudely treated by Jezebel.

In the third, and the last act, Kiguunda and Wangeci become happy, and they bought a lot of things such as clothes for the ceremony. They have also decorated the house so that it looks like Kioi's one. They imagine the atmosphere of this ceremony. Suddenly Gathoni returns home after becoming pregnant and jilted by John. She cries and informs her parents of what happens to her. Kiguunda and Wangeci go to Kioi, this man has viciously treated Gathoni as a whore and a prostitute, and that his son is guilty of nothing. These words have hurted Kiguunda, and made him angry. He pulls out a sword he wears under his clothing. He menaces Kioi, who covers in fear. Soon, a home guard has entered and Jezebel with a gun in her hand, she ordered them to leave. As Kiguunda turns back for his sword, she shoots him.

After this incident, Kiguunda loses his job and becomes drunk and depressed. Gathoni leaves her father's home to become a barmaid. Kioi used his powers in the bank to call in the loan and took Kiguunda's title deed because of not being able to pay the money back. Kioi, bought the one and a half acres, for the foreign company to build the insecticide factory. In the end they have realized that they should get their strength from unity and organization and fight together to end oppression and exploitation.

End notes

¹ John Willet, *Brecht on Theatre; The Development of an Aesthetic*, (London: Eye Methuen, 1957), 23

² Ibid, 23

³ Ibid, 72

⁴ Ibid, 108

⁵ Ibid, 109

⁶ Ibid, 44

⁷ Ibid, 37

⁸ Ibid, 136

⁹ Ibid, 37

III- Results and Discussion

1) -Results

Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* and James Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want* have been read and analyzed in the light of Brechtian Techniques of theatre. By doing so, we have come to the results that despite the playwrights' different social backgrounds, there are many similarities between them, both in terms of the themes they have chosen and in terms of the construction techniques used in the plays.

Our examination of the different techniques both playwrights employ in the first chapter has motivated us to analyze the similarities between James Ngugi and Athol Fugard as playwrights who use theatre as a tool for social protest. We have discovered from our examination of the Brechtian techniques of the Alienation Effect that the two writers share a similar use of episodic structure, direct narration, the use of music, and epic characters to create the audience's reason and objective thought to effect change.

In the second chapter, from our reading and analysis of Athol Fugard's and James Ngugi's plays through the Brechtian point of view, we noticed that both authors are politically engaged. They used theatre as a tool of expressing their attitudes towards political issues such as colonialism, Capitalism, Exploitation, and Oppression. In the first chapter we have explained how the two great playwrights relied on Brechtian techniques in order to reach their objectives of making social and political change through theatre. In the second one, however, we have studied the main themes discussed in the two plays and the extent to which Fugard's and Ngugi's theatres are popular and realistic exactly as Brechtian theatre.

2) -Discussion

This part of our dissertation intends to discuss Athol Fugard's *"My children! My Africa!"* And James Ngugi's *"I Will Marry When I Want"* through Brechtian point of view, using his theory of Epic Theatre. The first chapter will be devoted to the study of the main Epic Theatre techniques used in both plays. The second chapter, However, will be devoted to the analysis of themes discussed in the two plays and the analysis of the characters in terms of political commitment through epic theatre perspective.

As Bertholt Brecht says: "For art to be 'unpolitical' means only to ally itself with the 'ruling' group"¹. This is exactly the case of texts under study. It is very important to know that the two plays and the two playwrights are politically committed. Fugard was against the Apartheid in South Africa and Ngugi was against colonialism in Kenya and that two respective authors were jailed by the South-African and the Kenyan authorities because of their writings. Mainly James Ngugi; it is this play which led to his detention where he spent a year without trial for using both performing arts (theatre) and his native language (Gikuyu) to empower his people².

Chapter One: Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want* and Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* as Examples of the Brechtian Theatre of Protest.

In the current chapter of our dissertation, we will examine how the two plays fit into the theatre of protest. We will attempt to explain the concept of Epic Theatre and highlight the various techniques that are used by both playwrights in order to protest against certain social and political issues. Therefore, we will apply Brecht's theory of Epic Theatre constructed as a collection of Brecht's writings edited by John Willett under the title *Brecht on Theatre* (1964).

Epic Theatre is both didactic and dialectic, its purpose is to impart morality to the audience. The art is 'anti-illusory' which aims to educate the audience and encourage them to

change society where nothing really mattered because everything within it is wrong. We will demonstrate how some of Brechtian aspects are used in Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* And Ngugi wa'Thiongo's *I Will Marry When I Want*.

The Two Plays as Epic Theatre

We will discuss about the construction of the two plays according to the principles of the Alienation Effect technique. This technique is also called a-effect or distancing effect, German *Verfremdungseffekt* or V-effekt. In 1936, Brecht first used the term in an essay on "*Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting*", in which he described it as "playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious."³ Ngugi's and Fugard's aim is to distance the audience from emotional involvement in the play. Therefore, they ought to take some unusual action to continue alienating spectators. We will use some elements in our work to compare the two playwrights.

1) The structure of the Two Plays

a) Episodic-Structure

Epic plays use non-linear, fractured plots where the events of a single episode are not necessarily a result of the preceding one in contrast to dramatic plays which have a plot and focus on linearity. *My Children! My Africa!* and *I Will Marry When I Want* are based on "Episodic-scenes". As regards to the epic scene: in *I Will Marry When I Want*, the scenes are independent from each other. Epic theatre gives more importance to historical events. For instance, in this play, historical events occur in post-colonial Kenya and many scenes are interrupted by many other scenes using the technique of flashback. The latter is an important technique that is used to recall past memories; for example, in act one when

Kaunda was in a discussion with Wangeci, he went back to the past and he remembered how beautiful his beloved was, as he described her in the following quote:

kiguunda:[Going back in time]
That was long before the state of emergency.
Your heels used to shine bright,
Your face shone like the clear moon at night,
Your eyes like the stars in heaven
Your teeth, it seemed, were always washed with milk
Your voice sounded like a precious instrument.
Your breasts were full and pointed like the tip of the sharpest
thorn.
As you walked it seemed as if they were whistling beautiful
Tunes

And in the same conversation Wangeci remembered and she says:

Wangeci: [Also memorized by memories of their past youth].
In those days
We used to dance in Kĩneeni forest. ⁴

The technique of flashback is also used in Act One when the singer left the stage, Wangeci took over the remembrance of past things as demonstrated in the following excerpt: “I myself have always remembered The Olengurueni women, the ones driven from their lands around Nakuru to be exiled to Yatta, the land of black rocks... For they had faith were sure that, this soil will be returned to us”.⁵

Several episodes or scenes can be removed from the play without harming the story. Gicaamba’s speech is followed by a discussion which occupies more than nine pages without any reference to the developing plot. Gicaamba questioned how a marriage plan of young people who are already dating is influenced by religion.

All the religions that now sit on us were brought here by the whites
...
And which tell us we should give them a tenth of all that we produce
Where does the ten percent go?
To America
Then they send back to us ten shillings
Taken from the tenth portion we sent them,
And they tell us:
This is American aid to your local churches. And we give them a standing
ovation.
When the British imperialists came here in 1895,
All the missionaries of all the churches held the bible in the left hand,
And the gun in the right hand. The white man wanted us

To be drunk with religion
While he,
In the meantime
Was mapping and grabbing our land and starting factories and businesses
On our sweat.⁶

Obviously, even if it was based on a move in the plot, this speech can be deleted without harming the main story of the play. Every action is intended to start a dialogue about the unfair system that exploits the poor and maintains their manipulation by an opportunistic wealthy class. There are also dialogues that are not related to any development of the story but are present to directly help to evoke the audience in the way the author intended into critical thinking. A good example of this kind of conversation is that Kigūnda and Gicaamba were speaking about the realities of work in factories. About ten pages are devoted to this conversation without having a role in developing the plot, or any relation to the main story.

