



## **Dedications**

To my family, friends and relatives.

**Lyes**

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our deep gratitude to our teacher and supervisor Mrs. Larabi Sabéha for her guidance and support all along the writing process of this dissertation.

We are also thankful to the members of the board of examiners for their acceptance to take part in the assessment of this dissertation.

We are thankful to all the teachers of the Department of English for their patience and generosity during the process of our studies.

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## Abstract

*The present research paper falls within Comparative Literature. It aims to compare the Algerian playwright Kateb Yacine's **Le Cadavre encerclé** (1954) and the Irish playwright Sean O'Casey's **The Plough and the Stars** (1926). Our major interest in this research paper is to explore the literary affinities between these plays and to analyse their depiction and interpretation of revolution as experienced by both playwrights' countries, namely Algeria and Ireland. The discussion is organized in three chapters. The first chapter explored the issue of commitment through the lens of Brecht's theory on Epic Theatre. Our focus is on the characters that prove the political and cultural commitment of Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey. The second chapter is concerned with the Quest of Identity, in which we made reference to Stuart Hall's conception of Identity. The third chapter is about the thematic examination of the selected plays. We focus on the authors' interpretation of Revolution. The research results in bringing out some recurrent affinities between the two playwrights in their interpretation of Commitment and Revolution.*

## Introduction

This dissertation falls within Comparative Literature. It aims to compare the Algerian playwright Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre encerclé* (1954) and the Irish playwright Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). Our objective in this research is to explore the literary affinities between these plays and to analyse their depiction and interpretation of revolution as experienced by both playwrights' countries namely, Algeria and Ireland.

In fact, both Algeria and Ireland experienced the oppression and domination of the colonial forces. This colonisation urged the population to revolt in many ways. Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey opted for theatre as their weapons. Our choice of these authors is important since they are from two different geographical spaces and they speak two different languages. Thus, our aim is to draw parallels between them and to show that in spite of the differences that exist between them, their plays do not differ from each other.

To begin with, Kateb Yacine is qualified as one of the pioneers of Algerian and Maghreb literature of French expression. He declared: « L'usage de la langue française ne signifie pas qu'on soit l'agent d'une puissance étrangère, et j'écris en français pour dire aux français que je ne suis pas français ».<sup>1</sup> He justified his use of the colonizer's language as being his "butin de guerre" for the Algerian people.<sup>2</sup> He lived during the Algerian liberation war, when he started to write. Before independence, Kateb Yacine devoted his writings to denounce the atrocities and violence caused by the French colonizer against the Algerian population. And after, he condemned the government's corruption and injustice by portraying the livelihood of his contemporaries. Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre encerclé* (1954) is typical of his committed theatre as it depicts the events of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945, as he himself lived it and took part in it.

Sean O'Casey wrote his play *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) to depict faithfully the Easter Rising in Ireland of the 1920's. As Kateb Yacine, O'Casey used the language of the colonizer, that is English but not Gaelic, the mother tongue of Ireland. He is famous for his writings about the peasants and ordinary people just like Kateb Yacine. The first performance of his play was met with anger and disturbance among the audience since it challenged national Independence. Kateb and O'Casey lived the sufferings and horrors of World War II. Both playwrights are known for their political and cultural commitment.

**a. Review of the Literature:**

While handling Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre Encerclé* (1954) and Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), we noticed that both authors and literary works have been examined from different points of view.

To begin with, *Le Cadavre Encerclé* (1954) has received less critical attention, compared to Kateb's novel *Nedjma* (1956). However, it is considered as one of the best dramatic works in the Algerian theatre. Many were those who studied Kateb's work, among them Algerians and foreigners.

To start with, Kateb Yacine's literary friend Jacqueline Arnaud allotted a doctoral thesis entitled: *La littérature Maghrébine de la langue française: le cas de Kateb Yacine* (1986), where she revisits the life and works of Kateb Yacine. In describing Kateb's work, she says:

Prétendre élucider l'œuvre de Kateb, proliférante et retorse, en pleine fermentation, c'est essayer de crever les apparences, vouloir passer de l'autre côté du miroir. Entreprise aussi désespérante qu'exaltante : poursuivre, au risque de s'égarer, les gouttes du vif argent.<sup>3</sup>

This quotation from Arnaud's thesis shows the complexity and the variety of themes in Kateb Yacine's works. It also shows the difficulty of trying to grasp the meaning of Kateb's work.

Another critic who is concerned with studies on Kateb Yacine's works and the literature of the Maghreb is Charles Bonn. Bonn described *Le Cadavre Encerclé* as being a revolutionary play. In his book, *Kateb Yacine: Nedjma, études littéraires*, he asserts: « Une écriture révolutionnaire par son innovation formelle, son utilisation du substrat mythique et une dérision décapante ». <sup>4</sup> This quote shows the value of Kateb's writings and his innovation with reference to myth. Yet, it seems to us that this criticism lacks completion as it limits Kateb's oeuvre to the mythic perspective.

Another illustrative critic is Sabiha Boukhelouf. Indeed, she studied Kateb's *Le Cadavre Encerclé* in her doctoral dissertation, *Les instances énonçantes dans l'œuvre écrite de Kateb Yacine*. The critic devoted a whole chapter 'Le non-sujet dans le Cadavre encerclé' to analyse some concepts in this play, like history and identity. In describing the writings of Kateb Yacine, she says :

Dans ses écrits, Kateb Yacine n'a pas cessé de soulever l'identité multiple de l'Algérie. Il ne dénonçait pas seulement la colonisation française mais toute forme d'oppression . <sup>5</sup>

Boukhelouf considers that the work of Kateb Yacine does not only speak about the Algerians' freedom, but speaks for the freedom of all the oppressed. Yet, in *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, Kateb denounces the atrocities endured by the Algerians during the French occupation. In this respect, the critic assumes: « *Le Cadavre encerclé* dénonce les massacres du 8 mai 45 et décrit l'apparition de l'actant collectif formé par les militants » <sup>6</sup>.

As still another critic, Azouz Ali Ahmed in his PhD thesis entitled: *L'écriture contre l'oubli hétérogénéité et socialité dans l'œuvre de Kateb Yacine* (2014) discusses issues like memory, history and identity in the works of Kateb Yacine. According to him the two great tragedies that made Yacine a poet and writer were the massacres of May 1945 and the Algerian Revolution of 1954. The same critic adds: « En tant que tragédie, Kateb a su, à

travers la résonance des événements du 8 mai 1945, rendre présent le drame algérien sur la scène du monde ».<sup>7</sup> To our understanding, this quote shows the critic's limited perspective. It seems that he sees Kateb's *Le Cadavre encerclé* as purely historical document while we believe it is far more than this.

As far as Sean O'Casey is concerned, *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) has been the center of many critics and commentators. To start with, P.S. O'Hegarty, in his article *A Dramatist of New Born Ireland* (1927), argues that O'Casey's play is:

An unequal play. The first act is bad; the second act, taken by itself, is the most brilliant and most moving thing Mr. O'Casey has written; while the third and fourth acts, while in full keeping with Mr. O'Casey's thesis, are not a true picture. They contain truth.<sup>8</sup>

The critic explains that *The Plough and the Stars* contains true historical facts, which is the Easter Rebellion in 1916, however it does not give a real picture. According to O'Hegarty, the second act of the play is ideal adding: "It is a true act, a perfectly beautiful act, true humanly and true historically, and to it I take off my hat".<sup>9</sup> It is apparent that O'Hegarty dealt with *The Plough and The Stars* from a historical perspective. He made a descriptive analysis of the play without going any further.

Another critic who was interested in Sean O'Casey's work is Phil Preece who stated that *The Plough and the Stars* was barely performed in England since it portrays the Irish Rebellion against the British System. The same critic argues that O'Casey's work is influenced by William Shakespeare and Anton Chekhov. Then, Preece adds that what makes the play great is its litany of horror, madness and bitter regret.<sup>10</sup>

Last but not the least, Anthony Domestico in his article *The Plough and the Stars* (2010), claims that O'Casey wrote *The Plough and the Stars* to talk about a historical event and most of all to express his ideological and political standpoints. He asserts: "It is a testament to his powers of characterization and verbal ingenuity that such a frankly political

play has far outlasted its political context.”<sup>11</sup> The critic analyzed the play’s characters and setting, on which he comments: “O’Casey is perhaps most important for his ability to turn the Dublin tenements into a terrifying symbolic landscape.”<sup>12</sup> It is clear that Anthony Domestico’s criticism focused on the setting of the play, which are Dublin tenement houses in the year 1916. He praised O’Casey for his fine description and characterization.

