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***Modern African Literature Revisited:
A Study of Literary Affinities in Selected Early Novels by
Achebe, Feraoun, Kateb, Ngugi, Armah and Mimouni***

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To Lydia, Sarah, and Yacine.

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Abstract

This thesis revisits a representative example of early Modern African Literature with reference to six outstanding authors, notably Mouloud Feraoun, Chinua Achebe, Kateb Yacine, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Rachid Mimouni. These authors constitute a particular constellation. Their productions have been marked by experiment at the level of both form and theme. One of the major arguments is that they constitute a site for the interplay of orality and writing, one of the consequences of which is the production of the glocal discourse. Taking our theoretical bearings from a comparative poetics, giving as much emphasis to the oral tradition in which the writers were brought up as to the Western culture in which they were educated, we have sought to demonstrate that the six writers' attitude to orality spans the whole gamut from preservation marked reverence through refinement to revision. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*, for instance, provide a pertinent example of hybrid intellectuals who have been exposed to Western cultures, but managed to maintain their basic African identity. Their novels' hybrid discursivity has been articulated through the blending of the realist mode of writing, ethnographical and historical discourses, which are expressed in a formulaic oral style. The two writers' attitude to their culture is that of preservation; they celebrate it while, at the same time, acting as cultural critics all the while. As regards to Ngugi Thiong'O's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*, the attitude shifts from preservation to cultural refinement within the theme of revolution where African Epic narrative forms and modernist mode of writing blend. Kateb and Ngugi's novels provide an interesting paradigm of intersection between experimental textual strategies with which both authors grappled with the complexities of the written expression. Their novels are marked by a quest for style where in some elements from African oral tradition are more subtly deployed. A similar confluence of discourses and genres is also

displayed in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Rachid Mimoun's *Le fleuve détourné*. These two writers deploy textual "outbreaks" that erupt in vehement but subtle denunciations to put forward a vision of societies that emerged from cruel times of colonialism to be engulfed in neocolonialism. Both of them use verbal indirection and signifying oratory as deviation tactics to revise their cultures. The devices derive from the African verbal expression of implicit meaning akin to the African trickster tradition and are uttered in the grotesque mode of writing where satire and character type become the appropriate mode for social criticism. Armah and Mimouni express their dissident thoughts in a distinctive artistic way through their dialogic narratives.

المخلص

ركزت الأجزاء الثلاثة من أطروحتي على نظرية ثقافية يمكن أن نقرأ من خلالها ستة روايات من الأدب الإفريقي وأساسا على الأديب العرقي الوطني (المحلي). وقد تمت دراسة هذه النصوص تحت منظور الأديب المهجري الذي يسمح بتحرير مؤلفيه من سجنهم في "مناطق لغوية" وشرعت في عملية انطلاق من مسلمة أنه يمكن التشكيك وحتى فك المعارضة الثنائية بين "المركز" و"المحيط" من أجل تحقيق رؤية نقاوضية تدفع بالروايات المختارة إلى الدخول في حيوية أدبية ممكنة (متاحة). وما يربط هؤلاء المؤلفين الذين ينحدرون من مناطق جغرافية وثقافية متباينة هو تعاملهم الشبه المسائل مع التوترات التي خلفها الحكم الاستعماري الذي مارسته أرويا من جهة والأنظمة الشمولية التي تلت الاستقلال من جهة أخرى.

قارنت في الجزء الأول رواية العالم بيهار *Fall Apart Things* للروائي شينوا أشيبي "رواية الأرض والدم *La terre et le sang*" للروائي مولود فرعون" كأتمثلة عن النصوص الأدبية التي استجابت للترميز جديد للمكان والهوية اللذان يربطان ارتباطا وثيقا باللغة، فتكلم لغة ما يسمح بالتغيير والفهم، لكن اللغة تحصل في جوهرها قيما ثقافية وقيم الهوية. وقد اعتمد الروائيان اللذان تطرقت إليهما في موضوع بحثي على لغة ليست بلغتهم الأم كأداة كتابية بصوتيات أخرى كالفرنسية والإنجليزية وبقارنة هاتين الروايتين، تكون قد حللنا الأسلوب الذي سلكه الروائيان في استخدام الإستراتيجيات الخطابية بهدف تسليط الضوء على المستوى الصوتي لنصبيهما إذ سمح استخدام لغة المستعمر بالتعبير عن هوية وطريقة الماهية خاصة في مجتسعيهما ويتجه نصبيهما عن قصد ضد الخطابات الاستعمارية وروايات الاضطهاد الثقافي التي تعُد من الموروث الاستعماري لإفريقيا. وفي السياق ذاته، يحلل الجزء الثاني الطريقة التي أقام الكتاب الأفارقة موقفا "استراتيجيا" شارك في النضال من أجل التمثيل الأدبي. ويحدد هذا الجزء عملية التباين في عملية الخطاب ولغاته ولذا عملية التهجين. لتحقيق هذا الهدف اخترت رواية *القمع يُبقي A Grain of Wheat* لـ "نغوي وثيفو" ورواية "نجمة" لكاتب ياسين" لنموذج من الأساطير الأدبية الجديدة حيث تندمج الروايات الشفوية الإفريقية مع مختلف الإلهامات الغربية. وقد انبثق من هنا الاندماج حوار جديد خلق منظور توفيقيا عبر الجنود الوطنية والذي يتشابه من خلاله العنف والصراعات الثقافية علاوة على إنشاء هويات جديدة. وتركز هاتان الروايتان على موضوع الثورة حيث اعتمد الروائيان على استخدام أنواع معدنة من الناص والتي تمثل جزء من الأدب المهجري. أما في الجزء الثالث فقد قارنت رواية *العصر الذهبي ليس للعدو The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* لـ "لأبي كواي أرماس" برواية رشيد ميموني المعنونة *النهر الحائد Le fleuve détourné* باعتبارهما جزء لا يتجزأ من الأدب الإفريقي ما بعد الاستعمار حيث تحلل الأمة المقام الرئيسية في الرواية. لقد سلطت الضوء على الطريقة التي تم بها مزج الأنواع والصيغ التي اعتمدها المؤلفان للاعتراض على الروايات المسخوذة من "التاريخ الوطني" الذي تم التعبير عنه من خلال خطابات القادة السياسيين الأفارقة. وهكذا أصبح الهجاء والشخصية المثال أسلوب للنقد الاجتماعي وسلاحا لفظيا ضد الظلم السياسية وغياب القانون. قد عم اهتمامنا بمقارنة كتاب من شمل إفريقيا لكتاب من إفريقيا الصحراوية بالتوجه الحديث للدراسات الثقافية تجاه مسألة الصلة والارتباط الأدبي بدلا من الدراسات التأثيرية. وقد أهمل هذا الجانب من الأدب المقارن من قبل الدراسات الجامعية والنقد الأدبي من سنوات السينات إلى يومنا هذا. حيث اهتمت معظم هذه الدراسات بالكتاب الأفارقة وفقا لبعض التقاليد أو الفئات الأيديولوجية والتي استعير معظمهما من الأيديولوجية الاستعمارية التي قسمت الأدب الإفريقي إلى مناطق جغرافية وتاريخية ولغوية متباينة. يهدف مشروع بحثي هذا إلى تأسيس اتصال وبالتالي حوار بين التسمية الأدبية للمؤلفات الإفريقية والأدب المهجري بما يسعى إلى شد الانتباه إلى العمليات العالمية الجارية والتي تهدف إلى التغيير والتي نجد هاتي النصوص الأدبية المختارة لهذا العمل يرتبط تحليلي المتعدد السياقات والثقافات ارتباطا وثيقا باعتقادي بضرورة دراسية وتدريس الأدب الإفريقي بعيد عن قيود الدراسات

Résumé

Cette thèse a revisité un exemple représentatif de la littérature africaine moderne en référence à six auteurs, notamment Mouloud Feraoun, Chinua Achebe, Kateb Yacine, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah, et Rachid Mimouni. Ces auteurs ont constitué une constellation particulière dont les productions ont été marquées par l'expérimentation au niveau de la forme et du thème. L'un des arguments était que leurs œuvres littéraires étaient caractérisées par l'interaction entre oralité et écriture, découlant dans un discours global. Prenant nos repères théoriques à partir d'une poétique comparée, accordant beaucoup d'importance tant à la tradition orale dans laquelle les auteurs ont été élevés, qu'à la culture occidentale, résultante de leur éducation coloniale. Nous avons démontré particulièrement que le roman *Things Fall Apart*

d'Achebe et *La terre et le sang* de Feraoun fournissent un exemple pertinent d'intellectuels hybrides qui ont été exposés aux cultures occidentales, mais ont réussi à maintenir leur identité africaine. La discursivité hybride de leurs romans a été formulée par le mélange du mode réaliste de l'écriture, discours ethnographique et historique, qui ont été exprimés dans un style accentué par l'oralité. L'attitude des deux écrivains vis à vis de leurs cultures était celle de la préservation et de la célébration. Cependant, dans *A Grain of Wheat* de Ngugi Thiong'o et *Nedjma* de Kateb Yacine, cette attitude se transforma en celle de raffinement culturel à travers le thème de la révolution où la tradition africaine du récit épique et le mode d'écriture moderniste se fusionnaient. Plus précisément, les romans de Kateb et de Ngugi fournissaient un paradigme intéressant d'intersection entre les stratégies textuelles expérimentales avec lesquelles les deux auteurs s'initiaient pleinement à la complexité de l'expression écrite, d'une quête de style, qu'ils, par la suite, fusionnaient avec certains éléments de la tradition orale. Une confluence similaire des discours et des genres a également été affichée dans *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* d'Armah et *Le fleuve détourné* Mimouni. Les deux auteurs ont utilisé des indices textuels se manifestant à travers des dénonciations véhémentes mais subtiles, qui reflètent une vision des sociétés émergentes du temps cruel du colonialisme pour s'engouffrer dans le néocolonialisme. Par conséquent, les deux écrivains usaient d'un discours indirect, d'un style oratoire comme moyen de déviation pour réviser leurs cultures. Ces procédés sont originaires de l'expression verbale africaine dont le sens implicite s'apparente à la tradition africaine du « Trickster » sont prononcés dans le mode grotesque de l'écriture où la satire et le personnage type devenaient le mode approprié pour la critique sociale. Armah et Mimouni ont exprimé leurs pensées dissidentes d'une manière artistique distinctive à travers leurs récits dialogiques.

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General Introduction

Whoever hasn't yet arrived at the clear realization that there might be a greatness existing entirely outside his own sphere and for which he might have absolutely no feeling; whoever hasn't at least felt obscure intimations concerning the approximate location of this greatness in the geography of the human spirit: that person either has no genius in his own sphere, or else he hasn't been educated yet to the niveau of the classic.

(Schlegel, *Critical Fragment* 36)

The rise of new sites of accumulation, the reconfiguration of economic and political systems, the recomposition of gender relations, the fragmentation of nations into competing war-zones and "fieldoms", the struggle over particular sites of resources, the partial imposition of the market road capitalism: All are much as part of a complex reworking of old historical social relations as a response to changed circumstances. Over and above all this, the various forms assumed by these processes in different countries are the expression not of the state of anomie but of a process of trans-nationalisation. The rhythms and logic of this process are played out in multiple ways. Almost everywhere, however, the process itself accentuates the conflict between a cosmopolitan and nativist vision of identity and of African culture.

(Mbembe. 1998:2-7)

Presently, we live in an age of migration where cultural purity has become nothing but a nostalgic fantasy. In other words, this age is an age wherein intercultural hybridities and transnationalisations have taken the place of cultural purity and essentialism. A number of contemporary cultural theorists consider that the claim for a pristine and untouched cultural identity has become impossible because of the interconnectedness initiated by colonialism and then intensified by globalisation. Incessant transformations and discontinuities make the idea of pure cultural identity in no way predetermined and static since it undergoes permanent change through a variety of contacts with other cultures through the media communication, migration and translation. In other terms, the culture identity has been as fluid as the circulation of information through the media, migration and translation. This culture of mobility, decentring, amalgamation, and cultural syncretism are celebrated by many African world-acclaimed cultural theorists such as Edward Said, Wole Soyinka, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Achille Mbembe among many others. For instance in his essay, "The Many 'Spaces' of The African Writer", the South African social and cultural theorist, Achille Mbembe explains the several processes that create flows and movements

from issues and impasses across the social, political and cultural spectrums of the continent (Mbembe. 1998:45).

The world mobility, the massive international clashes, fusions and the intermixing they entail result from the contact of multiple influences and peoples. These new experiences lead to altered and evolving representations of experience and of self-identity. Such representations are manifest in cultural artefacts including new tastes, new styles, and new literary productions. The present thesis deals only with the last aspect of these representations and my approach goes around a moderate formulae in which the interaction of the “global” with the “local” creates forms that can be called “Glocal”. The focus on “glocality” form contributes to move beyond bipolar models of global against local; power against resistance and focuses instead on the relationship or the complex processes at play.

- The Objectives and Importance of the Study

By “Glocalty”, I mean an emerging form of literary interpretation of literary encounters closely linked to an integrative discourse which displays a mixture of traditions and cultures. It is a discursive form that recognises cultural fusion as a sure way to preserve one’s traditions by enriching them with foreign cultural elements. “Glocality” is far from being a device asserting rigid localism; it rather reconciles global ideas with local manifestations of an identity which comes to term with the idea of global and local tensions. It functions not as a dichotomy, but as dialogical method which conveys a synthetic notion of culture and a dynamic understanding of relations between cultures when the boundaries between “local” and “global influences are not always clearly demarcated. It can also be defined as a discursive variation which helps create a space for an association of ideas, concepts, and themes that reinforce and embody cultural pluralism rather than encouraging dominance. A particular focus in my comparative study is to use the concept of “glocality” to show how literary texts reflect the existence of a variety of historical, political, and cultural forces whose enmeshments with one

another are as manifest at the local as they are visible globally. The same concept can also be associated with the general concept of ‘movement’, embracing a wide variety of types and forms of human mobility, each capable of metamorphosing into something different and new through a set of processes. Salman Rushdie explains the effect of mass movements which he links to the creation of new types of human beings: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves because they are so defined by others or by their otherness; people in those deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality, having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross frontiers and cultures (Rushdie. 1991:125).

My thesis examines the notion of “glocality” as an analytical approach to study the way six African contemporary and internationally acclaimed novelists namely, Chinua Achebe, Mouloud Feraoun, Ngugi Wa Thiong’O, Kateb Yacine, Ayi Kwei Armah and Rachid Mimouni use African cultural forms which they impose on certain appropriated components and intertextual traces of an increasingly global impact to create new “glocal aesthetics” with which they not only succeed to preserve their identities in keeping their customs and world views, but also enrich these traditions by adding foreign aspects to them. The idea of “Glocality” is useful in studying their texts that mix various cultural constituents and appropriate for understanding a mixed reality created by dynamic links, on the one hand, between different historical periods, and on the other hand, it creates a multiplicity of new genres. Glocality also contributes to reflect complex articulation of tradition and modernity in the novels where at once the continuing relevance of African colonial and post-colonial sediments is put in an intercultural dialogue between Africa and the world. In other terms, I intend to foreground the way African writers rely on numerous sources of inspiration, both local and foreign; the manner in which they merge vernacular words with the foreign language as a strategic part of their recombination and syntheses to create new cultural markers including both the local and the global forces across

time, space that impinge on their identities across time and space. The aim is to show the way all these authors traverse genres and participate in the culture of mobility in support of broad-based form, content, style and context that produce a panorama of some literary patterns that straddle the diverse regions of the continent. My reading of the selected novels as part of glocal literature that brings together Algeria, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, among other global connections, aims to contribute to reading texts in terms of their cultural contexts as well as their formal innovations. In an era of cultural splits, I believe that it is interesting to consider the value of cultural synthesis in works wherein African and foreign traits are blended, making their works fragments of “Glocal Literature”.

- Choice of Literary Works

The choice of restricting the focus of the thesis on six novels is prompted by the opportunity they offer for questioning the study of African authors in terms of influence only. Second, the novels are atypical in a way that will allow me to flesh out some of the theoretical issues concerning glocal literature. Taken together, all the texts exhibit a number of different discursive strategies for unequivocally expressing the movement of the “other”. What links them to the concept of “glocality” is the fact they range from portrayals of complicated issues of identity to ambivalence resulting from cultural confrontations and fusions. The authors are all committed to cultural politics in their homelands, Africa, and the world at large. All of them exclude the monolingual, and demand of their readers to place them in “in-between-space”. They can be regarded as “glocal writers” because they have been prompted by the desire to think of African identities as both rooted in specific local geographies and routed to them. All of them are connected to knowable African communities, nations and traditions, but they also live a life divided across cultures and languages. Finally, all of them embrace and celebrate a state of cultural plurality far from “the ghetto” mentality and any kind of confinement. For them, to live between cultures or languages is an important way of coping with the disorientation of geographies. This new attitude toward Africa and the wider world of which it is part, according to Salman Rushdie, is a way to go against a form of internal exile which is called the “homeland”.

For, this Indian cultural theorist claims that of all the elephant traps lying ahead of us, the largest and most dangerous pitfall would be the adoption of a ghetto mentality. To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves with narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be, for Rushdie, to go voluntarily into an inner exile (Ibid. P. 19).

- Research Questions and Hypotheses

As the title of the thesis suggests, the study of literary affinities is based on the horizontal social relationships, local affiliations and the modes of knowledge which are generated from regions and traditions within Africa without failing to respond to transnational challenges in building cultural bridges between countries, languages and localities. In the course of my comparative study, I shall try to provide answers for the subsequent questions: how could authors transcend local, ethnic, and national literary boundaries to provide examples of the way in which local experiences encounter global narratives; how they manage the cultural traffic; and how their novels employ discursive strategies which emphasize their glocal form. In short, my study as a whole hopes to make clear what happens once one leaves behind the theoretical limits of the unidirectional study of African writers in terms of their literary influences and a way out of the theoretical deadlock posed by influence. It intends to offer an alternative approach that shows how the global impact of transnational culture compels African writers to resort to expressions of identity that can be called nomadic, since they move between and adapt to different socio-cultural settings. In formulating their ‘nomadic identities’, the six writers express them in the global and local dialogical counterpoints, a kind of ‘open space’ without restrictions and confinement. They use their novels as a means of making culture crossings and forging connections between different worlds.

- Statement of the Problem

For many years, the discipline of comparative African literature has been overshadowed by the study of literary influences. The tendency was to compare African writers with Western ones to delineate some influences. The majority of academic works in comparative African literature to date has mostly been within the framework of influence type studies. It is because all African authors belonging to what is commonly called Modern African Literature have come under the influence of Western authors. This influence is the outcome of the education they have received in Western-type schools. It may be important to note that the discipline of comparative literature falls into two broad categories of study. The first one is called analogy studies or the study of literary affinities, whereas, the second is referred to as the study of influences or indebtedness. Analogy studies are mostly concerned with the exploration of the psychological, social, political and economic contexts or backgrounds of literary creation across societies. They seek to explain how writers living in societies widely separated in terms of time or space manage to write in indistinguishable ways about more or less similar themes. Studies of literary influence and indebtedness deal with similarities between works, which are traced to the diffusion of ideas and forms, from one cultural area to another, as a result of factors like, education, colonialism, trade and other contacts. Unlike analogy studies, explain similarities between works of literature on other grounds than those related to background or context (Wolfreys.Robbins.Womack.2006: 07).

Of the two varieties of African comparative literature I have mentioned above, the influence type of study is prominent because critics devoted much energy to identify western analogues to modern African novels and failed to address African novel as a pastiche of a variety of separate influences and modes. The influences from the West have been until the present time the major area of study by scholars. Yet, down the years,

the concept of influence has been subject to re-evaluation and revision. For instance, two African authors, namely Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah have not hesitated to denounce what they call “Colonialist Criticism”. Through their public pronouncements, Achebe and Armah have tried, each in his own way, to put an end to re-appropriation of Modern African Literature through the inductive process of trying to find the “origins” of African literary works in Western Literature. Armah, for instance, replies to Charles Larson’s criticism saying: “Language borrowing and influence is usually a too subtle way Western commentators have of saying Africa lacks originality and creativity” (Brown.2005:35).

The other problem with the influence type of study in African literature is that it defeats its purpose by being confined within a limited body of data in terms of both space and time. The circulation of literary ideas, through space and time, has often been blocked by the walls of language and contacts among writers and scholars. African authors coming from what is formerly called “French Zones” of influence are mainly compared to their French counterparts while those issued from what is known as “English Zones of influence” are put in the companionship of English authors. The division of African literature in separate directions (French, English) created a kind of confinement that Jean Marc Mourra explains as follows: “In the Francophone background of studies, the majority of academics involved do not speak English very well, and therefore, have little access to the Anglophone body of work” (Mourra.1999:31). Such a tendency in influence type of studies in comparative African literature has resulted in the separation of African authors into delimited zones of cultural and literary activity. The confinement has also reduced the comparison between African authors, especially those coming from North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is against this background of confinement and influence-based reductive tendency of African literature that the present thesis moves away from a unidirectional view of studying African writers according to their Western influences and their confined literary zones. To redress the balance slightly in favour of other influences, I shall attempt to outline other elements of expression which reflect how the selected novelists use their African oral tradition. I shall concentrate on how techniques of tale narration in Africa, for example, influenced the manner in which African writers have gone about their narration. The parallel tales aids understanding the relationship between North African and Sub-Saharan traditions. The purpose of my research project is also to break away from the deadlock of the influence type studies predominant in comparative African literature by carrying out an analogy study on six writers from the North and the South of the Sahara in order to trace the various affinities when made under similar political and socio-cultural conditions. The question of who influenced who is not of my concern. I will rather study all the texts from an intercultural or cross-cultural perspective, with a consciousness of the unity of all literary creation and experience. Admittedly, these conditions are local. But no one can deny they are ultimately the outcome of a global imperialism. Hence, I can advance the idea that in their emphasis on cultural roots, Modern African Literature provides a perfect example of what I can call “glocal”. In defending this idea of the “glocality” of African literature, I deliberately want to escape the prejudices attached to universality and underscore the argument that African Modern Literature can only be studied in terms of its indebtedness to Western literary tradition. My comparative cultural study of the six novels aims to demonstrate that the overriding concern among these African writers is their inability and unwillingness to exclusively belong to one or the other of what they perceive as two irreconcilable world views. The double-voiced posture of their works embodies a cultural version of Bakhtin’s definition of linguistic and cultural hybridization as a mixture of two social languages within the limit of a single utterance, an encounter between two different consciousnesses, separated from one another (Bakhtin.1981:358).

More significantly, much has been written about “Negritude” with reference to African writers south of the Sahara with the Senghorian form celebrating synthesis of the Greek Black African modes of being. However, so far, little emphasis has been placed on what I can term “migritude”, the major characteristic of which is the art of crossing cultures by treading on routes charted by imperialism. By considering African literature in the age of globalization, I shall attempt to liberate it from its entrapment in “Zones”. My title reflects my decision to work on cutting edges in intersecting and bringing into encounter the crucial insights of North African and Sub-Saharan writers to facilitate dialogue and confrontation between them. Such a consideration does not necessarily ignore their individual traits; the main thrust of the idea behind my comparison is, in Homi Bhabha’s words, to display the uprooted, nomadic, transnational and transcendental fluidity of their literary works (Bhabha.1994:320).

- Research Techniques and Methodology

My approach to the study of the novels will be both historicist, grounding the texts in their socio-historical circumstances, and comparative drawing parallels between the literary works. The objective is to show how the writers create a stable identity that incorporates heterogeneous elements. By mixing the various and heterogeneous cultural elements into recombined forms, it becomes incredulous, in the case of these writers, to claim that foreign influences eradicate local traditions, and at the same time, it is ambivalent towards the notion of local resilience. What matters is that the glocal impact compels them to resort to expressions of identity that can be called nomadic, since they move between and adapt to different socio-cultural settings. In formulating their nomadic identities, Africa is expressed in the global and local dialogical counterpoints, identified with both Western and African cultures and rejecting parts of both of them, they embody glocality in that they live on two sides of a symbolic fault line which they blend without full allegiance to either.

My comparative analysis will be undertaken in conjunction with the German cultural theorist, Walter Benjamin’s constructivist and constellative method which argues that literary texts should be regarded as fragments composing and expressing in abbreviated form a larger

totality, be it the idea of art or the socio-cultural matrix in which it appears. The imperative of construction unfolding the artwork as a monadological fragment, according to Walter Benjamin, requires forms of textual construction and representation which withdraw from theoretical instruction. They may be legible only in certain ways, if at all, at certain historical junctures and moments of construction. The actuality of meaning, the significance of an artwork is contingent upon, and enters into a particular constellation with current circumstances and interests. Benjamin claims that literary texts are shaped as “mosaics” and “dialectical images”, a notion fostered by his conviction that there is no overall picture in art. Cultural and historical artefacts, adds the theorist, can only be removed from their entrenchment in a particular context and to be then “mounted” in a series of juxtaposed fragments to constitute a constellation. The fragments are different pieces which form a mosaic or a constellation, by which he means a methodological principle that governs the literary works of many cultural thinkers based on context sensitive constructions and interpretations of the relational fragmented aspect of the social cultural world (Benjamin, cited in Gilloch.2002:55- 75).

By using Benjamin’s concept of “constellation”, I shall try to show how African writers, like other world authors, responded to and negotiated with the colonial writings and other powers by imposing a specific configuration of literary norms on the structuring of their literary works. Moreover, my cultural comparisons are also informed by what Walter Benjamin calls the “changing function” of art, meaning that any literary text cannot be separated from the sphere of the community. The writer should cross the threshold separating art from the sphere of his community. Among the artists who succeeded in crossing the boundary, Benjamin regarded Marcel Proust and mostly Berthold Brecht as the best exemplars. Therefore, my whole research work rests on the gradual unfolding of an argument that, from Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Mouloud Feraoun’s *La terre et le sang* (1952), through Kateb Yacine’s *Nedjma*(1956) and Ngugi’ Wa Thiong’O’s *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), to Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*(1968) and Rachid Mimouni’s *Le fleuve détourné* (1982), African prose narrative, both in the North and South of the Sahara, followed in form and content the major historical developments in the African continent and beyond. The other point that needs

to be stressed is that what all these writers have in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged out of the experience of colonisation and asserted themselves throughout their creative writing to foreground the tensions with colonial power, to emphasise their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre, and to make themselves distinctively postcolonial.

The approach taken in this research is roughly chronological, and, if I can put it in this way, at once thematic and analytical. On the basis of that, I intend to study the particular socio-historical contexts of the authors' literary productions in order to ascertain what similarities there might be with their selected novels. The objective of the whole work is to explore how the turbulent histories of Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana served to produce a body of literature that has usefully contributed to counter claim discourses of power. The selected novels by these particular writers seem to exemplify a range of positions within the discourses of colonialism and imperialism in African writing, and as such, they go to show how their creators negotiate with the restrictions imposed on them by the distortions and the misrepresentations of their continent in Western writings as Irele Abiola aptly writes:

The new literature of Africa expressed in the European languages, the correspondence is a direct one between the themes and preoccupations that have governed the direction of the creative imagination and the distinctive aspects of modern African experience. Indeed those aspects that have gone into the shaping of the modern African consciousness, as much in its bold and broad configurations as in its more intimate manifestations, have also determined the lines of articulation of our contemporary literature. In the process of expressing the tensions set up in our modern awareness by the varied and often contradictory elements of the collective experience, the literature has come both to reflect that experience and to carry its imprint in the modes and particular accents with which our writers have sought to formulate its manifold character and to register its significant moments. This literature has served both as a direct and objective representation of our modern experience as well as a symbolization of the states of mind induced by that experience.

(Abiola. 2001:212).

By choosing these novels, I want not only to analyse their formal and thematic similarities and their large contribution to the rescue of the image of Africa but also to explore the imaginative responses of the selected authors to the devastating social and psychological effects

of colonialism, and to the period of independence that followed it. The objective of juxtaposing North African and sub-Saharan writers also aims to show that all of them can be considered, in Walter Benjamin's words, as "Literary Strategists" in fusing their literary forms and expanding the possibilities of their craft beyond its traditional boundaries towards a social and political commitment. Benjamin's expression prompts another question concerning the authors' sensibility and commitment to change their societies for the better. I shall show that what also unites all the selected authors, beyond the heterogeneity of their backgrounds and cultures, is the fact they do not simply write as individuals. They have rather been immersed in the situation they describe and contribute to the re-constructions of their countries' histories.

- The Structure of the Thesis

The outline of my comparative study is organized in three parts which are preceded by an introductory one divided into two chapters where I set up the basic answers for why Comparative Cultural Poetics Theory seems appropriate to my study and how it will be used. Dealing with these questions occupies the first chapter which attempts to set up a theoretical framework for the analysis of the six selected novels. I shall knit together the major theoretical relationships within Comparative Cultural Poetics Theory. The second chapter deals with an outline of historical context that enable the compared writers to produce their novels and every chapter will be rounded with sections exploring similarities resulting from the comparative analyses of the novels. The three parts, each with two chapters, will deal with the comparison of two novels. Each chapter includes three or more sections and all of the chapters are arranged according to the thematic paradigms under which the novels under discussion fall. I follow the same procedure in each part, since one of the major hypotheses is that different writers placed approximately under the same conditions would write in more or less the same way. The sections will be devoted to some analogies in terms of the novels' structure, mode of writing, characterization and common themes. My comparison seeks to discover, or to hypothesize at least, a structural similarity informing literary cases emanating from different cultural spaces. "Structural" not in terms of their formal properties, but in terms of historical matrices that shape the thematic and problematic

of the text and which in turn may very well yield material for formal comparison. All of which will be bounded to the idea of Benjamin's procedure of "constructing constellation".

In the course of the second part, I show how both Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* form the basis for the two authors' affirmation of their own identities and their preservation of their cultures which can be integrated, in many ways, with the local cultures which already existed in their countries before colonisation. The first chapter centres on the inquiry into the cultural affirmation and identity construction by focusing on the way Achebe and Feraoun preserve their culture through the way they use their colonizers' languages. The glocality of their novels is manifest on two aspects. First, I try to make clear the common way both writers "displace" and "deterritorialize" the Western forms by mixing them with some material from their African oral traditions. Both authors draw on the multiple local oral markers of their own ethnic expressive cultural traditions and simultaneously perform, as all writers, by borrowing and appropriating forms from others to create, what Mikhail Bakhtin calls an "intentional hybridity"; a way, for both authors, to upgrade the local into the global. For instance, I will explore Achebe's and Feraoun's way of displacing Western genre through their use of "some strategies", to dramatize the tragic consequences of the colonial intrusion or contact. The second chapter moves from the two authors' Western cultural borrowed sources to the study of how Achebe and Feraoun celebrate their African oral heritage including folklore, proverbs, and storytelling.

The third part focuses on Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *A Grain of Wheat* and my analysis will underline a second, more complex embodiment of glocality where highly localized African cultural elements of African popular culture collide and fuse with foreign elements. The preponderance of the new recombination from their African culture mixed with elements resulting from the global impact of colonialism and imperialism functions as a provider of content and a source of dialogical connections. Emphasis will be put mainly on the usefulness of a literary text to revolutionary discourse and the ongoing fight against oppression in the colonial context. In the fifth chapter, I deal with the way Ngugi and Kateb offer a historically concrete presentation of reality in its revolutionary development which combines with the task of achieving ideological change. It will be demonstrated through way both authors shape their

revolutionary characters as “epic heroes” and the way both authors transform their people’s revolts into epic narratives by using African oratory devices. The same chapter addresses also the way the two authors deal with the theme of violence to indict colonialism and embrace national liberation. The sixth chapter deals with the extent to which the two writers’ received Western education and their reading of other literatures have impacted on their way of writing. Emphasis will be put mainly on the use of some modernist techniques, which echo modernist writing. Ngugi and Kateb share points of communality with the techniques associated with the works of Modernist Literature, but both move beyond the limited dimension of the formal features, conventions and procedures of Western texts which they fuse with history and oral narratives. The techniques are then blended with the Kenyan and the Algerian legends, popular myths, and other elements from African oral tradition. To exemplify this, I explore the novels in order to single out some items relevant to African oratory, such as songs, legends, and myths. With Kateb and Ngugi, matters take an even more complex turn. The authors not only appropriate the colonizer’s language, but transpose it into a new form. Their novels demonstrate outright and total denunciation and rejection of colonialism and their poetic contrasts sharply with that of Achebe’s and Feraoun’s novels. The shift from the literature of “témoignage” to a “protest” literature, as Mildred Mortimer observes, is related to the growth of nationalist feeling at the conjuncture of the traumas of the events of the Second World War. The point is that while the first generation of African writers believe in reconciliation and celebration of their cultures, the second generation sharply attacks colonialism by urging their peoples to get rid of the colonial domination (Mortimer.1990:55).