In addition to these conversations and speeches, many episodes may also be removed from the play without harming the story. Episodes such as the mime of the church wedding, the mime of Gicaamba's and Njooki's native wedding and the drunk man who appears at Kigunda's home. The two events are not mime in the full sense of suggesting action, character and emotion without words, they continue as enactments that mimic a past or a future event. Moreover, the aforementioned two episodes do not take place as original action, but they are copies and mimes of certain events and they do not contribute to the development of the story.

These mimes are used to alienate the action and thinking about themes and ideas rather than focusing on the girl's story abandoned by her lover, or the loss of one and a half acre of land by her father. This shows that the story is an example of the unjust and exploitative relationship between the rich and the poor. The play story becomes symbolic because it can be the story of every exploited and dehumanized working-class members and their family.

In *My Children! My Africa!* The structure is episodic, and it is based on historical events that take place in 1985, which places it near the end of the Apartheid era. This play is

divided into two acts, the first act is composed of six scenes and the second act is made up of five scenes. Half of the scenes are monologues in which every character talks directly to the audience in order to expose their thoughts. Then the rest of the scenes include every event that build the play. There is no direct relation between the scenes. Many scenes can be deleted without harming the main story of the play because each one describes distinct events from the others. As an example, in the first act of the play, the team members do not meet each other before three weeks. In the second act, when Mr. M died, Thami meets Isabel again after four weeks.

When it comes to the structure, Fugard's and Ngugi's plays are episodic. Brecht structure is episodic while dramatic theatre has a linear narrative structure. In his epic plays, each scene is separated from the other. Brecht wanted to remind the audience that what they were watching was not real. It is a way to avoid succumbing to illusions. Audience is conscious that the events they had seen are just part of a play. This kind of structure distances the spectator from the story. Therefore, Bertholt Brecht wishes to get a positive change

b) Direct- Narration

Direct-Narration is another technique that is used to speak directly; it breaks the fourth wall and destroys any illusion of reality. This fourth wall is an imaginary wall separating the audience from action on the stage. The audience is an observer who is conditioned to believe that the world of the play is real. Bertholt Brecht uses this technique to make contact with the public, both Furgard's and Ngugi's focus on this epic theatre narration of the event. In many scenes of Fugard's narration, the characters are interrupted and addressed directly to the audience. It is seen as an additional character that is present on stage. Different words are used to define the audience such as "friend", "you", "man" and "good people". In his monologue, Thami who is the main character of the play talks to the

audience saying, “Do **you** understand me, **good people?**”. Another illustrative narrative instance is noticed in Act one, Scene Two, Isabel stands alone on stage and gives a monologue directly to the audience. The entire scene is a monologue.

I always talk very directly to the audience and the opposition. I am not shy about making eye contact. Well, when I did it this time, when it was my turn to speak and I stood up and looked to those forty unsmiling faces, I suddenly realized that I hadn't prepared myself for one simple but all important fact: they had no intention of being grateful to me. They were sitting there waiting to judge me, what I said or how I said it, on the basis of total equality. Maybe it doesn't sound like such a big thing to you, but you must understand I had never really confronted that before, and I don't just mean in debates. I mean in my life! ⁸

In this direct speech in which Isabel exposes her thoughts to the audience making eye contact and looking at their faces without being shy and addressing them by using the personal pronoun “you”. In a monologue, Isabel tells the audience that they contacted her school trying to establish a "pioneering intellectual exchange"⁹ and that her school checked and determined it would be acceptable if she is accompanied by the police to ensure that she would never leave the school grounds to go somewhere. Isabel goes with two other girls, "feeling very virtuous"¹⁰, they had to keep in mind that these students did not speak English as their first language. When they got there, the classroom and school were dark and gloomy. Right away, students gave them a critical examination. Not gratefully as the girls had expected.

Throughout the play, we do not notice many passages in which the actors speak directly to the audience. However, we can not deny the existence of the direct narration in Ngugi's play. The leader's speech when he says:

I speak the truth and swear before God and before the people present and before the ancestors I swear by the oath of the masses and by the blood of the Kenyan people...I'll never let this soil go with foreigners leaving the people of Kenya wretched. If I ever let it go, may this, the people's oath, destroy me and the blood of the masses turn against me... ¹¹

And the Characters song at the end of the play

The trumpet of the masses has been blown. Let's preach to all our friends. The trumpet of the masses has been blown. We change to new songs for the revolution is near...we are tired of exploitation. We are tired of land grabbing. We are tired of slavery. We are tired of charity and abuses. The

trumpet of the poor has been blown. Let's unite and organize. Organization is our club, organization is our sword, organization is our gun, organization is our shield, organization is a way, organization is our strength, organization is our light, organization is our wealth.¹²

These can be considered as the best illustration of direct narration. The actors through these passages have broken the fourth wall and have addressed directly to the audience. These non-cathartic passages show the way on which the playwright amplifies the play's revolutionary aspect relating to his audience's life, environment, and struggle. Ngugi writes that "theater is not a building. People make theater."¹³

Through using the direct-narration technique in theatre we understand that the audience is the observer who is constantly connected to the world of the play, and they are conditioned to believe that this world is real.

2) The Conception of the Hero in the Two Plays

The main character in *My Children! My Africa!* is Mr. M nicknamed, Anela Myalata. This hero is the perfect and model teacher, but, he is murdered by Black mob in South Africa during a boycott of schools. The protagonist's name is the symbol of humanity. Anela Myalatya's name is reduced to the letter "M" which might be interpreted as "Man" with a capital letter. It could be implied that Mr. M's battle does not only represent South Africans, but it also represents Man. As human, whatever the situation, we must strive for peace. The protagonist is portrayed as a peaceful individual. He is a person who dedicates his life to advancing knowledge regardless of his race. In short, Mr. M has values that are universal. He is not a mere citizen of South Africa but a citizen of all the world. In Act One Scene Four Mr. M stands alone onstage and gives a monologue directly to the audience. All the scene is a monologue in which he exposes his thoughts, he addressing the audience saying

Mr. M alone. He talks directly to the audience.

MR. M: "I am a man who in the eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food and in the joy of its attainment forgets his sorrows, and who does not perceive that old age is coming on."

(He shakes his head) No. As I'm sure you have already guessed, that is not me. My pursuit of knowledge is eager, but I do perceive, and only too

clearly, that old age is coming on, and at the best of times I do a bad job of forgetting my sorrows. Those wonderful words come from the finest teacher I have ever had, that most wise of all the ancient philosophers .¹⁴

Mr. M is alone onstage; he delivers a monologue directly to the audience. He begins by discussing his view of life, he talks about the idea when there is someone who is willing to learn, all regrets and other worries are forgotten; however, that is not exactly true for him even if he is a voracious seeker of knowledge. He moves on to another idea that he could do anything without violating his heart, compelled what was right. He could be confident of his morals to be able to wake up and know you shall just do things that are right even if he is old.