### **b. Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From the above review of the literature, it is clear that both Kateb Yacine’s *Le Cadavre Encerclé* (1954) and Sean O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) are two acknowledged pieces of literature whose importance has drawn a lot of critical attention. However, it is of most significance for us to notice that very little concern has been given to the issues of commitment and revolution in both works. Indeed, many pieces of research were undertaken on both works separately but very few were the critics who have carried out the task of looking for possible affinities between Kateb Yacine’s *Le Cadavre Encerclé* (1954) and Sean O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). Therefore, it is our task to analyse the two plays, and to highlight the playwrights’ stand as committed playwrights and to explore the issues of identity and revolution in both works.

Our interest in the issue stems from the fact that neither the geographical distance nor the cultural or language barriers prevented both authors from dealing with the same issues of nationalism, identity and freedom. Throughout our research, we will try to answer the following questions: in what ways does Kateb’s literature has the same dialogue as O’Casey’s? How do the two playwrights interpret revolution in their plays?

### **c. Methodological Outline**

Our present research is undertaken using the IMRAD system. It starts with an introduction that states the objectives of the dissertation. It provides a review of some of the

literature on both Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre encerclé* (1954) and Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). It also gives the Issue and Working Hypothesis. In the Methods section, we will summarize the theories we intend to borrow. The Materials section presents the biographies of Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey with synopsis of *Le Cadavre encerclé* and *The Plough and the Stars*. The Result section is centred on the findings of our research. Our Discussion section consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, we will try to discuss commitment in the two selected plays by Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey through an analysis of the main characters under the lens of Brecht's theory of drama. The second chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the issue of identity. Finally, in the third chapter, we shall discuss the issue of revolution as interpreted by the characters in the plays.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Arabesques Website. Ed. Biographie Kateb Yacine. Accessed on March, 2017. Available on : <<http://www.arabesques-editions.com/fr/biographies/kateb-yacine1974605.html>>
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Arnaud, Jacqueline. *La Littérature Maghrébine de la Langue Française : Le cas de Kateb Yacine*. (publisud,1986),42.
- <sup>4</sup> Bonn, Charles. *Kateb Yacine : Nedjma, etudes litteraires*. (Paris : PUF, 1990), 35.
- <sup>5</sup> Boukhelouf, Sabiha. *Les instances enonçantes dans l'œuvre écrite de Kateb Yacine*. (PhD diss., Université Paris VIII- Vincennes A Saint Denis : 1997), 171.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 641.
- <sup>7</sup> Azouz, Ali Ahmed. *L'écriture Contre L'oubli Hétérogénéité et Socialité Dans l'Œuvre de Kateb Yacine*. (PhD diss.,Queen's University, 2014), 261.
- <sup>8</sup> O'Hegarty, P.S. *A Dramatist of New Born Ireland*. (1927), in *Sean O' Casey: Modern Judgements*. Ronald Ayling, ed., (London: Macmillan, 1969), 64
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., 65.
- <sup>10</sup> Preece, Phil. *Review: The Plough and the Stars @ Birmingham Old Rep*. (12th October, 2012). Accessed on March, 2017. Available on: <<http://lichfieldlive.co.uk/2012/10/12/review-the-plough-and-the-stars-birmingham-old-rep/>>
- <sup>11</sup> Domestico, Anthony. *The plough and the stars*. (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University, 2010). Accessed on March, 2017. Available on: <[https://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/The\\_Plough\\_and\\_the\\_Stars](https://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/The_Plough_and_the_Stars)>
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## II. Methods and Materials

### 1. Methods

This section of our dissertation is devoted to the theoretical framework that will be used in order to achieve our objectives. First, it explores Harold Bloom's theory on "Influence" expounded in his book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973) to discuss Kateb's influence by O'Casey. We also intend to borrow some of Brecht's concepts on drama as developed in *Brecht on theatre* (1964).

#### a. Harold Bloom on Influence

Harold Bloom is a well known contemporary American writer and literary critic. Indeed, he has written dozens of books and hundreds of articles, including important philosophical reflexions on literary criticism. Among them: *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973), in which Bloom attempts to explain the influence that a poet had from old readings of other poets. Poets, according to Bloom, speak a language which is not their own but which they attempt to make their own by repressing its sources.

In addition, Bloom focuses on what he calls "the strong poet" and acknowledges the influence of the relationship that exists between 'the precursor' and the 'ephebe'. Furthermore, he claims: "only the strong poet can overcome this anxiety of influence; lesser lights become the citizen of poetry; derivative flatterers and never achieve poetic immortality for themselves".<sup>1</sup> Bloom believes that new poets get their inspiration and writings from reading previous poets.

Through his book, Bloom argues that his theory has nothing to do with the techniques and aesthetics of source study; in this respect he says that:

Source study is wholly irrelevant here; we are dealing with primal words, but antithetical meanings, and an ephebe's poetic best misinterpretations may well be of poems he has never read.<sup>2</sup>

Harold Bloom's work is an implicit response to several aspects of mid twentieth-century literary and cultural criticism like the techniques and aesthetics of source study, New Criticism and post-structuralism and de-constructivism. This is clear from this passage, as he puts forward:

I am made aware of the mind's effort to overcome the impasse of formalist criticism, the barren moralizing that archetypal criticism has come to be, and the anti-humanistic plain dreariness of all those developments in European criticism that have yet to demonstrate that they can aid in reading any one poem by any poet whatsoever.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, Harold Bloom's theory is important since it discusses most significant aspects in comparative literature like: inspiration, imitation, imagination and similarity, as it is the case in our study in comparing different works from different backgrounds.

#### **b. Bertold Brecht's Epic theatre**

Bertold Brecht is a German poet, playwright and theoretician. He introduced a new form of theatre called 'Epic theatre' as opposed to Aristotle's theory of drama. His drama is meant to preach and to educate; it appeals for reason rather than *Katharsis* and emotions. Brecht's Epic theatre supports the involvement of the audience to think and to criticize. Brecht argues: "the essential point of epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to feelings than to the spectator's reason".<sup>4</sup>

Brecht introduced 'the Epic theatre' and conceived its characteristics. One of these is the concept of 'Realism'. Brecht's 'Realism' is different from literary period that characterized most of the nineteenth century writings. He makes it clear:

we shall take care not to ascribe realism to a particular historical form of novel belonging to a particular period Balzac's or Tolstoy's, for instance, so as to set up purely formal and literary criteria of realism [...] our

conception of realism needs to be broad and political, free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention.<sup>5</sup>

‘Realism’ as it is conceived by Brecht is conditioned by social and political events. It is not static but open to change. It is free from the convention and free from the form. Brecht argues that playwrights “have to show things as they are”.<sup>6</sup> They must be faithful in their depiction of society.

When Brecht talks about ‘Realism’, he connects it to ‘Popularity’ because, realistic plays tackle issues of the masses. Brecht states: “Popular means intelligible to the broad masses, taking over their forms of expression and enriching them; adopting and consolidating their point of view.”<sup>7</sup> ‘Popular’ means of the majority of people. In other words, popular writings are understood by the masses. Accordingly, realism is a means in order to reveal the truth of the oppressor against the oppressed. Brecht assumes:

The ruling strata are using lies more openly than before. Telling the truth seems increasingly urgent. The sufferings are greater and the number of sufferers has grown.<sup>8</sup>

‘Realist’ playwrights tell truth in order to take side with the oppressed and to denounce the oppressor.

Epic theatre is also conceived through a technique called ‘Alienation Effect’ (*Verfremdungseffekte* in German). As we have already mentioned above, Brecht rejects Aristotle’s Catharsis which focuses on rising emotion among the audience. Yet, this technique aims at distancing the spectator from the play in order to allow him “to criticize constructively from a social point of view.”<sup>9</sup> This technique distances the spectator from the play and consequently urges him to question and to criticize what happened. To alienate the audience, Brecht relied on some dramatic devices among which we can mention the use of Direct Narration, Episodic Structure, Interruption and Reason and Argument.