The fourth part deals with Rachid Mimouni’s *Le fleuve détourné* and Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* which project a view of the post-independence period. The two writers move from the colonizer-colonized dialectics that preoccupied their predecessors towards a multiple perception of their respective societies. After independence, most African writings, either in the North or the South of the Sahara, remained tightly in the tradition of politically engaged fiction that has characterised the African novel since before the end of the colonial period. The persistence of commitment is due to the fact that independence of many

African countries was followed by an apparent continuation of Western dependence, located in a flexible combination of cultural and political concerns with an over-riding economic purpose. Rachid Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* exemplify this kind of writing. "Glocality" comes to view in the two narratives as they reflect certain "discursive" practices of imperialism and through the critique that probed alternative meanings of neocolonialism, injustice, and corruption. Both novels were written at a time when restrictions and censorship were prominent. So neither Armah nor Mimouni dared to indict their political leaders directly for the conditions under which African population during the same period. They could, however, imply such responsibility through the development of trickster paradigms. Subtlety, signifying, and indirection become their best tools because they couldn't risk a direct attack on the regimes. Armah and Mimouni allow their characters to deliver a dual message: the two novels are tricky; their seriousness is hidden and often overlooked in the tales. Contest dominates their interaction in a world where the weak and the witty always triumph over the powerful and the presumed superior in manners that are identical to the ways in which trickster figures, in African folktales, subvert similar forms of domination. The two authors resist political oppression in using the trickster's cunning which serves to convey the horrors of corruption and misrule in Africa and beyond. Both were driven by the dilemmas of the post-independence situation and showed a commitment to denounce the social and political tumult of their societies by concerning themselves with the description of the burning problems which their nations face. They reflect the incompetence, sluggishness, and absolute irresponsibility in the emerging African political leadership which led to the doom of the independence era ever since it came into being and devalued the much anticipated fruits of independence. Such a local view of their respective societies is displayed through transgressive and global devices such as laughter, irony, abjection, and disgust.. The seventh chapter will be devoted to the literary strategies or 'devices' that both authors draw from their local cultures are then combined with other global sources that appear in the novels' structures, style, and mode of writing. The eight chapter concerns itself with parallels between Armah and Mimouni's mixing of heterogeneous elements

into a recombined form through characters' connection to the notions of laughter, abjection, and disgust.

Throughout the chapters, I seek to reflect on and evaluate the relevance of Comparative Cultural Poetics to my three comparative analyses of the six selected novelists. Although other critics have focused individually on reading separately these authors, I hope that the analyses I provide here, with regard to these writers will offer a fresh perspective and a piece of the puzzle towards another understanding of their literary texts. Yet, before dealing with textual analyses, I set out my theoretical framework. This is developed from an analysis of the various approaches to Comparative Cultural Poetics Theory. I begin with the Frankfurt school's contribution and others who followed the same line of analysis. My theoretical approaches will be taken, first and foremost, from Walter Benjamin. I supplement Benjamin's theory by appealing to the work of Theodor Adorno, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. All of them provide an enriching extension of earlier theories and defend a dialogic and anti-essentialist theory of cultural production. Their formulations will be applied to the examination of the concept of "glocality" and all their theories will be shaped as elements around which Benjamin's theory of "Constructing Constellations" will revolve.

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Preliminary Part

**Theory, Methodological Framework, and
Historical Context of the Novels**

Chapter One

Theoretical Considerations

When we deal with the concept of “Glocality”, it is of no surprise that Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi Bhabha take centre stage not only because their several theoretical concepts and ideas are closely related to the notion “glocality” but also because all of them celebrate a strong association of literature with movement, migration and cultural diversity. In my view, the very terminologies one encounters in all these cultural thinkers’ theories explain their importance in present day’s studies. It goes for all of these cultural theorists that they are essential for analysis and understanding of literary criticism that stems from a revolt against the constraints of monological systems. Bakhtin, for instance, theorises “linguistic homelessness” and celebrates the novel as a dissonance of voices, languages as a decentred heteroglossia while Benjamin’s poetics build up a whole vocabulary of geographical and migratory terms such as monads, movements, territories, fragments, borders, a world in a state of flux and constructed in never-ending constellation. The same holds true for Bhabha, Said, and Kristeva for whom the novel grew out of an intensified international mobility of trade, colonialism, travel, immigration and capitalist unrest which generated a collision and interchange of multiple languages and cultures, a thoroughgoing “polyglossia”, to paraphrase Sten Pultz Moslund that help in the diffusion and disintegration of the supremacy of national myth with all its connotations of purity, homogeneity and centrality (Moslund. 2010: 25).

Correspondingly, a multidimensional combination of voices entered literature as an expression of the world in constant move. With this new “heteroglot” novel, the limited “monoglot” promoters of national cultures are overthrown by the advocates of new cross-cultural and multilingual sense of reality. Such a reality has been prompted by Walter Benjamin for whom the highest objective of literature is to leave, escape, cross the horizon, and enter another life. True literature is the one that does not conform to or confirm the codes of the established state of things. It rather sets things in motion and helps systems and thoughts to flight. In line with

Bakhtin, Benjamin's notion of the "heteroglot" novel, his logic of constructing a constellation operates with multiplicity and indeterminacy, violating any logic of a unified meaning. He contrasts the monad with the monologic and associates subversive multiplicity with the crossing and the dissolution of cultural and linguistic borders. Bakhtin's notions of "double voiced discourse", his mixing of voices are also comparable to Edward Said's "double vision" that he uses as a tool to challenge the oppositional presumptions of border, division, exclusionary thought and absolute difference. For him, an investment should neither be in new authorities, doctrines, and encoded orthodoxies, nor in established institutions and causes, but in particular sort of nomadic, migratory, and anti-narrative energy (Said. 1994:337).

For Edward Said, exclusivism and essentialism reconstitute difference as identity, conferring identities by demarcating "self/other" as the oppositions. The same dichotomising and essentialising discourse that the coloniser is accused of, especially against the self-indulgence of celebrating one's identity, since, according to him, identity does not imply "an ontologically given and externally determined stability, or uniqueness, or irreducible character, or privileged status as something total and complete in and of itself. No ethnic group can claim, if it ever could be pure, we are all métissage, concludes the theorist (Said.1993:407)

Edward Said's point of view is analogous to Homi Bhabha's notion of "Space in Between" as well as to Kristeva's position against the boundary limits and demarcations. Both theorists valorise difference, mixture, multiplicity, and transgressive movement in renouncing the notion of cultural sameness, coherence, and rootedness. All these cultural theorists have had great impact on cultural theory and particularly in the ways in which transcultural literature is commonly read. Their importance as promoters of a shift from insurgent politics of anti-colonial writings and readings to discourses of hybridity and global relocation is undeniable. All of them, in contrast to being steeped in the politics of relative forces and partisan agendas, pay allegiance to glocal literature with its transgressive discourse as a particular mode of representation which contests the view of the past set in binary oppositions and polarised positions (Black-White, Slave-Master, and East-West). In other terms, all of them propose a productive space of hybridity

where the binarism of cultural politics has no longer a place and the dichotomies of centre-periphery are no longer valid. Literature in this regard is a phenomenon related to both.

1- Definition of Cultural Poetics Theory

It is, of course impossible to give a full account of something as large and complex as Comparative Cultural Poetics Theory here, but some important points should be raised. In my view, it can only be properly understood if one has a general understanding of the theoretical traditions with which it intersects and out of which it developed. The following are only thumb nail outlines of the main trends which help understand certain of its key concepts highlighted. From the outset, the idea of culture and cultural theory, as I understand it, is represented pre-eminently by some Frankfurt School scholars such as Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno. Comparable ideas can also be found in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, and later on Jurgen Habermas. All of them made fine contributions to cultural theory to the point that their thought and perspective were used to form the field of Cultural Studies in the 1980s. Some of the Frankfurt theorists' ideas can also be detected in the writings of some French social thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. More significantly, some of their basic methods can also be noticed in some writings by Postcolonial intellectuals; at their head Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. In addition, some echoes, ideas and positions of the Frankfurt theorists can also be found in some Poststructuralist discourse-based approaches provided by Julia Kristeva and Mikhail Bakhtin who regard literary texts not as mere autonomous objects, but rather material products emerging out of specific social, cultural, and political contexts. All these critical voices share one basic premise: the collapsing of the binary oppositions of Western philosophical thought to be wholly inadequate to the task of articulating or resolving the nihilism of the modern world. In their attempt to overcome the binary oppositions, they return to the realm of material existence, social reality and historicity. In so doing, each of them made so many landmark contributions to cultural theory through their theoretical perspectives and approaches. No matter the considerable differences between all these theorists, they manifest significant similarities and common purpose with regard to cultural theory. Part of my aim is to identify and

exhibit this common ground. Primarily, what makes them important to my field of analysis rests on the fact that all of them dethrone the idealist tradition of universal and ahistorical criteria of artistic value and the formalist approaches to literature that focus upon art work in isolation from the historical and political situations of its production and consumption. All of them also sharply criticize all forms of intellectual and philosophical practices that resist being situated socially and culturally.

2- Choice of the Theory

It is true that contemporary criticism has dismantled the bridges connecting literary works to their political, historical and cultural contexts. Hence, some modern formalist and deconstruction theories have focused attention on individual works as independent units of meaning. These critical approaches to literature, like American New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Structuralism and even Post structuralism believe that literature obeys its own laws in a way far from representation, reference or historical context. Its adherents encourage rather the search for some unifying principles in the work itself. They believe that the study of a text is sufficient to ascertain the way its parts are structured to form a unique organism, supposedly to lead to a total experience of the literary work by its very nature. It comes also from the formalist assumption that its critics are opposed to the critical practice of bringing historical and social contexts to bear on the interpretation of a literary work. The emphasis on historical and social data could be replaced by more direct efforts to address the “dissociation of sensibility” that T.S. Eliot had diagnosed as the fundamental torment for contemporary culture. In his “Tradition and Individual Talent” essay, Eliot, for instance, asserts that “the poet has not a personality to express, but a particular medium” and the reader’s attention should be deflected from the poet’s personality or social circumstances which are, according to him, of secondary importance. What the poet should look for is an “Objective Correlative”, which includes a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which should be the formula of any emotion which should be kept in check by what the critic calls “Wit”, which means an ironic perception of things, a playful awareness of paradoxes and incongruities that poses an intellectual challenge to the reader. T.S Eliot’s idea of

“contextual criticism” is sustained by some other New Critics who claim that a literary work is preconceived as an autonomous, highly coherent, dramatic artefact. It is a “well-wrought urn” separate from and above the life of the author, reader, its social context, and far from everyday language. The New Critics also believe that a literary text has its own specific laws, structures and devices, which should be studied in themselves rather than something else. For instance, their famous reading practice is the calculated emptying out of literary interpretation in order to highlight intrinsic artistic craft and form while ruling out extrinsic matters such as history, psychology, and politics. Textual inconsistencies are harmonized by being valorised as literary ambiguities, paradoxes or ironies. The literary text is neither a vehicle for ideas or a reflection of social reality, nor the incarnation of some transcendental truth. Its material fact whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine. It is made of words, not of objects, feelings, and an expression of the author’s mind (Bertens.2001:13-15).

Contextualism, in a different form, is promoted by the Russian Formalists who consider that literature is a verbal art rather than a reflection of reality or an expression of emotions. According to one of its early critics, Victor Shlovsky: “art exists to recover the sensation of life [...] the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known” (Shlovsky (1917), cited in Bertens.2001: 31). The formalist critics also believe that the distinguishing features of any literary text rest, in Roman Jakobson’s words, on its “literariness” (1921), which means that poetry is a form of language characterized by an orientation towards its own form. What it, first of all, allows us to see in a fresh manner is language itself. What comes out of this process of “defamiliarization” is that it enables us once again to see the world in its full splendor or as true awfulness. Whereas New Critics, as Hans Bertens notes, study the artful convergence of elements in a literary structure, Russian Formalists examine the creative deviation of elements from the background of literary norms and conventions. They look at the study of literature as a science and concentrated, in the manner of hard science, on its general rules. While practical criticism and the New Criticism focus on the individual meaning of individual texts, Russian Formalists want to discover general laws, the more general the better through the use of an impressive range of what they call ‘devices’. They

appeal, for instance, to forms of repetition that cannot be found in ordinary language such as rhyme, and a regular meter in stanzas that we find in many poems. What the devices share is that they always draw attention to themselves: they constantly remind us that we are dealing with language and not with the real world because they signal their own difference from the non-literary language that people ordinarily use (Ibid. P. 34).

The structuralist and some poststructuralist critics, too, focus on the formal aspects of literature, on its specific forms, and on the sort of language that it employs. They see literature as concerned with itself by claiming that everything played a role in what a text is and does. Literature distinguishes itself from non-literary language because it employs a whole range of 'devices' that have a "defamiliarizing" effect and consider language as a sign system governed by difference. One of poststructuralists' obvious debts to structuralism is the concept of "binary oppositions" and the concept of "Deconstruction" which takes its name from Derrida's practice: his strategy of analyzing and dismantling parts of texts in order to reveal their inconsistencies and inner contradictions. Deconstruction promoters develop their accounts of texts and text reading, which inform the logic of textuality and deconstruction. At the heart of deconstruction, in Joseph Lewandowski's words, is the effort to dismantle the cover-ups that texts use to create the semblance of stable meaning: their attempt to create 'privileged' centres and implicit or explicit binary oppositions with the help of all sorts of rhetorical means. Derrida's way of reading texts aims to shed light on the tension between the central and the marginal in a text and maintains that there is nothing that is 'outside-text' because for the human species everything is always mediated by language. Paul Ricoeur is another practitioner of the logic of "il n'y a pas de hors texte" [There is nothing outside the text]. For him, what appears to the reader as meaning derives not from the intention of the speaker or writer but rather from the structure of language itself and from the way it works. Therefore, the outside world would seem to refer to is fictional and does not exist. A text would cease to be literature if its dominant orientation shifted from the text itself and formal scope to the outside world (Lewandowski.2001:45).

Just as for the New Criticism and Russian Formalism, Structuralist theory denies that the individuals whose behavior it studies are autonomous and act and think the way they do out of

free will. On the contrary, if a person was a member of a 'primitive' tribe, his personal contribution to a ritual would only take its meaning from its function in the whole, from its relation to other parts of the ritual, and not from his personal intention. More significantly, Post-structuralism continues Structuralism's strongly anti-humanist perspective and it closely follows Structuralism in its belief that language is the sole means to understand the world. Still, although it continues its anti-humanism and its focus on language, post Structuralism at the same time challenges structuralism by methodically questioning 'deconstructing' some of its major assumptions and the methods that derive from those assumptions (Habib.2005:645).

In short, what the major approaches to literature that I have so far referred to have in common the focus on literature itself. New Critics limit their search for a text's meaning to the 'words on the page'. Formalism is primarily interested in what makes literature different from other ways of using language and in the literary reasons for literary-historical change. As regards Structuralism and Post structuralism, both seek to establish the structures that underlie narratives and make meaning possible. Obviously what is missing in the approaches is an interest in what many literary critics consider very important issues such as the "historical situatedness" and "historical embeddedness" of literary texts. Therefore, the above theories and views of literature as text-based have been dismantled by the materialist oriented approach to literature. Its supporters maintain that all of New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Structuralism, and Deconstruction are insufficient as critical practices in so far as they fail to examine the social, historical conditions of possibility of literary form itself. Instead, they claim that it is only when art and literature are seen as the products of very specific social and historical formations that their true significance can be understood. As an illustration, George Lukács, an advocate of the materialist-based approach claims that it is only in the wide-ranging panorama and in the merging of individual life stories with the larger movements of history that the reader is confronted with the historical truth. Lukács then reconciles objective world and subjective imagination organically. His study of reification is the first analysis of culture where he claims that Achilles, Oedipus, Tom Jones, Antigone and Anna Karenina: their individual existence cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their

specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created (Lukács [1957] 1972: 18).

In my view, the formalist oriented approaches to literature have their relative drawbacks because of their singular focus on the text itself which is insufficient to comprehend the complex relations. What is needed, however, is rather a historicist and materialist approach which situates the text in its historical, societal environment by interweaving various links processes, and effects between the text and the social, political and economic forces. I claim that the materialist oriented perspective is better and therefore useful for my study of the six African novels because at its heart is a critique of the dualistic thinking and linear logic in cultural analysis as its emphasis on the numerous forces across time and space that impinge on an identity. Acknowledging this multiplicity entails abandoning “oversimplified Manichean identification” in creating dynamic links between texts and the social and cultural world. This approach seeks to make visible and connect a broad and overlooked range of human practices, actions, and cultural productions in ways that do not merely deconstruct linguistic illusions or reconstruct normative ideals, but views social life as a materialist construction of human practices and productions that are not necessarily rational or textual but rather relational. It begins with the premise that societies are relational constructions of disparate elements and social practices. Such a method emerges first with Benjamin’s research on image-construction, which he foregrounds in his various cultural analyses starting with his *Origin of German Drama* (1925), along his *One-Way Street* (1928), to his unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927). His work exists in a complex interplay with the theory of the Frankfurt School (Lewandowski. 2001: 36).

However, though the logic of constructing constellations has its origins in German Critical and Social Theory, it is not limited to that field because it can also be detected in the works of many prominent social and cultural theorists, among whom, Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva and many others figure. In addition, the logic of constructing constellation also came into sight in the writings of some Postcolonial theorists whose aim is to identify culture as an important constituent of life which should be carefully scrutinized and analysed in order to detect racism, oppression, homophobia and other tendencies that promote domination and oppression. The

objective of using the cultural materialist approach lies in the fact that it is impossible to miss out the fact that commitment, the necessities of political engagement, and the urgency of the situation which make it impossible for all the selected African writers to swerve or break away completely from a certain literary convenience. In this regard, the African critic, Abiola Irele, rightly suggests in the preface of his book entitled, *The African Imagination. Literature in Africa and Diaspora* (2001) that the African novel is directly linked to the historical circumstances of its emergence.

The critic also maintains that:

The historical experience of colonialism in all its ramifications serves as a constant reference to the African imagination and has a consequence for any form of criticism concerned with African literature. It is impossible, in the particular circumstances of its development, to ignore the specific historical and sociological references of African imaginative expression in the European language, for these references have determined the genesis and evolution of literature. The thematic approach is thus fundamental to the inspiration of African literature: as with the themes by which all forms of literary expression are mediated, the external references constitute the points of articulation that enable a primary mode of entry into the literature in question.

(Abiola.2001: x).

Irele Abiola is to the point because most of African literary works address not only fictional situations but the real problems of African societies as well. The six selected novels are not an exception because all of them were written in periods of intense social turmoil and contestation and have their origins in the politics of the anti-colonial struggle and bear the marks of that struggle. My choice of the cultural materialist perspective is further motivated by the following reasons: first, it emphasizes the numerous forces across time and space that impinge on identity construction, carries out a critique of existing systems of domination, and points to forces of negotiation and possibilities for radical social transformation.

The second importance of the materialist approach is aimed to understand the ways in which power relations are regulated, distributed and deployed within the selected novels with special emphasis on the significance of the particular contradictions present in the texts and what they tell us about the social experience out of which they emerged. It reads them in their contexts and shows how they are firmly related to worldwide structures of domination and forces of resistance of social struggles for democratic and egalitarian society. Moreover, it attacks

oppression and strives for social equality and seeks to attend to differences, and cultural diversity. A materialist approach, in this conceptualization, involves the analysis of the way stereotyped works, resistance on the part of stigmatized groups to dominant representations, and the struggle of these groups to represent themselves, to counter dominant and distorting representations, and to produce more positive ones. Finally, a cultural materialist method, to paraphrase Graeme Turner, is “a multi-perspective” readings approach that may not be particularly illuminating unless it adequately situates its text in its historical context. A text is constituted by its internal relations and its relations to its socio-historical situation and the more relations articulated in a critical reading, the better grasp of a text one may have. This approach must necessarily be historical and should read its texts in terms of its socio-historical context and may also choose to read history in the light of the text (Turner. 2003:99).

The whole corpus of my study is based on some models of social conflicts; consequently, as I have already asserted, to separate the political, social, and cultural contexts from the novels inevitably leads to a miscomprehension. In my view, then, the contextual, formalist, and deconstruction theories claiming that “the context should be kept in dock” cannot be applied alone with regard to my analyses of the literary works. The main argument for my preference lies in the fact that all writers neither elevate their literary works above the pains and the traumas of their societies nor conceive their novels outside their historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts. My emphasis will be put on the “intersection” between aesthetic function, utility, and politics. By function and utility, I mean the role of African writers as socio-political commentators, awakeners, or even teachers in their communities and beyond. What I am advancing here is an approach to the analysis of the texts, which rejects the conventional notion that there is a rigid dichotomy between “the world of the text” and “the real world”. I want to insist that the two worlds are intrinsically and dialectically linked. So, I attempt to avoid the pitfalls of both “art for art’s sake” notion of aesthetics and the purely materialist notion of function of literature alike. I go for what Walter Benjamin calls an opposition to the exclusive stress in bourgeois aesthetics, “art for art’s sake”, a position which is promoted by the theorist’s conviction that all works of art, no matter how exalted or sublime, are always simultaneously in

one way or another, some “faits sociaux” and their form is always in part conditioned by the level of the “forces of aesthetic” production”. The hallmark of authentic autonomous art, adds Benjamin, rests on its radical disavowal of the illusionism and aestheticism of the nineteenth century “Art pour art” and as its radical renunciation of the closed, organic work of art in favour of a completely fragmentary open-ended one, a “work in progress” concludes the critic (Benjamin [1936], cited in Wolin. 1994: 197).

3- Key Concepts and Method Analysis

a. Benjamin and Adorno’s “Dialectical Images”

At the outset, the idea of a ‘dialectical image’ appears, first and foremost, as one of the main constituents of Adorno’s dialectical theory that he calls “constellation of concepts”. It is displayed by “the motion character of language” by which he means a language as a model of dialectical thinking. For him, this aspect of language, “the double character”, is shared by all works of art, with no exception, for those which have language as their medium. The elements of language as morphemes and phonemes and the lexical items they constitute are not atoms of fixed meaning which are just added up to produce a sum total of meaning, but are variably meaningful only in their relation to the other morphemes or phonemes. In an analogous way, works of art organize elements which have no essential meaning in themselves into a meaningful relation (Jarvis.1998: 103)

Adorno criticizes the separation of art from science which has confined language to two equally functions: a system of signs and a language which is required to resign itself to calculation in order to know nature. As a correction, he appeals to the mimetic component of language, exactly to the aim of affinity between the concept and object. Adorno’s dialectic theory refuses the idea of language which cuts out its mimetic elements. Instead, he promotes mainly the slightest particulars of cultural objects to interpret the minute particulars with sufficient strength of mind and firmness to tell something about the whole world from which they emanate. As an illustration, the expression on the face, the type-face of a book, and the precise intonation of a violinist, according to Adorno, may be the smallest details, and so the easiest to miss while they

are for just this reasons not the least, but the most important matters. The best way to begin answering the big inquiries is with small details. Adorno explains that the meaning of a sentence depends not only upon which words it has in it but rather upon the order in which the words are placed; the meaning of a paragraph depends upon the order of the sentences in it. The meaning of a work, pursues Adorno, depends upon the arrangement of its chapters. The meaning of a life's work depends upon the relation of different works to each other. All works share a philosophical idiom which gives the work its internal coherence. If we lop the bits which look difficult or obsolete, it makes no sense (Ibid.P.2).

In practice, Adorno's sensibility to dialectical mediation is most clearly demonstrated in the studies of music to which he devotes a major portion of his intellectual energy throughout his life. For him, polyphonic music, the least representational of aesthetic modes, is perhaps best suited for the expression of the imageless "other". In addition to the complexities of its mediations, composer, performer, instrument technical reproduction make music a particularly rich field for the play of his dialectical imagination. Originating in the rhythms and rituals of everyday life, music has long since transcended its purely functional role. It is tied to material conditions and above them, responsive to changes in social realities and yet more than merely their reflection. Music, adds Adorno, contains social contradictions in its own structure, although its relation to social reality is problematical (Ibid. P. 180).

It is the common interpretive mode of empirically based social inquiry and the reflexive account of the social critic that reinforce the parallels between Adorno and Benjamin's dialectical theories. Both thinkers see an erosion of true experience as characteristic of modern life. Like Adorno, Benjamin rejects the purely aesthetic and contemplative attitude to art in favor of what is known as the "Denkbilt", a word which means thought-image and that can be defined as a concentrated description of experience, filtered through images where objects' description is their own philosophical commentary. To write *Denkbild* means insisting that what appears to the trivial mind as merely subjective and arbitrary is actually a manifestation of the objective. It is a way of decoding the imperceptible and the everyday. Fundamental to Benjamin's thought is the idea of montage, of juxtaposition, of sticking a motif next to another. Montage, for him, cannot be

disassociated from the act of rescuing, the efforts to recycle rubbish, detritus, scraps that appear to have no value. He deploys for the purpose of critical enlightenment what he calls “rags and refuse”. Benjamin’s method, Esther Leslie observes, involves less a rescue of tradition than the rescue of experiences, unacknowledged experiences under threat, and material on the point of disappearance (Leslie.2007: 63).

I shall engage with Adorno’s dialectical approach as an interpretive method to show the cultural relevance of all the selected novels that mingle Western literary forms with oral poetic techniques in their quest to be liberated from the linguistic, cultural, and political tyrannies of colonisation. The relevance of Adorno’s approach lies in its insistence that the artistic subject is in a sense social as well as individual. Works of art should be seen as cultural productions and political acts. They express objective social tendencies unintended by their creators as the artist’s alleged creative freedom is in some ways illusory. I shall pay particular attention to Adorno’s bearing upon the idea of “interpretation and reconciliation” which he develops in his unfinished and posthumously published *The Aesthetic Theory* (1970). In an attempt to organise and bring some clarity into this situation, I have distilled the aesthetic assumptions underpinning Adorno’s work into five closely interdependent principles which inform not only his choice of the subject matter but also his dialectical method and materialist approach. Taken as a whole, Adorno refutes the idea of “Art for art’s sake” and suggests that art responds to the loss of self-evidence not simply by concrete transformations of its procedures and comportments but by trying to free itself from its own concepts. The theorist reiterates that “art is determined by society, and yet it is free of society. He claims that a work of art is purposive in the sense that it is an intentionally constructed human artefact. Its purposelessness, however, rests on the fact that it does not wholly pursue the dominant purposes of Capitalism. In other terms, a work of art is not simply a commodity that exists for exchange and realisation of surplus-value. An art work, pursues Adorno, follows intrinsically artistic problems, such as representation of the organisation of the surface painting; the development of narrative; and the structuring of themes with a piece of music. Any given art, concludes the theorist, is a product of its age (Adorno [1970].Trans. Hullot-Kentor.1997:18).

Adorno regards art as socially critical and different from art viewed as absolutely “autotelic”. Rather, he interprets the autonomy of the work of art as a historical process which cannot be wished out of existence. The work of art knows the society which it lives off and on which it is irreducibly dependent, not only by giving us a picture of that society, but by assembling and organizing materials which are not themselves outside society and history but contain historical experience within themselves. The autonomy of art depends, however, on a heteronomous moment for its very possibility. As soon as art attempts to cut out this heteronomous moment, it also liquidates the conditions for its own autonomous, critical relation to the empirical world, and loses its character as art altogether to shrink to ornament and becomes a mere thing (Jarvis. 1998: 107, 123).

It is important to note that art, according to Adorno, is produced by and for the people themselves as an oppositional sphere to mainstream or hegemonic culture, which is often a colonial culture, or any other culture imposed from above. People produce and participate in cultural practices that articulate their experience and aspirations. The work of art’s detachment from empirical reality, insists the German theorist, is at the same time mediated by that reality. By opposing it, works of art obey its forces, which repulse the spiritual construction, as it were, throwing it back upon itself. There is no intent, no formal category of the literary work that does not however transform and unwarily derive from the empirical reality from which it has escaped. By pursuing its aesthetic concerns, art is pursuing the concerns of ordinary society albeit crucially stripped of the constraints of the dominant objectives of capitalism. An appropriate reading of a work of art can, potentially tell us more about society than can an empirical sociology, precisely because it exposes the inner tensions of society, not its reified appearance. For Adorno, understanding social facts is neither an art nor a science. The truths of art are too weak whereas the truths of science are too strong. In between, an alternative based on the logic of constructing constellations lies (Adorno [1970] Trans. Hullo- Kentor.1997:18).

b. Bakhtin's "Dialogism" and "Polyphony"

Parallel considerations apply to Bakhtin's notion of "dialogism" and "polyphony". In his essay entitled, "Discourse of the Novel", Mikhail Bakhtin states that language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's, it becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language, (it is after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own (Bakhtin. 1981: 293-94).

In the few lines cited in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Bakhtin reiterates that writing depends upon the abrogation of the contrasting power through the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages. He views the novel as a dialogic genre and as a form that contains within it a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. It exists in a constant process of change and renewal, and is contrasted with other fixed and literary forms. The novel absorbs into itself other less flexible forms which it parodies, travesties, and re accentuates (Andrew.Sedgwick. 2002:14).

Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism" is closely linked to Kristeva's notion of "intertextuality", which means that language is a neutral medium that the writer may use, without restriction, to express and communicate his ideas. Kristeva pursues Bakhtin's usage-oriented strategy of language description by infusing it with the central concept of intertextual memory. Her primary claim is that all new facts of language are grounded in the speakers' memory of previous experiences of using language. It is a "speech to speech" model: every new fact of speech is seen as emerging out of recalled fragments that are reiterated and manipulated at the same time. By the same token, the new meaning is always superscribed on something familiar and recognizable as its (more or less radical) adjustment. The model offers a way to describe the meaning of language as an open-ended process, the way the meaning of literary works is then foregrounded (T.Moi.1986:5, 10).

c. Bhabha's Notion of "Third Space"

The same notion of dialogism and mediation is also described by Bhabha. In his "Culture In-Between", he defines his concept of cultural and linguistic hybridity on the ground of Bakhtin's "Dialogism", and echoes Kristeva's notion of transposition. In his words, Bhabha describes the process as follows:

I have developed the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity. Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the 'authoritative', even authoritarian inscription of the cultural sign. At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge or a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an 'interstitial' agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism. Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in the whole.

(Bhabha [1986], quoted in Hall. Dugay. 1996: 58-59).

Bhabha's method helps focus on a variety of links between texts and experiences, at the same time, keeping the open trope of hybridity as a unifying element. It stresses the formative role of exchanges between participating entities and make possible the integration of material forces and discursive processes; it also allows to eschew the Eurocentric discourse as it offers more accurate picture of how a variety of material shape the texts. Bhabha's perspective is useful to my analysis of the way African writers link, in a dynamic way, traditional African forms and foreign ones deriving from imperialism to create their particular hybrid products. Acknowledging the multiplicity of the forms entails abandoning, in Edward Said's words, the "oversimplified Manichian identifications" (Said.1994:51).

Benjamin, Adorno, Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Bhabha, will remain the major point of my theoretical references as keynote cultural thinkers who inaugurated and still dominate

cultural materialist theory today. Starting with Walter Benjamin whose different works are regarded as a landmark work of cultural analysis and criticism, he regards literature as an important instrument in the struggle for political independence. For him, cultural self-definition and political self-determination are two sides of the same coin. He also insists that “The rigid, isolated novel is of no use whatsoever; it must be inserted into the context of living social relations” (Benjamin [1966] Trans, A. Bostock. 1998: 87).

The concept of dialogue and “third space” will be used to compare Achebe and Feraoun’s use of the coloniser’s language to affirm their identities. The two notions can be applied to the novels that come into being with the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective. Linguistic hybridity, as it will be demonstrated, is clearly one of the most significant and common features that link Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* to Feraoun’s *La terre et le sang*. In many ways, both Achebe and Feraoun use the French and English languages as raw materials to produce something new and different. The two writers share the “dilemma” of some African authors by “cause or accident of history” use, in their writings, the words and syntax which express the perception and characteristic modes of thinking of cultures which scorned their own. But, in spite of Achebe’s and Feraoun’s indebtedness to Western forms, models and use of foreign languages, both still strive to preserve and rehabilitate an African aesthetic. Their efforts to regenerate their own cultures is evidenced in their combination of various formal elements acquired from their Western-oriented schooling which they blend with their African oral forms like proverbs, myths, legends and folk tales. The two authors’ African subjects, rhythms, and attitudes made their novels distinctive and distinguished, as C.L. Innes phrases it, as alternative histories which both challenge colonial narratives and give voice to those whose stories were ignored or weighed down by European historians (Innes. 2007: 40).

Language as a discourse is closely linked to Benjamin's notion of "strategy" which he elaborated in his essay "The author As Producer" (1934) and which accords well with my analysis because three important aspects of this work are of particular interest. I shall draw upon the intellectual's social functions Benjamin proposed for understanding the role of the intellectual (writer) in crucial situations. So, I will be using Benjamin's essay in relation to the development of African writings that can be divided into three periods, knowing that the present thesis includes all of them. During the first phase, the African writer played the role of what Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha call "A collector and translator". He gathers the material provided by the culture of the occupying power, goes back to his own people's old legends which he interprets in the light of the borrowed aestheticism. In so doing, African writers, at that stage, wanted to show that their cultures were not destroyed. Though subdued, they survived all the storms, taking refuge in the minds of people who transmit them orally from one generation to another.