He concludes by summarizing his life. His full name is Anela Myalatya and he is 57 years old. He lives a simple life. Alternating between his small home and his small classroom, He makes comparison among two spaces to match boxes, describing his room which only has a table, a chair, and a bed. He talks about how people yell at him. As he runs between his two places, telling him that he will be late, and he believes they are right.

In the following excerpt from act one scene one, Isabel and Thami talk about their teacher Mr.M saying that he is wonderful.

THAMI: Yes you did, but nobody calls him that. He's just plain Mr. M to everybody.

ISABEL: Well I think he's wonderful.

SABEL: Mr. M.

THAMI: That's right.

THAMI: He's okay.

ISABEL: I had a geography teacher in Standard Seven who was a little bit like him. Full of fun and lots of energy.

THAMI: *Ja*, that's Mr. M all right.

Pause.

ISABEL: I meant what I said to him. I really did have a good time

THAMI: Same here. ¹⁵

This conversation shows the value of Mr.M and how wonderful he is and the place that he has in the heart of his students, Thami and Izabel.

Moreover, at the end of the play, it is made clear that Mr. M is a victim of Apartheid system. The hero is murdered by the boycotting mob because of contrasting their ideas.

Fugard demonstrates the negative effects of Apartheid on the black community. Mr. M is an example of the separated Blacks in South Africa because of Apartheid.

Ngugi uses a realistic protagonist whose name is Kiguunda. The latter is not a member of nobility but an ordinary man; he is a farm laborer, former freedom fighter and a representative of the peasants. We notice that the hero is poor. For example, in act one when the leader enters Kĩgũũnda's hut and explains the following:

Leader:

We belong to the sect of the poor.
Those without land,
Those without plots,
Those without clothes.
We want to put up our own church.
We have a harambee.¹⁶

This speech shows that they are poor and many of them are without land and clothes. Therefore, they want to put up their own church and they have a harambee, public fundraising. Kĩgũũnda is disgusted and yells them to leave his land.

Kiguunda is a modal and a representation of Gikuyu traditional culture. According to the following quotation about modernity and traditions, he is a symbol of his culture and society.

KIGUUNDA:
It's all the modern children.
They have no manners at all.
In my time
We could not even sneeze in front of our parents.
What they need is a whip
To make them straighten up!¹⁷

Kiguunda and Wangeci complain about how mannerless their child, as they see it. They dislike her arrogant demeanor and insistence. That she will marry when she wants. They don't like that; she prefers the frippery of clothes and shoes than respecting her elders and her traditions. In the majority of cases, this frustration is a lamentable feeling, but here it has resonance in particular since it implies that modernity is linked to Western values and

customs; thus, Gathoni is not only an unruly adolescent, but also a person who betrays her own people. Of course, what complicates this is that her assertion of marrying when she wants is a feminist one. In contrast, her father is a symbol of his culture and society.

On the one hand, in *My children! My Africa!*, the hero is a victim of the Apartheid system; Mr. M's name is a symbol of the humanity. He is the perfect and model teacher. In the other hand, in *I Will Marry When I Want*, Kiguunda is an ordinary man, a farm laborer and former freedom fighter, this hero is a symbol of his culture and society.

3) The Use of Music

Furgard and Ngugi use certain Brechtian strategies that convert singing, dancing and music into elements that remove the fourth wall by reminding the audience that this is a performance and not a real-life event. They rely on music to alienate their audiences and comment on social and political issues. In Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want*, each act and scene is accompanied by a song except scene two in the third act. To start with, in order to understand the message or the purpose of using music, we have picked Kigūnda's two long songs in the first half of act one that contribute to the creation of the A-Effect and set the tone for the songs in the play. Kigūnda reminds Wangeci the beauty of his singing and dancing in his younger years, before the state of emergency which began in 1952. He then sings to show her that he can always sing and dance in the same way he used to as illustrated below:

KĪGŪŪNDA: [Soloist]
I am he on whom it rained
As I went up and down
The Mūitīrīrimountain¹⁸

Kīgūnda is joined by dancers who also sing along with him

Before the disaster, when he was younger, he loved to sing and dance.
DANCERS:
I am he on whom it rained
As I went up and down
The Mūitīrīri mountain¹⁹

The second song, which similarly continues the previous conversation, comes next. Kigūnda and Wangeci is remembering how they used to sing and dance in the good old days. The couple started dancing to the song they were supposed to be hearing from memory, and then they were joined by actual guitar players and players of other instruments. All actors on stage joined the dance including Wangeci and Kigūnda. They sing: “Kigūnda. Nyaangwīcū let’s shake the skirt...our mother, we now refuse to be slaves in our home, to be slaves in our home.”²⁰

This participation of dancers who are not parts of the story, they are shown on the stage only to sing and dance with Kigūnda, in order to prevent the audience from identifying themselves with the characters on stage, and to mark it as a performance that is put on for entertainment. The strategies of only having actors perform on stage without being required to be there for any purpose, they are singing or playing music to songs connected with the story, and all throughout the play, choruses are present. The awareness of the artificiality of the event annihilates the “narcotic effects” of empathy with characters and action.

The songs of Kigūnda assists in alienating the audience and prevent them from falling in the illusion of reality mainly through their context and appeals to their reason rather than empathy, and this is facilitated by the fact that these two songs are based on folkloric songs or according to Brecht it is called gestic music. “Gestic music is the music which allows the actor to exhibit certain basic gestic on the stage”. The meaning of Brecht's “basic gestic” is the expression of social and class views through speech, gestures and movement. Through songs and music which are based on the traditions of Kenyan peasantry, social views are necessarily aroused. Kigūnda’s two songs speak mostly about love, but they end suddenly with the subject of patriotism. One of the songs concludes by taking a stance on the nation's current situation and rejecting neocolonialism.

Wangeci, our mother, we now refuse
Wangeci, our mother, we now refuse
To be slaves in our home,
To be slaves in our home,²¹

The sudden shift from the topic of resistance and patriotism surprises the audience. This makes it consider the cause of the change as well as the traditional folk song's ending, which introduces a new idea.

The play's final song makes a clear call for "holding dialogue." to develop strategies for combating oppression and exploitation. Gicaamba starts off by singing:

Come my friend Come my friend
Let's reason together
Our hearts are heavy
over the future of our children.
Let's find a way of driving darkness
From the land.²²

The passage reflects on revolutionary and knowledgeable individuals such as Gicaamba. As regards to the neocolonial situation and the brutal and unjust capitalist system that should be overthrown, Gicaamba calls for the poor workers and peasants to come together and consider their circumstances to engage in conversation and look for strategies to enact the most important social and political shifts. He Calls them to build mutual understanding and unity in their struggle requires dialogue among the oppressed, and to defend their just cause against exploitation and marginalization, according to Kenyan peasant traditions.