## 2. Materials

In this section, we shall give the materials used to achieve our work. It introduces both playwrights by giving biographical the background of Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey and respectively a synopsis of the selected plays.

### a. Biographical Background on Sean O'Casey

Sean O'Casey was born John Casey in Dublin, on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1880 to a middle class protestant family in a world dominated by Catholicism. His father died when his was only six years old. Then, he was raised by his mother, Susan Archer, a protestant. He spent most of his early life in a tenement house in Dublin. His formal education lasted no more than three years, because of an eye disease. However, this did not prevent him from educating himself with the help of his mother. James Simmons assumes:

He gave out different versions of when he learned to read; but, again, it may be enough to know that he read a great deal: theology, history, English, Irish, Shakespeare, Ruskin, Boucicault, the Bible and Dickens. The influence of these authors is readily apparent in his work.<sup>10</sup>

Sean O'Casey became eager and excited in the cause of Irish Nationalism, and he changed his name to its Irish form. He mastered Gaelic language, which he later taught. O'Casey was also involved in the labor movement and wrote for the *Irish Worker*.

Later, O'Casey spent his time in drama. The first play to be accepted in the Abbey theatre was *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923). In 1924, the Abbey staged *Juno and the Paycock*, his most popular play set during the period of civil war, and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). The three are known as the Dublin Trilogy. These plays had a great effect on the audience at the Abbey, that gave reputation and impetus to the theatre.

In 1926, O'Casey went to England where he met his wife Eileen Carey Reynolds, an actress. His following play, *The Silver Tassie* (1928) was rejected by the Abbey directors, but it was performed in England in 1929. Other plays by Sean O'Casey are: *Within the Gates* (1934), *The Star Turns Red* (1940) and *Red Roses for Me* (1946).

O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), which is our primary concern in this research paper, is set in the slums of Dublin during the Easter Rising 1916. O'Casey died in exile, on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1964 in Torquay, England.

**b. Synopsis of *The Plough and the Stars***

Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) is a tragedy in four acts. It is set in Dublin tenements in the year 1916. It accounts for the social and political situation of Ireland that characterized the Dubliners slum thought and life during the Easter Week Uprising. It centers on a young couple named Jack and Nora Clitheroe. Jack is a member of the Irish Citizen Army. Nora wants to move out from the tenements and to avoid her husband from getting involved himself further in politics. Some insight into the particular quality of tenement life is provided through the remaining characters.

The first act is an introduction of ordinary working class life in early twentieth century Dublin. It tells about some of the characters like Fluther Good, a carpenter, Ms. Gogan, a charwoman, and the Clitheroes. Nora wants to keep Jack to herself, but things start to break down when Captain Brennan from the Irish Citizen Army comes in and tells Jack that he was promoted and he is ordered to join General James Connolly at a meeting.

The setting of the second act is in a public house, outside of which a meeting is being held. Peter Flynn, Fluther Good and the covey come in and leave again many times, having a quick drink. A fight breaks out between the characters. They get all excited by the nationalist speech about giving up their lives for the Cause of Ireland. They are all impressed. The second highlights the difference between the supposed heroes of the Rising and the ignorance of the people of the tenements who just fight and get drunk.

The third act begins when the Easter Rising is at its height. There are raids and looting going on and Bessie and Mrs. Gogan set out and rob the shops. Jack comes in with

Langon who is wounded and Nora pleases him to stay but he ignores her, this marks the end of their relationship. Nora's marriage has been completely destroyed by the Rising which O'Casey uses to show the pointlessness of violence and war.

The final act takes place later in the Rising. The soldiers threaten Fluther, Peter and the Covey and arrest them. Bessie pushes Nora out of the way of the window where she is ranting about Jack and Bessie is shot. She does not die a heroic death but she does ask for Nora's hand and this is the only thing she has ever asked anyone for. She dies alone however. Captain Brennan comes in and tells of Jack's death.

### **c. Biographical Background of Kateb Yacine:**

Kateb Yacine is an Algerian poet, novelist, journalist and playwright. Kateb's name, means "writer" in Arabic. Born in Constantine in 1929, he lived and grew up under the French colonialism in Algeria. He is considered as an Anti-Colonial thinker.

Kateb Yacine was marked and hugely influenced by the demonstrations of May 1945. The French authorities faced Algerians who claimed independence with repression and violence. After the manifestations of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Kateb Yacine was arrested and tortured when he was only 16 years old. Consequently, he was expelled from secondary school in Setif.

In 1950, he traveled to different European countries and to the Orient: Russia, Egypt and France. In 1956, he published his masterpiece entitled *Nedjma*. In 1967, he traveled to Vietnam and took the decision to write exclusively theatre rather than other genres, and wrote his play *L'Homme aux Sandales du Caoutchouc*, which was translated into Arabic and presented in 1970. Kateb targeted peasants, students and workers as his favourite audience. He developed popular theatre, epic and satire in dialectic, the spoken language of the Algerians.

*Le Cercle Des Représailles* (1959) is a trilogy composed of three plays: *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, which is our case study, then, *La Poudre d'intelligence* and *Les ancêtres redoublent de ferocite*. It concludes with a poem entitled *Le Vautour*. In 1954, the French Magazine *Esprit* published *Le Cadavre Encerclé*. It was staged by John Marie Serreau but it was banned by French authorities. *Les Ancêtres Redoublent de Férocité* and *La Poudre d'Intelligence* were presented in Paris in 1967 and in Algiers in 1969, staged in Arabic dialect. Kateb Yacine won an award in France "Le Grand Prix National Des Lettres" in 1970. Kateb Yacine died on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1989 in Grenoble, France out of leukemia.

#### d. Synopsis of *Le Cadavre Encerclé*:

*Le Cadavre Encerclé* (1954) is a tragedy which centers on the main character Lakhdar. It accounts for the struggle of this latter against the French colonial forces along with his friends. It is also the story of Nedjma, who is fond of Lakhdhar. The play is constructed of episodes, which are stretched through time, from past to present and to future. In the opening of the play we see Lakhdar who is injured in a massacre that occurred in the street called "Rue des Vandales", this street is located somewhere in the Maghreb.

Lakhdar is a chief of militants of the resistance, he lived harsh conditions in a massacre and he was injured. Marguerite who is the daughter of French commander takes him to her house to help him with his injuries because she is a nurse. The acquaintance of Marguerite with Lakhdhar and his friends changed the relationship between Lakhdhar and Mastapha, his friend but rival. The latter is jealous about Marguerite because of the love that is shaping between Lakhdhar and Marguerite. When Marguerite's father came home, an officer of the French army, Hassan shot him dead. Later, Lakhdar disappeared after this incident and he decides to go back to the street where the massacre has been perpetrated. The French police find him and take him to prison. Lakhdar is tortured by the police, but he keeps

silent and he says nothing about his brothers in fight. After a moment, Lakhdar is freed from jail. At the end of the play Tahar, Lakhdar's stepfather, stabs Lakhdar and lets him die near an orange tree. Lakhdar's death has been witnessed by his friends and the crowd. This tragic play ends with Ali, who is Lakhdar's son throwing oranges to the audience from the orange tree where his father has been assassinated.

The play is fragmentary, one of the characteristics of Kateb Yacine's writings. His technique of monologue and use of flashbacks makes his play difficult to be interpreted. Nevertheless, one might use his imagination to capture the events and actions in order to build up a complete picture of the play.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence* (London: Oxford University press, 1973), 95
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 70
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 12
- <sup>4</sup> Brecht, Bertold. 'The Epic theatre and its Difficulties', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* ed. And trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 22-23
- <sup>5</sup> Brecht, Bertold. 'The Popular and the realistic', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* ed. And trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 107-115
- <sup>6</sup> Brecht, Bertold. 'Conversation with Brecht', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* ed. And trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 14-17
- <sup>7</sup> Brecht, Bertold. *Popular and Realistic*, 108
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 107
- <sup>9</sup> Brecht, Bertold. 'The Street Scene', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* ed. And trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 121-130
- <sup>10</sup> Simmons, James. *Macmillan Modern Dramatists: Sean O'Casey* eds. Bruce and Adele King (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1983), 3

### III. Results

In this part of our dissertation, we will shed light on the findings reached throughout our comparative study of the Algerian and Irish literature through Kateb Yacine's play *Le Cadavre encerclé* (1954) and Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926).