Benjamin, Fanon, and Bhabha's first function of the intellectual accords well with the generation of Achebe and Feraoun who wrote their literary works as a kind of political representation and their discourses were never mere reading strategies of isolated individuals but circulated and locked into a broader network of social relations which had profound consequences for how people lived in their world. They told their stories to correct the erroneous images of their African world which prevailed in the colonialist European literary texts that depicted Africa as a background for a description of jungle-safaris. Their objectives were to address problems that plagued their people on a daily basis. Since the political and economic problems Africans faced were tied to both their inner beings and the external forces that governed peoples' lives. It was imperative that their works addressed how people felt about themselves, their feelings, their inner struggles, in short their "états d'âmes". Their works deal with traditions, cultures, and the

conflict between the local and the imposed cultures. For them, the African traditions and beliefs should not be allowed to pass away, they must be renewed because they are still practical, and needed to be popularised and shared with the rest of the world. Achebe's and Feraoun's main objective in interweaving African traditional beliefs is a way that can help African local communities to reclaim some of the lost mechanisms of their cultures. The case will be made by means of specific examples and, for this demonstration, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which depicts the colonial encounter and its impacts on the Igbo community will be paralleled to Mouloud Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*.

d. Benjamin and Fanon's Concept of "Revolution"

The next function of the intellectual, always following the trajectory traced by Benjamin, Fanon, and Bhabha is linked to the political engagement to bring some changes in his/her society for the better. In discussing the dialectical relation between the correct political tendency and the quality of a literary work, Walter Benjamin claims that a writer should be operative rather informative. His mission is not to report but to fight, he should not assume the spectator's role but should intervene rapidly. The correct political tendency of a work includes its literary quality, concludes the German theorist (Benjamin [1966] Bostock.1998:101).

Benjamin's statement resembles and corresponds to the emergence of what is known, in the terms used by Frantz Fanon, as "La littérature de combat", as it shapes a national consciousness. It is characterised by the fact that its representatives do not content themselves with delving into the past of their people in order to find coherent elements which counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify their history and denigrate their culture. They rather work and fight with the same rhythm as their people to construct the future. For them, a national culture can in no way be reduced to folklore. These writers become the mouthpieces of a new reality in action in which they expose

distressing conditions through stinging condemnations. Most of the time, they denounce the oppressor with ethnic means, they address their own peoples with nationalist revolutionary themes and call on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. They also select some stories from oral tradition, epic songs of their people whose narratives recount struggles of heroes of earlier times.

Benjamin and Fanon's revolutionary commitment will be applied to my comparison of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Kateb Yacine, two African writers who saw that the persistence in following the forms of culture which are condemned to extinction is not enough. So, they turn themselves into "awakeners of people" whose main objectives are to shake their people's consciousnesses and urge them to revolt against the occupying powers. Their anxiety to join their peoples' struggle for independence resembles a kind of irrevocable taking up of arms on the people's side and leads them to shift their focus from pre-colonial life and base their interest mainly on describing in detail their peoples' struggles for independence. Ngugi and Kateb adopted a different strategy of legitimating, which was its claim to be true to life, to be "a history rather than a "story".

I consider the two authors' attempts to establish the details of the time and place of the creative writing they tell to refine their cultures. The tales themselves, in the case of *Nedjma* and *A Grain of Wheat*, do oscillate between truth and fiction, incorporating details of historical events. The way the two authors shape their narratives corresponds to Adorno and Benjamin when they reiterate that the development of literature is predetermined by some socio-political circumstances and the function of intellectuals, in this context, is dictated by the necessity of a politically revolutionary commitment in "setting the masses in motion". Their role consists of collecting the scattered fragments which litter the political landscape of cultural practice that can only be understood in the context of the work of cultural analysis as the re-constellation of its scattered elements.

The “glocality” of Kateb and Ngugi’s novels is expressed through the novelists’ blending of various fragments from their childhood experiences, their memories of the war, their influences by some master Western texts, and their African oral cultures to suit their political and artistic sensibilities. Both authors try to refine their cultures by constructing life histories from the fragments of knowledge that have come their way, and from the arduous struggle of their people. The history does not exactly depict the “facts” but it gives their narrative shape to fragments of experience that present themselves in quite heroic ways. Ngugi and Kateb modernise the struggle which the old heroic stories, evoke with the names of by-gone heroes and take up the old stories and remodel them by carving figures and faces which are put in their texts as a group of characters “typical” of the political and socio-cultural forces which characterised the periods in which their narratives were set.

e. African “Laughter”, Kristeva’s “Abjection”, and Miller’s “Disgust”

In the fourth part of my thesis, the focus turns from revolutionary form of the narratives to that of subversion and transgression with reference to the impact of African popular culture through the use of the trickster figure which will be linked to Benjamin’s notion of “Serious Laughter”, Kristeva’s “Abjection”, and Miller’s “Disgust”. All of these concepts are examples of opposition to the official discourse and hierarchy which occur particularly in Mimouni’s *Le fleuve détourné* and Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. First, the two narratives reflect directly many of Walter Benjamin as well as Fanon’s prophetic anxieties about the role of what they name ‘the degenerate bourgeoisie’. For instance, Benjamin’s intellectual position in the direction of the Weimar Republic’s intelligentsia “reduced to nothing but the role of consumers” is strikingly analogous to Fanon’s stance towards the African Black bourgeoisie which is “nationally post-colonial, but still ideologically and economically chained to the Western imperialist powers” (Fanon.1956:122). In my view, Armah and Mimouni’s novels echo Fanon’s criticism of the African Black Bourgeoisie whose sole interest is to safeguard and empower their

political positions. The task of the intellectual in this conjuncture, in the words of Benjamin, is to lift the mask of the bourgeoisie because an image of power is totally devoid of any political sense, unless it is to reveal how even the degraded bourgeoisie is unable to let go of certain ideals from its days of glory (Benjamin [1928], quoted in Winkler. 2004: 93).

Mimouni and Armah's novels illustrate the way reality and fictions merge. As avant-garde writers, through their literary works, both target the will and abuse of power and misgovernment. The two novels are reformist in tone and depict vividly the minority ruling class, Benjamin and Fanon referred to years earlier, by reflecting on the way it exploits their population and lure them with empty discourses. They portray all the infamy of the materialistic bourgeoisie which appears in the mind and behaviour of some of its representatives. Those people sing the struggle for independence with a nationalistic rhetoric. But behind the fight against the colonizers lies only personal interests. It is a class not only rotting away with corruption but it also encases itself in expensive western consumer goods while the ordinary people are crippled by shortages of foods, live under the soil of poverty, and corruption sucks their life and their blood.

In that order, it is possible to transpose Benjamin's analysis of the role of the intellectual a step further and link it to the African trickster's use of subterfuge and cunning as "strategies" against the abuse of power and oppressive authority. If for Benjamin, the cruel laughter of irony is necessary for the destruction of illusion, for Armah and Mimouni, it becomes a "trick" through which they represent a world which is a thinly disguised version of their own. Both overcome difficult personal, social, and political conditions through appropriation and reconstruction of resistance strategies akin to trickster figures such as Brer Rabbit, Bro Boar Hog, Djeha, Spider Ananse, Tortoise Mbe and other icons from African folklore. These tricksters from various cultures achieve freedom from alienating circumstances by using dexterous and creative resistance strategies and ideologies such as wits, kinship, communal support, verbal aptness, and courage which they use as necessary tools of rebellion against oppressors. The resistance tactics derive from traditional African folk tales where tricksters represent multiple functions and worldviews. The trickster figure is a symbol of indeterminacy and dons different personas. He is linked to a shared sense of moral righteousness, which leads him to become a force of retribution

that unsentimentally punishes the purveyors of greed and cruelty. He epitomises faith, goodness, and resistance against corruption and all kind of power abuses. (M'Bay.2009:73).

Further, I link the concept of “laughter” to Kristeva’s idea of “Abjection” and Ian Miller’s notion of “Disgust”; both theorists’ analyses will examine how “laughter, abject, and disgust” affect the two texts and use them as a means for exploring the relationship between laughter, satire and the ways in which each affects change in the two texts. All of these concepts are facets which form the body of the same word, namely “laughter”. In so doing, I seek particularly, through a comparison of the two fictions, to explain how and why the two novels are, satiric, ironic, and subversive by identifying the various abject, and disgusting elements in the two texts. In order to comprehend the multiple layers of techniques of laughter employed by Armah and Mimouni, I consider the novels as amalgamations of genres, voices, ideas, phantasms, and relationships. All these strategies attempt to account, in one way or another, for the dimension of the subjective experience of cultural forms and practices that in some way are resistant to official and powerful discourses. By focusing upon novelists’ discourse which produces laughter; I shall try to effect a transposition of African popular conception of laughter into the framework which makes it analytically powerful in the study of ideological repertoires of culture revision. When it is treated as an instance of a wider phenomenon of transgression, it moves beyond the folkloric approach to a political and operates far beyond the strict confines of popular festivity to become intrinsic of social classification.

It is perhaps worth recapitulating the points I have made so far. The structure of the foregoing chapter covered three successive steps which seem necessary for a comprehensive treatment of comparative poetics. In the first step, I dealt with the reasons which have motivated me to opt for comparative poetics. Then, I roughly sought to define and introduce the theory in its earliest formulations in the tradition of Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer, Benjamin, and Adorno have dealt with a sphere of cultural action that extends beyond the socially differentiated subsystems of the aesthetic or intellectual productions and include the realms of symbolic expressions and social interactions. With the Frankfurt School tradition of Social Theory, two distinct versions of interpretive social study emerge: that of the logic of constructing

constellations in Benjamin's image constructions and Adorno's interpretive philosophy and both oppose the sense of textuality and deconstruction alone. As a second step, I attempted to draw some similarities between the logic of constructing constellations in the social theory of the Frankfurt School and the emergence of a similar logic in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. All of them focus on the empirical elements and context dependent practices of social life rather than linguistic and textual constitution of those features and practices. Their works present a more materialist alternative to the logic of textuality and deconstruction. Finally, all of them attempt, from their own specific points of view, to consider already known facts in new perspectives and opened up innovative dimensions of cultural theory, providing stimuli for further ideas and innovations. The way I tried to do this is to form a kind of constellation of my own. In addition, I selected some of the concepts introduced earlier according to their relevance to our analysis and which help read these texts in constellation with one another adapting Benjamin's methodology and Bakhtin's dialogue as ways to illuminate the connections that I see developing between them. More significantly, my comparative study is based, as it is announced in the introduction, on six novelists who articulate the conflicts, fears, hopes, and dreams of individuals and groups confronting a turbulent and uncertain world. The concrete struggles of their societies are played out in the texts of these writers and resonate with other peoples' concerns and cultures. Consequently, to understand their meanings, I need a theoretical groundwork which relies on the dialectical relationship between a literary text and its political, social, historical, and cultural contexts.

Chapter Two

Historical Background of the Novels

Context of *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang*.

This section provides some historical guidelines to understand the synthesizing world view of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* which can be defined as the fusion of two distinct traditions to produce a new distinctive whole. Achebe's first novel and Feraoun's second one were written within the colonial situation and as such, in my view, they cannot be analyzed without an examination of the effect that context has on the way the texts are structured. The writers' responses to the consequences of the colonial encounter appear in their attempt to develop and refashion a credible response of people to history and experience. Achebe and Feraoun, as for many other African writers, writing became a means of constructing an identity which had been rubbed out by Western literary texts which equate knowledge, modernity and development with the West while they describe Africa from the perspective of the antithesis of positive qualities ascribed to the West. Western literatures, as Achebe points out, see in Africa the possibility or the opportunity to explore the darkness and the mystery of the unknown as well as a return to a primitive stage of civilization (Achebe.1977:02).

This narrowed view of Africa as a savage land devoid of civilization and as the 'Other' gave birth to the struggle over representation that emerge quite clearly within *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang* through which their authors sought to improve the images that the Western texts convey about their countries to lessen prejudices. Because their writings arose out of the desire to introduce an African perspective on the socio-political vision of Africa portrayed by colonialist literature, Achebe and Feraoun, then, construct some unique personal traits by incorporating African values into their literary works to correct the disfigurements and the misrepresentations of their respective societies. In so doing, they contribute to the re-fashioning of the collective voice that opposes the 'fixity' and the authority of colonial discourse.

In *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang*, both Achebe and Feraoun are also engaged in the process of uncovering a personal and collective past to redeem it from erasure. For instance, in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*, the author brings his childhood memories, accounts of

real events, dreams and impressions together in a text which, like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* explore a traditional society via the use of innovative language and narrative techniques in a self that has been overshadowed by the colonizer's educational system. Yet, Achebe and Feraoun's selected works cannot be analyzed as simple accounts of their communities' traditions and customs, but must be seen in the light of discourses circulating at that time. It is, then, important to describe the range of discursive practices brought into play in colonial text subjects, also describe the range of tactics which Achebe and Feraoun draw upon to create a balance between African and foreign values. As a starting point, Achebe and Feraoun reflect their immediate cultural environment in their response to specific cultural contexts. Their novels explain how the colonial situation caused severe confusions for African people through strategies of confrontation. But, before I deal with the similar ways in which Feraoun and Achebe inquire about the possibility of the African writer to relieve the burden of the past, to take inspiration from it, I first set out to establish a historical context in which to reinterpret what is suppressed in the colonial literature. To do this, I first consider how French and British colonization tried to erase African cultures in different ways, but having the same objectives.

If colonization is explicit in its complete domination and the total military control of Africa's vast geographical territories, it is also sustained by a series of concepts implicitly constructed in the spirits of the African peoples. The long years of colonization left behind bewilderment and confusion in Africans' minds. European colonizers, either in the North or the South of the Sahara, did not content themselves with holding African peoples in their grips but used all means to distort, disfigure and erase the history of these populations by erasing Africa's pre-colonial history. Colonizers employed many weapons to perpetuate violence not only by guns but also through religion and school, which brainwashed and encouraged forgetfulness in African people. In an essay entitled, "Colonialism and the Desiring Machine", Robert.J.C Young discusses the way European colonial practices were inscribed both physically and psychically in the territories and peoples subject to colonial control. He refers, for instance to "the violent physical and ideological procedures of colonization's deculturation and acculturation, by which the territory and cultural space of an indigenous society must be disrupted, dissolved and then re-inscribed according to the needs of the apparatus of the occupying power" (Young.1995:170).

The French school, for instance, served as an ultimate memory eraser. At that time, few Africans were then initiated to the colonizer's history and traditions while African cultures found themselves out of balance since these African "educated few", as new products of colonial education, were taught and encouraged to turn their backs on their traditional native cultures and values. These elites lived a kind of non-existence and void. Their identities had been stolen by the colonial educational system which eradicated the already existing religions, customs and languages. It is true that English domination stressed economic dependence only while the French emphasized cultural assimilation and unsuccessfully attempted to make Frenchmen of Algerians. However, French and English colonization shared some similarities throughout Africa in that they tried to make Africans reject their native cultures. In Algeria, for instance, the French assimilation policy tried to make French citizens of educated Algerians. The colonial imperative of producing Frenchmen out of Algerians presumed that Algerian cultures were of an atypical and obsolete tradition when compared to the assumed superiority of the imposed culture. In an article published in *Le Monde*, Jean Mouhoub Amrouche makes clear the French colonial efforts to assimilate Algerians after they subjected them to French laws and denied them the right of political citizenship. He describes the process in the following terms:

La société arabo-berbère et musulmane était, en effet, dans la perspective illusoire de l'assimilation ou de l'intégration, vouée à disparaître par un long et insensible processus d'absorption. Le rêve, l'alibi historique, le parfait achèvement de l'œuvre coloniale c'était cela: la métamorphose, homme après homme, famille après famille, de la société arabo-berbère et musulmane en société européenne et française.

(Le Monde. March, 30th, 1957).

[The Arab-Berber Muslim society was, in fact, illusory in view of assimilation or integration perspective, doomed to die through a long and insensible absorption process. The dream, the historical alibi, and the perfect completion of the colonial project was this: metamorphosis, man after man, family by family of the Arab-Berber society into European and French].

Great Britain did the same thing in its colonies, but in a different way. Unlike France, Great Britain did not erase or destroy the cultures of its colonies, but rather tried to implant in them a colonial superstructure that would allow the convenience of indirect rule, freezing the original indigenous culture by turning it into an object of academic analysis, while imposing the pattern of a new imperial culture (Young. 1995: 174). Though no official policy of assimilation was

declared, it must not be imagined that the indigenous culture of the people was left intact. What the official British policy left undone, the missionaries helped to complete by presenting the people's culture as heathen and wholly irreconcilable with their new "light". They frowned on everything original to the people; their names, dances, and customs. Oladele Taiwo quotes Achebe who maintains that:

When I was a schoolboy, it was unheard of to stage Nigerian dances at any of our celebrations. We were told and we believed that our dances were heathen. The Christian and proper thing was for boys to drill with wooden swords and the girls to perform, of all things, maypole dances. Beautiful clay bowls and pots were only seen in the homes of the heathen. We civilised Christians used cheap enamel wares from Europe and Japan; instead of water-pots we carried kerosene tins. In fact to say that a product was Ibo made was to brand it with the utmost inferiority. When a people have reached this point in their loss of faith in themselves, their detractors need do no more; they have made their point.

(Taiwo.1967: 50).

Not surprisingly, the colonial erasure of African cultural and personal identity urged nearly all African writers to admit a commitment to the restoration of their African values and to put an end to the negative stereotypes perpetuated by a system of education which encouraged all types of falsehood about their continent and their countrymen. In their efforts to finish with the jaded portrayal of their continent, as Ania Loomba observes, no [African] work of fiction written during that period, no matter how inward-looking, esoteric or apolitical it announces itself to be, can remain unaffected by colonial cadences"(Loomba. 2005: 73).

Many African writers became what Walter Benjamin referred to as "Strategists" in the literary struggle. Chinua Achebe and Mouloud Feraoun at their head use literature as a medium to help their societies to regain belief in themselves and put away the complexes of the years of vilifications and denigration which they had met during their pernicious learning in the colonial schools. Both are among the first African writers to openly confront the world or publicly go against "the colonial system". In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe reacts against Joyce Cary's superficial description of Africa, and Conrad's image projected in his novella, *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad, maintains Achebe, projects the image of Africa as "the other world", the antithesis of

Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality (Achebe.1977: 03).

As their British counterparts, the French writers such as Alphonse Daudet, Marcel Moussy, Louis Bertrand, and many others remain distant in their descriptions of the Algerian people. Most of their texts provide some 'clichés' and 'postcards' images of empty spaces open for conquest. As Achebe, Feraoun reacts to the French writers' external descriptions denying the representation of the Algerian society and its cultural norms. He refuses the racist discourse depicting his country as: "a dead and static Orient" which stands in opposition to Europe's "happy kinetics and lyrical dynamism" (Haddour.2000:14). Feraoun also objects to French resurrection of his country from backwardness as an "L'Orient de pacotille" and denounces the erasure of Algerian character in French literary texts. As an illustration, in his book *The Birthday* (1972), we can read:

If we are absent from the works of Camus, if Moussy's Algerians continually rub shoulders with us without ever actually seeing us, it is because it is neither Moussy nor Camus nor practically any of the others have managed to come close enough to get to know us sufficiently well.

(Feraoun [1972] Quoted in Corcoran. 2007: 39).

As a reaction to the erasure of his culture and the silencing of his countrymen, Feraoun sets himself the task of asserting that his culture is alive and does exist. His second novel stands witness to the past with its fairness, balance and internal harmony. All his literary works are anchored in the land of his ancestors and symbolize the rebellion and acculturation of the writer in search of its own cultural roots.

2. The Revolutionary Context of Kateb's *Nedjma* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and: Roots and Pathways of the Algerian and Kenyan Revolutions

In the course of the chapters which will compose the second part of my thesis, I base my comparison of Kateb's *Nedjma* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* on the way two novels are connected by a chain of moments, thoughts, and actions which occur at the local and global levels. I put more emphasis on some historical events such as the 8 May 1945 uprising and Mau Mau rebellion and the global causes that propelled the revolts. My insistence on the rebellions is

justified by their relevance, their importance, and their impacts on the writers. However, assuming that I deal with affinities, as the title of the thesis indicates, I examine the analogies rather than differences between the two revolutions in order to show how Kateb and Ngugi subject the artistic (aesthetic) dimension to ideological utility. Both are committed to presenting a version of history that is heterogeneous because they do not evoke an African pre-colonial world as a site of stable culture and identity as counterclaim to colonialist discourse, but stress their peoples' struggle against colonial power. Both have not only modified and challenged colonialist and colonial narratives, but also offered more complex histories of the colonial encounter than those offered in earlier novels by Feraoun and Achebe. Kateb and Ngugi destabilize the earlier paradigms by re-writing colonial modernity and African resistance from different perceptions. Unlike Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*, Kateb and Ngugi demarcate themselves from their predecessors by their shift from cultural preservation and celebration to center their interest on cultural refinement. In so doing, both of them base their interests on African heroic tradition as a protest, revolution, and part of their commitment to impel people into action to change their societies. For Kateb and Ngugi, the subjugation of Africans by Europeans is surely not based on their fears of African cultural integrity per se but was necessitated by the economic drives that formed the basis of the colonial thrust. They believe that colonisation started as economic exploitation and not as a cultural annihilation. The initial desire to colonise was rather based on a desire for material profits; only subsequently did the colonial forces develop arguments about the moral and cultural backwardness of the colonised and about the 'white man's burden' in order to rationalise and mask them with a benevolent theory (Jan Mohamed.1990:186).

The beginning of political awareness in Algeria, as Kateb writes in *Nedjma*, began in the 1920s with people who had gained access to French education, known as 'the educated few'. Algerian nationalism had its origins in the period following the First World War. The protest came primarily from the Algerian working class in France. The Algerian immigrants started to show their anger against the everyday racism expressed by French. The nationalist movement included a small and influential group of Algerians who earned their living in the industrialized

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

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

However, the first nationalists to call for independence were the members of the North African Star (Etoile Nord Africaine) members. Their claims were more proletarian and radical in orientation since they preached nationalism without nuance. The movement took an organizational form among the Algerian workers in France in 1926 under the leadership of Messali Hadj and was widely supported in Algeria as well. The Communist Party militants, who advocated the freedom of the press and schooling in Arabic, also joined the movement. In 1937, Messali turned from Communist ideology to a nationalist outlook and returned to Algeria to organize the urban and peasant masses. In the same year, he founded the Algerian People’s Party (PPA) (Ibid. P.13). Like Kenya, Algeria suffered from political restrictions and oppression because the colonial authorities refused any reform issued by integrationist or nationalist organizations. They dissolved the North African Star, in 1929 and arrested its leader, Messali Hadj, but his arrest did not stop the nationalist movement. The PPA gained widespread support until it was banned in 1939 (Ibid.19-21).

In *Nedjma*, Kateb refers also to 1942; the year corresponds to the date of Nedjma’s marriage with Kamal (P.67). With regard to Algerian nationalism, the date matched the alliance of some assimilationist Muslim leaders and Ferhat Abbas, with the French side. The nationalists were ready to join the Allies, during the Second World War, in freeing their homelands, but demanded the right to call a conference of Muslim representatives to develop political, economic

and social institutions for the Algerians “within an essentially French framework”. In the same year, Ferhat Abbas shifted from his assimilation tendency and full integration with France to self-determination. He drafted the Algerian Manifesto in 1943 to be presented to the Allies and to the French authorities. The political organization called for an agrarian reform, the recognition of Arabic as an official language on equal terms with French, the recognition of civil liberties and the liberation of political prisoners of all parties. As a response, the French administration instituted a reform in 1944, granting full citizenship to 60, 000 people, among whom were military officers, decorated veterans, university graduates, government officials and holders of the Légion d’Honneur (Harbi.1980: 26 - 27).

Algeria experienced almost the same turmoil as Kenya during the period following World War Two. The main historical event which forms the central theme on which Kateb’ *Nedjma* is based is undoubtedly the uprising of May 1945, which occurred nearly a decade before the beginning of the Algerian Liberation War. The author refers to the event repeatedly and gives a vivid picture of the rebellion. Kateb moves the narrative back in time and presents the events of 8 May 1945, making *Nedjma* a highly political novel that goes well beyond a mere evocation of adolescent experiences. Politics plays a great part in the texture of Mustapha’s adolescence world. To explain fully the social and political unrest, which prevailed in Algerian society from 1944 to 1945, Redouane Aïnat Tabet provides an analysis of the different crises experienced by the different layers of Algerian society. In his book entitled *Le 8 Mai 45 en Algérie* (1987) the author explains that the situation was fuelled in part by a poor wheat harvest, shortages of manufactured goods and a severe unemployment rate. At the political level, the Algerian nationalist claims, even for civic and political equality, were suppressed and repressed. The crisis penetrated every aspect of life and the signs of an approaching storm were all too apparent (A.Tabet.1987: 29).

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

systematic raking over the suspected centers of dissidence using military airplanes to repress the civil populations. During the week following the uprising, the French authorities continued the use of violence to squash the revolt and stop the emergent independence movement by issuing a series of repressive and harsh measures. The party of Les Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté (AML) was outlawed and 5,460 Algerians were arrested, including Ferhat Abbas, who deplored the use of violence from the two sides (Ibid. 85 - 86). The Setif uprising was an important step in the progress of Algerian nationalism. It is from it that discontent grew and increased the Algerians' anger at colonial oppression. In the aftermath of the Sétif unrest, Algerian nationalism witnessed many quarrels for leadership and efforts to unite all the political trends came to failure. Ferhat Abbas who gained the support of Messali Hadj in forming the Friends of the Manifesto and Liberty (AML) failed and the alliance of the Muslim leaders did not last long. In 1946, F. Abbas, who in 1934 had doubted the existence of the Algerian fatherland, wrote: "The Algerian personality, the Algerian fatherland which I couldn't find in 1934, I find them today". He founded the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA), abandoning the alliance with the (AML) and called for a free secular and republican Algeria, federated with France (S.N. Boudiaf and M. L. Maougal. 2004: 152).

In the same period, Messali Hadj formed the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, MTLD, committed to unequivocal independence and opposed Abbas's proposal of federation. The supporters of the party attempted to promote Messali's concept of independence contrarily to the advocates of moderate autonomy. The nationalist efforts to combine their forces were a failure (Harbi. 1980: 31). The disunion of the Algerian nationalists is represented in Kateb's *Nedjma* by the separation of the four characters at the end of the novel. Mildred Mortimer and Jean Dejeux have drawn a parallel between the leaders' disagreement and the characters' dispersion (Mortimer. 1990: 87).

Kateb's *Nedjma*, ends before the beginning of the Algerian Liberation War but its author gives prominence to collective action rather than to leadership and individual heroism: «plus de discours, plus de leader, de vieux fusils hoquetaient» (P.52). This can be linked to that period when the Algerian nationalists rejected any mere reform of existing structures and

institutions because they were convinced that these reforms could yield national unity and change. This conviction gave birth to a radical organization and to relentless struggle for independence. Members of the PPA, an outlawed party that continued to operate clandestinely, formed the radical group who created secret political cells throughout Algeria and paramilitary groups in Kabylia and the Constantine region. The emergence of the advocates of revolution began their work as a Secret Organization (OS) in 1947. They were obliged to carry out secretly military operations since political protest through legal channels was banned. The situation was fuelled by the rigged elections of 1948 for an Algerian Assembly that made it clear that the peaceful solution to Algerians' problems was not possible (Harbi.1998: 69).

Although the Algerian war started officially in 1954, the nationalists' attacks had started earlier. In 1950, the French police discovered that the robbery of the Oran post office had been the act of the Secret Organization (OS), led by Ben Bella. The group, whose opposition to French colonization became increasingly radical, began to prepare the revolution. It was known as the Revolutionary Committee of Unity and Action (CRUA). Nine nationalist leaders, known as the 'Historical Chiefs', namely; Hocine Ait Ahmed, Mohamed Boudiaf, Belkacem Krim, Rabah Bitat, Larbi Ben Mhidi, Mourad Didouche, Moustapha Ben Boulaid, Mohamed Khider and Ahmed Ben Bella, led the organization. In 1954, the Secret Organization became the National Liberation Front (FLN) and assumed the responsibility for the political direction of the Revolution that rested on the National Liberation Army (ALN), a military branch, which conducted the war for independence (Connelly.2002:25).

Folk heroic creation as an emergent process is one of the ways Ngugi outlines his people's struggle against the British colonizer. One of the first figures of nationalism in Kenya, cited repeatedly in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*, is Harry Thuku, a clerk in Government service who founded the Young Kikuyu Association in 1921. The members of Thuku organization demanded mainly African representation in the Legislative Council. They based their protest on some important issues, such as the Kipande card, the doubling of Hut and Poll taxes and the reduction of wages paid by settlers, mainly after the First World War (Ngugi, pp 2, 66, 218). But, as soon as Thuku tried to expand his organization to other parts of Kenya, he was sacked from his job,

arrested and deported to the remote northern frontier district (on the coast of Mombasa) in 1922. The British detained the leader, hoping that the organization would thereby collapse. But the arrest of Thuku did not prevent other political groups from spreading widely among the Kikuyu who saw the arrest of their leader as a direct attack against their economic and political interests. To show their discontent, they organized a general strike in Nairobi. The police fired upon the demonstrators and the strike ended with the massacre of some demonstrators. But repression did not stop the protest. Resistance continued against the low wages and the prohibition of coffee production by Africans (Davidson. 1978: 159).

Initially, the Kenyan nationalists were involved in organized political activities, but not in the struggle for independence. As in many other African countries, nationalism, in Kenya, began with western educated leaders who used new concepts such as political representation, reforms, self-determination and self-government. Some of them also used new organizations that transcended traditional society. The goals and the objectives of the new elite were to achieve independence within the framework of the colonies created by colonial powers. Moreover, the claims of the Kenyan politicians were not to overthrow the colonial regimes, but rather to require more extensive participation in decision-making and administration. Political considerations began to usurp the place of prominence formerly occupied by economic problems after the First World War. Hence, important political developments were taking place. The protest came first from people who suffered most from land grabbing. The “natives” who had participated in the First World War perpetuated the discontent. These people were aware that colonialism could be defeated through organized activities. To represent the tribes’ grievances, some political organizations started in the 1920s and the 1930s. A class of young Africans educated in colonial schools, as was the case in many African colonies, generally led the protest. This generation was promoted into the colonial and missionary institutions, but only up to a certain point. They were given a chance to get an education in the British and missionary institutions but they were excluded from political or economic participation. Consequently, they started to organize themselves in associations which opposed land alienation, compulsory labor, tax increases and wage cuts. (Maloba.1998:46).

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

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi also refers to the birth of the Kenyan Kikuyu Independent Schools (P.18), which Kenyatta and many teachers founded after they had left the mission. The Kenyan teachers established their own schools and freed them from the influence of the Church. Kenyatta, as a leader of these Independent School Associations, was fully involved in the growing political movement. He led the Kikuyu against the Christian Mission’s campaign to prohibit female circumcision and came to prominence as a secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association, the principal representative of the Kikuyu at that time. The organization formulated the people’s demands on cultural self-determination and claimed equal economic rights from the colonial authorities. They launched their own newspaper *Muigwithania*, edited by Kenyatta, and set up their own independent schools too (Kenyatta, p, 263).

After the Second World War, the large number of Kenyan former service men, who had fought for Britain, came back from Asia. They brought with them new political thoughts, the knowledge of nationalism as well as the skills of guerrilla warfare. Ngugi alludes, in *A Grain of Wheat*, to the thousands of Kenyan returning detainees and fighters

from military fronts who found that their lands were forfeited and redistributed to the loyalists (P.83). Deprived of their holdings, the former soldiers directed their efforts to the recovery of their land by forming associations such as the Kikuyu Provincial Association, the Kikuyu Land Board Association or Kenya Central Association. Whatever differences the Kikuyu had, the land issue was the one on which all of them agreed. The organised groups worked, prepared petitions, undertook court cases and lobbied not only the government but several commissions from Britain inquiring into the land issue. Their efforts were, however, fruitless (Maloba. P. 40).

In addition to the discontented former service men, the growing poverty led to the rise of new workers' unions which struggled for political rights in rural areas. The squatters were increasingly frustrated as the white settlers occupied most of their fertile land. Thus, the growing poverty and the politico economic exclusion led to anger and despair on the part of the poor who joined the urban proletariat in Nairobi and the radical wing of the unions there. The marginalized groups saw violence as the only path to get their independence. They first organised general strikes in Mombassa in 1947 and in Nairobi in 1950, as Ngugi points out in *A Grain of Wheat* (P.180). The demonstrations were followed by a ruthless repression and the recourse to counter-violence was inevitable. Apart from the economic problems, one of the main formative elements in shaping the rebellion was that Kenyans were not allowed to organise themselves politically. Because of the increasing agitation, all forms of protest were outlawed in Kenya and the KCA was suppressed and part of it went underground. The colonial government suppressed the KCA newspaper, and harassed the association by restricting greatly its activities and raiding its offices in search of evidence of subversive activity by the police. In 1952, the KCA was banned and its leaders jailed (Davidson.1978: 263).