Like Fugard's *My Children! My Africa*, Ngugi uses song in his play *I Will Marry When I Want*. But we have only one song which is in the sixth Scene of the First Act, Thami is alone onstage. He starts his monologue singing a song in Bantu and then translating it into English. He sings as follows:

Thami alone.
THAMI (*Singing*):
MasiyeMasiyeSkolweni
MasiyeMasiyeSkolweni

EskolweniSasakhaya
EskolweniSasakhaya (Repe
GongoGongo
lyakhalaIntsimbi
GongoGongo
lyakhalaIntsimbi
(Translating)
 Come,come,let'sgotoschool
 Let's go to our very own school
GongoGongo
 Thebellisringing
GongoGongo
 The bell is calling! ²³

In a monologue, Thami sings a song in Xhosa, his native language, about going to school and hearing the bell ring. When he was seven, on his way to school every morning, he used to sing this song. He brings up the memory of how much he loved school when he was younger. He received accolades from his teachers, and he was always eager to enter the gates in the morning, his teacher requested that he read an essay on an assembly since she thought it was so well-written. The essay discussed his desire to become a doctor when he grew up and explained his attitude of treating white people for pay and black people for free.

Now that he is older, Thami claims he needs to review his essay. He has changed his opinion about becoming a doctor. He believes that freedom can cure people. But he no longer knows what to dream of, precisely because of the possibilities of "bright young blacks" ²⁴like himself, the young black are also limited by apartheid. He claims that he is unable to attend class and continue to make his teachers proud.

In both plays, *My Children! My Africa!* and in *I Will Marry When I Want*, the two playwrights have relied on music. There are some similarities between the plays about memories. As an example, in *My Children! My Africa!*, Fugard relies on the previous song to describe Thami's happiness on his way to school in the morning when he was seven, as well as, in *I Will Marry When I Want*, Ngugi describes Kigūnda and Wangeci's good and happy old days, before the white man's arrival. Characters in both plays used to sing old songs. It is

a kind of remembering and memories. The two playwrights focus on music, either songs or the Chorus, separating the characters on stage so as to create distance and deliver lessons to the audience members who are expected to learn something from the theatre.

4) The Two Plays Appeal to the Audience

Brecht posits that “I give the incident badly so that the audience can think for itself that’s why I need a quick-witted audience that knows how to observe and setting enjoyment from its setting its reason to work.”²² Obviously, nothing changes inside the theatre. “The audience is made to identify itself with the character on the stage.”²⁵ By encouraging audience criticism. We now reach the true purpose of Epic plays, namely change. Typically, the purpose of writing epic plays is to effect social change.

In *My Children! My Africa!* no real change has occurred, and the author has not made a clear end of the play in order to stimulate the audience thoughts and also to provoke a social change. Isabel's positive speech at the end of the play when she says: “the future is still ours, Mr. M”²⁶, reinforces this idea. Inside the theatre, change never happens; it is up to individuals to bring change outside of the theatre. Playwrights only use theatre as a tool to motivate audiences to take action outside of it. Epic plays are therefore intended for an audience who will think and take action outside of the theatre for the benefit of society. Fugard has taken on this moral in his plays. He has tried to solve his society's struggles through his plays.

Fugard wants to convey his message to both Black and White audiences in order to persuade them that Apartheid was an unfair form of government. He never forces his ideas on others even if he writes plays using the epic concept. He provides the audience with realities, and it is up to them to decide whether he is right or not. In his play, The South African playwright is merely reflecting what occurs in society, as in *My Children! My Africa!* There is a presented reality. In a variety of social contexts, including the work and

education, black people face discrimination. Racism is the main problem. As well as for the white South Africans due to their consciousness taking this into account, this may feel natural. Fugard has made an effort to find a solution for this precise situation. He then grants people the freedom to act. In support of his position, Brecht asserts:

In the epic theatre moral argument only took second position. Its aim was less to moralize than to observe. That is to say, it observed and then the thick end of the wedge is followed: the story's moral.²⁷

It implies that epic plays are distinct from the morality plays of the Middle Ages. They authentically reflect social reality. Only after witnessing such a reality does this play come to a moral conclusion for the audience.

In *I Will Marry When I Want*, Ngugi Wa'Thiongo and his collaborator Ngugi Wa'Mirri ask their audience to reflect on their own lives. By distancing the dramatic action and attracting the audience in the theatre production process in addition to contrasting various themes and forms, in our play we have many examples about critical thinking of the audience which make them active participants. In Fact, after closing a traditional love song with the promise of victory, Kigūnda changes the topic of his song:

Mother ululate for me,
For if I don't die young I'll one day sing songs of victory.
Oh, yes, come what come may
If I don't die young I'll one day sing songs of victory.²⁸

After this stanza is repeated by the dancers Kigūnda sings:

The crown of victory should be taken away
from traitors
And be handed back to patriots
Like Kimathi's patriotic heroes.²⁹

These songs are intended to help the audience comprehend how they are being exploited by a small group of wealthy capitalists from their nation and that it is time to change that circumstance. The songs encourage audiences to reflect on topics deeper than their own childhood, nostalgia and love. This shift in time and topic keeps the audience's attention on the comparisons and contrasts the songs make. They might even

momentarily lose focus on the major plot that is taking place in the background. They stimulate the audience to reflect on the social changes and suggest the new topic and give them time to think about what they have heard. However, Kigūnda does not stop singing, and as he sits down, he recites the last stanza while modifying the final line to express his desire to be recognized as a patriotic freedom fighter:

The crown of victory should be taken away from traitors
And he handed back to patriots
Like Kigūnda Wa'Gathoni³⁰

The songs invite the audience to think about their life conditions and to see how the benefits from the victory attained by the sacrifices of the poor, are monopolized by a small number of national elites who are essentially traitors. Despite the fact that these songs celebrate native folkloric tradition (in this example, singing) and its aesthetic value, as they analyze the audience's living situations, they are also soliciting the audience's intellectual involvement. The songs avoid the audience's emotional immersion in the story by bringing deeper topics for their critical consideration.

We have noticed that both of Ngugi and Fugard have a remarkably similar play style. Therefore, the epic elements cannot be denied because they enable them to use their theatre as a tool for protest and a call for change. “Episodic-Structure”, “Direct-Narration”, “Music”, “conception of the hero” “the play appeal to the audience” that we have discussed are all characteristics of epic theatre.

Endnotes

¹John Whillet, ed and trans, *Brecht on theatre; The Development of An Aesthetic* (London: Eye Methuen, 1957), 196.

²Los Angeles Review of Books, *An interview with Ngugi WA'Thiongo*: <https://lareviewofbooks.org>.

³Bertholt Brecht, 'Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting', in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of An Aesthetic* ed. Andtrans. JohnWillet (London:EyeMethuen,1964), 91.

⁴Ngũgĩ Wa'Thiongo and Ngugi Wa'Mirii. *I Will Marry When I Want*. Portsmouth Heinemann, 1982), .22

⁴ Ibid, .22

⁵Ibid,.26

⁶ Ibid,.56

⁷Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 42

⁸ Ibid, .13

⁹Ibid, .12

¹⁰ Ibid,.13

¹¹Ngũgĩ Wa'Thiongo and Ngugi Wa'Mirii. *I Will Marry When I Want*. Portsmouth Heinemann, 1982), .41-42

¹²Ibid, .115-116

¹³Ngũgĩ, *Decolonizing the Mind* 42

¹⁴ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 21-22

¹⁵Ibid, .6

¹⁶Ngũgĩ Wa'Thiongo and Ngugi Wa'Mirii. *I Will Marry When I Want*. Portsmouth Heinemann, 1982.08.