Our exploration of the two selected plays has revealed that inspite of the geographical distance and the different socio cultural backgrounds of the two playwrights, they produced the same literature. Indeed, Kateb Yacine wrote his play around May uprising while Sean O'Casey's play depicts the Easter uprising. Both authors belong to different countries, cultures and they speak two different languages.

To achieve our aim, that is to demonstrate the influence of Sean O'Casey on Kateb's work, we relied on the theoretical guidelines of Harold Bloom's theory developed in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973). We have also borrowed some theoretical concepts from Bertold Brecht's 'Epic Theatre' to discuss the Commitment of the two playwrights and their interpretation of revolution.

Our analysis of Commitment in both plays through characterization has shown the devotion and engagement of both playwrights to struggle for the freedom of their respective countries. Kateb's commitment is more political than of O'Casey's, whose commitment is more cultural and social. Consequently, we have noticed that Kateb's characters are in the middle of May 08<sup>th</sup> 1945 manifestation, they are struggling and fighting and they react to the atrocities committed by the colonizer. O'Casey too portrays his characters in *The Plough and the Stars* as involved in the Easter Rising of 1916. Jack Clitheroe, the main character is a commandant in the Citizen Army and is fighting for his country, which leads to his tragic ending.

Moreover, one of the major findings of our research paper are the affinities between the Algerian and the Irish stage, both theatres of the colonial period almost have the same roots, both were the product of colonial oppression and were meant for revolt. They are also meant to depict the real world of the middle working class during the harsh conditions under the colonial system.

The last but not the least of our findings is that biographical elements inform both works. Indeed, Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey have experienced the events in question namely, the manifestations of May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 for Algeria and The Easter Rising in 1916 in Ireland. Both playwrights have participated in the uprisings and have been jailed. They portrayed the events to denounce the atrocities of colonialism and to take the defense of the deprived and the oppressed people.

## **IV. Discussion**

This section of our work is concerned with the analysis of the plays *Le Cadavre encerclé* and *The Plough and the Stars*. It includes three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the analysis of Commitment as it is reflected by both playwrights in the selected plays through characterization, themes and settings. In the second chapter, we shall attempt to discuss the issue of Identity as depicted by both authors. In the third chapter, we shall discuss the issue of Revolution as treated in both plays. Our aim is to highlight the literary affinities between Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey.

### **Chapter One: Commitment in Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*.**

This chapter of our dissertation intends to explore the political and the cultural Commitment as reflected in Kateb's *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*. Thus, our aim is to draw parallels between the main characters as they represent the authors with respect to their commitment.

#### **1. Lakhdhar and Jack Clitheroe as Committed Intellectuals**

To begin with, Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre encerclé* was written in the dawn of the Algerian War for Independence. It centers on the character of Lakhdhar, an intellectual and chief of militants, who is injured in a massacre, obviously the May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 Algeria Uprising, as he himself experienced the events in question, Kateb Yacine wrote his play to express his vision and emotions against the French colonizer. As a committed writer, he portrayed the sufferings and hardships of Lakhdhar by using different techniques as developed in Brecht's Epic theatre.

In *Le Cadavre encerclé*, Lakhdhar represents the typical Algerian during the colonial period. In the opening, we see Lakhdhar lying on the street surrounded by corpses in "la rue

des Vandales”. This place is used by the playwright on purpose. It aims at showing the reality in which the conditions under which the inhabitants are living. Lakhdhar states:

Ici est la rue des Vandales. C’est une rue d’Alger ou de Constantine, de Setif ou de Guelma, de Tunis ou de Casablanca. Ah! L’espace manque pour montrer dans toutes ses perspectives la rue des mendiants et des éclopés, pour entendre les appels des vierges somnambules, suivre des cercueils d’enfants, et recevoir dans la musique des maisons closes le bref murmure des agitateurs.<sup>1</sup>

From the passage above, one can understand that the sufferings of Lakhdhar are representative of the Algerian people, but about the Maghreb as a whole. It reflects the reality of the inhabitants of the street, that of the beggars and the weak.

With reference to Brecht’s theory, Kateb used the technique of ‘Direct Narration’ to portray the reality of the living conditions of the character Lakhdhar. This reality speaks of itself. It tells about the misery of Algeria under the colonial occupation and the consequences of colonialism. Lakhdhar continues his monologue and says:

Ici je suis né, ici je rampe encore pour apprendre à me tenir debout, avec la même blessure ombilicale qu’il n’est plus temps de recoudre; et je retourne à la sanglante source, à notre mère incorruptible, la Matière jamais en défaut, tantôt génératrice de sang et d’énergie,...<sup>2</sup>

In this quote, Lakhdhar is paying a tribute to his origins. He is attached to his origins and to his land. In addition, Lakhdhar’s intellectualism is demonstrated through Marguerite’s words with Lakhdhar. She says:

MARGUERITE: Non, je suis sûre. Vos paroles étaient incompréhensibles. Mais c’était du français.

LAKHDHAR (*rougissant*) : c’est ce que c’est d’être allé à l’école...<sup>3</sup>

This quote shows that Lakhdhar is an intellectual. He has been to school and he masters the French language.

Similar to Kateb’s main character, who is a militant, Sean O’Casey’s character Jack Clitheroe, is about to be promoted commandant of the Citizen Army. Indeed, by the end of the first act, Jack Clitheroe learns that General Connolly has appointed him Commandant and

he has an argument with his wife, Nora, about a letter she burned two weeks earlier. Nora begs him not to go out, but he disregards her laments and goes along with Captain Brennan. In the second act, the setting is a bar of a public-house, to depict the people of Dublin in their environment. While the characters are drinking inside, they listen to the speaker outside. Jack and his mates in the citizen army express their will to die for the independence of Ireland:

*Capt. Brennan [lifting up the Plough and the Stars].* Imprisonment for th' Independence of Ireland!  
*Lieut. Langon [lifting up the tri colour].* Wounds for th' Independence of Ireland!  
*Clitheroe.* Death for th' Independence of Ireland! <sup>4</sup>

This shows how much they are devoted to fight for their country. They are ready to sacrifice themselves for the Independence of Ireland. In another example:

*Clitheroe.* Ireland is greater than a wife.<sup>5</sup>

Jack's statement shows his feelings towards his country compared to those towards his wife. It is evident at the end of the play where he dies like a hero fighting for Ireland's Independence. Lakhdar and Jack Clitheroe are the main characters in the plays by Kateb and O'Casey. They are both tragic characters, who are committed to fight and to die for their countries in order to regain their freedom and dignity.

## **2. Tahar and The covey: The Representation of Traitors**

Tahar in *Le Cadavre encerclé* and The Covey in *The Plough and the Stars* represent the traitors and all those who were against the uprisings, respectively, May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 in Algeria and Easter Rising 1916 in Ireland. Tahar is described by Kateb as being a traitor, who takes side with the colonizers and provides them with information about the militants. He accepts the presence of the oppressor in his country without protest. He is on the opposite side of Lakhdhar and his friends.

*Ouvriers et paysans se rapprochent en silence.*  
*Tahar reste seul au comptoir.*

Lakhdhar (*à Tahar*) : Nous commencerons quand tu seras parti.<sup>6</sup>

In this scene, we remark that Tahar is marginalized from the others. Lakhdar's statement shows that he does not trust Tahar, so he pushes him out from the meeting. Tahar is against the freedom of the country at the cost of innocent lives. He tells Hassan and Mustapha,

TAHAR: Dans ce pays de Malheur, tous les dix ans le sang coule. J'ai vu trop de blancs-becs enflammés comme vous courir toujours à la même défaite. Qu'avez-vous fait avec vos drapeaux, contre les mitrailleuses? Toutes les révoltes s'apaisent aussi vite que de sanglots d'enfant. Nos maisons sont démolies au canon. La milice et l'armée viennent renforcer la police. On vous frappe, on vous humilie, on vous fait travailler de force, on tire sur vous cortèges maudits, et tout cela rejaillit sur des innocents. Peuvent-ils compter sur vous, les neufs enfants du greffier brûlé vif, après avoir été arrosé d'essence, parce qu'il avait eu la lubie de conserver vos journaux ?<sup>7</sup>

In his words, Tahar reproaches to his companions the death of innocent people in their struggle against the colonizer. However, by the end of the play, Tahar himself stabs Lakhdhar with a knife that makes of him a traitor. His final comments on Lakhdhar are:

Tahar (*fulminant entre ses dents*) : Ciel ! Ils ont lâché la vipère !