The lack of any peaceful solution made it clear to Kenyans that an armed force maintained colonial rule. Consequently, they were convinced that the only way to dislodge it was through armed resistance. Hence, in the 1950s, Kenya lived in a climate of tension, and many factors favoured the formation of the revolution and the outburst of what was known as the Mau Mau rebellion (Ibid. 264). The Mau Mau revolt, as Ngugi reiterates in *A Grain of Wheat*, began in the 1950s and found its roots in the Gikuyu tribes, which were mostly hurt by land confiscation. It was an uprising of peasants against colonial domination, its policies, and its agents. The peasants began to “take the oath”, leaving their homes and families for the direction of the forest, raiding and killing British settlers, mutilating their cattle and burning their farms. The acts were intended to instil fear into the settlers so that they would leave the country, and the Gikuyu regain their lost lands. The Mau Mau survived as a secret society and became a fighting force, as its members were able to get supplies and help from many sources (P.85). From the beginning of the revolt, the British refused to see any legitimate reasons for the uprising. The Mau Mau fighters were called bloodthirsty savages and all means were used to demean the movement. The settlers and the colonial government, for instance, portrayed the rebellion as: “The welling up of the old unreconstructed Africa, which had not yet received colonial enlightenment and discipline, the insurgents proved that colonialism still had a job to do” (Slaughter. 1991: 3).

The examination of the background and the context in which Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb’s *Nedjma* were written, lead us to reach certain conclusions. First, by putting emphasis on the main historical events referred to in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma*, we have noticed that both writers give a great importance to the past and trace the nationalist movements for independence from their very beginnings to the outburst of the revolts. Second, we have established the common way in which the Kenyan and the Algerian peoples had lost their lands and how they had been subjected to compulsory work for the British and French settlers for low

wages. We have shown also how the situation of the ‘natives’, in both countries, worsened during and after the First World War because of the various restrictive measures and taxes. In the two countries, the unbearable conditions were the formative circumstances that gave birth to protests, the emergence of nationalist ideas, and the outburst of rebellions. The Algerian and the Kenyan political awareness evolved in comparable ways; assimilation, rise of nationalism, and war for liberation. The Algerian and the Kenyan nationalists followed similar revolutionary path, hoped for similar victories and had to pay, to a certain extent, the same price for independence. The search for the origins of two revolutions depicted in Ngugi and Kateb’s novels has taken us back to the historical circumstances, not in their totality, far from it, but to the extent that they sparked the two novels. We have reached the conclusion that Kenya and Algeria shared oppression and social degradation in colonial hands. The convergence of social, economic, and cultural frustrations, along with the renewed sense of political possibility were fertile grounds for the two revolutions. Indeed, Ngugi and Kateb’s novels can be explained as works which spring from the Mau Mau and 8 May revolutions including the political and economic conditions which produced them. The question which imposes itself is how the commonality of colonial experience shape these selected novels and how the revolutions play out in Kateb and Ngugi’s novels. The reply will be the concern of the third part.

3. Backgrounds of Armah and Mimouni’s Novels

Not long after the end of the Western colonisation of Africa in the late 1950s, several if not all the African nations experienced forms of authoritarianism perpetuated by post-independence leaders who failed to establish credible institutions to insure justice and equitable use of national resources. Africa became an arena for coups, counter coups; and civil wars. Achille Mbembe’s *In the Postcolony* (2001) provides good insights into the various dramas of power, authority and resistance. Some of his formulations are useful to understand the concept of “the banality of power” in the post-colonial African countries (Mbembe.2001:15). Correspondingly, after the end of the colonial period, African literature witnessed a shift mainly in terms of the themes explored. The formal

end of colonialism has engraved a remarkable new character on the thematic concerns of the African writers. Nonetheless, the advent of independences did not only alter African writers' perspectives of engagement but also made their works increasingly committed. Their commitment was directed against what Ngugi and Wole Soyinka call respectively the "neo-colonial compradors" and "Black Oyinbos", a minority of the privileged elites that hastened to benefit from the material commodities in their quest for the masters' recognition. The writers' commitment is perceptible in their anatomising of the troubled events of their countries.

It is on the basis of the foregoing background that, in the course of the last part, I intend to demonstrate that the post-colonial condition has determined a strong dystopian current that has found its most powerful expression in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Rachid Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* (1982). Both authors have been profoundly affected by Africa's post independence political situation and their novels formalize the necessity for critical assessments of their time by making their texts both moral and political fables about post-colonial Ghana and Algeria. I propose to examine and substantiate the above arguments through a comparison of Mimouni and Armah's novels as fine examples of their authors' narrative style, political and social concerns in describing vividly the escalating socio-temporal dislocations and the various contradictions which shaped the post-independence period in Africa. Both authors engage with "local" and "global" matters through the use of a number of specific discourses which can be seen as an example of what Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia" in that their texts embrace a series of overlapping codes and discourses. The interaction between the various discourses, do not only position both novels amid the genre of "glocal literature", but also takes up the function of the African writer as a "Maneuverer" a step further. The argument I sustain and which I will try make clear is, as it was the case in the

previous chapters, that the two novels are mainly shaped by their historical context and reflect the reality from which they emerge and their authors have no other choice than to engage in the “literary struggle” to match their artistic and political sensibilities.

Algeria and Ghana, described allegorically by both authors were crippled by political turmoil, their economies disintegrated, hyper inflations triggered food shortages, basic necessities became in short supply, and human rights abuses became widespread. Therefore, Armah and Mimouni, like “intellectual tricksters”, show their profound disenchantment with their post independence societies through their move from the corrective stance of colonial misrepresentations to more domestic issues. They take a nonconformist stand against the anti-national, anti-democratic, and neo-colonial character of Ghanaian and Algerian ruling regimes and connect the ills not just to the moral failings of this or that ruler, but also to the perpetuation of imperialist domination in their countries, in Africa, and in the world at large.

The general period that is of most concern extends approximately from the late 1960s to the 1980s when Ghana and Algeria exhibited significant similarities in the basic framework of politics in their post-independence periods. By 1960s, the great majority of African nations that started out at independence with one form of democratic governance or another had come under full blown military dictatorship including other variants of authoritarian rule. For instance, Ghana succumbed to invariably bloody military interventions and Armah insists that there had been a colossal failure of political leaders, while Algeria lapsed into a one-party political system with an authoritarian military rule. The two novels as a whole reveal the contemporary conditions of Algeria and Ghana, and parallel that of many independent African countries, where independence has propelled a new set of masters, African this time, into seats the colonial authorities used to occupy. These new masters acquired the same status symbols and behaved with the same

arrogance and aloofness as the old colonizers. I argue, therefore, that the two novels can be reminders recalling the warnings of Frantz Fanon that independence itself would not automatically solve all of Africa's social and political problems. The issue of decadence that dominates Armah and Mimouni's novels is particularly relevant to Fanon's caution about the depravity of the postcolonial African bourgeoisie discussed in his essay "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", which remains one of the most illuminating commentaries on the first phase of the post-colonial era in Africa. Fanon proved more clairvoyant in his emphasis on the fact that he warns against the potential disaster in post-colonial African nations if they only replace the ruling European colonial bourgeoisie by an indigenous African one, while leaving the basic class structure of the societies still in place. The African Black elites, reiterates the theorist, are mere imitators of their Western masters, who themselves had already become decadent by the time of their full-scale colonization of Africa in the late 19th century. The African bourgeoisie follows the Western one along its path of decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention (Fanon. 1967:122-124).

Armah's *The Beautiful One Are Not Yet Born* is tied to the crucial events and the society that produced it. The independence of Ghana was accompanied by much optimism and the liberated Ghanaians dreamt of a utopian society based on unity, liberty and equal share of the national resources. Early in his career, Nkrumah had been the quintessential symbol of African revolutionary movement alongside prominent figures such as Sékou Touré, Jomo Kenyatta, and others. As president of Ghana, however, he became the embodiment of dictatorship and his contradictory image as both the hero and the tyrant, to borrow Alex Thomson's terms, has demonstrated that almost immediately upon taking power, Nkrumah did not only confine the protection of its political channels, he also restricted opposition emanating from civil society. For instance, he used

parliamentary majority to outlaw “the tribal based organisations by introducing in 1957 **The Avoidance of Discrimination** Act. A year later, the **Preventive Detention Act** followed giving absolute power to the new elected president to detain all political dissidents. Nkrumah then began eliminating everyone suspected of plotting against his regime and his party (Thomson.2000:112).

While Nkrumah was busy reinforcing his political channels, at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s, his country remained plagued by violence and political chaos. Armah came to a clear and profound understanding that independence had brought little improvement to his society. Therefore, disillusion caused by ‘the stolen hopes’ and the ‘betrayal of the revolution’ inspired the novelist to tone down his enthusiastic trust in the ideals of freedom, equality, and happiness theorised by the Ghanaian nationalist leaders. It was in the atmosphere of disillusion following his country’s independence in the 1960s that Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* was written. The author sought to denounce the rampant corruption, the social injustice, will to and abuse of power, which threatened to annihilate all hope of individual existence and freedom.

The story circles around a specific time in the history of post independence Ghana. Though Armah does not give dates, it is clear that from the first to the twelfth chapter, the events take place in Nkrumah’s reign in the mid 1960s. The story happens between 1965 and February 25, 1966, the day after the overthrow of Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president. Armah’s anonymous main character, the man, oversees his country’s underdevelopment and coordinates the trains whose cars are filled with raw materials being transported from Takoradi to the port. The narrative describes the failure of a supposedly socialist government, which is, in fact, as capitalist as the white colonial regime it has replaced. After independence in 1957, the colonial powers blocked African industrial development, and Ghana was no exception because it was left without an industry to develop its raw

materials and had no choice but to remain a perpetual market for European refined products. Ahmad. A. Rahman observes that the economic structures of British colonialism systematically removed natural resources such as cocoa from Ghana and never built a factory for making chocolate. When the British withdrew, they left an infrastructure that made it easy to send raw materials to the coast but difficult to make anything with it. Therefore, the retarded growth of its manufacturing and industry left Ghana dependent on a single cash crop for its national income and dependent on factors totally outside its control. The foreign chocolate markets in the United States Of America and Europe set prices that led the Ghanaian president to make compromises (Rahman. 2007: 184).

Meanwhile, by the mid 1960s, economic stagnation, official corruption, and political strife tarnished the image of Nkrumah's regime who in the euphoric atmosphere of 1952 to 1957 had made promises to his people stating: "We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people, by the number of children in school, and by the quality of their education, by the availability of water and electricity in our towns and villages, by the happiness which our people take in being able to manage their own affairs" (Asenssohs. 2001:35). Yet, for several years, the Ghanaian population kept on waiting for these developments in vain. The leader and his officials, who seemed full of promise for the masses, were seen as serving only their personal interests and that of other bureaucrats who made bribery and corruption ubiquitous. The new black leaders with white souls, according to Jean Marie Allman, had used their positions of power for personal gain. The corruption reached all levels of society creating economic relationships based on pressure, bribery, and fraud (Allman.1993:125).

Throughout *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah depicts a monotonous society and reports it through the eyes of an ordinary man who fails professionally

because he has been too acquiescent and unable to participate in the bribery game. He also fails to provide a comfortable life for his wife and children. Throughout the narrative, he remains disgusted by what is essential to get rich in Ghana: participation in the bribery and corruption that accompany almost every transaction. To keep his integrity, he refuses to submit to fraud and corruption, but his decision hurts his family which does not feel proud of his honesty. The only heroes in the society are the ones who manage to put aside all the virtues of moral or emotional values. For the man, the Ghanaian political leaders are not different from the old African chiefs who sold their people into the slave trade for the charms of white society and are proud of the fruit of their trade (P.131). In the sixth chapter, the Teacher provides an impressionistic account of the violence and poverty of the final years of the colonial regime. He condemns the “old lawyers” and “yessir men” who first struggled for independence, claiming they were so infatuated with European ways that they failed to understand that this cultural worship merely ensured their continuing powerlessness (P.82). These pathetic creatures are briefly contrasted to Nkrumah who spoke the language of people and did not base his authority on his relationship with the British. But Nkrumah, who realized power by refusing to mimic those from whom he took power, appears no different from the British or their African Yessir men. The voice of the Teacher reiterates: “He was good when he had to speak to us, and liked to be with us. When that ended, everything was gone” (P.88). As the years passed, the party that unified Ghana began to separate itself from the nation. Nkrumah’s regime became authoritarian and the Convention People’s Party, CPP became less concerned with promoting Ghana’s general interests than with enriching and empowering its own members. The CPP turned into a parasite on society, little better than the British, except that now Africans were exploiting their brothers. To make matters worse, economic failure and growing dissent led Nkrumah to sponsor repressive

measures, to cement his hold on power by outlawing opposition parties in 1964. As the Teacher notes, the bitterest part of his failure was that it represented a complete reversal of Nkrumah's original principles. Ghana was not only oppressed, it was also betrayed, and the traitor was the very man who had promised to end oppression. Yet, although the novel paints the Nkrumah regime as corrupt, Armah is very careful for not to celebrate the new rulers. Some narrative instances insist on the hypocrisy of those who participated in the overthrow and describe the same vices repeated by the new rulers (P.158). Armah's novel, then, as Joyce Moss and Lorraine Valestuk assess, portrays both the euphoria of independence and the disillusionment that followed in Ghana. It was a sobering period, in which the early promise of freedom gave way to economic malaise, political corruption, and continued financial dependence on Europe. Nkrumah's regime had overseen the creation of a national political culture marked by hypocrisy, greed, and naked self-interests. The slogans the leaders mouthed were used to mask the real business of stealing and squandering the wealth of the nation. The names change while their destructive and corrupt methods remain integral (Moss.Valestuk. 2000:13).

Like Armah, Mimouni's shift from the description of the Algerian people's struggle for independence to a critique of the post-colonial Algerian ruling leaders emerges from his disillusionment *vis à vis* the political situation which followed Algeria's independence. The author employs a sweeping historical scope that allows him to indict the Algerian ruling leaders. As Denise Brahimi truly notes, « Mimouni évoque avec beaucoup de force dans ces romans le délabrement de l'Etat algérien, le caractère dictatorial du régime politique et l'oubli complet des idéaux qui animent la génération de l'indépendance » [Mimouni evokes with great force through his novels the state of disrepair in Algeria, the dictatorial nature of the political regime, and the complete neglect of the ideals that impel the generation of independence] (Brahimi. 2001: 36).

Denise Brahimi is right because by the time he wrote *Le fleuve détourné*, nearly similar political and socio-economic conditions as in Ghana took place in Algeria. When independence was

gained in 1962, people found themselves face to face with governments who ruled arbitrarily. Although Algeria was rich in oil, and other natural resources, only a tiny upper class, known as “La bourgeoisie d’Etat”, was able to profit from the revenues of these natural resources. The governmental officials lived in extraordinary luxury which was in stark contrast with the circumstances of average Algerians (Yefsah.1982:149). For most of the population, life was shaped by food crises, low salaries and poverty. Meanwhile, Algeria continued to be dependent economically since little was done in the way of diversifying its major industries. When it came to supporting the needs of its population, the Algerian new administrative class was perceived as being greatly interested in supporting its own needs and those of its European collaborators (Lowi. 2009:85).

It is that period of the Algerian history Mimouni describes vividly to expose the paradoxes and disillusionment of Algerian independence. His *Le fleuve détourné* can be read as a comic farce and a harsh satire that daringly strikes out against the officials and their cohorts. It is a novel in which he takes a critical and accusing look at his country that is plagued by corruption, exploitation, injustice and political manipulation. Its narrative offers a bleak picture and is conceived as a commentary on the contemporary aberrations of the political scene in Algeria as it also has a suggestive relevance to other African and world dictatorships. The novel contains the most salient experiences and deeply felt concerns of ordinary men and examines the paradoxes, which characterized the Algerian society emerging from a history of the French colonization.

Like Armah, Mimouni thinks that independence neither changed anything in the daily lives of people nor relieved their suffering since they still suffer from a degrading status and political contempt. Though a specific timeframe is not indicated, the reader can understand that the story recounts the period of Boumediene’s presidency (1965-1978) and describes a population which came out of the dependence and insecurity of colonialism to find itself engulfed in other horrors and other enslavements. The novel is primarily a description of the chronic unhappiness and a magnificent meditation on the social, economic and intellectual crisis that Algeria passed through. Similar to Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the heavy burden of the post-

colonial moment provides the background framework of experience to which Mimouni's third novel testifies. Its narrative centers on the decadence of post independence Algeria and emerges from a closely similar context as that of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* because an analogous scenario, as in post independent Ghana, more or less repeated itself in Algeria.

Le fleuve détourné covers the period from the 1960s to late the 1980s when the participation of people in the anti-colonial struggle raised hopes that they would gain legal rights, improve their economic conditions and live in social justice. These hopes went unfulfilled. Instead, division within the political leadership resulted in several economic projects such as the agrarian and industrial revolutions to equip Algeria with a national unified economy aborted. It was a time when the national state was in the making and when contests over state power, known as the "Wilayisme", to paraphrase Abdelkader Yefash, generated conflicts and alliances among potential contenders. Mimouni refers mainly to the promises made by political leaders in the euphoria of independence that were unfulfilled and people's interests become caught up in disagreements among conflicting tendencies and in struggles among forces competing for power (Mimouni, pp,12,14). Politics in that period reflected the social forces that previously united to overturn colonialism, but then tended to become torn by rivalry in the pursuit of power in the newly independent state. Most of the political leaders were preoccupied by their personal situations; they spoke about good principles only to confiscate power. Their terms were used to describe the regime's ideology, an ideology to which all sectors of society and individuals must submit (Yefsah.1982: 62).

The context and the period in which *Le fleuve détourné* was written is linked to, and closely reflects the contradictions as well as the evolution of Algerian society during the reign of president Boumediene who ruled with an iron fist during the whole of mandate under a one-party system. As a former military leader, he came close to perfecting a kind of authoritarianism that had started during Ben Bella's short regime. Under Boumediene's leadership, the institutions of the state were supported by the military and security services, with the aid of a compliant bureaucracy, which struck an

implicit bargain with the population. Politically, since the country's independence in 1962, the National Liberation Front (FLN), a military and political structure conceived and born during the anti-French resistance and National Liberation War (1954-62), had been determining all aspects of the economy, education, political organizations, and state institutions. The post-colonial regime was managed by the FLN Party but, in fact, it was largely controlled by the army. The Algerian ideology was based, on the one hand, on a combination of state capitalism and nationalist discourse. On the other hand, it was centred on a synthesis of socialist ideals and Arab-Muslim principles. The economy was ruled centrally and the state institutions and administrative structures supervised by an omnipotent bureaucracy, depended totally on the authority of the government. The various structures were closely linked to it either openly or indirectly (Soukhal.1999:59). The state provided security, order, welfare, education and jobs in return for a political passivity. Nationalism tinged with features of cultural authenticity (Islam and Arabism) were the main ideological reference point, while legitimacy would be claimed in the name of the revolution and the memory of million and half martyrs who died fighting for independence. From the 1970s onward, the model was complemented by the availability of substantial oil and gas revenues that were redistributed in the form of financial assistance for food, housing, and education. The state controlled industries that would be kept afloat regardless of their profitability. Therefore, patronage, clientelism, and bossism became the major features of governance. Algeria enjoyed stability, restricted freedom while its economy grew steadily thanks to the rising prices of oil (Quandt.1998:24).

The above conditions appear in the opening pages of Mimouni's novel, mainly in the discourse of the Administrator. The speech with which the narrative opens summarises many aspects of the prevailing limited and undermined social, economic and political circumstances in which Algerian citizens found themselves in the post

independence period. The Administrator announces boastfully and with fanfare that his anti-capitalist regime has taken several safety measures to assure people's happiness, to end depravity, and solve all the other problems. He pretends that he is responsible for the defence of the people against any external threat and for the reinforcement of the ability of the government to exert its influence and act with confidence in the exercise of its policy (P.14). Yet, from his elocution, one understands that he is unprepared to shoulder the leadership affairs of his nation. The Administrator's incompetence has its teething problems in the fact that the Algerian Liberation War left the newly sovereign state with virtually no administrators. The French ones had departed en masse and most of the local leaders were Algerian notables who had been appointed by the colonial authorities to create and staff a new administration. The war experience had offered little preparation for the challenge. To dress up the undemocratic measures in democratic clothing, the Administrator reiterates that the adopted measures stand for the state's ideology that talked about "the people" as the people spoke with a single voice. From the Administrator's discourse, we understand that the state governs in the name of people, who were portrayed as having a unitary nature and a common set of interests. Anyone who does not agree with the regime's interpretation of popular will is a potential traitor. The administrator's discourse can in no way be questioned since it is acting on the behalf of the people (P.15). The speech, in fact, is a reflection of the state and the FLN party's monolithic and dogmatic discourse on national liberation, social justice, and equality that was combined with a Soviet-style approach to industrialisation.

To understand such a discourse and many of Mimouni's numerous historical allusions, we need to refer to William.B.Quandt who discusses in his book entitled *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition From Authoritarianism* (1998) how in the years following independence, the achievement of national sovereignty brought about

conflicts of an ideological nature over access to power and over policies. The nationalist struggle culminated with the formation of a national state characterised by extensive factionalism. Cleavages developed mainly on the basis of regional differences and sharp splits among political groups with different social bases for power and with a tendency to engage intermittently in open conflicts. Kept in check during the anti colonial struggle, the factionalism among the nationalist leadership erupted into violent conflicts after independence and the newly formed national state had little choice but to accommodate itself with the new factions vying for power until Boumediene's coup d'état of 1965 that ousted Ben Bella from power. (Quandt.1998:22).

From the moment of his accession to power, Boumediene, who appears implicitly in Mimouni's novel as: "L'homme d'acier qui ne voulait autour de lui que des hommes dont la main ne tremble pas" [The man of steel who wanted around him men whose hand does not tremble] (P.165), had no popular base and depended entirely on the military officers. With their help and loyalty, he set out to modify the nature of the political system without a new legitimacy. He, for instance, cancelled the 1963 Constitution and replaced it by a new structure called a Council of the Revolution under his supreme authority that would exercise ultimate power until the new institutions were established. He then subverted the democratic norms in taking very manipulative and repressive steps to perpetuate his power in political office without the requisite electoral process, without leadership term limits since he remained in power until his death in 1978. Like Nkrumah and many other African leaders, Boumediene was unchallenged, unfettered, and ruled with unlimited autocracy, because under his rule, there was no countervailing power from people or from the constitutionally created national legislature and judicial institutions which could provide the checks and balances to the executive branch and mutually between each other. After leading a successful coup to unseat the first president, Ahmed

Ben Bella, Boumediene, referred to in Mimouni's novel as "L'homme au regard severe"[The man with a severe eye](P.58), promised to hand power over to democratically govern his country. His promises to his people were to ensure high levels of investments, to prevent excessive private wealth, maintain an egalitarian ethos, and make the country become self-sufficient by producing what it had formerly imported. These promises are echoed in the Administrator's discourse which reiterates:

Vous pouvez ainsi constater que la sollicitude des autorités à votre égard n'est pas un vain mot, nous tiendrons toutes nos promesses. Bientôt, vous verrez partout surgir des villes nouvelles, et toutes vos villas seront équipées de ce même type de lavabo, dernier cri de la technologie moderne" (P.30).

[You can thus see that the authorities' concern for you is not an empty word, we keep our promises. Soon, you will see emerge around you new cities, and all your houses will be equipped with this same type of sink, the most fashionable in modern technology].

Concretely, however, at the economic level, Boumediene saw the Soviet model of socialism as a successful model of industrialization. Socialism was defined as the state's basic orientation and underscored his anti-capitalist nature by taking several measures. These included the fact that Algeria nationalized the French oil companies that operated in the Algerian territory. The president wanted the state to control the economy from the top down relying on the state monopoly of oil rents to provide capital for new industries. By controlling the investments from the centre, scarce funds could be directed to sectors of high value. The allocation of foreign exchange would presumably be rationalized, insuring funds on imported luxuries. However, the distinction between the ideological appearance and the social and economic reality, finds subtle expression in the following passage that overtly incorporates some relevant sets of strategies for understanding the political, social, and economic world depicted in *Le fleuve détourné*.

The fall in oil and natural gas in the case of Algeria, has laid bare the deep dysfunction and failure of a system based on a command economy on the Soviet model of industrialization and prestige, but totally unsuited to its environment. The gradual disappearance of rents from oil, after the crazy years that followed the boom in prices during the 1973 crisis, has left many people in a welfare mentality. Moreover, the crisis in its economic aspect is

a structural and chronic, which eventually exasperated the population, giving rise to a vicious circle of questions of identity, challenge and violence of civil war since the late eighties.

(Lowi.2009:83).

The passage provides an especially thoughtful and measured analysis of the question, one which explains the roots of the period's decadence. The model of "import-substituting industries" produced distortions and inefficiencies of its own, opened the way for corruption, reduced incentives to innovate and to work. In addition, the agriculture sector was managed with careless disregard for the interests of Algerian peasants. Miriam. R. Lowi makes another revealing comment by suggesting that the peasantry, constituting seventy percent of the population, never really benefited from the redistribution of colonial land. The lands became collective and agricultural production crashed because prices were controlled and too low to sustain their output (Ibid: 85). The same measures led to an increasing rural exodus and the overcrowding of cities with spreading slums (Mimouni.P.115).

However, the pervasive sense of the novel's vision of sterility and decay extends from the stagnant, unproductive economy to the consciousness of the new ruling leaders whose narrow self-serving interests have made them incapable of creating a social policy that might eliminate the prevailing conditions of poverty, deprivation and misery that are the parcel of colonial inheritance. Mimouni describes metaphorically Algeria engulfed in multifarious socio-economic problems. The main problem remains the scarcity of food, shortage of certain commodities, and very low salaries. All the people's privations are voiced by Vingt Cinq, one of Mimouni's characters in a denunciating tone:

Comment leur dire notre difficulté de vivre avec un misérable salaire, quand tout se vend au marché noir, du lait des nourrissons aux cahiers d'élèves? Notre désarroi de voir en même temps de colossales fortunes se bâtir à l'ombre des lois socialistes (P.137).

[How to tell them our difficulty to live with a miserable salary when everything is sold on the black market from the baby milk to school books? Our disarray, at the same time, is to see huge fortunes built in the shade of the socialist laws]

The passage illustrates the character's distress and indicates that contrary to their expectations, Algerian people felt neglected by the state as the political leaders leaned heavily on a rural base

consisting of an impoverished rural petty bourgeoisie made up of local notables oriented towards their own interests and areas. The case of the Administrator, his Chief, and Si Mokhtar, Ahmed's father are the best illustrations.

The second tool for the Algerian authoritarian regime was the appeal to repression. Numerous cases of repressions, use of coercion, and violence to some degree to maintain authority are reflected in Mimouni's novel. For instance, the Administrator warns verbally that any kind of opposition is not tolerated and his administration will not hesitate to use "revolutionary violence" to eliminate all the opponents (P.17) and that demonstration and gatherings in public places are forbidden (P.50). Yet, he keeps pointing out that these repressive measures are only safety measures taken for genuine security reasons against Western threats (P.51). Repression in the novel appears through the use of power in arbitrary ways. The best example to illustrate the point is the way the man is repressed by the police to prevent him from entering his Douar (P.43). The scene can be added to the one describing Said, the shoemaker beaten by the police for willing to gain his living honestly in repairing the shoes of passers-by in a corner of the street (P.111). All the scenes indicate that no one is secure and no honest citizen is protected by the law. All the repressive actions stand as symptom of the ruling leaders' decadence, contempt, and cruelty. The same violent actions are used by the author as effective transgression and a subversive offence against the ruling class. The discourse of the Administrator can be directly linked to Boumediene's rule that is commonly known as a "carrot-stick" policy which aimed to weaken potential rivals who found support in local and regional solidarities that played a critical role during the liberation war by either eliminating the guerrilla forces or co-opting their leaders within the ranks in the army and government institutions. Such a policy appears clearly in the Administrator's ambivalent strategy towards his interlocutors in combining tolerance, special favors, elimination and direct attacks (P.15). The same scheme was adopted by Colonel Boumediene in 1965. His military coup, as Mounira Charrad points out, did not only strengthen his power, but also gave him the opportunity to exclude disobedient guerrilla fighters from positions of authority by granting final power to army officers. The new president sought to manage the elite divisions and internal diversities and gradually the army gained the

upper hand over civil political leaders and controlled all the state apparatus. The regime was characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of the president, freedom restrictions, heavy bureaucracy, the abuses of the hated military security, and frequent shortages of consumer items. All these limits and restrictions made Boumediene's iron-fist policy and its props profoundly unpopular among the Algerian population (Charrad.2001: 181-182).

The Administrator's discourse also parallels to the official ideology that sought to perpetuate the state's power. William B. Quandt, in his analysis of authoritarian regimes, suggests that authoritarian rulers often use and mix ingredients such as ideology, repression, payoffs, and elite solidarity to maintain their power (Quandt, p, 30). Some, if not all of them, do apply to the Algerian political leaders that Mimouni refers to in his novel. For example, the mixture of the above ingredients appears within the Administrator's discourses, the behavior of the police, and the indifference of the authorities towards people. As an illustration, the novel opens with an Administrator who tries to maintain a sense of ideological commitment to patriotism by playing on a fear of external threat to gloss over the hypocrisy and incompetence of the administration (P.14). He shows toughness and boasts many successes to keep his powerful position. He acknowledges the problems and the failures, pledges to tackle the problems, and pleads for patience and sacrifice. He also blames foreigners for the setbacks and includes his plan to secure people's lives (P.15). As the narrative progresses, we discover that the discourse and all the ones that will follow in the course of the narrative are meant to avoid an opposition which can point to his shortcomings and the incompetence of the incumbent regime (P.24). The Administrator's discourse is understood as an integral part of the way officials treat people with arrogance and open contempt. They take drastic and autocratic avenues to stay in power and cow people into submission through the use of force and coercion. Thus, the government and its monolithic discourses were resented by the majority of Algerians who were shut out (Yefsah.1982:75).

Correspondingly, Mimouni uses a figurative language, in a symbolic code, to perform his rebellious position of an "intellectual trickster". The dominant stand of humorous trickery, in *Le fleuve détourné*, illustrates characteristics of the trickster engaged in struggle to overcome social inequality and oppressive power. The trickster figure will be employed as a useful term for my

comparison of the two novels and by examining the representation of Ghanaean and Algerian cultures in the two novels, I want to see how Armah and Mimouni, “two intellectual tricksters” coped with some historical forces of alienation and oppression that they experienced; how they negotiated their double consciousnesses between African and European cultures to make their narrative parts and parcels of glocal writings. In attempting to uncover the traces of these figures, it is crucial to interpret the manner in which both Armah and Mimouni appropriate the ambiguity in African oral tradition in order to resist domination and transgress boundaries. My comparative study explores the influence of traditional African ideologies of resistance, spirituality on Armah and Mimouni’s novels. Oral tradition plays major roles in the critique of imperialism in the two narratives which reveal how the two authors use African cultural and ideological symbols and concepts as means against oppression in their societies. They draw from African tradition, spirituality, and secular philosophical and political thoughts that allow them to establish connections with Africa and the global world.

To sum up, Armah and Mimouni’s disillusionment is hard to dislodge because it seems to be the only logical reply to political failure and economic stagnation in Africa which the two novels imaginatively mirror. Their protagonists’ mad trips contest the existential primacy of an emblematic “impasse” which their authors experienced in reality. The writers’ main characters wonder “why has the national political universe become so closed, so crushing?” Such stupefaction is directly linked to the disenchantment which followed Ghana’s accession to political independence that paralleled the Algerians’ disappointment with their authoritarian and arrogant ruling leaders. Common to both authors, therefore, is the common way they reflect on the circumstances which prove that there was a glaring gap between the hopes and aspirations of the anti-colonial struggles and the realities of the post-colonial worlds with its authoritarian one-party or military rulers, ethno-nationalist crises, collapsed economies, political instability, unemployment and deepening mass poverty. The new regimes have merely accentuated the repulsive and anti democratic character of the colonial rule. Both novelists offer a philosophical analysis of the ruling elites’ concern with their own pockets than caring about the welfare of their peoples. They also provide sites that produce crucial knowledge about corruption, betrayal and

insights into the complexity of power, its mode of acquisition and its abuses in “hijacking democracy and human rights”. The two novels mirror the development of, and intersect at several points with major historical events in Africa and stand as a ground-breaking analysis of decolonization. Both symbolize the euphoria of the two countries’ independence which preceded the absence of any real democracy which bankrupted the revolutionary dream of collective national reconstruction.