¹⁷Ibid, .17

¹⁸ Ibid, .11

¹⁹ Ibid, .11

²⁰Ibid, .23

²¹ Ibid, .24

²² Ibid, .105

²³ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 40

²⁴Willet, ed. and trans, *Brecht on Theatre*, 1

²⁵ Ibid, .16

²⁶ Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 68

²⁷ Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre*, 75

²⁸ Ngūgi i'Wa'Thiongo and Ngūgi Wa'Mirii. *I Will Marry When I Want*. Portsmouth
Heinemann, 1982.12

²⁹ Ibid,.13

³⁰ Ibid, .13

Chapter Two: Denouncing oppression, exploitation, and capitalism in the two plays and analyzing the political engagement of the characters.

A) Denouncing Oppression, Exploitation, and Capitalism:

To begin with, it is very clear that the two playwrights share the same idea and the same vision with Bertholt Brecht in terms of realism and popularity. Since both of them do not only narrate the events and the characters' lives but also dare to reveal all the problems of their societies and people such as injustice, exploitation, human rights etc... through them aiming to a social change. This is what makes their theatre popular because popular means "intelligible to the broad masses, taking over their own forms of expression and enriching them..."¹. Both Fugard and Ngugi have the objective of making their audiences aware of their social and political situation mainly through the characters and dialogues of the plays. Epic theatre is addressed to the masses and the proletarians. Brecht tries to make his audience interested in theatre as experts, his objective by doing this is political and not only for cultural reasons.²

1) Denouncing Oppression, Exploitation, and Capitalism in *My*

Children! My Africa!

My Children! My Africa! was written with the goal of denouncing Apartheid through mainly the characters of the play. Fugard wrote:

My point is obvious. Anything that will get people think and feel for themselves, that will stop them delegating these functions for politicians, is important to our survival. Theatre can help to do this.³

Fugard wants to educate and make the audience (mainly blacks) aware of their social and economic situation. In the first act of the play, Thami says

...Brothers and sisters these are foreign ideas. Do not listen to them. They come from a culture, the so-called western civilization, that has meant only misery to Africa and its people. It is the same culture that shipped away thousands of our ancestors as slaves, the same culture that exploited Africa with the greed of a vulture during the period of colonialism and the same

culture which continues to exploit us in the twentieth century under the disguise of concern for our future...⁴

This passage is a clear and direct criticism of the oppression experienced by African people during western colonialism. The author's objective through Thami's discourse is not to appeal to the audience's feelings or make them empathize with him; on the contrary, he is appealing for their reason because epic theatre is dialectical which means that ideas are presented in a contradictory way. In the same act and the same scene of the play, Mr. M gave the same right to Isabel to say her concluding sentence in order to make it easy for the audience to take their position and express it in the vote. Both of them reinforced their ideas with arguments. It is at the same time an attitude against Capitalism because when we say capitalism we automatically think about exploitation.

The play reveals the injustice practiced against the blacks in South Africa during apartheid. The author illustrates it in Mr. M's conversation with Isabel when he says: "it is not easy you know to be a teacher to put your heart and soul into educating an eager young mind which you know will never get a chance to develop further and realize its full potential."⁵

This passage may allow us to understand that black people are not given equal education with white people in order to prepare them for hard work which means they will be exploited, in other words, they are prepared to be future slaves. Even Thami is aware of this situation and confirms this in his monologue. He depicts the bad conditions in which black people live. He denounces a person called Mr Dawid Grobbelaar who used to tell lies such as the word "future" at school because according to him the reality is quite different. He argues: "I look around me in the location...I see a generation of tired, defeated man and woman crawling back to their miserable little pondoks at the end of a day's work for white baas or madam..."⁶

The word 'pondoks' here represents the misery and poverty in which black people live, while, the whites live in big houses and have all the means they need for a comfortable life. Through this monologue, the author tries to convince the audience that things must be changed for the

best and this will be made by struggling against exploiters because he realizes later that this change will not be offered to them, but they have to make it themselves otherwise they will remain oppressed and living forever in misery. It is clear that Fugard like Brecht “wanted his theatre to intervene in the process of shaping society”⁷. Thami is not the only person who is aware of all this. Even Isabel has discovered these inhumane conditions of Black people’s lives, she describes them in her monologue and expresses a kind of sympathy towards them when she says:

...The location is a quite an eyesore by comparison. Most of the houses—if you can call them that—are made of bits of old corrugated iron or anything else they could find to make four walls and a roof. . There are no gardens or anything like that. You’ve got to drive in first gear all the time because of the potholes and stones, and when the wind is blowing and all the dust and rubbish flying around . . .!⁸

Here Isabel compares her life as a rich and wealthy girl to the others in terms of the main conditions that permit them to live a better life. She refers to this by two words “gardens” for the rich, and “dust” “and Rubbish” for the blacks. She continues

...I think you’d be inclined to agree with our mayor. I’ve actually been into it quite a few times with my mom to visit auntie, our maid when she was sick, and with my dad when he had to take emergency medicines to the clinic. I can remember one visit, just sitting in the car and staring out of the window trying to imagine what it would be like to live my whole life in one of those little *pondoks*. No electricity, no running water, no privacy! Auntie’s little house has only got two small rooms and nine of them sleep there. I ended up being damn glad I was born with a white skin...⁹

This quote can be seen as the position where the author shows segregation and racism caused by the policy of the Apartheid government in South Africa.

Moreover, Fugard reveals the oppression and the violence practiced by the police against the young students only because they have boycotted the school. Those terrible scenes and the bloody events were described by Mr. M in his monologue as he says: “Every road I took was blocked by policemen and soldiers with their guns ready...”¹⁰. This is a kind of denouncing and criticizing the police that are repressing people rather than protecting them.

2) Denouncing Oppression, Exploitation, and Capitalism in *I Will Marry*

When I Want

Similarly, "*I Will Marry When I Want*" is a play that criticizes and denounces colonialism in Kenya and deals with the political issues mainly the themes already cited in the title above. In the conversation between Kioi and his friend Ikuua he says: "...all we are required to do is to be their [the foreigners or the white man] watchmen, yes we could be called their **watchdogs**"¹¹. Ngugi in this play tries to show his audience how the Kenyan people continue to suffer even after gaining their independence. It is a play that deals with social, economic, and political issues in post-independent Kenya and generally with neo-colonialism. For Ngugi, the purpose of writing about pain is helping to cope with it and helping to end it, hopefully.

In the first act of the play, Ngugi has used a character who is a drunkard to refer to the exploitation of the workers. This drunkard according to Kiguunda: "...he was a good man; he became the way he now is only after he lost his job...he was Kioi's nightwatchman. But one day Kioi finds him dead asleep in the middle of the night. From that moment Kamande lost his job."¹² Through these words, he wants to draw the audience's attention to workers who spend most of their time doing hard jobs but are not well paid. Furthermore, the author expressed his attitude towards capitalism and its exploitation through Kiguunda and he has illustrated it several times either directly or indirectly. For example, in one of the conversations with his wife Wangeci, he says: "...they are now the ones employing you, jobs without wages!"¹³ Gicaamba who is another character of the play, also complains about the situation in his conversation with Kiguunda and asserts that the workers are exploited when he says: "even though we are paid fortnight wages can never equal the work done. Wages can never really compensate for your labour."¹⁴ Gicaamba denounces the dangerous and bad conditions of working in Kenyan factories he asserts that many workers die there, and those

who are victims of work accidents are neither taken to hospitals nor are they given any compensation. He calls the owners of these factories “real scorpions who know three things only: to oppress workers, to take away their rights, and to suck their blood.”¹⁵