*Tahar bondit sur Lakhdhar, et le poignarde...*<sup>8</sup>

In *The Plough and the Stars*, Sean O'Casey depicts the reality of Dublin tenement houses during the 1916 Uprising, and portrays the life of the working class. In this respect, Brecht argues,

the folk or people appears with its immutable characteristics, its time honoured traditions, forms of art, customs and habits, its religiosity, its hereditary enemies, its unconquerable strength and all the rest.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Plough and the Stars*, The Covey does not represent the traitor, but he is against the Uprising in the name and under the flag of Communism. As a Marxist, he makes it clear through his speeches with the other characters that it was a 'disgrace' to the Uprising using the flag of 'the Plough and the Stars':

*The Covey*. They're bringin' nice disgrace on that banner now.  
*Clitheroe* [to Covey, remonstratively]. How are they bringin' disgrace on it?

*The Covey* [snappily]. Because it's a Labour flag, an' was never meant for politics. ...What does th' design of th' field plough, bearin' on it th' stars of th' heavenly plough, mean, if it's not Communism? It's a flag that should only be used when we're buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Workers' Republic!<sup>10</sup>

In this play, O'Casey's use of characters and setting portrays the daily life of the Dublin tenement dwellers. In other words, the Irish people are portrayed by O'Casey through the characters, which are shown either drinking, or arguing and quarrelling or playing cards. Like in the first act, when Fluther and The Covey discuss about religion and politics:

*Mrs. Gogan* [to the Covey, as she runs back into the room]. What's after happening Covey?

*The Covey* [with contempt]. Th' job's stopped. They've been mobilized to march in th' demonstration to-night undher th' Plough an' th' Stars. Didn't you hear them cheering th' mugs. They have to renew their political baptismal vows to be faithful in *-seculo seculorum*.

*Fluther*. [sitting on the chair L. of table, forgetting his fear in his indignation]. There's no reason to bring religion into it. I think we ought to have as great a regard for religion as we can, so as to keep it out of as many things as possible.<sup>11</sup>

In his speech, Fluther expresses his thoughts about religion and politics. He thinks that religion has nothing to do with political issues. The Covey's view about the meeting is shown through his talk with Fluther:

*Fluther* [to Covey]. Th' meetin' should be soon over, now.

*The Covey* [in a superior way]. Th' sooner th' better. It's alia lot o' blasted nonsense, comrade.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, in the second act, The Covey's answer to the speaker who talks on heroism and war is striking,

*The Covey* [towards all present]. Dope, dope. There's only one war worth havin': th' war for th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually, in the fourth act he declares to Corporal Stoddart that the only duty of a socialist is the emancipation of the workers.<sup>14</sup> The covey does not hide his stand towards the Rising. He expresses his view overtly in front of the people present in the bar. He is for the improvement of the worker's conditions and against the Rising.

### 3. Nedjma and Nora: The Representation of Women

Both plays do not neglect the representation of women and their roles in the course of the events under study. Indeed, Kateb uses Nedjma in *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and O'Casey's Nora in *The Plough and the Stars* to depict women's important tasks during the uprisings and Algerian events.

To begin with, Nedjma represents the whole country Algeria. To Lakhdhar she is the only place where he would die. He states: "Ici est la rue de Nedjma mon étoile, la seule artère ou je veux rendre l'âme".<sup>15</sup> In this sentence, Lakhdhar speaks about Nedjma as a road where he could lay dead, but metaphorically, he means Algeria, his country. Nedjma is portrayed as a woman who struggles for the freedom of her country alongside with the men. In the first scene, we see her;

*Nedjma, voilée, quittant sa chambre, va vers l'impasse. Elle déchire son voile, sa joue, sa robe et se lamente.*<sup>16</sup>

In this representation, Nedjma frees herself when she tears up her veil. In a call for women to get involved in the rebellion, Kateb Yacine stresses Nedjma's involvement in the manifestation. The presence of Nedjma with the militants is conveyed through Mastapha's speech:

MUSTAPHA : Nous avons passé la nuit à préparer la manifestation. A l'aube, Lakhdhar s'est mis à faire de grands gestes. Il voulait fermer la porte, congédier les militants, se charger de la besogne. Finalement, il ne resta plus que nous trois : Lakhdhar, Nedjma et moi.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, she is in constant search for her beloved Lakhdhar. She asserts: "Tant de visages a mes pieds tant de spectres dispersés a ma poursuite, et nulle trace de Lakhdhar"<sup>18</sup>

The same role is given to Nora in *The Plough and the Stars*, or at least the role of a woman who cares about her husband. Similar to Nedjma, she goes out to find Jack Clitheroe who is in the midst of the Rising. In contrast to Nedjma, who participates in the manifestation, Nora is against the fact that her husband gets involved in the Easter Rising.

*Nora [wearily]. I could find him nowhere, Mrs. Gogan. None o' them would tell me where he was. They told me I shamed my husband an' th' women of Ireland be carryin' on as I was. . . . They said th' women must learn to be brave an' cease to be cowardly. . . . Me who risked more for love than they would risk for hate. . . [Raising her voice in hysterical protest] My Jack will be killed, my Jack will be lulled! ... He is to be butchered as a sacrifice to th' dead!*<sup>19</sup>

In this passage, Nora is lamenting about her husband who she could not find anywhere. She is afraid that he will be killed. Her weak psychological state drives her to madness at the end of the play and her continuous worry about her husband leads her to a miscarriage. Both Nedjma and Nora are committed in their struggle against oppression; however, Nedjma's commitment is political and Nora's is more cultural and social.

To conclude, in this chapter we tried to demonstrate the commitment of both authors in their plays by drawing parallels between the main characters. We assume that the geographical and cultural remoteness did not prevent the two playwrights to show similar cultural and political commitment through their plays.

## Endnotes

1. Yacine, Kateb. *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, in *Le Cercle des Représailles* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 15.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 35
4. O'Casey, Sean. *The Plough and the Stars*. In *Twenty Five Modern plays*. Ed. S. Marion Tucker. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), 746.
5. Ibid.
6. Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 45.
7. Ibid., 21.
8. Ibid., 55.
9. Brecht, Bertold. 'The Popular and the Realistic', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* ed. And trans. John Willet (London: Eyere Methuen, 1964), 108.
10. O'Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*, 733.
11. Ibid., 728.
12. Ibid., 744.
13. Ibid., 742.
14. Ibid., 759.
15. Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 16.
16. Ibid., 18.
17. Ibid., 24.
18. Ibid., 20.
19. O'Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*, 748.

## Chapter Two: The Quest for Identity in *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and the *Plough and the Stars*

This chapter of our discussion is devoted to the analysis of the theme of quest for identity in the selected plays as it is conveyed through the characters. We will make the link to the creation of theatre in both Algeria and Ireland and the aim behind it.