Conclusion

It follows from the two chapters that constitute the preliminary part that the frontiers of culture are not as wild fight as it is generally believed. In the next part, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun’s *La terre et le sang* will substantiate further this claim. The focus will be on the idea of the writer as someone who transports the imagination beyond the maps of narrowly defined borders, in promoting a range of new and established voices as well as signposting new waves in contemporary literature worldwide.

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Part One

**Preservation of Culture in Chinua Achebe's
Things Fall Apart and Mouloud Feraoun's *La
terre et le sang***

A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another: unless the bridge is supported at both ends, it falls down and nobody gets anywhere. Dialogue is inescapable: the “other” at the far end of the bridge always enters into the composition of what I loosely think of as my words.

(Valentin Nikolaevich Volosinov)

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, woman, Muslim, or American are no more than starting points which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, and exclusively white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet, just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival is about the connections between things. Moving beyond nativism does not mean abandoning nationality, but it does mean thinking of local identity as not exhaustive, and therefore not being anxious to confine oneself to one’s own sphere, with its own ceremonies of belonging, its built-in chauvinism, and its limiting sense of security.

(Edward Said)

Introduction

The present part centres on a connection of Chinua Achebe’s first novel, *Things Fall Apart* and Mouloud Feraoun’s second novel, *La terre et le sang*. My intention is to show that “Glocality” in the two novels is manifest at two levels. In the first place, both authors include many cultural indicators, among which figures the use of oral markers which are highly localised with their Africaness. Secondly, there is also the embodiment of “foreign” elements in the two texts which are the outcome of the global impact of imperialism. The way Achebe and Feraoun fuse the local and foreign elements exemplifies the preponderance of African popular culture as a provider of content and a source of dialogical connections with other cultures. Their texts have, in my view, an enduring value as they contain what can be regarded as an expression of their glocal aspects. Achebe and Feraoun’s selective engagement with local and foreign cultures carries implications for how “glocal” texts are conceptualized. In the course of what follows, I try to provide answers to the following questions: how do Achebe and Feraoun use some discursive

strategies that are expressive of African difference which neither hypothesize African ‘Otherness’ through a simple negation of European definitions of their cultures nor articulate merely the forms imported from the West? How both authors preserve their cultures without becoming ossified? And how do they find a way to assert themselves and their own culture to reject the colonialist appellation of their countries as “static empty spaces open for conquest”, without at the same time, rejecting everything that might be of value that comes from their Western education and their readings of master texts?

What this part addresses is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun’s *La terre et le sang* and considers their importance in terms of the cultural context in which the two novelists preserve, celebrate, and translate their traditional African values and cultural practices, and the extent to which both writers are able to present a subtle and skilful implied criticism of European cultural values within the narratives. Specifically, both novels address the ramifications of rapid cultural change and how it affected the conservative elements within the Kabyle and Igbo cultures. In sum, my overall intention is to refer to intratextual and intervocal concerns in order show how the syncretic vision of both authors functions, which is characteristic of glocal poetics. But before drawing parallels between the way Achebe and Feraoun seek to confront and dismantle the chains of authority, reject the very concept of fixed oppositions and hierarchies, and prefer laying claim to a double inheritance expressing a mixture of cultural interchanges and interactions through time rather than affirming a fixed ancestral identity, I begin with the two novels’ critical receptions.

Chapter Three

Critical Reception of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun’s *La terre et le sang*

So much has been written by and about Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* that one can ask what new insights my thesis can be expected to provide that are not already present in the works about Achebe or his first novel. The answer is simple: Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* has never been compared to *La terre et le sang* in terms of their “glocal” aspects though the similarities between the two novels are remarkable as it will be shown in the course of the following chapters.

At its publication in 1958, Achebe's first novel did not attract much critical attention. His early critics charged Achebe of not making the Nigerian nationalist cause his main concern. One of the critics who have been most scornful in his criticism of *Things Fall Apart* is Ode Ogede in his analysis entitled "Achebe or the Politics of Representation". The critic instigates an embittered critique of the author's failings for not succeeding to construct his novel as an adequately anti-colonialist narrative. Achebe has been faulted for not depicting a world filled with struggle, with pain, and colonial injustices to which the probing mind of the creative artist slowly awoke. The critic also charges Achebe for not mentioning the burdens of colonialism and insists:

In his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe adopts an uncompromising stance in his criticism of the failings of the indigenous African leadership while the atrocities of colonization are all relegated to a secondary focus. Why does he do this? Why does he make excuses for the weaknesses of the colonizers, while spewing undiluted venom at Africans for failing to rule with conscience? Why does he fail to hold the colonizing powers to the same standard of morality, especially since colonialism is initially responsible for creating the majority of the problems with which the indigenous leadership has found itself beset? Could it be that the attempt to exonerate the brutality of the occupation forces issues from a stance. Achebe has contrived with deliberation? If so, is he one of those writers who uphold the belief that the moral properties of human beings are genetically determined? Does Achebe present colonialism with such a demonstratively forgiving spirit because he believes its proponents are inherently less capable of moral sentence than the conquered people?

(Ogede [1999] cited in Morrison.2007:63-64).

However, the harshest criticism to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* came from feminist critics, with Rhonda Cobham, Roze.U.Mezu, Patersen, and Florence Straton at their head. As an illustration, in her essay entitled, "Making Men and History: Achebe and the Politics of Revisionism" (1991), Cobham parallels Okonkwo's perspective in its violence and misogyny with that of Achebe. She likens the portrayal of the main character as a socially rootless figure to Achebe's own unstable position as a hybrid of colonial and traditional culture. For the feminist critic, *Things Fall Apart* is a profoundly "willful" work in which the author attempts to mould his cultural inheritance to match a particular self-image. Cobham persists that:

Okonkwo's final solution brings back the dilemma of his creator. Like Okonkwo, who attempts to carve out a relation to his clan in the absence of an inherited sense of identity, Achebe must renegotiate a relation to traditional Igbo society, a connection in education, religious training, and internalized moral standards have made tenuous. Like Okonkwo, he often proceeds by isolating specific aspects of a

society to which he has access and allowing them to stand for many other possible readings of a given social situation. Achebe has said that his mission in writing *Things Fall Apart* is to teach other Africans that their past was neither so savage nor benighted as the colonizers have represented it to be. In other words, Achebe wants to prove himself that the best values of his Christian upbringing are compatible with the value of the traditional Igbo society (Ibid: 32).

The same point of view is shared by Florence Stratton who charges Achebe as a sexist and compares his attitude to Joseph Conrad's racist stance. Florence Stratton's opinion will be developed with more detail in the course of my analysis of Achebe's representation of women characters.

Apart from Achebe's detractors, throughout my different readings, I noticed that it is rare to encounter a commentary on African literature that ignores the merits and the contributions of the Nigerian writer and critic, Chinua Achebe. His first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, on which the author's reputation now rests, began high and has continued, stimulating critical analysis in hundreds of articles, a huge number of books and dissertations. All of Achebe's other books have not reached the success of *Things Fall Apart*. According to Salomon O.Iyasere, *Things Fall Apart* is the most important novel to date, the most widely read and studied in Africa and abroad. It is translated into more than fifty languages since its publication in 1958. The novel continues to attract a vigorous increase in readership and literary prestige in Africa, the West, and Asia (O.Iyasere.1998:6).

Likewise, Isidore Okpewho states that there are few works outside Western canon that received anything close to the attention given to *Things Fall Apart*. Okpewho regards Achebe's first novel as the widely read book, next to the Bible and the Koran (Okpewho.2003:05). The same point of view comes from Ernest N.Emenyonu for whom Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is, without doubt, a landmark classic novel, translated into more than fifty five languages and more than eight million copies in sale. The critic sees Achebe as an artist with a proper sense of history, an imaginative writer with unavoidable sense of cultural mission and political commitment. The critic praises Achebe's careful and fastidious control of his art, where craftsmanship manifests itself no matter the form and the genre he chooses for the exploration of the human condition in Africa (Emenyonu. 2004: xviii).

Likewise, Irele Abiola suggests that it is in Achebe's work that the African experience is brought into definite focus, and assumes its full human and narrative scope in the modern novel. The critic adds that Achebe's redefinition of the terms of the fictional representation of Africa established the novel as a modern narrative genre on the African continent, indeed, as an autonomous mode of imaginative life in Africa. The native grasp of an Igbo ethos of communal living and individual awareness that underlies and legitimizes Achebe's imaginative expression has given powerful impulse to the effort by other writers to convey the sense of a specific location in the world that his work evinces. His influence in this regard has been evident in the work of the cluster of Igbo novelists who may be said to constitute a school spawned by his example, concludes the critic (Abiola. 2009:09).

However, in spite of the impressive amount of criticism Achebe's first novel received, to my knowledge, none extensively project orality as a way of expressing unity in diversity, or as a way of verbalising the continuity of African heritage. My focus, however, is not on the historical theme, which has been discussed extensively, but on stylistic aspects that display, cultural, political and aesthetic functions of orality. I focus on this aspect because some critics who operate mainly from Eurocentric perspective have not analysed the significant socio-political themes that are communicated by the oral presence in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The subsequent chapters, therefore, attempt to demonstrate, the "glocal" discourse produced by incorporating orality as a deliberate technique of literary production which becomes a model by which the author conceives and articulates a view of his society by specifying preferred constructions of selfhood, identity, and social relations. In other terms, I shall try to show not only the importance of orality in Achebe's novel to convey authenticity and African flavour but also the author's use of orality as a most efficacious means of breathing life into his text. It is to see the way "vocality" intervenes to impart to the text its concrete reality. Parallel considerations will be applied to Feraoun's second novel.

However, it would be an exaggeration to say that Feraoun gained the same attention and acclaim granted to Achebe though some formula of critical responses to his first novel can be applied to Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*. Feraoun is regarded as the father of Algerian literature

produced in the French language and occupies a significant position among Algerian writers not only because of his remarkable talent as a novelist, but also by virtue of his linguistic resources and the possibilities his works offer. In particular, he stands out most distinctly as an accomplished writer who constantly draws on his rich linguistic background to enliven his imaginative re-creations of contemporary socio-political experiences of his homeland. Like Achebe, Feraoun's fame rests on his first novel, *Le fils du pauvre* (1950), translated by Lucy R. McNair as *The Poor Man's Son* (2005). For many readers, the name of Feraoun is almost always associated with his first novel and since its publication in 1950 it remains a widely read and discussed novel in Algeria and abroad.

As regards Feraoun, his early reviewers did not seem to give Feraoun's literary works their merit. His novels were not accompanied by a body of criticism to confer on them a literary value. The reasons for the neglect have little to do with the values that are displayed inside the texts. They dismissed his works together with other fictional works that appeared between 1950 and 1952 as being of no literary merit. For example, they have, to varying degrees, carried some 'misreading' of the novels to the extent of putting Feraoun in the 'French Literary Tradition' instead of underscoring the textual richness, and bringing to the fore the creative devices and strategies with which his novels are endowed. Feraoun has been attacked on two main fronts for his position. Some critics accused the author of being not in sequence with the historical events in Algeria. They did not hesitate to regard him as a "traitor" because he wrote in the colonizer's language. Feraoun was also blamed for serving the colonial cause by showing a closed society in denial about its history. Louis Julia, for instance, considers Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* as a novel written in a flat and cowardly language woven especially in descriptions and pictures of improprieties and clichés. For the French critic, Feraoun had not made the nationalist struggle in Algeria his priority. The critic neither single out the novelist's creative inspiration nor identify the writing process through which the author combined different discourses. For him, expectedly then, Feraoun, "[Le] miserabiliste, décliné, non engagé, peu révolutionnaire, ne sachant pour qui opter, racontant et poignant avec une écriture sans recherches sophistiquées, s'arrêtant à des réalités non exaltantes" [The] pessimistic, declined, uncommitted, and little revolutionary, not

knowing which to choose, telling and poignantly writing without a sophisticated searches, stopping at none exciting realities] cannot, in any sense, be considered as a protest writer. In addition, Feraoun has also been accused of political naivety and inaptitude because he did not conform to the established formula of political writing. Some critics believe that Feraoun has little or no political commitment. For them, he even seems politically ignorant (Sayeh.2010: 68).

More contentious and discordant is Fawzia Ahmad's analysis of Feraoun's literary works that contends that the central problem in discussing Feraoun's novels is to decide what kind of literary works they are because the writer has been unable to articulate his identity. Fawzia Ahmed also criticizes Feraoun's zeal to project an acceptable image to a French audience which leaves no space for his Algerianness in his text. She supports her arguments with the fact that Feraoun fails to present his identity and concludes that his depiction of the land appears alienated from his identity as an Algerian writer (Ahmed. 2005:88).

What the critic is not alert to is Feraoun's way of using the French language to establish his "double" identity because the more we read Feraoun's literary texts, the more they reveal and even certify the way the author verbalizes some situations in order to bring to the fore his own identity. Moreover, the reviewer's investigation into the way Feraoun presents his native identity has not explored in order to account the way the author manipulates the French language, uses socio-historical terms, and creates particular strategies to revalorize his native culture. In my view, Ahmad's lack of knowledge about what Paul Zumthor calls the "auditory mode of articulation" let her ignore the orality of the text, its remnant vocality as well as "the poetics of the voice" in Feraoun's text. The reviewer skips the figurative representations which can allow her to perceive, in Zumthor's words, "the signals emitted by history" , a poetic discourse as opposed to an approved master language that is external and reductionist: "the human voice" (Zumthor. 1984:74).

By presenting a more nuanced analysis, Abdelhamid Zoubir and Jacqueline Kaye note that the predicament of Feraoun's texts neither rests on his use of French language nor in his choice of religion. The reviewers argue that he is as familiar with Christianity as he was with Islam that has nothing to do with his national identity. The two critics maintain, however, that the problem is

that Feraoun's novels are "singular receptacles of an alien language where the antinomies of Algerian perceptibility are objectified" (Kaye. Zoubir.1990:82). What the two critics fail to pay attention to is without doubt Feraoun's use of that "alien language" to suit his purposes. Unlike Zoubir and Kaye's criticism, I see that Feraoun's second novel is deeply permeated by moral sensibility and is strongly committed to the preservation and celebration of his culture, to foregrounding his identity, and the denunciation of colonial oppression and injustice and it is through language that they are mostly displayed.

Among the critics who discredited the previous critical opinions about Feraoun's novels, I can cite Wadi Bouzar and Mohamed Getarni, to whom Feraoun is far from being a traitor or an assimilationist but rather a committed writer. Getarni maintains that no one can doubt or call into question Feraoun's literary genius and affirms that the writer's engagement should not be ignored. His writings with their 'anti-colonial impulses, their recuperative approach to the Algerian past and his commitment to affirming the dignity of his compatriots, are all features that can be traced in his fictional works. Guétarni supports his arguments by drawing a parallel between Feraoun's second novel with Mohamed Dib's *The fire* and writes: «Tout comme *L'incendie* publié en 1954, *La terre et le sang* (1953), est un titre symbolique et en même temps cruel. Il peut être considéré comme le prélude à une conflagration de la Guerre de Libération qui fera couler beaucoup de 'sang' sur la 'terre' algérienne" [As with *The Fire* published in 1954, *The Earth and Blood* (1953), is a symbolic and at the sametime cruel title. It can be seen as a prelude to a conflagration of the Algerian War of Liberation that will run a lot of 'blood' on the Algerian land] (Guétarni. 2006:122).

The same critical evaluation can be read in Azzedine Haddour's *Colonial Myth. History and Narrative* (2000). The critic writes that Feraoun, in his *La terre et le sang* shows the end of the French assimilationist policy through the way he ends his narrative. For the reviewer, the mixed marriage [Amer and Marie] does not symbolize the symbiosis of cultures but reflects the failure of assimilation. The alienation of the protagonist is cultural and ontological. The critic also suggests:

This marriage is a metaphor of immense critical suggestiveness. Not only does it interpret the failure of assimilation which led to the cultural seclusion of the colonized, but shows how misery is engendered and regenerated in a mummified society. Trapped in this society, with the burden of supporting a poor family, the colonized, could not break the ‘vicious’ and infernal dialectics which perpetuate colonial misery.

(Haddour.2000:141).

The quotation shows clearly how Feraoun depicts a traditional world order in its contact with Western culture. It is with the context of such a contact of the old and new orders that the writer sets up his tale.

On nearly similar lines, Jack Gleyse believes that a study of aesthetics more readily reveals the epistemological, stylistic difference of an author who can describe different sensibilities without necessarily jeopardizing his commitment to a particular cause. For the critic, Feraoun’s commitment lies in his support and revalorization of the various aspects of Kabyle social life of his time. Feraoun’s achievements in such a concise work as *La terre et le sang*, rests on his description of the different dimensions of Kabyle society. He manages to convey, in such vivid terms, a sense of the lives of the people and the culture he writes about. Gleyse also maintains:

Nous nous trouvons d’emblée dans un univers très différent du nôtre, un univers où le sens de l’honneur, l’attachement à la terre signifient encore quelque chose, un univers souvent dur qui a de quoi surprendre les âmes d’européens.
(Gleyse.1990: 45).

[We are immediately in a very different world from ours, a universe where the sense of honor, attachment to the land still mean something, a very often hard universe that has something which catches Europeans souls].

Though Feraoun’s novels have been attacked for their lack of Algerian values and for their ‘classic simplicity’, Feraoun is much more implicated in the ethnographic discourse of his time than has been acknowledged so far. Although authenticity has been the ideology of colonialism by which it sought to dehistoricize African cultures in indicting them of backwardness and reluctance to modernize. In the hands of Feraoun, the idea is transformed into a claim enunciated as resistance to it. The author invents a tradition in historicizing the pressures that impelled the invention of tradition. Unfortunately, his work has not been scrutinized with attention that it merits. Some critics have been quick to identify the European sources rather than the African

ones. Others refer to the points where identification of Western sources occurs before that of African poetics while, in my view they are bound together. So, Feraoun's engagement and resistance are not only steeped in local color that is far from the French exoticism, but in the complexities which are seen as reflecting an African cultural and visionary experience. Resistance, as Denise Brahimi states, "ne s'agit pas forcement de combats armés, mais plutôt d'une affirmation de soi, obstinée en dépit des obstacles et de l'adversité" [Resistance is not limited to an armed fighting force, but it is rather self-affirmation, despite the stubborn obstacles and adversity] (Brahimi.2001: 85).

Admittedly, Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*, although set during the period of nationalist military activity, makes almost no mention of the Algerian armed struggle. The reader will not fail to notice that the author expresses speech from the perspective of the narrative's discontent with impoverished lives, speaking forcefully in his own voice, and marks instances of repression. Feraoun's problems with authority are reflected in the troubles of his protagonist, Amer, who faces the effects of mental and economic colonization directly. Feraoun paints a colonial society wherein economic and social status is associated with Western acculturation or the ability to impersonate a human being as an attack on the pretences of the colonial "civilizing mission".

Therefore, I think that all the negative criticisms are due to a lack of objectivity and the distance from the texts that remains the main source of attacks from which Feraoun's novels suffered. Feraoun is far from being a traitor. He just opposes all forms of oppression that alienates man. The critics, especially, who blame Feraoun for writing his novels in French, seem to forget that writing in French is not a choice but rather an outcome of colonial violence, as Mohamed Dib voiced it to an Egyptian newspaper: "quel malheur que d'écrire dans une autre langue que la sienne [...] c'est ce malheur-là qui nous fait écrivains" [what a pity to write in a language other than his own [...] this is the misfortune that makes us writers (Alhram.org.2003: 6).

What most of Feraoun's detractors ignore is the fact that although deeply and unmistakably imbued with all French culture, Western humanism and his readings of the French classics, Feraoun's novels oppose all colonialist fancies, alluring images, warmth

and softness that give body to the “exotic literature” of Alphonse Daudet’s *Tartarin de Tarascon*, Victor Hugo’s *Les Orientales*, and Louis Bertrand’s *La Barbarie*. Feraoun’s literary works are set against the exciting and voluptuous atmosphere, the oriental phantasmagoria and any excess of emotions and fascination for the exotic customs of his country. The following passage from the author’s posthumous book, *L’anniversaire* (1972) sums up the point:

La voix a été tracée par ceux qui ont rompu avec un Orient de pacotille pour décrire une humanité moins belle mais plus vraie, une terre moins chatoyante mais riche de sève nourricière, des hommes qui luttent et souffrent, et sont les répliques exactes de ce que nous voyons autour de nous (P. 54).

[The voice has been drawn by those who have broken with rubbish East in order to describe a less beautiful but more real humanity, a land less but rich in life blood, men who struggle and suffer, and who are exact replicas of what we see around us].

The passage indicates that Feraoun can, then, be distinguished from the French writings in many ways: most importantly his novels illustrate willingness to balance positive and negative; the beautiful and ugly aspects of the world he depicts. In his *La terre et le sang*, the author replaces the exoticism of French colonialist literature by a richer life, less beautiful but true and free of any moral restraint. More significantly, the review of criticism about Feraoun’s novel shows that his reviewers have never gone further than pinpointing some superficial aspects of the novel and did not seem to have worked in-depth. They either expressed their disagreement with Feraoun’s choice of language or religion. In my view, the inconsistency of some arguments in the above criticisms stem from an ideological orientation and their authors over emphasize the Arabo-Islamic dimensions of Algerian literature instead of working the texts methodically. We can say that the original sensitivity of Feraoun brings with it a new modern thought, almost avant-garde, which is far from alienating his identity. The power, strength and originality of his novels thus born of a mixture his inspirations, cultural fragments, memories are all of them are parts of his identity. Feraoun’s identity rests on his skilful manipulation of French language to enable it to convey essential and intricate traditional Kabyle speech patterns and sensibilities, and world view. So, arguments, explanations, or justifications as

to why Feraoun uses the French language are not so much of concern as is the question of how he uses it. He writes in French using his concepts and images that may not be those of a French person and language becomes a communicative tool with which to express and depict his perception of the world around him. Consequently, Feraoun's novels deserve more intensive attention by scholars, and much more critical discourse by critics than it has received so far.

From the above criticism, I understand that both Achebe and Feraoun have been charged with relying too heavily on European models in their writings. Although I cannot deny their use of such models for inspiration, I claim that both have consistently argued for the African basis of their writings. Therefore, Achebe and Feraoun should be situated in a new trend of "glocality" that enables readers to acknowledge the significance of blending European and African literary forms and helps to position the two authors at the confluence of two alternatives. Among the key terms on which my hypothesis lies are "cultural and linguistic hybridity" through which I demonstrate the way Achebe and Feraoun recast their traditional oral features into new forms to create polyphonies that are "contrapuntal" in nature. The correlations of these new forms also function as a weapon against political oppression and create a revolutionary discourse of cultural revalorization. At the outset, the affinities between Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et sang* will be corroborated with regard to Achebe's and Feraoun's manipulation and recasting of the existing European and African literary forms into new dimensions. First, by using the colonizer's language, both writers insert in their novels some literary strategies including "linguistic hybridity" by means of an "intervocality" of the French and English languages to create something new, a kind of "third space" to paraphrase Homi Bhabha.

The Content of the Form: Discursive Strategies in the Novels

1- Linguistic Hybridity

Two creative driving forces overlap the poetic imagination of African writers, with regard to their encounter with European imposed cultures. Ashcroft *etal* call them appropriation and abrogation. Abrogation is explained as a process which involves the rejection of the Western language and the culture it vehicles as they stand as leftovers of the colonial past. Appropriation,

on the contrary, promotes accommodation as an alternative to a complete rejection of the colonial heritage. It looks for adjustment rather than dismissal and engages in a combination of two languages, two cultures in a negotiation process that attempts to create local meaning, a particular worldview, with borrowed expressions (Ascroft.Tiffin.2004:28).

Feraoun and Achebe's novels are shaped by the poetic imagination of their writers' two creative impulses and two ideological postures. When linked to the discursive categories of hybridity, appropriation and mixture can also be linked to Bakhtin's typology of hybrid discourses (1992): the organic, "not deliberate, and unconscious" hybrid, and the deliberate "intentional" hybrid. In his study of the novel, Bakhtin divides the concept of linguistic hybridity into two categories: intentional hybridity which is the outcome of an intention and stylistic organization. It is therefore, a semantic hybrid, not in the abstract but a semantics that is concrete and social. The intentional hybridity, adds Bakhtin, is primarily a communicative phenomenon and its intentionality increases the possibility that it will become a process of othering, where identities are projected by powerful social agents onto others who are less powerful. The second type of hybridity is called "Organic hybridity". It is unintentional or unconscious and occurs and changes historically when several languages or cultures enter into contact: "the image of a language conceived as an intentional hybrid is first of all a conscious hybrid; (Bakhtin.1981:359). Bakhtin maintains that organic hybridity is the discourse in which the combination of languages is fused into a new system, which brings forth the historical evolution of all languages, whereas intentional hybridity stands for the "internally dialogic" form, in which languages and ideologies are consciously set against each other. Bakhtin sees the first variety of hybrid structure as characteristic of any living, evolving language, while he incorporates the second in the dialogised nature of the language in the novel. Organic hybrid discourses involve mixing and fusion; they are part of a natural practice in language and cultural contact. Bakhtin clarifies that they are always mute and opaque. Nevertheless, they are endowed with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world" (ibid. 360). The intentional hybrid, on the contrary, comes as an outcome of an artistic intention to dialogize hybridity; an artistic intention that produces a separation rather than fusion. The aim of this disjunctive type is disconnection,

because it is essentially a contestatory site of more than one discourse, with one of them trying to unsettle, disarticulate the other discourses representing authority. For Bakhtin, therefore, hybridization, best concretized in the novel, is closely linked to subversion of authority.

Applied to Achebe and Feraoun's novels, organic hybrid discourse finds its most conspicuous expression in the way both authors move beyond bipolar models of "global" against "local" in considering culture as a synthesis, not an untouched entity, as it appears in appears in their use of language. Such a strategy can be linked to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "unintentional or organic hybridity" by which he means the perception of one language by another language, its illumination by another linguistic consciousness. An image of language may be constructed only from the point of view of another language, which is taken as a norm. The dialectical approach to language advocated by Bakhtin provides a conceptual framework that I find applicable to Achebe and Feraoun's use of language. Both writers' use of their local cultural knowledge to which they add foreign rudiments resulting from the global impact of imperialism creates a dialogue between the local and the global. For instance, Achebe sees writing in English as the best means to reach a national audience, and so to break down the barriers between different ethnic groups in Nigeria. He prefers subverting English in order to bear his African experience and advocates its use as a medium through which the experiences of the colonized Africans can be communicated by inserting the idioms, proverbs, and imagery which evoke his culture and compel the reader to accept the different linguistic terms as well as the story he has to tell. What is of particular interest is to show how Achebe and Feraoun have internalized and consciously foregrounded features of the 'spoken' language such as speech rhythms and conversational to prove that 'literature' and 'orature' instead of being mutually exclusive categories of linguistic creativity, the two traditions constantly return to each other and draw upon each other for sustenance. For both writers, the two linguistic manifestations of their society's creative imagination clearly cannot be taken to stand for a simple polarity between written literature and orature and what follows is a remainder of the correlation which exists between the two in Achebe and Feraoun's novels.

We must comprehend the problematic at the core of *La terre et le sang* along similar lines. Feraoun comes from a society where the principal mode of literary transmission prior to

colonization was oral. But more than a century of colonization (1830-1962) has left its considerable traces on his works. As many Algerian writers of his generation, Feraoun faces the choice of writing and thinking in the language of the colonizer and attempts to reconcile his two cultures (the world of his schooling and the traditional oral world of his society). In *La terre et le sang*, he describes his position of an “in-between of the two cultures”, to paraphrase Bhabha, through the “intervocality” of his French language. He demonstrates an awareness of the influence of his French education on his work, and rather than refusing such an influence, he accommodates to it, understands and then distorts it. He distorts the paradigms of Western heritage, as he fashions an identity by turning French epistemology into a raw, repackageable material or a kind of “montage” in the words of Walter Benjamin. As Achebe, Feraoun bends and intentionally changes the French language in order to reflect an Algerian reality. He needs to transform the language, to use it in a different way in its new context, as Achebe says, quoting James Baldwin, make it ‘bear the burden’ of [his own] experience. Feraoun imposes the imprint of his background on his adopted language. At the basic level, he does it by introducing vocabulary items, particularly cultural terms which combine with the French syntax. He alters the paradigmatic norms of standard French and proved what Bhabha calls “the suplimentarity and hybridity of cultural translation and by linguistic filiations”. He illustrates how language with its power and writing with its signification of authority have been wrested from the dominant culture (Bhabha.1994: 36).

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe lets the rhythms and idioms of his Igbo language be heard and the defamiliarization that results from such a practice draws attention to the non-English linguistic and cultural context of his work as Abdul Jan Mohamed summarizes it:

There is an additional compulsion to write about his culture in English because not to do so would leave the definition and representation of his society at the mercy of usually racist colonial writers. However, under these constraints, he uses English in a way that deterritorialises it. By deliberately simplifying and willing a certain kind of poverty he pushes the English language to its limits: the rhythm of he endless paratactic sentences negates the diversity and complexity of which language is capable. The deliberate simplicity is combined with the dryness and sobriety of voice to create a new register. Achebe develops a mythic voice that can evoke sympathy and concern while remaining entirely neutral. This neutral, mythic

voice, which is entirely new in modern English literature, is able to recuperate a vanishing cultural experience without lapsing into sentimentality of spitefulness. (Jan Mohamed, cited in Bloom.2004:56).

The passage sums up the reasons which forced Achebe to alter the paradigm of the English language without showing the way or the strategies Achebe used to do it. Some of the strategies are discussed in Paul Zumthor's *La lettre et la voix* (1984) where he insists that language is unthinkable without the human voice, a voice that goes far beyond the spoken words. In the voice, the spoken word is uttered as a reminder, like a memory enacting some primordial contact. It is the voice and gestures that provide verity and coherence; these are things that persuade us, adds Zumthor (Ibid.P:87). The same strategies or oral style are fully discussed Chantal Zabus's analysis of some discursive means of verbalizing a spacio-temporal experience. The critic discusses technically the discursive segments that belong to the vast corpus of African traditional material, which are transposed into Igbo Anglophone novels as constituting an "ethno-text". She argues that the grafting of an Igbo ethno-text onto the novel creates an "indigenization of the European medium". Several of the elements of Igbo ethno-text which Achebe syncretically incorporates into the novel creates, such as mythopoeia, periphrasis or a roundabout way of speaking, and parataxis. In Zabus's article entitled: "Language, Orality and Literature", she discusses the way African writers appropriate the Western languages with particular focus on Achebe's appropriation and subversion of English through the use of some techniques including cushioning, contextualisation, reflexification, parataxis, and periphrasis. Zabus explains, for instance, that to 'cushion' consists of tagging English calqued onto the indigenous word. Though this method is effective in preventing the use of culturally misleading expressions, Chantal Zabus warns that the English translation "shadows" and provides a fainter representation of the Igbo word and when this method is used excessively, or is carried to extremes, it can change the meaning of a text (B.King.2002:35).

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe appeals to all these techniques throughout the narrative and many words are 'cushioned'. For example, there are some calqued words such as obi (hut); ndichie (elders); agbala (a woman); eze-ngadi-nwayi (the teeth of an old woman); jigida (waist

beads); and chi (personal god). Achebe gives the equivalent of the word in English. But most of the time, no explanation is provided especially for songs. For instance, when Ikemefuna was driven to the forest to be sacrificed, he sang an Igbo song of his childhood. The recalled song is untranslated:

Eze
Eze elina, elina!
Sala Eze ilikwa yo
Ikwaba akiwa alighali
Ebe danda nechi eze
Ebe uzuzu netegunand
Ebe uzuzu netegunand (P. 42)

The fact of not providing the equivalent in meaning to the Igbo word is called a technique of “contextualisation” which means that some words are kept without translation and are explained within a given context. As an illustration, the words Ekwugwu, the nine masks (P.64); Efulufu which means a worthless individual (P.103); Agbala (P.12), an untitled man or a woman. All these terms can be understood from the contexts provided in the novel. The purpose of using some untranslated Igbo words, as Neil Kortnaar states in his article entitled: “How the Center is Made to Hold in *Things Fall Apart*”, is to emphasize the exclusivity of the two worlds. For the critic, Achebe leaves the Igbo words untranslated as foreign traces in an English text that refers metonymically to a whole world that cannot be adequately translated, a world that Achebe shares with the character he writes about. The non-Igbo reader, by implication can only achieve a mediated knowledge of that world (Okpewho.2003:127).