In this play, Ngugi also shows how the Capitalists and the rich class use religion as an instrument to manipulate the poor and keep these classes unconscious. They do not want them to wake up, consequently, they will neither ask nor protest for their rights, while the rich enjoy their life and do not care about anything. This is directly expressed by Jezebel when she says: “the tractor driver is very mature. He does not argue back, he does not demand high wages. He just believes in hard work, praising our Lord all the time. He is a true brother-in-Christ.”¹⁶ Indeed, this is well developed in the play through the character Gicaamba who always argues to Kiguunda against Kioi and his friends. In order to do so he returns to history to reveal the hypocrisy of the White Man and says that when the White Man came to colonize Kenya they “held the Bible in the left hand, and the gun in the right hand...”¹⁷ Gicaamba goes further in attacking religion and links it with colonialism and exploitation since he argues that:

The white man wanted us to be drunk with religion, while he in the meantime, was mapping and grabbing our land, and starting factories and businesses on our sweat. He drove us from our best lands, forcing us to eke a living from plots and roadsides like beggars in our land, some of us dying in his tea and coffee plantations, others dying in his factories.¹⁸

Gicaamba considers that religion is like the alcohol which anesthetizes people’s soul and a poison of their mind at the same time¹⁹.

Additionally, Gicaamba is the most politically committed character of the play who always tries to prevent his friend from the Kioi. Indeed, he always returns to historical events such as the Kenyan struggle for independence in order to recall him that religion was always a tool of colonizers and oppressors, which is used against the colonized. He also comments on the rich man’s visit that if he really wanted the best for him, he would come with a wage increase rather than an invitation to join the church. Like her husband, Njooki too is conscious

about this situation and agreed with him because she also tries to make Wangeci think when she says: “I wonder. Since when have, the rich man been known to visit their servants”²⁰. From this quote, the author wants to convey a message that the rich seek only their own interests and nothing more, and that the workers remain always servants and slaves in the eyes of the rich. It is later confirmed in the second act that Njooki was right. When Kiguunda and Wangeci went to inform Kioi and Jezebel that they are ready to go to the church, Jezebel has mistreated them after she has reached her objective.

Capitalists consider the poor just as slaves and means to increase their wealth. This idea is presented by the author in two different ways by Ngugi Wa’Thiongo both through the protagonists and the antagonists of the play. Even Kioi in the second act confirms Gicaamba’s thoughts. In that scene, Kioi was discussing with his friend Ikuua about the place where the insecticide factory should be built and says:

The main problem with such a factory is that it’s bound to produce a lot of smelly gases and therefore it cannot be built in an area where important people live. What we need is a place like Kiguunda’s or any other place similarly situated. The poor are many in Kenya.²¹

This quote mainly its last two sentences are used by Ngugi in order to show the audience the Capitalists hidden face, to reveal their hypocrisy. The author aims to stimulate them to make their own judgments. In fact, he is expressing his position about colonialists and neo-colonialists. This is a great reason to view this play as an epic play, because Brecht “confronts the spectator not with reality itself but attitudes towards reality”²². In addition, he is “concerned to jolt the audience into some kind of reaction...”²³ It is obvious that he insisted and added the last sentence in the dialogue in order to express his attitude against capitalism and tries to make the audience aware of its danger because capitalist are ready even to kill people in order to make more money.

Finally, the author’s denouncing of oppression, exploitation and capitalism is viewed at the end of the play. Kiguunda lost his job and his title-deed to Kioi, because he has given him

some money which he could not pay back, as a result, he took his land to build the insecticide factory. Kiguunda confirms that the piece of land was bought by Kioi, he also says: “When I left the auction place, I thought I should revisit the piece of land for a last glance, a kind of goodbye. Who did I find there? Kioi Wa’Kanoro, Ikuua Wa’Nditika plus a group of whites. I fled but their open laughter followed me.”²⁴

At the end of the play, we have noticed that when Kiguunda came back home drunk, he repeated the same song and nearly the same words that were said by the drunkard in the first act. This repetition represents also a kind of criticism of capitalism and stimulates the audience to think about it. Kamande and Kiguunda share the same situation. The author tries to convey to the audience the idea that capitalism is the source of all their suffering, so they have to fight together against their oppressors.

B) The Characters’ Political Engagement in the two Plays:

In this part, we are going to show to what extent the characters in both *My Children! My Africa!* And *I Will Marry When I Want* are politically committed and how. We will start our analysis by Athol Fugard’s then we will continue with James Ngugi’s play.

1) Characters Engagement in *My Children! My Africa!*(1990)

Thami:

In fact, as the previous quote of Athol Fugard suggests (page 33), the mission of thinking and feeling about people’s social and political situation must be done by those people themselves and must not be left for politicians. Bertholt Brecht considers Capitalism as dangerous. He claims: “The oppressors do not always appear in the same mask”²⁵. For this reason, and according to Fugard and Brecht, we can understand that theatre and its characters play the role of politicians. *My Children! My Africa!* is a play that applies Brechtian “intellectualism”. In one of the conversations made with Brecht, he asserts: “I write for the people who just come for fun and don’t hesitate to keep their *hats* in the theatre”²⁶. It is clear

that Brecht's use of the word *hats* in this sentence is figurative because he wanted to refer to the mind, which means the audience's reason. Accordingly, Fugard introduced Thami as the most committed character of the play because he is the most character who tries and insists to awaken the people of his community and to convince them to act against Apartheid and the Bantu Education and to look for a change. Despite Mr. M's disagreement with his ideas, Thami recognizes that he is his favorite student and even describes him as a *leader*. Mr. M declares in his conversation: "He's a born leader and that is what your generation needs. Powerful forces are fighting for the souls of you young people. You need real leaders...I know Thami is meant to be one."²⁷ More than this, in the training session with his teammate Isabel, Thami has referred to one of the greatest personalities in South Africa "Nelson Mandela" who spent many years in detention because of fighting against Apartheid, and later he has abolished Apartheid through the political reforms which he made after being elected as South African president. Additionally, unlike Mr. M his teacher, Thami believes that words are not enough to change things, but people have to act in order to reach the objective of ending his sufferings and the sufferings of his community. Thami is a committed character because he has sacrificed his dreams of becoming a doctor and even his life for what he believes in. In the end, he decides to boycott school as a way of protesting against this segregationist system, which is Apartheid. However, this event leads to the death of Mr. M which obliged Thami to leave his country by escaping prison and injustice.