### 1. An Original Theatre:

It is worth mentioning that the creation of theatres, namely the Algerian and the Irish were meant for cultural struggle and revolt against the colonizer, French and British respectively. The colonizers influenced and restricted theatrical activities to their own style and conventions. In this concern, Moussa (Youcef) Selmane, in his Doctoral thesis, entitled *Modern Algerian Theatre: Translations and Critical Analysis of Three Plays by Kateb Yacine, Abdelkader Alloula And Slimane Benaissa* (1989), argues:

...theatre is totally committed to the struggle for socialism. Its aim is to identify with the workers and peasants and educate them; all the themes tackled by the different groups were entirely based on social, cultural and economic problems, as well as on the struggle of the third world and colonized countries.<sup>1</sup>

From the above quotation, one can understand that the purpose of such theatre was to denounce the oppressor's power on the workers and the peasants and that was meant to reflect the problems encountered in society. Playwrights like Kateb Yacine sought to create an Algerian theatre that would bring the idea of national identity into the minds of the audience. However, the Algerian playwrights did not manage to isolate themselves from the influence of foreign playwrights. This is shown in this passage from Moussa Selmane's thesis:

The lack of playwrights led to the translation and adaptation of plays from the general theatrical repertoire, especially plays reflecting the political guidelines of the government – Broadly socialism and struggle against imperialism- and thus names like Brecht and O'Casey topped the repertoire list.<sup>2</sup>

As far as the Irish playwrights are concerned, they also did not escape the influence of English playwrights like Shakespeare. Nicholas Grene quotes in his *Politics of Irish Drama, plays context from Boucicault to Friel* (1999), Brian Friel's claim that:

apart from Synge, all our dramatists have pitched their voices for English acceptance and recognition . . . However I think that for the first time this is stopping . . . We are talking to ourselves as we must and if we are overheard in America, or England, so much the better.<sup>3</sup>

This statement sums up the initiative of creating a theatre that Sean O'Casey and his colleagues in the Abbey theatre were looking for. This is a theatre engaged in the cultural struggle for the Irish identity.

Both the Algerian and the Irish theatres converged to the same aim which was to create a drama of National Identity, to say to the world that they are Algerian and Irish. In fact, our discussion in the following chapter is to investigate this quest for an authentic identity.

## **2. Awakening the Consciousness of the People**

By presenting the problems of society and portraying the living conditions of the population, the playwright is pushing the people to identify themselves with the characters of the play. Yet, the discourse used in the play is meant to the audience. Therefore, the play is talking to the audience. As we have already mentioned, Brecht's Epic theatre is meant to the people. In the use of 'Direct Narration', the playwright is addressing the audience. It has to be recalled that the technique of 'Alienation Effect' allows the spectator to think critically and to ask questions on what is happening on the stage from a social point of view.<sup>4</sup>

Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* are cases for such theatre in the way they build their plays. In *The Plough and the stars*, the Voice of the Man who is giving out his speech during the meeting, displays an illustration:

*The Voice of the Man.* Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. . . . Such august homage was never offered to God as this: the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country. And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption! <sup>5</sup>

This speech goes directly to the people in order to show the importance of struggle and revolt for their country; and he [Patrick Pearse] asked for bloodshed to get their deliverance from the colonizer. Here, Sean O'Casey makes reference to Patrick Pearse's Patriotic speech. This speech inspires the population to rise against the British rule. The crowd as portrayed in the play is ready to get involved. Like the Barman and Rosie who remark:

*Rosie.* It's th' sacred thruth, mind you, what that man's afther sayin'.  
*Barman.* If I was only a little younger, I'd be plungin' mad into th' middle of it! <sup>6</sup>

The same will to participate in the Easter Uprising is further enhanced in the play. Fluther, one of the main characters says:

Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I listened to th' speeches pattered on th' people's head, like rain fallin' on th' corn; every derogatory thought went out o' me mind, an' I said to meself, "You can die now, Fluther, for you've seen th' shadow-dreams of th' last leppin' to life in th' bodies of livin' men that show, if we were without a tither o' courage for centuries, we're vice versa now!" Looka here. [*He stretches out his arm under Peter's face and rolls up his sleeve*] The blood was boilin' in me veins! <sup>7</sup>

However, as in all struggles, not all the crowd is willing to fight along with the Irish people. Some traitors betray revolution and raise against the people's will to overthrow injustice. The Covey, as we have mentioned earlier, is against this war. He tells Bessie,

*The Covey* [*to Bessie with a scornful look at Peter*]. When I think of all th' problems in front o' th' workers, it makes me sick to be lookin' at oul' codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accoutered figures gone astray out of a toyshop! <sup>8</sup>

In fact, there was no unity among the Irish during the Easter Rising. As it is displayed throughout the play, some characters are depicted sitting in the bar rather than going to the place of the meeting. This shows their indifference and unwillingness to fight.

As far as *Le Cadavre Encerclé* is concerned, Kateb's characters are in the midst of the movement. In the first episode and as he gives his monologue, Lakhdhar speaks about the place 'Rue des vandales'. He speaks to the audience to tell them that they are concerned with it. In the sentence 'Ici je suis né', he means that the audience is also born there. He identifies himself with the public. Lakhdhar is trying to awaken the public's consciousness to see their real situation and push them to join the uprising. He declares,

Ici je me dénombre et n'attends plus la fin. Nous somme morts. Phrase incroyable. Nous somme morts assassinés. La police viendra bientôt nous ramasser.<sup>9</sup>

By using Lakhdhar as his mouth piece, Kateb Yacine intends to awaken the people's consciousness and to make them aware of their existence and the injustice of the French colonizer who dominates them. He addresses a message to the working class and the ordinary people who represent the majority of the population in order to enlarge his public and attract them to the cause. As Lakhdhar calls the public in the 'café':

Approchez, approchez tous! Tout le monde peut ici s'inscrire au barreau. Mais ça sera de l'autre côté de prétoire, car la loi va changer de camp...<sup>10</sup>

In this passage Lakhdhar is raising the consciousness of the people to fight against the colonizer and to join him in the manifestation because things will be reversed from the side of the oppressor and will be in the hands of the oppressed. Indeed, the presence of the lawyer shows evidence of the consciousness for law and justice.

### 3. Identity Vs Identities

History plays a great deal in shaping one's identity. Algeria and Ireland witnessed through their histories various turbulent events that affected their populations, and mostly that resulted from colonization. The latter brought chaos and anarchy to the lives of the colonized people thus fragmenting their identities. This fragmentation in identity is a result of changes in history, as it is assumed by Stuart Hall,

A moveable feast formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural system which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self".<sup>11</sup>

In the context of war and colonialism, both Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey seek to question their existence within their native countries. Their plays *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and *The Plough and the Stars* treat this issue of identity in many ways. Both playwrights exiled as a response to their suffering from an identity problem. Their plays reflect Algerian and Irish people's identities through the characters and their language.

#### a. A Lost Identity

In *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, the setting 'rue des Vandales' refers to the identity of the people. It is a public road where Lakhdhar makes his monologue to the audience to tell them that he is also a part of the community. In her article, *The African Worldview in Kateb Yacine's Le cadavre encerclé (1954) and Les ancêtres redoublent de férocité (1959)* Mrs. Nadia Gada argues:

His [Lakhdhar] choice of the "place des Vandales" as a site to publicly reclaim the power and honor vested in his traditional identity as a member of the colonized community is significant.<sup>12</sup>

From the "rue des Vandales", symbol of origins and ancestors, and as a member of his community, Lakhdhar plays the role of a leader who is ready to sacrifice for his country, for the sake of his country's independence. He is well-known by all, as Hassan says to Le Marchand,

Hassan : Tu n'as pas vu Lakhdhar ?  
Le Marchand : il y en a, dans notre pays, des hommes qui s'appellent ainsi.  
Hassan : C'est un ami. Tout le monde le connaît.<sup>13</sup>

Lakhdhar displays the center of the play, since he is always searched by the other characters all the time.

Nedjma: Pardonne-moi. Tes amis te cherchent. On t'a vu descendre ici.<sup>14</sup>

We assume that this quest for Lakhdhar symbolizes the quest for an original identity which is lost by the people. In his article *Narrating the Algerian Nation* (1999), Kamal Salhi argues,

Nedjma's desire to prevent her husband from entering a possible relationship with Marguerite appears to relate to Algeria's need to prevent its talented people from being seduced by the appeal of France and French culture.<sup>15</sup>

This quote displays the struggle of Algerians to avoid any link with the French to preserve their own culture by mixing with the French. Nedjma does not approve Lakhdhar's involvement with Marguerite. Another element that shows this quest for identity in *Le Cadavre Encerclé* is the language. It is worth to note that the play is written in French, the language of the oppressor. In the play, when Lakhdhar meets Marguerite for the first time, she thought of Lakhdhar as a French of nationality, because he speaks French. But, she realizes later that it is not the case and tells him,

Marguerite: Vous êtes étranger? Non. Vous êtes Arabe. Je le vois maintenant, en vous regardant de plus près. Vous avez le sang.