The second way in which Achebe incorporates freely the Igbo language throughout the novel is ‘relexification’. The term means to inscribe language and ideological variance in a text in a way that forces it to carry the weight of the writer’s culture and convey the concepts and thoughts of that culture. Such a technique is apparent at the very beginning of Achebe’s narrative when he describes Unoka’s love for music: “He could hear in his mind’s ear the blood-stirring and intricate rhythms of the Ekwue and the Udu and the Ogene (P.5). Moreover, the use of the colonizer’s language can be seen in the way Achebe shapes the novel’s form and pattern. He appeals to the formalized conversation patterns, which are based on aspects of the traditional life,

then are put into literary use through the technique of “Parataxis”. This term, according to Chantal Zabus can be explained as the placing of clauses one after another without words to indicate coordination or subordination. All these insertions prove that Achebe diverts English and uses its flexibility to assert his Igbo culture. ‘Parataxis’ appears mainly through the author’s use of some repetitions for emphasis. The narrative relies on the juxtapositions, accretion, and repetition of various kinds of details to highlight particular aspects. For instance, to show Okonkwo’s intense violence, Achebe announces it in the third paragraph of the first chapter: “He did pounce on people quite often” (P.3). It is repeated in the second chapter: “He ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives especially the youngest lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper” (P.9). The same idea is persistent in the fourth chapter: “Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger” (P.21) and the idea keeps surfacing like a leitmotif. Repetition also occurs in the description of Okonkwo’s triumphs in fighting and in defeating his opponents. Achebe devotes the whole chapter six to its description (P.33-36).

The other technique of “intentional hybridity” is displayed through Achebe’s uses of “periphrasis”, which means a return to and reliance on some public remembrances, old sayings, and the metaphorical language of the elders. The narrative makes ample use of ‘periphrasis’ because it is a technique prized of the Igbo conversation and Achebe announces it very early in the narrative: “Among the Igbo, the act of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are palm oil with which words are eaten” (P.5). In *Things Fall Apart*, the reader is forced to assimilate the many scattered Igbo maxims. The English translations provided by Achebe are personal renderings through which the author attempts to evoke the spirit of the proverb and preserves faithfulness to the Igbo phraseology and terminology. Oral and communal dictums are very much part of the Igbo culture and Achebe uses them as a source of inspiration and admitted that he continually appeals to this oral tradition in his writings to record and therefore preserve them from disappearance. It is important to note that Achebe’s transposition of the Igbo oral discursive material is three-fold: Achebe appeals to it for the sake of authenticity, cultural definition, and differentiation. David Whittaker adds that Achebe’s insertion of his Igbo material

has a crucial epistemological function as repositories of communal wisdom and knowledge and as educational tools (Wittaker.2007:32).

Achebe manages to express difference between his Igbo language and English through a literary version of some idioms of speech, as Taiwo truly observes:

Achebe adopts the English language for his own needs in an intelligent manner. In him, we recognize the beginnings of a successful experiment. While refusing to adopt slavishly recognized English usage; he uses the language to put across ideas and concepts which are originally foreign to it. That he does this fairly successfully is a great credit to him.

(Taiwo.1967: 66).

More significantly, Achebe goes further in calling the reader's attention to the survival of the Igbo language and its inclusion of non-European concepts which English can never encompass and maintains:

For me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it [...] I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will be new English, still in full communication with its new African surrounding".

(Achebe.1975, cited in Loomba.2005:80).

An analogous form of language mixture that indicates some communalities of linguistic texture and form can be found in Mouloud Feraoun's novel, *La terre et le sang*. Language for the writer is an offspring of Kabyle word, revealing the complex nature of the Algerian character, which many French writers had misrepresented as a boring being of idyllic goodness and simplicity. Feraoun makes this process apparent in his novel through expressive deviations from the standard French, as Robert Elbaz and Martine Mathieu-Job rightly point out :

L'insertion d'un mot Kabyle qui trône la langue Française ou l'aplatissement du Français [...] l'essentiel pour Feraoun, c'est bien de donner l'illusion que l'objet Kabyle transparait, de lui-même en quelque sorte, et pour cela, de lui assujettir la langue de l'autre, d'aplatir celle-ci faute de mieux, aux fins de sa propre representation (Elbaz. Mathieu-Job. 2001: 89).

[The insertion of a Kabyle word contributes to either the subjecting of the French language or the flattening of French. What is essential for Feraoun, is to provide the illusion that the Kabyle object is somewhat reflected in itself, and for that, to subject it with the language of the other, to flatten it for the better, for purposes of his own representation]

Feraoun, then, intentionally reconstitutes in French the Kabyle voices which are less latent in French literary texts, making good use of the inheritance of some native terms and expressions and makes of the borrowed language his own. Its “intervocality” appears in the very beginning of the novel through the narrative voice. The narrator creates a space between himself and the reader and announces the coming discursive difficulties to get access to that space. In so doing, he produces sentences which are not thought initially in French and announces from the very beginning of the novel that the language of the ‘other’ will be transformed to achieve the link with the reader (P. 88).

In the course of the novel, Feraoun inserts more than forty untranslated Kabyle words and all of them are not cushioned. For instance, Feraoun uses words like tharoumith, French woman(P.4); toub, red earth(P.10); Mechmel, bare land(P.17); Ouada, offering (P.76) Achou, what do you mean?; Achhal, how much?(P.110); Ilha, nice; and thakhaounith, religious woman(P.200). As Achebe, Feraoun appeals to the technique of ‘relexification’ in making some characters speak in a normal manner and say things which are expected of people in their situation of life, in the way they naturally would by using some Kabyle expressions which he renders directly to French. Cases of direct rendering are: « ils mangent Tamazirt » (P.17); “ce sont vraiment des têtes”(P.97); «il ne faut pas chanter qu’on a de l’argent”, followed by « les rêves sortent» (P.166) ; «madame s’est pas lavée ce mois »(P.167) « les cheveux d’enfer»(P.211) “Dieu lui donne sa part”(P.133) ; and « Dieu lui garde ses péchés »(P.126). These expressions do not mean something when they are translated directly word by word into the French language. They are meaningful only for the reader who is aware of and takes into consideration the cultural context in which these expressions are uttered, the vocality of the text.

Like Achebe, Feraoun applies the technique of “contextualisation” in showing his people’s spirit through language. Some of the uttered phrases have no meaning in French. For instance, Chabha to show her temperance, says: «Je suis large comme une pleine”; other sentences of the same paradigm follow ; “Elle veut salir une femme d’honneur”; “Voiler le soleil d’un tamis” (P. 208).All of them are double voiced. The free indirect speech of Chabha’s thoughts becomes more and more inflected by Chabha’s speech patterns. It is in the range of forms of double-voiced

discourse that Feraoun speaks from within his people and his different characters speak from with him. The language is sometimes as crude as its user: "son ventre est plein de bile", exclaims Slimane; "Dieu a bien fait d'avoir privé l'âne de cornes", says then angrily the same character (P.83). All these expressions show that Feraoun does not spare French language. He rather shows its limits, transforms and deconstructs it to rebuild it differently, not for its shape, but for the ideas it conveys. Feraoun kills the sense to make it reborn. Such a technique appears through his use of "periphrasis" to show the wisdom of the ancestors. Some of the remembrances are uttered by the wise voice of Ramdane and others by the Marabout diviner Si Mahfoud (P.78). So, the French language becomes merely an envelope which contains the form of ideas and the moving speech of the author who sacrifices its form in favour of the meaning. Denise Brahimi notes that Feraoun's use of the French language resembles the way Abdelkebir Khatibi uses the same language. The Moroccan writer sees that : «Une langue aussi forte que le français ne se laisse pas facilement détruire ni même modifier. Personnellement, il préfère la considérer comme « une belle étrangère » séduisante, peut-être à jamais insaisissable, mais avec laquelle peuvent s'établir des rapports d'amour» [A language as strong as French can not be easily destroyed or even modified. Personally, he prefers to regard it as "an attractive, perhaps forever elusive, beautiful stranger", but with which some relations of love can be established] (Brahimi.2001: 52).

In my view, however, what Denise Brahimi fails to pay attention to is that Feraoun in his *La terre et le sang* did not content himself to admire the French language, but succeeds in modifying it. His appeal to a non-standard usage of the French can be viewed as a process of linguistic decolonization, a questioning not only of the usage of the established language but also of western-ways of perceiving and interpreting reality. Feraoun re-examines the official historical, colonial discourse and then breaks through it with voices from his culture so long silenced. He re-inserts the previously silenced voices of the Algerians through a reconstruction of French syntax that gives the language of his novel a kabyle ring. Feraoun reproduces the rhythms and sentence patterns of the Kabyle speech; rural images, analogies and proverbs which come directly from

oral traditions, as Christiane Achour notes, “ La langue du romancier, comme celle de Taos Amrouche, mais avec plus de bonhomie rustique, se nourrit de la vieille sagesse des dictons, des proverbes, des images recherchées [The language of the novelist, like that of Taos Amrouche, but with more rustic simplicity , feeds on old wise sayings, proverbs, and popular images (Achour. 1984:14).

By infusing the Kabyle material into the French language, Feraoun 'deterritorialises' the French language. Therefore, a Frenchman who reads the above selected expressions may find them unfamiliar and difficult to understand. But Feraoun uses them in a way that does not hinder or change his comprehension of the novel. The reader needs to know what is said in the original Kabyle language as J.Dejeux rightly observes: “Feraoun laisse parler sa langue première à travers le Français et réalise une œuvre d’art, non parce qu’il aura forcément cassé la langue française, mais parce qu’il aura su créer dans une ‘difference’ intraitable” [Feraoun allows his language to speak first through French and create a work of art, not because he forcefully breaks French language, but because he manages to create nonflexible 'difference' (Dejeux.1993 : 20).

To sum up, it may be clear that if Achebe imposes an Igbo thinking on the English language in his *Things Fall Apart*, Feraoun does the same thing in his novel, *La terre et le sang*. The linguistic hybridity of the two novels with their heavy dependence on tones of the voice, suggest that the reader ought to pay greater attention to words in audible motion rather than to their frozen form on the page. The words on the page are recognizable nuances of the Ibo and Kabyle sounds, even when the spelling is standard French or English, the words in print are fully available only when readers are in touch with the oral and other cultural contexts the words imply. Achebe and Feraoun give importance to a kind of “phonetic reading” which emphasizes aural reading and invite the reader to “hear” the rich texture of the covert as well as overt orality. In so doing, both capture and refashion the colonizer’s language to new usages to mark a separation from the site of colonial privilege. The hybrid style of the two novels in blending oral and French and English written techniques produces a substantial possibility for readers to fathom

their cultural differences and nuances. For this, both authors succeed in creating what Bhabha calls “a third space” and achieve a kind of the ‘possibility of reversal’ and to liberate the very things which dominant systems of discursive practices would like to suppress and have proven what Bhabha calls “the supplementary and hybridity of cultural translation and any linguistic affiliations” (Bhabha.1994: 193).

More significantly, Achebe and Feraoun contribute to create a nomadic deterritorialization that allowed them to rework French and English languages through (Ibo and Kabyle) to mobilize all the languages of everyday life and to provide the means to experience, the moods, and representation of their people. In my view, Achebe and Feraoun want to signify a poetics of identity that reflects the African use of language as a double symbolic marriage between African and Western discursive practices. The second “discursive strategy” with which Feraoun and Achebe foreground the dynamic connection of the “local” to the “global” is displayed through their novels’ mode of writing.

2- Realism, Ethnography, and Historical Sensibility in the Two Novels

As indicated earlier, Achebe and Feraoun’s novels were inspired by a pressing political situation that required a discourse of the real. Their novels attempt to criticize colonialism by using realist, ethnographic, and objective descriptions to make the injustices of colonialism transparently evident. Under pressures to employ their ethnographic descriptions, the problem of representation for both authors becomes of narrative, or “histoire” as both story and history. In other terms, both authors convey social injustice under colonial administration and highlight it as a historicizing gesture which distinguishes their ethnographic descriptions from the ones aiming at reconstructing pure and whole rituals, customs and traditions. Rather, the two writers set their narratives to revise the colonizer’s belief of the African as unreflecting and unintelligent. Achebe and Feraoun’s plot lines are constructed along familiar realist patterns. But at the same time, Achebe and Feraoun adapt the realist style of writing to express their African world views as well as their own cultural contexts. Realism for the two writers becomes an ethical response to the colonialist view of African society as Jan Mohamed remarks in the case of Achebe:

Realism, then, is his aesthetic as well as ethical response not only to colonialist

views African societies but also to the social dilemma of African cultures that are attempting to come to terms with the disorganisation that is the legacy of colonialism.

(Jan Mohamed.1983:178).

We can easily see why a response to these circumstances Achebe and Feraoun would want to wrest control of what authentic Africa is. In order to break the dual oppositions from which they speak, both authors adopt a realist aesthetic that combines ethnographic and the historical, two discourses that usually work at cross-purposes. Ethnographic description often repress historical context in the effort to re-create whole cultures. Historical consciousness, on the other hand, seeks to recover repressed narratives of cultural loss and fragmentation. Both authors had to face what Eleni Coundouriotis calls “ethnographic impulses”, a desire to restore the local cultures under their observations and also revise the mastering descriptions of the Western ethnography. The ethnographic impulse in this context, according to Coundouriotis, reflects actual historical circumstances. As a response to a sense of injustice aroused by the representation of Africa in the West, it expresses itself in an effort to describe with impartiality a particular African culture. The description entails elaborating a narrative of causality whereby the author implicates his Western readers in a history of African denigration. It is the way authors each transform the restorative discourse of the ethnographic impulse into history that their dissenting voices take shape (Coundouriotis. 1999:23).

Achebe and Feraoun scramble the usual paths of power and authority and tried consciously to write ethnographically with less concern with authenticity in the abstract, decontextualized way. In my view, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun’s *La terre et le sang* are works of anti-colonial protest which differ radically from the ambiguous, dislocated, unmastering observer provided by Western narratives about Africa. The two authors mix the literary and imagined in favor of the real and objective that is far from the superficiality of all representations. They replace “surfaces” and “snapshot” appearances of things by a meticulous knowledge and deep understanding of their societies. Achebe and Feraoun tell their stories in the full cultural context of their respective people and the two narratives are skillfully interspersed with carefully selected depictions of the Igbo and Kabyle cultures during a specific moment in

their history. They are motivated to attempt a correction of the image of Africa through a symbolic literary creation of an alternating and more objective picture of their native cultures. Achebe and Feraoun write against the idea of African cultures which are superficial with no substance or depth and foreground in their narratives that people are quite content to exist within their traditional culture. The two novels are not concerned with empty glorification of culture or with nostalgia because the cultural material is used to convey peoples' particular identities. The two authors aim at describing an orderly society and demonstrate that it contains and it is endowed with a political system and a social organization.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe brings together history and traditions of his Igbo culture into play. His understanding of his Igbo society and thought places him on a plane parallel to Feraoun in his capacity to recreate order from a familiar cultural Kabyle world in transition. As I have mentioned earlier, the British colonial occupation of Nigeria involved the physical and discursive subjection of its peoples, the destruction of social orders, and the ruthless suppression of dissent, even cursory acquaintance with oral popular performance genres. But the attempts to silence these people were far from successful. As it is displayed in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the colonized subjects have continued to speak, in unofficial ways, from unofficial spaces, and also from the centers of their societies to revalorize the cultural values they take account of.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes a living culture within which alone the community's life has meaning. It is historically organized, democratic in the sense that people have never had rulers with anything approaching autocratic powers. They have no ladder of powers rising from a broad democratic basis through ascending level to one central peak: "Igbo enwe eze", which means that the Igbo do not have kings, writes Achebe. Among the Igbo people, the social structure is shaped by many small villages where communal authority replaces individualism. Every compound, for its part, consists of individual family units surrounding the extended families including their individual homes. Many compounds form a village, and several villages makes up a town. A home can be divided into sub-homes. A young man, like Okonkwo, grows and can marry many wives. Therefore, he makes his own family and builds his 'Obis' within the other homes.

In addition to its social organization, the society Achebe depicts is endowed with a judiciary system embodied through the presence of the Egwugwu who appear in the most important meetings opened only for men. Achebe depicts the Egwugwu as leading men of the clan who are disguised as spirits for the trial. Their task is to regulate the conflicts. Through a ritual of proper procedure and control, the evidence of both opposing parties is heard before the Egwugwu retire to consider their verdict. Their task is to sustain the established laws and orders and settle some matters amicably. The masked spirits form the highest judicial body in the Igbo society (P.66). They combine in their functions the duty of the police to maintain order, and all the force of an army to enforce the laws inside and outside Umofia. They should be obeyed and no one can call into question their orders. For instance, they were at the origin of Okonkwo's exile, the burning of his compound by the villagers, and the smoldering of the Church. They also decided that Ikemefuna be brought to the village and put under the protection of Okonkwo (P.19). The description of the process proves the existence of a form of government as well as some tribal practices before the arrival of the British to the village. Achebe's inclusion of these scenes also aims to demonstrate the presence of an Igbo judiciary system that is an integral part of their life and values. Achebe's reference to a group of elders sharing decision making based on a long and evaluating tradition is not only to give emphasis to the absence of cultural vacuum in his Igbo community, but also to point out the deliberate imposition of the "benefits" of the British religion, education and democratic institutions.

The organization of the Igbo society also rests on Achebe's description of Umofia, where the inhabitants practice rituals common to their native traditions. The oral tradition's stock of beliefs and social customs provide a rich source of inspiration for Achebe. He reflects, for instance on the Igbos' worship of Gods who protect, advise and reprimand them. The Gods are represented by priests and priestesses within the clan. For example, the Oracle of the Hills and the caves grants knowledge and wisdom to those who are brave enough to consult him. No one has ever seen the Oracle. Achebe describes how spirits affect crops, influence rainfall, avert sterility, and punish evil doers. The spirit world is protective even to the point of surrounding believers with an indestructible magical superstructure. For instance, the villagers of Umofia communicate

with the spirits through rituals which regulate their beliefs. The Igbos also link their physical world to the spiritual universe of their dead ancestors. For instance, the villagers of Umofia communicate with the spirits through rituals which regulate their beliefs. They also interact permanently with their dead ancestors with a personal 'Chi' and nature deities under the watchful eyes of the supreme God, Chuku.

Another instance of the organization which characterizes the Igbo society is the existence of a calendar. Time is measured by generations, seasons, lunar cycle, planting and harvest festivals. For example, Achebe reflects on the festival motifs, the narrative is set in a typical indigenous festival atmosphere to celebrate the harvest. It opens with a festive celebration which deals with an event of social, religious and economic importance in the life of the Igbo people. The peasants sing and dance the song of harvest in praise of the earth and the Gods. The importance of the event makes Achebe devote the whole of chapter five to its detailed description (P.26-36). Ritual and ceremonies of healing and purification have also provided the basis, both in terms of their content and structure for Achebe's novel. Therefore, Achebe's depiction of the totality of the Igbo society is a deliberate way, as Jan Mohamed observes, to counterclaim the denigrating view of his culture in colonial literature. The critic adds that Achebe is "drawn to realism partly in order to counter the 'racial romances' of Joyce Carry" (Jan Mohamed, cited in Bloom.2002.41).

However, in *Things Fall Apart*, there are several points which Achebe openly criticizes in his society. He does not spare the evil of the Igbo traditional life. He portrays his Igbo society overshadowed by the ever-dark presence of danger, fear and death. This fear is apparent in numerous scenes showing that Achebe is quite honest about the "primitive" nature of the society. The inhabitants of Umofia, though called "the children of the forest", are afraid of the unseen, and darkness held a vague terror for these people: "a snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear"(P.7). Even the bravest Umofians, like Okonkwo, are terrified by dread of evil, impulsive Gods "his life is dominated by the fear of the forest forces, fear of capricious gods and of magic, forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw"(P.9). It is an integral part of the Igbos' beliefs that only magic provides the answer of the harmful mystical forces that beset them

in their environment. The fear of dark and magic forces pushes Obierika to take his twins and throw them alive into the evil forest. The author's criticism of the act is voiced by the Obierika who questions the practice saying: "what crime had they committed?" (P. 43).

In addition to the obscure forces of nature, the Igbos are terrified by their Gods who are obeyed without questions by the members of the community. Some sacrifices and donations are offered by the villagers to Gods for various purposes. They implore them in order to avert calamity and atone for offences committed. For instance, after beating his wife in a week of peace, Okonkwo offers a she-goat, a hen, length of cloth and a hundred cowries (P.22). The sacrifices serve to express gratitude to divinities for their blessings and guidance. In the Igbo community, no one can call into question the vengeful acts of Gods even when a religious rule makes no sense as it was the case in the execution of the innocent Ikemefuna. Achebe comments the act severely by using the voice of Obierika who utters his criticism through a proverb "if one finger brought oil, it soiled the others" (P. 89). The proverb articulates the collective submission of the Igbo people and their total capitulation to their Gods's capricious and malevolent acts. The killing of Ikemefuna also makes Nwoye rebel silently against the tradition by embracing the White man's religion (P.103). In certain sections of the novel, Achebe openly disapproves some of his folk practices such as child mutilation by the medicine man. He is also against children's mutilation cult, described through the Ogbange, wicked children who, when they die, enter their mothers' wombs to be born again only to die again. Achebe condemns the practice of their mutilation at their death, and the fact of drawing them by the ankle on the ground. They are buried in the evil forest, tied to trees, abandoned to die and to be devoured by birds of prey and vultures (P.56). Achebe also attacks the Osu cult of marrying with certain groups because the descendants were sacrificed to some deities (P.113). Another out dated fashion is seen in the disposal of the body of a person who commits suicide. Suicides also are considered as an abomination of the earth goddess, the persons who commit this evil doing are buried like dogs in the evil forest. Achebe's objectivity lies in presenting the two facets of his Igbo community. The seizure of a mother's only child, the expulsion of a man from his fatherland for the accidental

shooting of his kinsman is balanced with the Igbo society's strength and stability goes hand in hand with their brutality and will for violence.

Nearly the same paradigm is reflected in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*; its author's recuperation of his cultural heritage is simultaneously objective and subversive of the avowed intention to resuscitate the dignity of ancient practices. Similar to Achebe too, Feraoun's evocations of cultural traditions serve two purposes: first, it is to contest the French allegation that Algerians in general are uncivilized. Second, it is to provide a background justifying the narratives insistence on its own realism. Feraoun is committed to rehabilitate his culture and his cultural roots. He treats the conflict of cultures and expresses a desire to salvage his culture from the brutalities of French colonialism. He relishes anything his Algerian culture embodies because the theme of celebration of cultural heritage, with its social values, has a special place in the novel.

Feraoun's Algerian culture is displayed all through the novel, starting from the name of the village where the story is set. Ighil-Nzman suggests a historical place reminiscent of the past order and stability when people lived in harmony closely linked by family contacts and their love for their land. Except for brief accounts of disruption, resulting from the exposure of one of its members to a foreign culture and values, Feraoun's presentation of the period suggests social tranquility and shows the villagers' sacred respect for the earth, their closeness to it, and their dependence on it both in life and in death. The name of the village, Ighil-Nzman, is also suggestive of the author's evocations of Kabyle traditional life style where the concept of the tribe is consistently used as a signifier of order, harmony, and the depository of a valuable cultural heritage and cohesiveness. The community depicted in Feraoun's second novel, is distinguished by its fairly traditional values such as obedience to authority through certain customary laws and the preservation and observance of the ancient cultural practices prescribed by the ancestors. All of them aim to strengthen peace and order. Feraoun conveys, most faithfully, the quality of life in Ighil-Nzman. The scenes he depicts come to life largely because of the wealth of details and the liveliness and appropriateness of the imagery he appeals to. Realism in *La terre et le sang* rests on Feraoun's description of the basic qualities of the traditional life in his homeland including his

people's vision of life, communal concern, love for labour, social equality, and contentment with little. The social lives of the villagers of Ighil-Nzman are characterized by particular values and respect for traditions. They include patience, tolerance, honesty, respect for others, communality and mutuality, compassion, regard for due, discretion, gentleness, modesty, self-control, moderation, and flexibility. These customary laws encourage people to uphold the principles which constitute the basic pillars underpinning the culture of peace. The principles in question include tolerance, respect, and consideration for the neighbors. They play the greater part in transmitting important traditional values to future generations. The inhabitants of Ighil-Nzman delight in what they produce for themselves. In that community, there is no desire to be above others and there is no wish to excessive acquisition of wealth. In poverty, they are as content as in plenty. The villagers remain in solidarity of the poor and exchange favors, help, sympathize with each other and at least share their fate. In a certain sense, the vision of Feraoun is to show that the Kabyles can confront their problems and their past through the use of local laws. The framework of perpetuating his society's cultural identity is apparent in the social behaviour of its inhabitants. As with Igbo villages, the social organization of Ighil-Nzman and its various folk practices and beliefs are also the mainstay of the action in Feraoun's novel. The village of Ighil-Nzman, as with all the other Kabylean villages, is endowed with suitable structures for solving different conflicts, problems of inheritance, infidelity, and other conflicts (P.92). It is organized and structured in ways that encourage cohesiveness and peaceful coexistence. From time to time, like any other human societies, it experiences conflicts. The conflicts arise between individuals or between families (Kharroubas). The way in which the villagers settle their disputes is striking and the colonial officials are absent from the process. All social problems are resolved on the basis of the consent emanating from open public debates in a manner that protects not only the rights of the individuals concerned but essentially the corporate interests of the whole community as well. The individual's interests are entwined and inseparable from the Kharouba and the village. The village is coherent because it is an organic unit with its moral order. Under this system, the elder is recognized as having an advisory role and plays an active part in strengthening solidarity and social harmony. The fundamental characteristic of the village is the respect given to the elderly in

general, and to l'Amin, the elder of the village in particular. He is respected by all, and plays a key role in solving conflicts and resolution.

When a conflict degenerates into armed violence, an appeal is usually made to a third person of mature years to calm the tension and reconcile the combatants. Such an appeal for mediation is usually made to the head of the family, a 'Tamen', who enjoys the consideration and respect of all who know him. The chief of the khabouba goes to meet the opposing parties, and interposes himself between the fighters to make them see reason. When words prove fruitless, the gesture signifies a curse for those who bear responsibility for such a grave act. Because of the respect that people owe the Tamen, they will obey before the fateful acts are accomplished. It can happen that negotiations and mediation fail. So, Tamens or chiefs of all the village families are invited to deliberate with the head of the community before the problem is exposed in front of all the villagers in a public Assembly, "Tadjmaith", where the quarrel is settled. The ceremony of the assembly is directed by l'Amin, the village elder. To manage a conflict, the village is endowed with well-organized regulatory machinery, 'Tadjmaith' in which 'l'Amin', the village elder, most of the time, plays a major part. 'Tadjmaith' is a generator of culture and the place of men as mediators of that culture. The authority of the village elders is based on rational, orderly, and democratic principles as Hanoteau and Letourneaux summarize it in their book entitled, *Les coutumes Kabyles*, where we can read:

L'organisation politique et administrative du peuple Kabyle est une des plus démocratiques et, en même temps, une des plus simples qui se puissent imaginer. Jamais peut être, le système de self-government n'a été mis en pratique d'une manière plus complète et plus radicale; jamais administration nombre aussi restreint de fonctionnaires et n'a occasionné moins de dépenses à ses administrés.

(Hanoteau. Letourneaux.1969:01).

[The political and administrative organization of the Kabyle people is one of the most democratic and, at the same time, one of the simplest that one can ever imagine. Never a system of self-government has been put into practice in more comprehensive and a more radical administration has never counted a limited number of staff and has resulted in less expenditure to its citizens].

The excerpt suggests that the village is a complete democratically organized unity. Its elder is, most often, a man of very advanced age whose moral integrity is acknowledged by all the members of the community as he has a very broad array of actions, and is associated with all

meetings and consultations. Thus, he is required to possess a wide range of qualities and competences including a sense of responsibility, patience, good personality, oral abilities and decency. He should also be familiar with all customary laws because he is responsible for the day-to-day management of conflicts. He is in charge of mediation and is consulted on all problems. Therefore, he needs to know exactly what the problem is and what is at stake. His role is to carry messages of peace and reconciliation by mobilizing and encouraging the forces of peace. He does not only communicate to people wishes of peace of the ancestors with whom the villagers are in contact, but also the requirements for maintaining harmony with nature with which they are in communion(Bourdieu.1987:9).

The head of the village is on the alert and reacts immediately at the least sign of disagreement between the members of the community and has the immediate effect of stopping aggressive acts. If he notices a menacing quarrel, he quickly calls upon the protagonists in order to question and calm them. After listening attentively to both querulous families and persons, the aggressor acknowledges his mistake, submits himself to mediation and accepts the Assembly's verdict. Once in the midst of confrontation, he mediates the conflict between the two families and serves as an intermediary. In the end, the person at fault asks the offended party to forgive the offender or offenders to heal the wounds and to cement the agreement. After discussion, he keeps a watchful eye on them for a substantial period of time until quarrelsome families are pleased that their advice had borne fruit. Finally, they are requested to drink and eat together to seal their reconciliation with a shake of hands or a kiss to celebrate peace. In the Kabyle traditional society which Feraoun refers to:

La nourriture crée en Kabylie des liens. Au-delà d'un simple rite, elle unit à travers le repas communiel ceux qui ont mangé sous un même contrat. Partager un repas correspond toujours à recommencer quelque chose en mettant un terme à tout ce qui s'est passé.

[The food creates links in Kabylia. Beyond being a simple rite, it unites through the communal meal those who ate under one contract. To share a meal always means to start something new and put an end to what so ever past happenings]. (Makilam.1996: 50).

Makilam suggests that the conflict ends once the two families are reconciled and share food. The head of the village is neither paid for his work nor works alone. He is always subordinated by

some representatives of the various Kharoubas, “Tamens” in settling the differences peacefully and establishing good relations among the villagers. The Tamens play the role of intermediaries or mediators between the head of the village and the villagers. But to gain the trust and respect of people, they should be just, honest and show integrity. They contribute to reconciling the individuals involved in a conflict and play a role of keeping watch over the community (Bourdieu.2006:9).

The next value which features prominently in Feraoun’s novel is the celebration of the dead ancestors and the land that are revered by the living for their ability to ward off the evil or offer protection to the living. In Ighil-Nzman, any human endeavour can be achieved without the active support and cooperation of the dead ancestors. Consequently, either in action, in mood, and feeling, the dead are usually beseeched and implored by the living. Sometimes, prayers and offerings are given to them especially in situations of need and danger (P.75). For the inhabitants of Ighil-Nzman, the dead ancestors, in a way, are not really dead; their exit from the living world really provides them with the opportunity to look after the welfare of the living people. In short, the dead constitute an integral part of the villagers’ cosmos. To show his countrymen’s, respect for the dead and the land, Feraoun reflects on their closeness to earth and their love of labour. The novelist takes the reader through the seasons of harvest and crops and rounds of social activities. The love and attachment to the earth appears mainly through the way Slimane works his land. It is a way to make the reader see and feel the way that man cherishes the land and treasures his environment as Makilam rightly observes:

Les Kabyles se situaient à l’intérieur de la nature d’ensemble cosmique. Ils étaient liés dans un même dynamisme de vie et dépendent des données physiques et des forces vitales du surnaturel du ciel avec ses principales étoiles, la lune et le soleil. Ils lisaient le temps annuel afin d’organiser leurs activités matérielles selon l’évolution naturelle de la vie de la terre visible dans la végétation: un changement de couleur des épis sous le soleil, leur maturation lente puis rapide sont toujours considérés comme le plus sûr des calendriers (Makilam.1996 :138).

[The Kabyles located themselves within the whole natural cosmos. They were linked by the same dynamism of life and depended on physical data and on some vital forces of the supernatural from the sky with its main stars, the moon and sun. They read the annual time to organize their activities according to the natural evolution of life on earth which is visible in the vegetation: a change in the colour spikes through the sun, their slow and then rapid maturation were always

considered as the most reliable and exact calendars].

By drawing some parallels between the above passage by Makilam and Feraoun's narrative description, it becomes clear that Feraoun offers a true picture of Ighil-Nzman along with its cultural past, its social structures, its order and the respect of its inhabitants for the earth and the dead ancestors. As Achebe, Feraoun describes many religious beliefs and indicate the close link between people's mystical union with the spirits and the dead ancestors who are believed to be the guardians and fertilizing agents of the land. The spirits and ancestors are considered to be invisible but they reinforce this union and act as the source of human possibilities. Thus, sacred places, ancestors and other symbolic objects play an important role in two texts.