Anela Myalatya (Mr. M)

Mr. M also can be considered a committed character in *My Children! My Africa!* In one of the conversations with Thami, he asserts: "I want our freedom as much as any of you. I was fighting for it in my own small way long before you were born!"²⁸. However, unlike Thami, he has chosen to fight against oppressors pacifically using knowledge and education. Mr. M believed that in order to liberate people from oppression it is necessary to liberate their minds

first. In other words, those who are expected to make a revolution should be intellectually prepared. It is clear that he takes a position toward apartheid from the beginning and is struggling for equality. He has always done his best to convince both the Blacks and Whites that instead of fighting each other they have to fight together. He asserted this in his conversation with Isabel when he says:

...What a contest! But at the same time, what a waste I thought! Yes, you heard me correctly. A waste! They shouldn't be fighting each other. They should fighting together! If the sight of them as opponents is so exciting, imagine what it would be like if they were allies. If those two stood side by side and join forces, they could take on anybody...and win! For the next few days that is all I could think of. It tormented me. When I wrote my report about the debate in the school dairy, it was the last sentence. "But oh!, what a waste!"...²⁹

Mr. M goes further and qualifies the apartheid system as lunacy, and he is worried by the necessity giving up with it. Mr. M argues:

...The truth is, I've seen too much of its Isabel. Wasted people! Wasted chances! It's become a phobia with me now...the thought that you and Thami would be another two victims of this country's lunacy, was almost too much for me. The time of lamentations is passed...³⁰

Despite the fact that Mr. M seems to Thami and the comrades as a traitor and was accused of supporting apartheid by continuing to teach their programs, he affirms the opposite by saying that he was not happy to teach that syllabus and that he made everything he could in order to sabotage it by opening the students minds and liberated them from what the Buntu education wanted them to become, and he asserts that Thami's position toward it, is a great proof of his success.³¹

Finally, he is assassinated by the comrades. His tragic death proves that he is committed because he was not afraid and even is ready to die for his ideas. Mr. M has given his whole life to serve his community through education. It appears that the author in this play has presented the two characters dialectically and presented different ends to them in the story in order to stimulate the audience and attract them to think and judge them.

2) The Characters Political Engagement in *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977)

Gicaamba:

In James Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want* also most of the characters are politically engaged to play the role of politicians in criticizing capitalism and the corruption practiced by the Kenyan authorities and making their people aware of this. Ngugi has introduced Gicaamba as the most radical character in the play. He is the one who insists to make his friends see the tragic consequences of neo-colonialism and capitalism on Kenyan people. He is also ready to resist and act for his people and his country. In order to express and convey his message to his audience he relies on songs and says:

Here at Wa' Gathoni's place I will spend night and day till I am sent for by post. I will talk about workers and also about peasants for in unity lies our strength. Foreigners in Kenya pack your bags and go. The owners of the homestead have come. I will defend my fatherland with the sword of revolution as we go to the war of liberation. Poverty! Poverty! Nobody can govern over poverty for poverty is like a poison on the body. Exploitation has poisoned our land.³²

This proves to what extent Gicaamba is a very important character of the plays because his discourses are radical and full of determination. Gicaamba's words contribute in "arousing his [the spectator's] capacity to take action"³³. In addition, he often gives strong arguments for what he says. Indeed, the author used him to return to historical events which happened in Kenya using the technique of flash back in order to remind his friend how people and workers used to protest. He illustrated this in a leader's discourse when says:

I speak the truth and swear before God and before the people present and before the ancestors I swear by the oath of the masses and by the blood of the Kenyan people...I'll never let this soil go with foreigners leaving the people of Kenya wretched. If I ever let it go, may this, the people's oath, destroy me and the blood of the masses turn against me...³⁴

According to Benjamin Walter, Epic Theatre addresses itself to "interested parties who do not think until they have a reason to"³⁵. It is obvious that for this reason Ngugi introduced this character. It is also for this reason that he gave a great importance to historical events to show

that even though Kenya has got its independence, the Kenyan people are still suffering as if the colonial era did not come to an end, and that the governor's behavior is not different from the colonizer's. This is what he tries to explain to his audience. Another fact of Gicaamba's commitment is that he always defends the working class and joins their struggle. He always calls them for unity as he says: "Whatever the weight of our problems, let's not fight amongst ourselves, let's not turn the violence within us against us, destroying our homes. While our enemies snore in peace."³⁶ At the end he succeeds to convince them to wake up and struggle to end oppression, misery, and to free themselves. Thus, they all sing:

The trumpet of the masses has been blown. Let's preach to all our friends.
The trumpet of the masses has been blown. We change to new songs for the
revolution is near...we are tired of exploitation. We are tired of land
grabbing. We are tired of slavery. We are tired of charity and abuses. The
trumpet of the poor has been blown. Let's unite and organize. Organization
is our club, organization is our sword, organization is our gun, organization
is our shield, organization is a way, organization is our strength, organization
is our light, organization is our wealth.³⁷

Through those examples we understand the importance of this character in the play and the great role that he plays to convince his friends and also to alienate the audience.

Kiguunda

Kiguunda is another political character in the play who is engaged in fighting against the injustice practiced by the oppressors. Although he does not appear as a radical person like his friend, he is presented as a victim of the capitalist and neo-colonialist system of Kenya, he is aware of what is happening around him and agrees with Gicaamba in all what he says. In the Second Act, after Njooki and her husband left, he remained deep in thought and says to his wife: "the spear of Gicaamba's words has truly pierced my heart"³⁸. In addition, when his wife asks him about the visit of Kioi he answered with a less serious way than he used to speak. He says: "they want to see how their slaves live"³⁹. He was from the beginning against the construction of churches and their use as a tool of exploitation by the white man (the colonizer). These thoughts are clearly showed in his dialogue when he argues: "Religion in

this village will drive us all crazy”⁴⁰. In addition, he refused the idea of a Christian wedding from the beginning and when Kioi visited him and suggested this to him he became furious, and he shouted Kioi and his wife out of his house. At the end when he lost everything, he blamed his wife because she insisted for going to the church thinking that it is for the interest of her daughter. Kiguunda argues: “who wanted a church wedding? You an old woman wanting to go through a humiliating ceremony! And all because of looking down upon your culture!”⁴¹ During the period of the Kenyan war of liberation, Kiguunda has joined the Mau Mau movement to struggle for Kenyan independence. He remembers the fighting days and glorifies them in his speech by saying: “Oh the seven years were not even over when we began to sing new songs with new voices, songs and voices demanding for Kenya our home land.”⁴² He also describes the violence and the oppression they lived in during this period he says: “The emergency laws became very oppressive. Our homes were burnt down. We were jailed, we were taken to detention camps...but through Mau Mau led by kimaathe and Matheenge. And through the organized unity of the masses, we beat the whites and freedom came...”⁴³

In the end Kiguunda lost his land and from that moment he decided to join his friend in the struggle because he has later understood that there is no way to end injustice except by protesting it. This shows that the author wants the audience to learn from Kiguunda’s experience and that he has illustrated it and given it as a kind of argument to Gicaamba’s ideas. This is the role of theatre according to Brecht, because Epic Theatre “turns the spectator into an observer”⁴⁴ in order to be critical and in order to be able to comment on what is happening. In one of Brecht’s interviews, he answered a question concerning the end of his play *Mother Courage and Her Children* he says: “...but even if courage learns nothing else at least the audience can, in my view, learn something by observing her.”⁴⁵ Kiguunda has finally understood that his friend was right after he lost everything he answers Gicaamba and affirms:

“You have spoken the truth. For from today Kioi has become my enemy. Either I die, or he dies. Why, they have buried me alive.”⁴⁶ This means that he is engaged to fight and recover what belongs to him and to struggle for the rights of the poor and the proletarians.