Lakhdhar : Oui, j'ai le sang.<sup>16</sup>

Here, Lakhdhar affirms his origins and identity to Marguerite. It is worth to mention that 'sang' in the cultural context of Algeria is symbolical of original identity.

As far as *The Plough and the Stars* is concerned, Sean O'Casey used his characters to treat the quest for an Irish Identity through the characters. In fact, the characters are representatives of typical Irish people in 1920 Ireland. The setting is in one of the many tenement houses of Dublin in 1915. Similar to Kateb's *Le Cadavre encerclé*, O'Casey's play

is depicting the Irish people to denounce the impact of colonial contribution to the fragmentation of their identity.

As portrayed in the play, the characters are in constant fighting and quarreling about things that do not matter. We assume that the message which O'Casey wants to convey through this image is that of disunity among the Irish people. In fact, the characters do not agree on the question of national concern. Among the characters that are against the Uprising is The Covey. He is described as an educated man, despite his talk about "Jenersky's *Thesis on the Origin, Development, an' Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletaria*,"<sup>17</sup> and Karl Marx's theory "about th' relation of Value to th' Cost o' Production"<sup>18</sup> He is preoccupied with his intellectualism rather than get involved in the action. He evokes a sort of evasion from being involved with the Uprising.

The Covey refuses to fight for a false ideal and objectives. He declares: 'if they were fightin' for anything worthwhile, I woudn't mind.'<sup>19</sup> Similar to The Covey, Bessie Burgess is disillusioned with nationalism and predicts the defeat of the Irish Citizen Army against the British soldiers. She cries out,

*Bessie [opening and looking out of a window].* Maybe yous are satisfied now; maybe yous are satisfied now! Go on an' get guns if yous are men Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun! Yous are all nicely shanghaied now; th' boyo hasn't a sword on his thigh, now! Oh, yous are all nicely shanghaied now! [*She shuts down the window viciously*]<sup>20</sup>

To show the lack of interest in the Uprising on the part of the citizens, Sean O'Casey uses the breaking into the shops during the Uprising. All men and women are interested in having their share, ignoring the danger of the Uprising itself. Through this representation of the characters during the Easter Uprising, O'Casey shows that some Irish are not much preoccupied with the Uprising or their National Identity.

Both Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey depict the lost identity of the people and seek a much larger identity which is humanism.

### **b. Humanism**

Humanism is a recurrent topic which is tackled in both *The Plough and the Stars* and *Le Cadavre encerclé*. In fact, as Marxist thinkers, Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey deal with their humanist conception to denounce the cruelty and the suffering of their people from colonialism and oppression.

Kateb Yacine's treatment of humanism in the play is through the main character Lakhdhar. Lakhdhar is injured in the manifestations. He is dying and he is surrounded by other Algerian 'cadavres'. Jane Hiddleston in her article *Man in motion: Kateb Yacine and the poetics of revolution (2012)*, argues:

Kateb's plays *Le Cadavre encerclé* and *Les Ancêtres redoublent de férocité* also use the example of the Algerian revolution to depict humanity in motion, returning to the past while demanding, however desperately, an ongoing process of creating human freedom from all forms of oppression.<sup>21</sup>

This quote shows the humanist dimension that Kateb Yacine has reached through his play. By depicting Lakhdhar in his struggle to gain Independence of his country from the oppressor's hands, Kateb Yacine conveys a message to the whole world to free themselves from any kind of oppression. Lakhdhar speaks on behalf of the oppressed and condemns the oppressor's guilt for the sufferings he endures.

Lakhdhar: Je ressens mieux l'oppression universelle<sup>22</sup>

In *The Plough and the Stars*, the Covey makes an overt declaration of his humanist thinking. In the first act, when The Covey and Fluther had a discussion about their thoughts on the meeting, Fluther, who is for the Uprising makes this remark:

*Fluther*. We're all Irishmen, anyhow; aren't we?  
*The Covey* [with hand outstretched, and in a professional tone]. Look here, comrade, there's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk; we're all only human bein's.<sup>23</sup>

From the answer *The Covey* gives to *Fluther*, one can understand his position towards National Identity, he is for human identity. We also assume that the *Covey* is a mouthpiece for Sean O'Casey himself. In fact, similar to Kateb Yacine, Sean O'Casey is committed to the denunciation of the oppression of the colonizer.

Having dealt with the quest for Identity in both, *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and *The Plough and the Stars*, we conclude that both authors speak on behalf of the oppressed and their drama is meant to struggle against oppression of any sort.

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13. Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 32.
14. Ibid., 36.
15. Salhi, Kamal, 'Narrating the Algerian Nation'. in *Bulletin of Francophone Africa*, Centre for Francophone Studies, University of Leeds, 14 (1999): 41-68.
16. Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 35.
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18. Ibid., 744.
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21. Hiddleston, Jane, Man in motion: Kateb Yacine and the poetics of revolution. *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, Vol.15 (2012): 435–454.
22. Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 49.
23. O’Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*, 729.

### **Chapter Three: Revolution in *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and *The Plough and the Stars***

In this chapter of our discussion, we shall investigate revolution as depicted by the playwrights through their plays. We aim to draw a thematic parallel between the two plays and discuss the influence of Sean O'Casey on Kateb Yacine. Both plays are centered on the common people or the middle working class. The playwrights' concern is to portray the daily life of these people and their sufferings. Themes like colonialism, violence and death illustrate better this idea.

#### **a. Colonialism**

Colonialism is a common issue in both plays. Sean O'Casey and Kateb Yacine denounce the colonial presence in their countries and hope for change. Both plays depict the consequences that colonialism has brought to their societies. In fact, the playwrights treat colonialism in accordance with their countrymen. They portray the tragedy as it is lived by the people.

To start with Sean O'Casey's *The plough and the Stars*, it opens with the description of the living conditions of the Dubliners in the 1920. The first act pictures the Dublin tenement houses before the Easter Rising of 1916. As it is said by Anthony Domestico in his article *The Plough and the Stars* (2010), the tenement houses are 'terrifying'<sup>1</sup>. This shows how bad the people lived under such circumstances. Throughout the play, O'Casey depicts every detail to show the impact of colonialism on the individual. Indeed, Nora Clitheroe goes mad because of the death of her husband who is killed in the Uprising. In addition, Mrs Gogan loses her daughter Mollser, 'died of consumption'.<sup>2</sup>

O'Casey brought these elements on stage to show the destructive impacts of colonialism on his society. Moreover, he faithfully depicts the reality of the Dublin dwellers

who lived in poverty and misery. Colonialism brought only poverty and misery to the people of Ireland as Bessie tells:

*Bessie [to MRS. GOGAN as she halts the pram again]. Poverty an' hardship has sent Bessie Burgess to abide with sthrange company, but she always knew them she had to live with from backside to breakfast time.*<sup>3</sup>

That is how people felt under colonial system, they had to bear all hardships and to live with strange people. There are no other options for Bessie, she has to tolerate her neighbours in the tenement house. In the final act, O'Casey gives a clear image of this poverty and describes the living room of Bessie Burgess: "*There is an unmistakable air of poverty about the room.*"<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the final act shows colonial repression through the presence of the British soldiers in the house. They came to escort the funeral of the still-born baby, Nora's, and Mollser's body. They also arrest the men who were hiding in the house.

*Corporal Stoddart.* All men in district 'as to be rounded up, an' 'eld in till the scrap is over.<sup>5</sup>

In *Le Cadavre encerclé*, Kateb Yacine also brings the colonial forces onto the stage to denounce their atrocities and massacres. He refers to the manifestations of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 where many lost their lives, many others were arrested. Similar to the Easter Uprising, the events of May 1945 reflect the consequences of colonial repression.

In the opening episode of *Le Cadavre encerclé*, we see Lakhdhar lying down among many other Algerian corpses. He is badly injured. He gives a long speech in which he 'vehemently denounces and then supersedes all the colonial oppressive authority'.<sup>6</sup>

Like O'Casey's play, *Le Cadavre encerclé* undertakes the task of portraying the living conditions of the Algerian society under colonialism. Like Ireland, Algeria is poor:

Lakhdhar: Je vois notre pays, et je vois qu'il est pauvre

Je vois qu'il est plein d'hommes décapités.<sup>7</sup>

As lived by both playwrights, colonialism is omnipresent in their plays. They denounce its effects and impacts on society, by poverty and hardships, and on the individual, by suffering and mental disorder.