In a similar way as Achebe too, Feraoun describes the ways in which rigid notions of tradition are established through particular historical circumstances. He, for instance, does not only enumerate the various positive aspects of his community, but also offers many commentaries on some of them. As an illustration, he inserts an implicit criticism of the less admirable aspects of social and individual life of the described community. The story is characterized by unquestioning conformity to the cultural values of his village which are mixed with signs of what I regard as an implicit and sometimes overt rebellion against certain customs and negative traditions such as gossip, arranged marriages, superstition of the Marabouts, witchcraft and the oppression of women. Feraoun considers these practices to be narrow, restrictive and conservative. Such aspects appear in the authors' ambivalent attitudes towards the characters and his community. For instance, in a veiled and implicit humor, Feraoun criticizes some of the outdated traditional habits which force the women to bear children, conflicts between the Kharroubas, and illegal links. Feraoun alludes to Amer and Chabha who deviate from society's cherished norms. He then exposes the negative aspects of those who see nothing good in their own traditional background like Rabah ou Hamouche who forgot his fatherland and died in exile. Feraoun also condemns the shocking tradition that permitted Smina, under the pretext of getting her daughter to bear children to use witchcraft and superstition to the extreme (P.158). In the same context, the voice of the narrator mocks the fact that Slimane goes to visit the diviner, Si Mahfoud hoping that he might put an end to his impotence: "Si Mahfoud était un grand marabout

et grande est sa baraka. Il savait ce qui se passait dans le coeur des gens!’’ [Si Mahfoud was a great marabout and great is his baraka. He knew what was going on in the hearts of people!], voiced by the narrator in a high ironic tone (P. 78). As Okonkwo, Slimane is profoundly superstitious and endlessly gullible in matters of religion.

More importantly, Feraoun does not neglect to express his point of view regarding the pitiful conditions of some women oppressed by patriarchy. He catalogues, for instance, the misery and the woe of Fetta, including way she is ill-treated until she bitterly dies in isolation. Satire surfaces in phrases as: « Hocine qui, sur- le champ, l’engrossa » [Hocine makes her, at once, pregnant] (P.121), followed by :”Fetta grimpa dans son perchoir, avec une veille natte et les plus mauvaises couvertures. Elle aménagea sa couchette entre les jarres à provisions et d’autres ustensiles fatigués’’ [Fetta climbed into her perch, with a mat and some of the worst covers. She set up her berth between the storage of jars and some useless utensils] (P.122). In this particular case, the author challenges discrimination and the voice of the narrator is critical of the inherently repressive roles assigned to women in his ancestor’s patriarchal society. The narrator’s attitude, in this section of the story, fluctuates between the objective tone of a disinterested observer, reporter and a commentator. The other aspect of social reality that comes under sharp criticism in Feraoun’s novel is gossip which has come to characterize the Kabyle society. Feraoun expresses overt criticism of his people’s way of keeping watch over the affairs of others and their endless gossip. Feraoun’s criticism appears in a number of derogatory remarks made about gossip as: “les antennes mystérieuses” [mysterious antennas] (P.125), and “il est permis de broder”[it is permissible to embroider (P.123).

To sum up, it needs to be stressed that Achebe and Feraoun do not exalt traditional virtues or idealize their communities without, at the same time, condemning their peoples’ faults and defects. Both authors stamp out the regressive elements which they perceive as threatening to the integrity of their respective cultures. They reveal, for example, the fierce sense of the Igbo and Kabyles, their beliefs in witchcraft, and superstitions side by side with their powers of patience, their dignity, and endurance. Both depict villages where individual faults and merits are

described, and both do not only record the belief of their ancestors, but they also comment on their social or cultural functions. It is important to notice, however, that description of the rituals and customs say less about authenticity than about historical consciousness of its participants. They are meant to instruct their peoples about their identity to tell them about what they have forgotten. Achebe and Feraoun's extensive effort to re-create the style and rhythm of African life and narrative representation of traditional practices acts in their texts to show their historical importance. In so doing, the two authors align some historical details with ethnographic discourse to suggest that the Western ethnography about Africa can be parodied by the invention of an African tradition which is based on ethnography with a historical perspective. Both writers, in my view, convey social injustices under colonial administration that foreground the two novelists' historicizing gesture which distinguish their ethnography aiming at reconstructing pure or whole rituals. The ethnographic descriptions are aligned with historical details and say less about authenticity than about historical consciousness of its members. The characters' remarks are not cast as a discourse of belief, but as a discourse of knowledge. This ethnographic discourse contributes to make the two narratives' representation of the traditional practices act dramatically in the texts to show their historical importance. Achebe and Feraoun do not only use ethnographic description, but also subvert them in showing the ways in which rigid notions of tradition are established through particular historical circumstances. The historical insights that Achebe and Feraoun foreground in their fictions go against the stories they narrate and the ethnographies they provide. History, in this context, is used as a "device" because it teaches something different. In other words, the two authors demonstrate that the timeless, ethnographically complete traditional culture frozen in time is not valid.

Finally, the operative concepts, in Achebe and Feraoun's thoughts, are the experience of colonialism as what Jan Mohamed considers as cultural "denigration" that forced the African intellectual to envision a cultural "restitution" (J.Mohamed.1990: 153-154). Both Achebe and Feraoun affirm the contemporaneity of their own cultures with those of the West. The Ibo and Kabyle cultures are not decidedly a finished thing looked at nostalgically at the moment of the novels composition but the very perspective from which an African writer of the 1950s is looking

at his continuous history. Both authors show the persistence of the African ways of life during the colonial period, and analyse historically the tendency of their cultures to dissolution by avoiding the ethnographic fancy of reconstructing a coherent whole. Such a common tendency comes to sight in the way they shape their characters.

Chapter Four

Characters as “a Technique” in the Novels

The next discursive strategy with which Achebe and Feraoun’s novels provide a demonstration of the ‘glocal’ aspect of their novels is, in my view, their way of turning their characters into “a technique” in the manner of the Russian formalists. The conception of the character, in both *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang*, is complementary to others. In both novels, characters have a generic function and do not stand by themselves. Like the characters of African folktales, they are associated in a relationship to others who echo them, but without duplicating them. They flow into each other and into the landscape, in a series of relationships and role inversions, a technique reminiscent of the African popular folktale figures. Moreover, characters are historical agents who continue to shape their own cultures. The two authors set out to tell the story of these characters and restore them to full humanity. In so doing, both bring into focus the “global impact of colonialism” and create a link between “local” representation and the issue of identity construction. The influence of African folklore on Achebe and Feraoun’s characters appears in their search for a moral value in a world that is permanently overwhelmed by change is the milestone on which the two narratives are built. Achebe shares with Feraoun an interest in specific moments of historical and cultural transitions combined with the ways their main characters have been caught up in such changes. Both writers consider the links between individuals, history, and interaction between personal and communal causes. They also explore the problem of individual blame in a universe where individual power is determined by forces outside one’s control and one’s knowledge.

Achebe and Feraoun do not set out to idealize their characters, but illuminate the best in them as they criticize their negative qualities. They are realistically drawn and easy to identify with because they are replicas of real ones because they are built according to aspects of popular and accepted Igbo and Kabyle thoughts and belief systems completely different from the projections of the colonizer’s fantasy. It is also through the characters that Achebe and Feraoun transform the western individual tragedies to collective ones. What also unites the characterization

in the two texts is the fact that Achebe and Feraoun place African characters at the centre of the stage as thinking, speaking, and feeling subjects. Both stories are about passionate and complex human beings with virtues and vices, desires and obsessions, faith and illusions, loves and hates. In a simple and clear language, Achebe and Feraoun populate their novels with characters who appear as normal human beings with all their imperfections, yet instilled with a great deal of virtue and an admirable sense of responsibility. In addition to these general common features between the characters of the two novels, a comparison can be rounded off by placing some characters of *Things Fall Apart* side by side with those of *La terre et le sang*. The striking similarities between the two novels, is to draw some parallels between the two main characters, Okonkwo and Amer-ou-Kaci. Both are comparable through their identity crises, their social achievements, their loss of identity, their search for it after their return from exile, and finally, by their doomed illusions and awful deaths.

Beyond the Tragedy of Okonkwo and Amer ou Kaci

The portrayal of Okonkwo resembles that of Amer-ou-Kaci in several aspects. The structures of the two novels are determined by the two protagonists' path from initial optimism and 'grandeur', through part-fulfillment of their aspirations to their ultimate disaster, caused partly by forces which they are incapable of understanding and controlling, and partly by their personal weaknesses and their inability to adjust themselves to the colonial imposed order, understanding of their peoples, and accept the cultural changes. Okonkwo and Amer are complex characters. If for the former as well as for his society, prosperity and confidence in the future can only be possible with hard work, in Ighil-Nzman, Amer-ou-Kaci is valued through his working skills and his education.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the growth of Okonkwo towards his tragic end is described through three stages, corresponding to the three sections of the novel. At the start, Okonkwo is depicted amidst ceremonies of innocence, peace, devoutness, and pleasurable communal life. Driven by fear, he commits offences which lead him to seven years of exile in his mother tribe, Mbanta. After his return, things change with the coming of the white man to Umuofia. Unable to adjust himself to the new order, Okonkwo kills a white messenger before he

commits suicide. Okonkwo is, as the narrative begins, endowed with all the impressive qualities which his community takes pleasure in and possesses all the marks of success. He is determined, a man of action, a wealthy farmer, having two barns full of yams, three wives, and two titles. Though he is a son of a lazy father whom he sees as failure, the young Okonkwo lifts up his status of a poor youth to become one of the strongest, wealthiest, and most honored men of his village. Achebe forces the reader to admire the strength and the determination of the character. His village, Umuofia is not a chief-directed society. It is rather an achievement-oriented society where a man does not inherit titles and social rank from his ancestors, but he gains them by his own acts: "Fortunately, among those people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (Achebe.1958: 6). Okonkwo's self-confidence is revealed in the scene when he goes to borrow some seeds from Nwankwo. The main character, in praising himself, affirms:

I know that it is hard to ask a man to trust another with yams, especially these days when young men are afraid of hard work. I am not afraid of work. The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if one else did. I began to fend for myself at an age when most people still suck at their mother's breasts. If you give some yam seeds I shall not fail you (P.16)

This passage shows Okonkwo's confidence and self-reliance. He believes that he is not only different from the other members of his community, but places himself beyond them. He can succeed where the others fail because he resembles the lizard which succeeds to climb until the top of the highest iroko tree. He is determined to be different and shows his desire to conform to his society's aspiration for success through hard work. The Umuofians recognize that Okonkwo is an embodiment of their values by choosing him to be the emissary to Mbaino to settle the tribal conflict after the murder of a woman from Umuofia. The villagers also make of Okonkwo the guardian of the hostage, Ikemefuna. His uprightness also convinces the members of his community to decide on making him the representative of his village among the nine masked Egwugwu. Okonkwo for his part, at the outset, does not deviate from the virtues of his society, but tries to stick to them.

Yet, while Okonkwo has many fairly universally recognized virtues of honesty, hard work, loyalty to the group, and courage, he is quick to anger. He is a troubled individual with a deeply repressed feeling of anger, aggression and becomes a relatively brutal husband and father. His harsh actions and fierce beatings of his wives are fuelled by his fear of weakness. As the narrative progresses, he develops a loathing for anything feminine and becomes not only 'macho' but expects the same of all men around him. In a way, Okonkwo strives to compensate for his father's lack of strength and tries hard to be extra vigorous. But the excess of vigor and other personality flaws will not only nullify his individual accomplishments but also precipitate his catastrophic demise. Okonkwo is presented, on the one hand, as a superior human being, set above common men because of his remarkable and extraordinary physical force, but he is inflexible on the other hand. His psyche is permanently overwhelmed by a blind passion to succeed and by fears of being weak like his father. Okonkwo is dogged by the memory of his father and his fear of failure leads to his restlessness and to an overabundance of nervous energy: "Okonkwo had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough; he would use his fists (P.3). He is driven by some inner uncontrollable forces which make him impatient with unsuccessful man. His personality is then characterized by a one-dimensional perception of reality that makes him take some personal decisions that hasten his calamitous end. He does not use dialogue in dealing with his family and his face never relaxes into a smile. He rather uses force and intimidation in dealing with people. His harsh and nervous temper, fierce emotionalism and his predisposition to violence lead him to be nicknamed "roaring flame" (P.110). Because he is unable to control his anger, Okonkwo commits many offences. The first happens during a sacred Week of Peace when he beats his wife to death because she makes a trivial remark about his skill in hunting. Okonkwo behaves aggressively when all sorts of violent acts are banned by the Igbo customs: "He was not a man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a Goddess (P.21). In addition, though he is warned not to participate in the killing of his surrogate son, Okonkwo's fears of being thought weak pushes him to strike the fatal blow. Okonkwo cuts down the innocent Ikemefuna's head with his own machete against the advice of his friend Ezeudu (P. 43). As a result, the harsh inflexibility of his masculine values

leads to a break between him and his son Nwoye who never forgives his father's taking part in Ikemefuna's execution. For David Carrol, the death of Ikemefuna is a turning point in the novel:

The guardianship of the boy was a mark of Okonkwo's hard-won status and the highest point of his rise to power. The execution of Ikemefuna is the beginning of Okonkwo's decline, for it initiates the sense of catastrophe which ended in his death. But this event is not only a milestone in the career of the hero. The sympathetic rendering of Ikemefuna's emotions as he is being marched through the forest to his death has wider implications.

(O. Yasere.1998:129).

However, one of the most crucial, if not the most serious wrongdoing which is committed by Okonkwo, is his killing of Ezeudu's son. It is the most critical of a number of acts motivated by his temperamental violence and restlessness. As a consequence of Okonkwo's errors, his family is destroyed and is exiled for seven years to his mother tribe, Mbanta. There, his strict character leads Nwoye to run from Umofia to live with the white men in the newly established mission. Nwoye is not only driven to the coloniser's religion but he also rejects all that his father stands for by converting himself to the Christian religion and by changing even his name. Nwoye is given a new self-identity; he is called Isaac (P.103).

Thus, Okonkwo becomes an unhappy man, immensely lonely and his isolation becomes more marked by his return to his fatherland Umofia. After the period of his exile, Okonkwo becomes unable to make compromise and fails to adapt himself to the changing conditions brought by the arrival of the missionaries and the white man's government. He exhibits uncontrollable hysterics of violence when disturbed by his clansmen's submissiveness. He gets furious when the villagers do not organize themselves to fight the white men. He does not only fail to convince his fellow villagers to drive the white men from Umofia, but he also loses their support. Finally, he is caught in a lonely battle against the intruders and responds by refusing concession. For Okonkwo, to enter into dialogue with the white men is in direct disagreement with his beliefs. For him, co-existence is impossible between the new society and the traditional one. The conflict becomes inevitable with the coming of Mr Smith who sees things as 'black and white'. The conflict reaches its peak when in a meeting, a court messenger arrives to stop the meeting and Okonkwo, impelled by the destructive force and hate within him, kills the man with

his machete. As the novel ends, Okonkwo is totally disillusioned and convinced that he is the only representative of the old proud order. As a reaction to his clansmen's passivity, he puts an end to his life as Richard Begam observes: "In taking his own life, Okonkwo has simply preceded his people in their communal destruction" (Bloom.2004:05).

With the death of Okonkwo, an old age passes. His death symbolizes the demolition of his clan which is replaced by the District Commissioner, the representative of the new order. The same representative commands the elders to leave Okonkwo's house and they obey without murmur. Achebe deplors the passing of the old order and its replacement by another which is only remarkable for its ignorance of the Igbo customs. Okonkwo's tragic death stands for a vanishing world so rich in dignity and human values which are replaced by the formality and fragmentation of modern society. Achebe describes Okonkwo's struggle against himself and against his environment as a tragic hero. But unlike the Greek tragic heroes, Achebe does not intend to raise the reader's pity and fear but rather to elevate a feeling of loss. In our view, Okonkwo's downfall followed by the disintegration of his community is a manner, for Achebe, to prove that what was lost in the encounter with Europe is more noble and dignified than what was gained. Okonkwo's decision to commit the ultimate of self-destruction signifies a desire to end all his troubles. His suicide can also be considered as a victory, a conscious act of refusal to become a prisoner in the Whiteman's orders, it is an act of resistance against conforming to the colonizer's ideas. More significantly, the fact that Okonkwo cannot be buried properly with honors as a great man, as it is voiced by Obierika, makes him a martyr, a new type hero that Achebe elevates out of the realm of his personal failure into the historically significant realm of anti-colonial resistance. As Kenneth Harrow observes, Achebe places Okonkwo in both contexts by having him appear as both an unreal folk hero and as a 'real' psychologically flawed protagonist whose weaknesses coincide with the historical demise of his society's independence (Harrow.1994: 116).

Just like Okonkwo, Amer suffers from his loss of identity. He tries to regain it after his return to his homeland but fails and ends his life in a tragic way. His story is that of a man who willfully goes beyond the safe limits of his community, and pays for it heavily. His attitude is that

of a young man exposed to western values and after returning to his native village, he becomes uprooted from his home traditions. He is crushed by the clash and ends in tragedy because his behavior does not conform to the standards of his community. Feraoun shares Achebe's preoccupation with the clash between the old and the new, the impact of westernization and the evils of colonialism. But some of the tragic features discussed above about Okonkwo's tragedy, do not apply to Amer. In *La terre et le sang*, the society as well as the ancient order do not decay as in *Things Fall Apart*. In Feraoun's novel, the society consolidates itself, rather than disintegrating. The traditional way of life presented by the villagers is strong, durable, and closely knit.

Like Achebe, Feraoun traces Amer's itinerary which leads to the psychological transformation that foreshadows his tragic death. Similar to Okonkwo, Amer's life movement is comprised of three independent components: his life in Europe, his return to his homeland, and his gradual reinsertion to his community interrupted by his adultery and followed by his death. Amer's story, though set mainly in Ighil-Nzman, is structured around a series of journeys, each of which takes him and the reader not only to a deeper and complex understanding of the culture which has shaped the personality of the character but also of the degree to which Amer has grown away from it. The first is Amer's journey from his fatherland to France; the second is his wandering around the French towns; and the third, the most significant as it depicts his return to his village. At the beginning of the novel, Amer reminds us of the young Okonkwo. He is shaped by the Kabyle society of that time where people view education as the only way a Kabyle can improve his living conditions in the context of colonialism. Education enables Amer not only to attain a power in his community but allows him to have all the qualities of a hero. He is endowed with many merits apparent in his decent behavior, learning, and self-control. He is brave and shows respect for his community members. Amer is also a motivated hard worker and is courageous enough to seek fortune and to find a place for himself in a foreign country. At first, Amer possesses a superb intelligence, tremendous enthusiasm and great organizing ability. Some of these qualities are summarised in these sentences. Amer, writes Feraoun, «était jeune et robuste, avait fréquenté l'école, ne flânait pas à l'ouvrage. Il pouvait abandonner ses travaux

Kabyles, apprentissage ingrat, et aller gagner gros à l'usine» [(Amer) was young and strong, had gone to school, did not loiter in work. He could give up his Kabyle, unrewarding apprenticeship for a big earning at the factory] (P.52). In addition, despite the very hard working conditions in the French mines, Amer has the ability to bear pain without drawing back, “il attend la deuxième année, car il aura l'âge pour descendre dans la mine [...] c'est dans la fosse qu'on a l'impression d'être un homme” [He waits for the second year to attain the age to descend into the mine [...] it is in the pit that we get the impression of becoming a man] (P.49). The way Feraoun endows his main character with an extraordinary strength led Christiane Achour to note that Feraoun constructs a discourse “une espèce de mythe du muscle, de la force, du travail, comme moyen de tester ses possibilités et sa virilité (Achour.1990: 175).

The way Feraoun historicizes the portrait of traditional Kabyle society is in relation to the historical immigration and colonial injustice. It is through Amer that Feraoun depicts the emigrants' tribulations at the hands of the French masters and does not lose the opportunity to criticize the French administration. The author exposes the French presumption in disposing justice based on total ignorance of Algerian emigrants' rights. The description of the hardship and oppression under which the emigrants live in France are inspired by the endurance of Feraoun's own father who was victim of an accident in one of the French mines of Aubervilliers in 1927. The author's vivid description of the terrible conditions forces the reader to feel a strong sense of compassion for these emigrants who endure the cruelty and inhumanity of their French masters. They are deprived of their basic human rights; they are denied access to socio cultural development opportunities and economic benefits; they are outcasts.

To explain the reasons that cause Amer's disillusion, Feraoun inserts carefully some flashbacks to throw light on Amer's experience in France and shows that Amer's behaviour is shaped by particular social circumstances. Feraoun does not present this movement as a logically coherent narrative, but rather he calls it to mind through ellipses (flashbacks). Feraoun quite fastidiously analyses the causes of Amer's suffering and locates them not merely in the acts of an individual injustice but rather to lay bare the colonialist system of exploitation and social

injustice. During the beginning of his stay, France seemed to Amer as a dreamland and a place of tremendous opportunity. Like many colonized subjects he, at first, idealizes Europe. But shortly afterwards, his stay then takes a tragic turn as a result of disillusionment and alienation, both physical and psychological and finds himself in a vicious circle from which he cannot escape. Feraoun then depicts the French environment as a sterile and mechanized world where the emigrants are objects in the hands of the French colonizer. Feraoun's strongest condemnation of colonialism is given to the character André, the Polish miner. He is more listened to and better ranked than the Algerian emigrants although an immigrant himself. Amer cannot be given the same privileges as the Portuguese or Italians. French justice remains deaf or indifferent to Amer's words because he is not a European. The police would rather listen and trust André than Amer. The narrator denounces avowedly the French injustice as follows:

On savait bien comment les choses se passaient, dès qu'il s'agissait 'd'Arabes'
Il suffisait de voir la manière d'enquêter. Tout le monde était pressé d'en finir.
André n'avait qu'un témoin. Le pauvre Rabah avait pour lui l'équipe entière.
Mais on n'insista pas. André fut mis hors de cause (P.75)

[We knew how things were going on when it was the case of "Arabs". Suffice it to see how the investigation was conducted. Everyone was in a hurry to end with it. André had only one witness while the poor Rabah had for him the entire team. But we did not insist. Andrew was exonerated].

The excerpt reveals that Feraoun packs in not only the resentment against the perversion of colonial justice but also the inefficiency of the entire western democracy. During the period of his self-imposed exile, Amer's experience in France has been traumatic. After the accident in the mine, he undergoes the painful experience of recurrent traumatic nightmares of Rabah's accident in the mine: "Le crâne ensanglanté, la tête bouillie aux mèches gluantes, visage écrasé avec un caillot noir sur la bouche et le nez" [The skullbloodied, the head reduced to pulp with matted strands of hair, face crushed with a black clot on the mouth and nose] (P.54). Anxiety invades his body and mind. Life in the French cities nauseates him, and his sense of loss and confusion is expressed in this way: "Il sombra dans un état d'hébétude, voisin de l'inconscience [...] il était indifférent aux événements" [He sank into a stupor; akin to unconsciousness [...] he was indifferent to events] (P.55). Amer's loss of direction is further accentuated by his arrest and

imprisonment by the German troops during the First World War. The West becomes a surrealist world in which people are merely pawns and puppets in the hands of the oppressors. Therefore, Amer's feelings of sadness associated with guilt are replaced by those of fear and self-doubt. When he loses his job, his eyes are opened to the sordidness of Western civilization, with its squalor, injustice and exploitation. After the war and once released from prison, Amer is, then, overcome by the nostalgic desire to get closer to his oppressed people.

Feraoun effectively portrays Amer's strong instinctive attachment to his fatherland, his sympathy for his oppressed brothers, and the dehumanizing effect of emigration. In this respect, he lives with them and shares their misery. This is partly the reason why, like Feraoun himself, Amer has been unable to adjust to circumstances anywhere he has gone. Amer is convinced that France is a place where it is impossible for an Algerian to reach self-fulfillment. After a period of wandering in French towns, Amer meets Mrs Garrett who tells him about Yvonne and her daughter Marie. Despite the fact that Amer has been constantly a victim of social injustice and oppression in France, he does not hate all the French people for, he believes, as Feraoun himself did, that some French people such as Yvonne and Mrs Garrett are good, honest and just. Amer's conscience is then appeased as soon as he meets Marie. He tries to correct his misbehavior and pays his debt by marrying Marie, Rabah's daughter: "le sang de Rabah revient dans celui de sa fille" [Rabah's blood comes back in his daughter's] (P.108). As the French environment does not offer happiness, Amer decides to return to his fatherland for deliverance, peace and hopes to reintegrate himself into the mainstream of his society.

Right from his return from France, Amer is disillusioned with native life because he returns home to find that his father died and his land has been mortgaged by his cousin Hocine. In addition, because of his involvement in the murder of Rabah ou Hamouche, Amer and his mother have been excommunicated in public by the Ait Hamouche. Their banishment resembles that of Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Though he suffers a cultural loss and becomes a victim of moral degradation because of his exposure to European experience during his fifteen years spent in Europe, Amer tries to modify the fatalistic view of his emigration experience by turning it to his advantage. He spends most of his time working hard which gives him the opportunity to

regain his father's piece of land which has been sold to his cousin Hocine. In a short time, he becomes easily the most respected man in the village, the one to whom the inhabitants of Ighil-Nzman look for leadership and whom they affectionately call their "Tamen". He, then, recognizes, respects, and adheres to his folk's norms by becoming their spokesman and the elder of his Kharouba in the village assembly, 'Tadjmaith'.

For a while, Amer does not feel particularly isolated because he becomes part of a group surrounded by his clansmen. He turns to the other villagers, in the café, for companionship and amusement. As he is able to reintegrate himself into village life, he becomes a pivotal part of the social, cultural and spiritual community that surrounds him. His relationship with the villagers is itself characteristic of the bonds between him and his fatherland. Amer's immediate reintegration leads the villagers to accept, respect, and even admire him. Amer stands out because of his remarkable qualities. He has not only the maturity but also the education. So, Amer-ou-Kaci resumes his esteemed position in society and reasserts his importance as 'a Tamen' though his remorse and confusion, worse than pain, sometimes blur his harmony and happiness. Amer is impressed by the harmony he sees in his village and thinks about becoming a farmer like his clansmen.

However, in spite of his sterling qualities, Amer does have some significant weaknesses, and these are just as important in precipitating his calamity and that of his family. Amer's exposure to European experience during his 15 years spent in Europe makes him lose his sense of identity. He typifies the educated man who has absorbed and been influenced by western ideas so that he no longer respects the older traditions of his people. He is so blinded by idealism in willing to introduce revolutionary reforms into the social life and outlook of his countrymen that he commits a big mistake. He falls prey to emotional turmoil and loses his moral balance, ideals, and starts disintegrating when he succumbs to the charms of his uncle's wife, Chabha. Amer shares with Chabha a deep intimacy and is then caught between his love and his duty towards his wife and community. Feraoun's depiction of the love affair is rendered not in western concepts but in those which are fully Kabyle. For instance, the author bases his interest on Amer's signs of inexperience and his love for a married woman that makes him oblivious of his

village's traditions. It is scandalous in a traditional society that a man dares to have a relationship with a married woman. Amer's desire to be with Chabha is based on a conscious decision and a deliberate awareness of the consequent blow. Feraoun shows that, in Ighil-Nzman, such love is only impossible because it violates profoundly the Kabylean "code of honour" which punishes by death any act of adultery. Those who risk an adulterous adventure will automatically meet death as a repercussion. Adultery is considered not only as inappropriate but shameful and sinful. Therefore, Amer offends one of the most important codes of moral behavior in his society and his rehabilitation to resume his place in his community after fifteen years elapses.

Like Okonkwo, Amer deviates from his village's law that his clansmen hold sacred. His act is deviant in relation to traditional inherited values. Because of such a deviancy, the celebrated value of 'code of honour' is badly shaken. As Amer deliberately goes against the village norms in having a love affair with Chabha, his jubilation will be short-lived. The tragedy begins when things leave their accustomed place as Amer meets Chabha secretly in Tighzrane. His meeting with her is a foolish act and his appearance at the fountain in the company of Chabha leads to disastrous consequences. First, his clansmen are deceived by the love affair which brings the conflict and confusion to a head. Then, Amer and Chabha become a prey to the villagers' gossip, especially women. The culmination of the gradual loss of self-assurance and dignity accentuates with Amer's lack of caution and neglect in meeting Chabha secretly, and marks the beginning of his downfall as his act is a direct assault on the villagers' traditions. Consequently, Amer does not only lose his high rank and his countrymen's esteem but has to endure their accusing eyes. Amer is further humiliated by a drunken villager (P.201) and loses his dignity. His conflict or struggle for self assertion can be added to his continuous incorrigible behavior. Amer's resistance to folk values and his inconsiderate attitude towards village customs cause not only his death, but also engulf his beloved Chabha, his mother, his wife, and the whole village in a great grief and unhappiness as the novel closes. Amer's tragic end can be subject to four interpretations: Firstly, the death of Amer means that no one can escape his fate. Amer falls in a trap exactly on the same model as that which André sets for Rabah ou Hamouche. Secondly, Amer's tragedy signifies his failure to reintegrate into his community. As he becomes alienated and unable to reintegrate, he

kills himself since western values implanted arbitrarily lead to his destruction. Thirdly, Amer's death means victory and not a hopeless ending since in death; Amer finds the harmony and rest that eluded him from the moment he left his homeland. The closing chapter is an epilogue in which the death of Amer leads him towards peace, reconciliation, and reconnection to the earth: "Ce sont les pierres et la terre-même qui le tuent". [It is the stones and the earth itself that have killed him] (P.220). The return to his final resting place can be seen as the ultimate source of peace and harmony that Amer found so deceptive in his life. It is a place where all his conflicts vanish. It becomes perfectly clear that the death of Amer and Slimane have merged their souls at rest. The sinister death ends Amer's consciousness of guilt while Slimane is granted grace and peace by his return to his beloved land. Finally, what the death of Amer offers, is a warning to observe correct behavioral codes. Amer's misbehavior as a man, who rebelliously steps beyond cultural limits, is met by troubles as a consequence of his misconduct. If we consider Amer as a tragic hero, then the flaw is something in him which leads to the love affair with a married woman and his hubris has to be his belief that his personal desires can be or have a right to exist in a traditional society. Amer's love affair with Chabha does not only bring shame and humiliation on their families but also brings to the ground Marie and Chabha and affects the lives of the entire village. As the novel closes that the love affair with Chabha takes the tragedy to its furthest extreme by the sense of disaster it causes to his mother, his wife, his relatives and friends. In our view, the story has three "endings": the first is the horrific death of Amer the second the effect on Chabha and Marie; finally, is the apparently conclusion drawn by the villagers, who discuss the incident thoroughly from all sides until it was understood, and that conclusion is spelled out briefly by Lamara.

On the basis of what has just been said, it is clear that Okonkwo's downfall and Amer's demise are analogous. Okonkwo's pride, courage and hard work are perfectly impressive, as are Amer's integrity, fairness and many other virtues which represent the aspiration of their cultures. Amer is an admirable man in every way. He has a deep sense of obligation to the values and honesty of his culture. Similarly to the heroic stature of Okonkwo, his position is both as great and as tragic. His fall originates from bad fate but also from his errors. Second, the point of

intersection between the two novels occurs in that Okonkwo and Amer's tragedies have not reached their ends. In other words, the tragic destiny they imply continue to be lived out by their descendents. Our reading of Achebe's *No longer at Ease* and Feraoun's *Les chemins qui montent* indicate that Okonkwo and Amer's tragic destinies are inherited by their family members. Obi Okonkwo, the son of Isaac (Nwoye) ends his life in prison while Amer, the son of Amer-ou-Kaci dies in a mysterious way just like his father. Therefore, Achebe and Feraoun's central characters bridge the literary and cultural contexts. Their cultural identities are fully integrated with their characterization as literary figures, and they influence the nature and outcome of their actions, personal conflicts, and relationships with the other characters.

The other character in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* who is a tragic figure and can be compared in many aspects to Achebe's Okonkwo, is Slimane. The strength and physical appearance of this character reminds the reader greatly that of Okonkwo. Slimane also possesses some tragic features and resembles Okonkwo physically as well as morally. Slimane is a rogue "une bête immonde" [A vile beast] (P.70) and bears a resemblance to Okonkwo's physical appearance, his force work, and his love for farming. As Okonkwo too, Slimane is brutal, rigidly stubborn, and emotionally an isolated man. In Achebe's novel, Okonkwo loves his daughter Ezinma but he never shows such emotion clearly. Something similar seems to happen exactly to Slimane when he keeps secret his great affection for Marie who is probably his niece. Feraoun shapes Slimane as the best example of the ordinary man for whom the traditions prove too strong. He claims our sympathy and understanding as an example of a simple, frail human being. Slimane is a skillful farmer and the reader appreciates his skill and initiative. The work fascinates him; he is a determined and a talented farmer. We admire Slimane's devotion as he strives after perfection, for only perfection will express his love for the land he cultivates adequately. Land has a symbolic value in the novel and its importance lies in the fact that it establishes a bond between people. Slimane symbolizes the pliability, perseverance and permanent love of the Kabyles for their land.