Wangeci and Njooki

Female characters in James Ngugi’s *I Will Marry When I Want* are also politically engaged. The author has shown it in the dialogues of the characters, as an example, at the end of the third act, when Gicaamba says: “Do you think that only the man who fought for Kenya’s independence? How many women died in the forest?”⁴⁷ Through these words, he highlights their implication on the struggle for Kenyan land’s liberation. Njooki, is presented by the author as the most conscious and determined woman exactly like her husband, for she always supports him, agrees with him, and reinforces his ideas and his arguments by hers. She often opposed to colonialism as much as to capitalism and religion. While her husband is trying to awaken Kiguunda, she at the same time is doing the same thing with Wangeci. She argues about her position toward Gathoni’s marriage from Kioi’s son as: “You people! A tooth smiles at a spear. The rich never marry from the poor. The rich only want to find ways of continuing to drink people’s blood.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, she criticizes religion and capitalists at the same time by singing: “believe in God and he’ll take care of all your problems and will show you all the good things and remove all the evils from you. Through Jesus you’ll get your share in heaven. Believe in God believe in God and trust him.”⁴⁹ Through this song she is mimicking the religious discourse as a kind of mockery of it and her purpose in doing so is to say that she already knows the rich family’s intention of making the poor unaware and remain them in their poverty. In addition, she shows her position toward struggle and she confirms her determination by stating: “I’ll never betray this land, I’ll never allow the greed for money to guide me like Waruhiu and Luka Wa Kahangara.”⁵⁰ In the contrary, Wangeci is presented

in a dialectical way by Ngugi Wa' Thiongo. She knows that the rich are exploiting the poor in one hand, when she says:

Stop. Stop it there. Aren't they the real bedbugs, local watchman for foreign robbers? When they see a poor man's property their mouths water, when they get their own, their mouths dry up! Don't they have any lands they share with these foreigners whom they have invited back to our country to desecrate the land?⁵¹

And in the other hand, she wants her daughter to marry one from those who exploits them, and accepts his suggestion to go to the church that largely contributed in their suffering. She has even expressed her disagreement with Gicaamba when she advised her husband and says: "Go ahead and let your daughter suffer all because of the words of a political agitator. Since when did a person try to build his hut exactly like that of his neighbor?"⁵² According to her words it is not necessary to spend their whole life in poverty just because their friends remain in. This idea shows Wangeci as a selfish person who is ready to betray her land and friends and collaborate with her oppressors in order to earn money. This can be considered as a pure Brechtian dialectic because Ngugi through this passage wants to stimulate people to think about what is happening and learn from it. It is also a kind of Brechtian intellectualism since its objective is pedagogical. Brecht argues: "even when a character behaves by contradiction that's only because nobody can be identically the same at two unidentical moments... a man is an atom that perpetually breaks up and forms anew."⁵³ In other words Brecht wants his theatre to present things and show them as changeable. For Brecht "feelings are the products of opinions. They follow on. But opinions are decisive."⁵⁴ And that is what both Brecht and Ngugi want to do for their spectators through theatre.

Through the analysis of those characters in both plays we have concluded that their authors are politically committed and engaged. Both of them used theatre to express their ideas and attitudes toward the issues already discussed. Both the playwrights and the theorist have focused on conflicts between the classes. There is the poor and the rich, the oppressor

and the oppressed, the colonizer and the colonized. For this reason, those plays are realistic in the same way Brecht has defined realism.

Along with this chapter we tried to analyze the two plays written by both the south African playwright Athol Fugard and the Kenyan Ngugi Wa' Thiongo in the light of Brecht's Epic Theatre. We have discussed those texts by referring to some of the concepts such as popularity and realism. Through this study we conclude that *My Children! My Africa!* and *I Will Marry When I Want* are popular, realistic and political according to the German playwright, poet, and theorist.

Endnotes

¹John Willet. *Brecht on Theatre, The Development of An Aesthetic*, 108

²Benjamin Walter, *Understanding Brecht: (London: verso, 1998)*,16

³Athol Fugardnotebooks

⁴Athol Fugard, *My Children! My Africa! (London-Boston: faber and faber, 1990)*, 2

⁵Ibid, .17

⁶Ibid, .41-42

⁷Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, *Cambridge Companion to Brecht: (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)*, 134

⁸Athol Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*, 12

⁹Ibid, .12

¹⁰Ibid, .53

¹¹James Ngugi, *I Will Marry When I Want: (south Africa: Heinman Educational Books, 1982)*, 5

¹²Ibid, .13

¹³Ibid, .33

¹⁴Ibid, .33

¹⁵Ibid, .43-44

¹⁶Ibid, .56

¹⁷Ibid, .57

¹⁸Ibid, .61

¹⁹Ibid, .32

²⁰Ibid, .75-76

²¹Ibid, .142

²²Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, *Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, 142

²³Ibid, .140

²⁴NgugiWa' Thiongo, *I Will Marry When I Want*, 111

²⁵John Willet, *Brecht on theatre, The Development of an Aesthetic*, 110

²⁶Ibid, .14

²⁷Athol Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!*,21

²⁸Ibid, .33

²⁹Ibid, .16-17

³⁰Ibid, .17

- ³¹Ibid, .50-51
- ³²Ngugi Wa' Thiongo, *I Will Marry When I Want*, 41-42
- ³³John Willet, *Brecht on Theatre, The Development of An Aesthetic*, 37
- ³⁴Ngugi Wa' Thiongo, *I Will Marry When I Want*, 68
- ³⁵Benjamin Walter, *Understanding Brecht*, 16
- ³⁶Ngugi Wa' Thiongo, *I Will Marry When I Want*, 110
- ³⁷Ibid, .115-116
- ³⁸Ibid, .72
- ³⁹Ibid, .29
- ⁴⁰Ibid, .9
- ⁴¹Ibid, .109
- ⁴²Ibid, .25
- ⁴³Ibid, .27
- ⁴⁴John Willet, "*Brecht on Theatre*", *The Development of An Aesthetic*, 37
- ⁴⁵Ibid, .229
- ⁴⁶Ngugi Wa' Thiongo, "*I Will Marry When I Want*", 110
- ⁴⁷Ibid, .105
- ⁴⁸Ibid, .56
- ⁴⁹Ibid, .58
- ⁵⁰Ibid, .59
- ⁵¹Ibid, .31
- ⁵²Ibid, .72
- ⁵³John Willet, *Brecht on theatre, The development of an Aesthetic*, 15
- ⁵⁴Ibid, .16

IV- Conclusion

Athol Fugard and James Ngugi belong to the group of artists who devoted their work to defend human rights, particularly those of the oppressed. Because of this, both of them are important literary figures from the twentieth century. *My Children! My Africa!* and *I Will Marry When I Want* are among the best illustrations of Ngugi's and Fugard's ideology. The difficult conditions that both playwrights faced, have instilled a sense of commitment in them. In simple terms, both Athol Fugard and James Ngugi have frequently expressed their anger toward social injustice and political corruption by highlighting the terrible aspects of Capitalism, and the oppressive actions of the colonizer, and Exploitation. These two playwrights were conscious of the fact that theatre cannot exist without protest since protest is an essential component of theatre. As a result, their desire for change still represents their best hope.

We have examined the topics of Oppression, Exploitation, and Capitalism in order to understand how the idea of protest is portrayed in both plays. We have dealt with the way Fugard and Ngugi employ a variety of characters, setting, and themes in order to accurately represent the social and political problems that are so prevalent in both South Africa and Kenya. We have explained how both playwrights alienate their audience and convey their devotion through language and characters. In both plays, social protest is primarily accomplished through the exposure of painful realities and the denunciation of political issues in both South African and Kenyan societies. The information presented in the second chapter can be used to support the playwrights' commitment.

We are unable to address every point that links Ngugi and Athol due to the constraints of our research though; we hope that at least some of their similarities have been made clear. As there are still many things to discuss, we invite other students to discover the two plays from different angles.

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