#### **b. Violence**

Another common issue treated by both playwrights in their plays is Violence. When there is War, there is bloodshed, terror and violence. In fact, the manifestations of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 in Algeria and The Easter Rising in 1916 in Ireland hold a memory of violence and atrocities against the population. Accordingly, *The Plough and the Stars* and *Le Cadavre encerclé* depict these events.

To maintain dominance over the people, the French and the British colonizers resort to violence as a tool to show their strength. The acts of violence in the plays are covered in mass killing, torture and imprisonment. For instance, in *Le Cadavre encerclé*, Mustapha accounts for the loss of his comrades and informs Lakhdhar:

Mustapha : Je ne vois que trois catégories: les victimes, les captifs, les rescapés.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the Algerians respond to the French's violence by counterviolence. As Frantz Fanon states, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), that: 'The underprivileged and starving peasant is the exploited who very soon discovers that only violence pays.'<sup>9</sup> Yet, Fanon claims that: 'Once the colonized have opted for counterviolence, police reprisals automatically call for reprisals by the nationalist forces.'<sup>10</sup> The peasant now knows the oppressor's power:

Mustapha: Nous connaissons le pouvoir des colons.<sup>11</sup>

Since they are aware of the deeds of the colonizer, the people has to revolt against the latter, through Lakhdhar's voice, which is full of anger and despise against the colonizer,

we learn his readiness to fight and to die for his freedom and for that of his country. Lakhdhar's bravery goes on to defy the colonizer during his interrogatory in the prison.

Lakhdhar (*hurlant dans le haut parleur*): C'est ça votre exécution ? C'est ça ? A vous de parler. Allons, parlez!<sup>12</sup>

It has to be recalled, Lakhdhar's sufferings are the sufferings of the Algerian people. Another example, in which the violence of the French colonizer is stressed, is when they release Lakhdhar from prison and the chief officer of the French soldiers comments on Lakhdhar's state:

Le Chef : Il est foutu. Il aura des visions toute sa vie. Il criera comme un possédé. Qu'il retourne chez ses amis. Qu'il retourne chez sa mère. Quand ils le verront, ils comprendront.<sup>13</sup>

This speech by the chief illustrates well the cruelty and carelessness of the oppressor for the wellbeing of the oppressed. Lakhdhar's mental state reflects the author's experience of violence during his imprisonment in the manifestations of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Furthermore, the French officer wants Lakhdhar to be an example for others who try to revolt and ask for self determination.

Similarly, Sean O'Casey portrays violence throughout *The Plough and the Stars*. In fact, O'Casey treats the characters' violence in the manner they talk to each other, and as they are always fighting and drinking. In Act Two, when the man is giving his speech in the meeting outside, the characters inside the bar get excited and agree with it. Every one becomes enthusiastic to the call for blood shedding :

*The Voice of the Man*. Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. ...Such august homage was never offered to God as this: the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country. And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption!<sup>14</sup>

This patriotic speech holds true for violence, as it calls to sacrifice the millions of lives for their country. As the man continues his speech, the characters remain in the bar to get drunk. They are for the revolution against the British oppression, except for The Covey who is disgusted by what he has heard at the meeting and expresses disapproval, he states:

*The Covey [towards all present].* Dope, dope. There's only one war worth havin': th' war for th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat.<sup>15</sup>

Another example of violence in *The Plough and the Stars*, is when a robbery of the shops started during the Uprising itself. All the characters get involved in the plunder.

And Like in *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, there are imprisonment and killing during the rising. By the end of the play, the characters, The Covey, Fluther, Peter and Captain Brennan are detained by the British soldiers in a church.

### c. Death

Death is a theme in both Kateb's *Le Cadavre Encerclé* and O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*; the plays are tragedies which converge to the resolution of death. Death is a direct effect of war and armed revolution. In addition, both playwrights lived the events in question.

In *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, Lakhdhar lies dying in 'rue des Vandales' among many other corpses. He says: 'Nous sommes morts. Phrase incroyable. Nous sommes morts assassinés.'<sup>16</sup> This statement displays Kateb Yacine's thought of the death of many Algerian people during the manifestations of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Colonialism has brought only death and suffering to the colonized Algeria. The audience is aware of the death that is lurking around the characters in the play, because the setting is filled with danger. As Tahar states: 'Dans ce pays de Malheur, tous les dix ans le sang coule'.<sup>17</sup> This shows the impact of revolution against the colonial oppressor.

Death pervades in the play, for instance the scene where Hassan assassinates Marguerite's father, the French commander:

*la porte vole en morceaux sous la botte du commandant, aussitôt abattu par Hassan, à bout portant.*<sup>18</sup>

Under pressure and fear, Hassan kills Marguerite's father without any hesitation because he represents the enemy. Also, by the end of the play, Tahar takes the task to kill Lakhdhar. During times of war and revolt, death is inescapable.

In addition to these scenes of killing and assassination in *Le Cadavre encerclé*, *The Plough and the Stars* does not miss to depict the theme of death. Sean O'Casey depicts the suffering of the characters like Nora from the death of her husband that leads her to miscarriage. Also, the death of Mollser is symbolic in the way O'Casey portrayed the poverty and misery of Dublin inhabitants.

In addition, Bessie is killed with a shot by mistake of the British soldiers while she pushes Nora away from the window. Blood is pouring out of Bessie and Nora is hallucinating and calls for Jack. Mrs. Gogan narrates Bessie's condition:

*[She feels Bessie's forehead]* My God, she's as cold as death. They're after murderin' th' poor inoffensive woman!<sup>19</sup>

By the rendering of the killing of innocent men, women and children as well as the destruction and desolation brought to their countries during the time of revolution, Kateb Yacine and Sean O'Casey aim to denounce and to expose the hardship and the effects of Revolution.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 39.
- <sup>9</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 23.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 47.
- <sup>11</sup> Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 40.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 51.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., 52.
- <sup>14</sup> O'Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*, 739.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., 742.
- <sup>16</sup> Yacine, *Le Cadavre Encerclé*, 17.
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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>19</sup> O'Casey, *The Plough and the Stars*, 762.

#### IV. General Conclusion

This piece of research has been an opportunity to explore the literary affinities between the Irish playwright Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* and the Algerian playwright Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre Encerclé*. The aim was to discuss their Commitment and their interpretation of Revolution as it is conveyed through the selected plays.

Drama is meant to mirror the real world in which the playwright is living without distortion. In Brecht's view, drama has to show things as they are. Also, despite the differences that exist between the two authors in terms of geography, culture and language, they seem to have produced identical literary works in terms of their interpretation of Commitment and Revolution. Indeed, previous readings by Kateb Yacine of foreign literature and his longing for denouncing oppression on behalf of the oppressed led him to follow his predecessor Sean O'Casey by portraying the real world of the Algerians during the French colonization.

We have discussed O'Casey's influence on Kateb Yacine's *Le Cadavre encerclé*. The affinities between *The Plough and the Stars* and *Le Cadavre encerclé* are so close that both works seem identical in bringing the experiences of the Algerian and Irish working classes. We investigated Commitment as it is conveyed through the main characters in the plays. Indeed, the dialogue in the works is most likely to be the same, as both playwrights used some techniques of Epic theatre to speak about the consequences of colonial oppression. Also, we have tackled the issue of identity as it is portrayed in the selected plays. Moreover, we discussed the way the authors have interpreted revolution through the colonial representation in their plays and the violence lived by both Algerian and Irish people during the Uprisings.

The scope of our research does not allow us to cover all the issues related to the works of Sean O'Casey and Kateb Yacine. We have tried to draw some possible affinities between the Irish and the Algerian theatres relying on *Le Cadavre encerclé* and *The plough and the Stars*. Kateb Yacine recognizes having been influenced by worldwide authors. So, we invite other students to dig further in the works of both authors from other perspectives. In fact, the theatrical devices used in both works seem to be identical, thus we suggest to students to discuss these devices in relation to modern theories of drama, for instance relying on Arthur Miller's conception of Modern Tragedy.

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