Though Slimane works hard, he lives an unhappy life because his wife is plagued by infertility (P.119). As Okonkwo, Slimane is superstitious because he believes that the Marabout

diviner, Si Mahfoud is capable of putting an end to his curse. His visits to the diviners can be compared to Okonkwo's, in *Things Fall Apart*, to that of Chielo to cure his daughter Ezinma (P.55). As the narrative progresses, Slimane becomes so discouraged that he accepts bitterly his childless state. He lives in distress because he has no successor to continue the family lineage after his death (P.70). To safeguard his heritage, he decides to give all his property to Chabha through a contract with Amer. We also pity him for the humiliation he suffers from his wife's adultery. He becomes cruel to himself and to the world around him. His restlessness is due to a mixture of impatience and doubt about the growing relationship between Chabha and Amer. The news of the forbidden passion is reported, first, through gossip among women, and then it reaches men, voiced through the mouth of a drinker. Slimane is then confronted by a sharp moral crisis for which his society has no answer. He is caught between two fires, to believe the news or to ignore what happens. Unable to find rest, the gossips propel him to keep watch on the two lovers. One night, he sees Amer and Chabha discussing quietly behind a tree. The two lovers are enjoying the pleasures of their love in such a way that they are completely blind to what is taking place around them, namely, the presence of an observer. Slimane becomes haunted by the memory of what he sees that night. As he rests on his bed he thinks about what he has seen and he swears vengeance. He sits alone in near fire sobbing bitterly, with his troubles reflected on his face. So while Chabha continues to behave normally, her husband flounders aimlessly (P.106). The gossip of people turns him into an aimless, brooding character who can no longer find peace until he takes his revenge. In his despair, Slimane longs for revenge and what he sees that night hardens his will to revenge. In all passion and rage, he silently plans to take his revenge because he cannot overcome his jealousy. Slimane's wilful blindness to revenge is accentuated by the ghostly figure of his brother, Ali who haunts him every night urging him to revenge the death of their elder brother, Rabah. The horrible feeling passing through his mind allows him to lose his temper. Further to this, he suffers the anguish, the humiliation and the absurdity of the story of Amer and Chabha. Slimane's downward spiral of degradation, despair and gradual impotence gives the story much of its emotional force. As the novel ends, Feraoun leaves the thread so suspended concerning Amer's death that the reader does not know exactly if Slimane mistakes his

vengeful will for the will of his brother Ali or takes his revenge for Amer's disloyalty. Slimane plans to kill Amer because it is the only way to get out of his dilemma. We can observe that Slimane's ending happens in the same way as that of Okonkwo. Slimane's denouement comes with his determination to cleanse his honor by getting rid of Amer. His act can be paralleled to Okonkwo's hysterical state of mind and his determination to relieve his clan of its curse, by killing the white messenger. Beyond the common features between Okonkwo, Amer and Slimane that are singled above, the parallels in characterization between Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* include also many common points between the two main characters' friends and advisers, Obierika and Ramdane. Both characters are invested with authority in terms of morality, flexibility, and truth.

Obierika – Ramdane as Voices of the African “Amusnaw”

Obierika and Ramdane are endowed with many virtues. They are very significant characters because they have a powerful influence on the two main characters. Ramdane, for instance, assumes the position of guide and advisor for Amer and the same role is given to Obierika for his friendship and loyalty to Okonkwo. Obierika and Ramdane are characters in whom resides an abiding, soft nature which forces the reader to feel respect and sympathy. Like Obierika, Ramdane is not a great talker. He speaks when he must and his words are carefully chosen, go to the point, and speak of tolerance and forgiveness. Both characters are equally dedicated to communal rather than personal welfare.

In *La terre et le sang*, Ramdane is Amer's 'Guardian Angel'. He is presented as a unifier, a moralist, and therefore a model of character to follow. Feraoun shapes Ramdane as a wise man who ought to be consulted in time of conflict. His wisdom is clear and untiring from the beginning of the novel and appears in his readiness to reconcile the Ait Larbi and the Ait Hamouche families. He also mediates the quarrel between Amer and the Ait Hamouche, attempts to convince Slimane to not only accept and forgive Amer but also to agree for a compromise (P.74). He convinces him that his nephew deserves kind consideration and forgiveness and hopes to spread the gospel of reconciliation and brotherly love between the two families. He tries to erase the disagreement and hate of the Ait Hamouche and the Ait Larbi caused by Rabah ou

Hamouche's accident in the French mine and keeps insisting that Amer is neither a guilty nor a wicked person, and that he is rather a victim of André's conspiracy. More significantly, Ramdane is shaped as the guardian of the tradition too, the voice of old ancestors as well as an executive of wise decisions. Feraoun also uses this character as a vehicle for expressing some of his own ideas and projects. He advises Amer and invites him to come back to the wisdom of the ancestors in the cemetery (P.103). He has proven to be wise and succeeds in maintaining his position in the village. He also keeps the respect of his neighbors integral. In the course of the narrative, Ramdane is depicted as a more thoughtful man than Amer. The expression of his own passionate feelings is made in coherent and carefully structured sentences which indicate his considerable self-control. As the situation deteriorates with the women's gossip at the fountain, followed by the drinker's sharp words, Ramdane remains quiet and succeeds in using, without any reservation, whatever means are necessary to avoid any kind of humiliation (P.200). All these examples prove that Ramdane accommodates himself with his surrounding environment. All his virtues force the reader to regard Ramdane as the sanest and the most sensible character throughout the novel.

The same role is played by Obierika in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Distinct from Okonkwo's fearless, crude declarations, with an obsessive quality to his tone which reflect an abnormal emotional state of mind, Obierika appears as a man endowed with wisdom and full of common sense. The character is introduced in chapter eight, following Ikemefuna's death (P.46). From the moment of his appearance in the narrative, Obierika is presented as a man deeply compassionate and receptive, a man of thought rather than of action (P.64). He is also generous and tolerant. Unlike Okonkwo who is a man of few words, nearly all the information and the reflection on the realities and consequences of the colonial intrusion are voiced by Obierika. He is the only member of Umofia to understand and regard as a real danger the Whiteman's presence in his village. He is presented as someone who thinks about the changes and who cares about their consequences. Obierika is shown as one who tries to find a balanced assessment that adapts to time and place. He confesses his anxiety to his friend Okonkwo saying: "I'm greatly

afraid. We have heard stories about the white men who made the powerful guns and the strong drinks and took slaves across the seas, but no one thought the stories were true” (P.101). His speech is equipped with a measured dignity and a willingness to accept compromises. As an illustration, referring to Ikemefuna's execution, Obierika tells his friends Okonkwo "I would not dispute nor be the one to do it" (P.56). The character's flexibility is opposed to Okonkwo's blind adherence to the limited image of force. Obierika warns his friend Okonkwo that his involvement in Ikemefuna's death offends the earth Goddess (Ani) for which he will be inevitably punished. The prophecy is fulfilled at Ezeudu's funerals when Okonkwo's machete explodes and accidentally kills the dead warrior's ten-year old son. The revenge of Ani is thus manifested in Okonkwo's punishment and his exile to his mother's village. Obierika is affected by his friend's exile and laments the severity of the act. So, after his friend's departure very early in the morning, Obierika" sat down in his Obi and mourned his friend's calamity"(P.89). Obierika is not indifferent to the harshness of his society's traditions which he voices through this questioning "Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently?". The calamity of Okonkwo reminds his friend of a bitter moment when he abandons his twins in the evil forest because the earth Goddess Ani ordered it. Obierika criticizes his society and expresses his grief by another comment "What crime had they committed?"(P.47). Obierika knows when it is appropriate to ask questions that will lead to consistent upholding of societal and individual harmony. His flexibility is also perfectly apparent in the way he answers the question about why not to fight the White man:

How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us?
The Whiteman is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion.
We were amused by his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won
our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the
things that held us together and we have fallen apart (P.127).

The passage reveals that as the situation worsens in Umuofia, though Obierika is a great warrior, he sees that fighting the white men is similar to committing suicide. At the end of the novel, Obierika loses all his sense of objectivity and reflects on his friend's death showing his complete bitterness which he voices as follows: "That man was one of the greatest men of

Umofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog"(P.149). So, even at the death of his best friend, Obierika still has the strength to make a final honour to Okonkwo in front of the colonial administrator. Obierika, then, succeeds where Okonkwo fails because he has a more stable temperament and knows what he wants out life by following, in a moderate way, the Igbo traditions and accepting the changes. However, Obierika's remarks are cast not as a discourse of belief or tradition but rather as a discourse of knowledge which has lost its relevance because it is transmitted to those who are not knowledgeable of tradition; it is therefore another way Achebe historicizes his traditional Ibo society in relation to the history of colonial injustice. Thus, Obierika is shaped as the best quintessence of soberness and good judgment. Obierika's many virtues, as David Wittaker observes, makes him 'live his name'. The signification encoded in the name inhabits the character's experience of inter subjective sociability. He is astute in discerning the small, barely tangible but socially cementing swiftness of personality and character; he is deeply humane and sensitive; he is imbued with sagacious but unflawed moral imagination (Wittaker.2007:35).

In sum, our comparison of the two characters reveals that Obierika bears closer affinity to Ramdane. Both characters are conceived roughly along similar lines and the descriptive terms that apply to Obierika all apply to Ramdane too: they are both alike in the words they use, the pattern and tone of their speech, the figures of speech they employ, the nature of their conversations, and their mannerisms. Ramdane's wisdom connects him every bit as much with Obierika's thoughtful probing of the future. The next common link between Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* is reinforced by some parallels between the women characters. The women representation in the two novels does not stand as a depiction of individual characters. All of them are generic, functional, and stand for the collective's traditional way of life.

The Burden of Tradition and Patriarchy in the Two Novels

The roles assigned to the feminine characters in the two novels speak to the need to reverse the complement of laws and social norms that are fundamentally made and enforced by men. The female characters take care of their families to ensure the stability and continuity of the community. Women in both societies exist to reproduce and reinforce patriarchy. They are accustomed to suffering and they consider it as inevitable. Feraoun resembles Achebe in describing women's subjugation to man. In both communities, men dominate social organizations, they are masters, make law mostly in their favor and to suit their needs, and make it appear to be right. In Kabyle traditional society, women have no free choice in marriage while in the Igbo community, law and customs allowed men to have more than one wife but women have only one husband. In my view, Achebe and Feraoun are merely putting their two novels to mimetic use, reflecting the oppressive mores and traditions of their respective communities. Like Achebe, Feraoun is quite honest about the oppressive nature of the Kabyle culture and makes no effort to gloss over how difficult the women's lives are. A kind of compassion in Feraoun's attitude to these women is conveyed in many direct ways. However, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the female characters play a minor role while in Feraoun's they are often more important, frequently, playing a significant part integral to the development of the story. We argue that the female characters in Achebe's novel are essentially secondary when compared to the completeness with which Feraoun renders, for example, Chabha and Marie. Yet, beyond all the differences, there are some common characteristics that make Achebe's portrayal of women characters, in *Things Fall Apart*, resemble that of Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*.

The first common point is that, in both novels, women are defined by the status of their husbands and fathers and their social advancement is possible primarily through marriage. In the two novels, women accept patriarchy as a norm, and in no way, aspire for equality with their men folk except Ezima and Chabha who dare to challenge their patriarchal social order. Women in the two novels ask only for the right to occupy their own spaces, from within which they derive their

greatest satisfaction as productive members of their communities. For instance, mothers appear to play a significant role in the moral and spiritual development of their offspring in both societies. Their stories and folktales serve the purpose of educating young ones in the communal ethic of sharing, embody the values and beliefs of the group, and guide their future actions and behaviors. Women's involvement in the works that concern men also shows the various ways in which their participation maintains the community harmony.

In Achebe's novel, the women have a very low status and are considered as mere objects. The woman is offered as a form of reparation "blood pact" not only to put an end to the conflict but also to preclude any future conflict between the descendents of the two clans (P.11). They are systematically excluded from the political, economic, judicial and even discursive life of their community. As an illustration, they content themselves within their domestic works and the upbringing as well as the educating of their children. They, for instance, repair the house of the Ekwugwu from outside but they never see the inside, they do not venture to look inside: "no woman ever did, no woman ever asked about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the clan", writes Achebe (P.64). Women are also barred from their own marriage ceremonies. For instance, during the ceremony of her marriage, Akneke enters carrying a wooden dish with three Cola nuts and alligator pepper. She gives the dish to her father's eldest brother and then shakes hands, very shyly, with her suitor and relatives [...] she returns to her mother's hut to help with cooking without uttering a word (P.51). A similar instance is illustrated by the attitude of Okonkwo when Nwoye's mother dares to ask if Ikemefuna, a lad placed in her husband's custody, will stay with them. Okonkwo howls, saying: "Do what you are told, woman [...] When did you become one of the Ndichie of Umofia?"(P.14). So, a woman in Achebe's novel is not only excluded from the public sphere but is also completely submissive, powerless, and silenced. Achebe's portrayal of Chielo and Ani, the only women in positions of power, are despotic and destructive. For example, Ala or Ani is a capricious Goddess because she forbids the Osu as well as the ones who have a shameful disease to be buried in her soil. She orders the twins of Obierika to be thrown to the evil forest (P.47). Roze.U.Mezu, a feminist critic states that in Achebe's novel:

African women languished on the fringe of their universe, neglected, exploited, degenerated, and indeed made feel like outsiders. They werenot invited to stay when men were engaged in any discussion, they werenot included in councils of wars, and they did not form part of themasquerades representing the judiciary and ancestral spirits.

(R.U.Mezu.1995:02).

The above excerpt indicates the way Achebe shapes his women characters which has been the object of disapproval especially from some feminist critics, Florence Stratton at their head. In her critical reading of *Things Fall Apart*, Stratton blames Achebe for granting insignificant roles and status to all women characters of his first novel. To reinforce her argument, Stratton bases her disapproval in citing C.L. Innes's analysis of Achebe's characters as contrasts to Joyce Cary's portrayal of Africans. Innes writes that Achebe shapes his characters as complex individuals, rather than archetypes. However, Innes's assertion is valid only with regard to Achebe's male characters. For while a fair number of male characters such as Okonkwo, Unoka, Nowye, Ikemefuna and Obierika have complex personalities, all of women characters including Ekwefi, her daughter Ezinma, and the priestess of Agbala remain shadowy figures. The critic adds that Ekwefi, Ezinma collapse into stereotypes while Chielo is a feminine archetype. As an illustration, Ekwefi, who runs away from her first husband so that she can live with Okonkwo, is passive in her response to the beatings she receives from her husband and even his attempt to murder her. She seems to be content with her condition as a battered wife and remains of a limited stature though she is admirable for her courage. She defies the Gods by refusing to abandon her only daughter while Okonkwo participates in the killing of Ikemefuna for fear of the Gods' anger (Wittaker.2002:111).

Florence Stratton pursues her condemnation with reference to Ifi Amadiume's revisionist analysis entitled: "Male Daughters, Female Husbands", who holds Achebe responsible Achebe for his masculinisation of Igbo society by assigning the name of "God water" for a 'water Goddess'. Amadiume also maintains that Achebe marginalizes the most important Igbo deities, Idemeli while Ani's power is insignificant because she is not powerful enough even to protect Okonkwo's wives from their husband's brutality. Stratton ends her essay in writing that it is an issue to be regretted that despite all the strategic roles which women are able to play, Achebe

grants them an insignificant role in the narrative. The feminist critic also charges Achebe in making women in *Things Fall Apart* passive, submissive, powerless and voiceless. She disapproves sharply of Achebe's way of shaping women characters in his novel for they are marginalized, have no names, and they are numbered as Okonkwo's achievements. For her:

As to reflect their social insignificance, Achebe does not bother to name Okonkwo's wife until the narrative is well under way. At the beginning of the narrative, they are merely numbers representing an apparently minor part of Okonkwo's achievements [...] it is until chapter four that Okonkwo's first wife is called Nwoye's mother, and his third Ojiugo. His second is not named Ekwefi until after she has, in anonymity, first been beaten and then narrowly escaped being murdered by Okonkwo (Ibid.P.111).

Stratton illustrates her point of view by reference to Okonkwo who was provoked to justifiable anger by his young wife because she went to plait her hair at her friends' house, and did not return early enough to prepare the afternoon meal. The critic notes that even the narrator sides with Okonkwo because its voice passes the judgment on Ojiugo's irrationality and thoughtlessness from her husband's perspective. Achebe, pursues the critic, does not bother to let Ojiugo explain herself on her return. Stratton reaches the conclusion that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and can be juxtaposed to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe's sexist description of women, in *Things Fall Apart*, is similar to Joseph Conrad's racist portrayal of Africans in his novella. For Stratton: "The critical silence on the work's sexism can be attributed to the same cause as that which Achebe assigns responsibility for the silence on Conrad's racism" for Achebe does not tell the African women "where the rain began to beat them" (Wittaker.2007:116).

Achebe's description led also many African women novelists to react and embark on a revisionist way of shaping their women characters in their novels to dismantle the myth of female irrelevance by challenging the archetypal roles of women as mothers, witches, and capricious Gods. For example, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and her *Idu* (1970) depict women in positive ways. She will be followed, in the same vein, by Ama Ata Aidoo's *Dilemma of a ghost* (1965), and Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* (1980).

A similar trend of emphasis on the role of a woman as a mother and a submissive house wife is also noted in Feraoun's novel. In Ighil-Nzman as in Umofia, women are denied confident

access to public expression because speech is a male privilege while women's talking is restricted by the customs. If permitted, it is still characterized by its private nature, as an extensive of trivial domestic discussion. They do not take part in making decisions about issues which concern or affect them. All the important issues are limited to men's gathering in 'Tadjmaith' that is an exclusively male province. During the village assembly, only men are accepted, they meet and talk of important matters away from women. In Feraoun's *La Terre et le sang*, all the female characters stand as symbols of the Kabyle traditional culture. Feraoun stresses the constraints placed upon them as indicative of what he saw as repressive in the Kabyle culture. In the novel, women concern themselves with their families, maintain relationships, and tend to the spiritual and moral well-being of the family group. They are encouraged to care for others and consider the maintenance of the relationships as their domain. They also consider the links and interest in people important. The woman character in the novel, as Naget Khedda rightly observes shifts and follows the development of the Kabyle society (N.Khedda.1991: 34).

In *La terre et le sang*, the Kabyle woman is represented firmly in the private sphere as she would be in the traditional society of that time. By using the character of Chabha ou Ramdane, Feraoun shows that a Kabyle woman earns respect and becomes fully integrated into her husband's family only if she bears children. She deserves credit for nothing other than procreation. In other terms, a woman, in the traditional Kabyle culture, becomes entitled to any material inheritance only through her male children. Such a situation explains Slimane's fears that his family ends because he is childless (P.117). More importantly, in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*, a woman is oppressed by the harshness of the traditional society which cripples her desires and mutes her motivations: «L'austérité des moeurs était le fait de la nécessité et de l'habitude plutôt que d'une vertu exceptionnelle. Ce qui importait le plus, ce n'était pas l'amour mais la vie» [The austerity of manners was the result of necessity and habit rather than an exceptional virtue. What mattered most was not love but life], writes Feraoun (P.84). As in *Umofia*, a woman in Ighil-Nzman has not right to a say in any matter. She obeys without questioning, and follows the laws dictated by her patriarchal society. As an illustration, Chabha is compelled to marry Slimane, a man twice her age, who turns to be impotent. She marries him reluctantly because her

parents have chosen her for him. The patriarchal culture that the narratives revolves around presents Chabha as a woman bound to obey her father and the role of an obedient daughter should in the normal course of things lead her to follow his wishes in her marital choice. To disregard her father's wishes and to marry a man who from the perspective of the social group to which she belongs is totally unsuitable. Feraoun does not portray Chabha in liberal humanist terms: she is not a free, autonomous agent in the choice she makes. In Kabyle Society, dissidence is not so much a matter of individual agency but is first of all produced by the inner contradictions that characterize the social order. Chabha resembles Okonkwo's third wife, Ekwefi in many aspects. What makes the case of both women similar is their limited stature due to their infertility. Like Chabha, Ekwefi suffers a great deal. She had born ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, before the age of three. Her only daughter left, Ezimna is an Ogbange that means she is a wicked spirit being born and dying over and over again, maliciously grieving its mother.

As in *Things Fall Apart*, there are two types of women figuration in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*; the good ones with no power, passive, obedient and submissive, juxtaposed to the wicked, powerful, foolish and irrational. The first category is represented by Chabha ou Ramdane who possesses all the noble qualities which all young women wish to acquire. Feraoun makes Chabha appear in Chapter fifteen and is described as a caring, tender, self-contained and reticent woman (P.136). She is very good at her work and is admired for her "special gift" in cultivating the land and nurturing her crops. With time, she gains the capacity to bear the neighbors stinging remarks about her barrenness without a repartee. She never engages in any serious dispute with another woman. It is in this way that her prestige among the village women grows until, even Hammama, the chattiest among them, is hesitant to be unpleasant to her. Chabha's generosity and goodness of heart are revealed when she reassures her husband that he should forgive Amer (P.101). In the same way, she does not hit back against the various insults of Hamama. Chabha's charity, generosity, the sense of honor and devotion to duty are evidenced when she proposes to Kamouma to sleep in her house. Chabha is also an exemplary wife that God granted strength to work and the same virtues are also found in Achebe's novel in the character of Ekwefi. Yet, though Chabha is an admirable hard working person, respectful, resourceful woman, and a dutiful

wife showing high regard for the reasonable norms of her society, her attractiveness and apparent innocence deceives her husband because she makes a terrible mistake. Her relationship with her husband is cordial but she prefers Amer's company to Slimane's. She sits in the moon light with him, chats with him for hours in the evening while her husband is left alone sleeping or amazed by his lonely fire. Her love for Amer leads the gossiping neighbours to criticize her. She, therefore, loses the villagers' respect because of her love affair with Amer, and for which she pays greatly. Amer and Chabha's relation is limited to a hide-and seek romance. This act is unbearable for her traditional community where a woman must accept things because the society recommends them.

The two other female characters which are described by Achebe and Feraoun in a positive way are Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma and Amer's French wife, Marie. Both Achebe and Feraoun express optimism in these two women characters. In *Things Fall Apart*, Ezinma is very often called, Ezigbo, which means "the good one" (P. 30). Though the reader catches only brief glimpses of her, she remains one of the few positive representations of women in the novel. She is endowed with many virtues such as tenderness, bravery, loyalty and faithfulness. The character serves to represent a young woman who is incredibly strong and intelligent. But she is weak in body and also perhaps in arguing any position. This is due largely to the fact that she is a woman, and of little concern in man's world. The author's sympathy is apparent in this description of the character's appearance. She is described as: "well, bubbling with energy like fresh palm-wine and this captures the quickness and effervescence of spirit that establishes Okonkwo's favourite child" (P.72). Ezinma symbolizes the future of the clan when she moves slowly into the cave and comes back in safety on the back of the oracle, Chielo.

The same positive description is granted to Amer's French wife, Marie. The French woman discovers that as soon as she crossed over to the village, she becomes no longer the same person. She redefines her position to people of Ighil-Nzman and accepts their customs. Marie makes her choice. She abandons and forgets her European world by integration with the villagers, and as the other Kabyle women, succeeds in living in harmony. She becomes one of them and is stripped of her French personality. She does not only put an end to her bewilderment and loss but

also manages to understand her surrounding and adjusts to her new situation. She also tries to get involved in the village life, and plays a new role by trying to erode her European personality (P.88). The villagers' warmth and welcome contributes to the dissolution of Marie's French personality, and favours her integration into her new environment. As Ezinma in *Things Fall Apart*, Marie as the novel ends symbolizes the future because she succeeds not only in being integrated fully in the Kabyle environment but also is able to manage her role as a wife. She carries on the name of her husband and puts her red belt on his coffin to inform the inhabitants of the village that she is expecting a baby.

In Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*, the other category of women with power are symbolized by Hamama, Smina, and Kamouma. In contrast to Chabha, Hamama is a frivolous, snobbish and selfish creature who appears to be the embodiment of all the Kabyle feminine vices and malice. She is arrogant, vain, ranking herself above the other women of the village (P.122). She has a sharp tongue and, most of the time, does not hold it as her conscience never stops her from hurting the sensibility of Chabha (P.188). In the same category of Hammama, stand Smina and Kamouma. The two old women function as agents or catalysts to the fall of the main character, Amer-ou-Kaci. They are a nuisance and a hindrance. This is apparent by the way they plot to make Chabha meet Amer secretly and encourage their prohibited love affair. Smina and Kamouma are also well known by their wearing chatter and their endless gossip; they are, most of the time, sharp-toothed. Smina is depicted as a kind of "an ill omen" woman. She is sufficiently foolish and irrational to force her daughter to commit adultery. She is also a figure of evil and cunning. The old woman is more anxious than her daughter. She does not only worry about Chabha's infertility, but tries all means to cure her. The stigma of barrenness pushes her to use all the possible treatments including the prepuces of a circumcised boy to put an end to Chabha's plight. By virtue of her desire to cure and protect her daughter, Smina uses all means even illicit or dangerous in order to put an end to Chabha's infertility. For instance, she forces her to eat all sorts of herbs, even the most noxious, for her health. The following passage illustrates best the point:

Si je pouvais l'acheter, ce petit fils, le sang de notre sang, je donnerai tous les

jours qui me restent à vivre pour le seul moment où je le verrai naître [...] Je ne parle pas des intestins d'hérisson grillés que Chabha mangea sept matins, dans du miel ; ni des crêpes préparées par une étrangère et arrosées de lait de chienne ; ni même de cette herbe des fous que pourtant peu de gens peuvent distinguer. Toutes ces choses, je les ai procurées à Chabha sans difficultés. Mais tout de même, cela ne se ramasse pas sur les chemins (P.158).

[If I could buy this little son, the blood of our blood, I will give all my life long left days for the sole and only moment I see him born [...] I do not speak of the roasted hedgehog intestines mixed with honey that Chabha ate during seven mornings, or the pancakes sprinkled with a bitch milk and prepared by a stranger woman, or even this grass of fools which only few people can find. All these things I have brought them to Chabha without difficulty. But still, these entire things can not be picked up on the roads].

The excerpt shows the plight and the despair of Chabha's mother and her readiness by all means to put an end to her daughter's bareness. Ramdane, her husband calls his wife: "les cheveux d'enfer" (P.211), and sees through all Smina's tricks because they are common practices in Kabyle society. She would have killed to see her daughter with a child. She resembles the legendary old woman in Kabyle folk tales, who competed with the devil twice and won the challenge by bringing tragedy and death to all her neighbourhood. Feraoun's sister, Tassadit, known as Titi, in *Le fils du pauvre*, told me that Feraoun knows about the legend of the old woman who succeeds in putting Satan in a bottle. It is from such old stories that he shapes the characters of Kamouma and Smina (From an Interview conducted on March, 2010 with Feraoun's sister Tassadit).

It is, however, important to point out that in Kabyle society, the woman is more valorized than in the Igbo. In Feraoun's novel, they play a leading substantial role both in their families and within their own circle. At home, the traditional Kabyle wife exercises a considerable influence over her husband although it was reported that this domestic authority was forced to remain absent in public: "[...] à tout bien peser, la femme n'est pas effacée dans le foyer. Elle le remplit de sa présence, peut-être plus que l'homme auquel il arrive de n'être que le chef nominal", [Concretely, the woman is not erased from her home that she fills with her presence, perhaps more than the man whom happens to be only the nominal head](P. 84). The most influential adviser of the husband in the intimacy of the bedroom is his wife. Indeed,

indications from Feraoun's novel show that Slimane seeks his wife's opinion. For her part, Chabha does not only give advice to her husband but she also influences the decisions he takes later. In the course of the narrative, Chabha participates in the development of the narrative. After Amer, she is probably the second most important figure in the plot, although she appears late in the narrative. The author insists on it in the fifteenth chapter. Feraoun highlights many qualities that Chabha are endowed with. She is a woman of twenty eight years who is forced by the weight of tradition to marry a man twice her age. She is distinguished by her kindness, generosity, spontaneity and love for others. Thanks to her strength of character, her decision making and her influence on her husband, she claims a real existence for herself. Given the reluctance of Slimane, Chabha persuades her husband to forgive the inevitable gesture of Amer and is able to bring about the reconciliation with the mother of Amer and the Ait Larbi. Chabha is courageous; she is doing well, helping her husband in the fields, caring for her home. Despite her sterility, she accepts her situation with courage and knows how to bear her misfortune and never abdicates. Chabha refuses the idea of a marriage of convenience with a man twice her age. She expresses this refusal through a secret affection to Amer, a handsome, young and attractive man. Initially Chabha considers Amer like a brother, but later she dares to take his hand and makes the first step. The courage of Chabha appears on the day of the death of Slimane. She keeps her head high before the Ait Hamouche and does not show weakness before her enemies. The endurance of Chabha resembles that of the earth which faces all kinds of misfortunes while Amer's love stands for Feraoun's unquestionable love for his culture and fatherland.

In *La terre et le sang*, it is the relationships Amer, Marie, and Chabha that operate to reveal Feraoun's discourse on the French language issue. The link is also used to show his preference. Amer is married to Marie, the daughter of Yvonne, the mistress of his uncle Rabah ou Hamouche in order to "correct his mistake and pay his debt"

(P.73). From his return to Ighil-Nzman, Amer engages in a forbidden passion with Chabha, the wife of his uncle Slimane. Feraoun uses the following sentence to announce Amer's preference, "Le véritable amour c'est chez soi qu'on le trouve" [True love is at home where it is found], (P.155). It is for Chabha that Amer gives body and soul and he prefers her to the seductive and charming Marie, the blonde with blue eyes and red lips (P.28). It is also because of Chabha that Amer perishes in the quarry, crushed by a rock, pushed by an invisible hand. Symbolically, Amer's total dedication and ardent love for Chabha is nothing but Feraoun's passionate devotion for his own culture.

To sum up my comparison related to the study of characterization of the two novels, I can say that in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, every action, thought, and the emotions of the individual character are inseparably bound up with the life of the whole community. Like Achebe, Feraoun, in his *La terre et le sang*, divides the human personality into mutually exclusive private and public sectors, all private dilemmas, ambitions, and understandings of his heroes are firmly grounded in public interaction. Both authors present individuals as complex social beings. *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang* can be then classified, in my view, as collective tragedies because the narratives are focalized on the larger social group. The tragedy of Okonkwo and Amer-ou-Kaci are closely linked to the tragedy which occurred in their communities during the period of colonization. The other parallel between the two novels concerns the representation of women. The Kabyle and the Igbo traditional communities are masculine-based societies. Feraoun likes his female characters because he is aware of the constraints that the traditional society imposes on them. He reflects, for example, the pitiful conditions of his women characters and their hopeful wish to survive. He catalogues the misery and woes of some of them. But perhaps the most significant instance of such tenderness is the one implied in the author's vivid description of Fetta's untold agony and atrocities she undergoes after the birth of her child (P.122). All these characters stay half away between their traditional culture and the foreign one. The authors are interesting models of positive hybrid intellectuals who have been exposed to foreign cultures, but nonetheless succeed in maintaining their basic African personalities. Their

insertion of folklore into an African reality is a proof that tradition would be preserved but not petrified, continually re-examined and re-adapted and syncretised with the beneficial effects of modern practices. In answer between modernity and authenticity, they propose a marriage of two contending tendencies that will produce healing narratives. *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang* demonstrate their authors' attempts to adapt the African tradition to the modern reality of Africa and the world at large in a manner that transcends ethnic and national boundaries.

Achebe and Feraoun's Oral Formulaic Style

In the course of the previous chapter, I have shown how Achebe and Feraoun have at their disposal certain Western literary forms and how they remolded them to suit their artistic objectives. It cannot be denied that both Achebe and Feraoun were fascinated by their readings of Western writers, but the oral tradition in the sense of a stock of oral narratives and a body of African beliefs and practices constitute another important source of inspiration for Achebe and Feraoun. Both remain firmly tethered to it, borrowing from its resources of legends, myth and folktales. Achebe and Feraoun derive their motivation from their cultural foundations by their use of folklore to expose the richness of their native cultures. By folklore, I mean the unrecorded traditions of a people as they appear in their popular fiction, customs, beliefs, magic rituals, and proverbial sayings. Folklore also includes myths, legends, stories omens, charms, spells. All of them are found among people who keep them in their memories and convey them verbally from one generation to another (Goody.2010:117).

In *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang*, the folk tradition forms the backbone of the two stories which are peppered with myths and legends preserved among common Igbo and Kabyle peoples. Both authors also incorporate into their prose the rhythm that conveys a sense of African oral storytelling. The two authors appeal greatly to the use of their African oral narratives which, in the words of Jack Goody, contain five aspects of literary forms including epics, myths, legends, folktales, and personal narratives which have many functions and many levels of interpretation. The telling of tales is often thought to be characteristic of all human discourse and

it is fashionable to speak of narrative as a universal form of expression, one which is applicable to the life experiences of individuals and to the dramas of social interaction (Ibid.122).

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's debt to the Igbo oral heritage is displayed by his use of some elements from oral tradition. The novel's characters speak and weave into the fabric of their everyday conversation with some allusions to folktales, legends, and myths. They support their opinions and attitudes with some appropriately chosen proverbs, traditional maxims and cryptic anecdotes. Their dialogues are chosen from an oral tradition. The non-verbal elements of music and their functions range from the creation of mood to local color, and African flavour. For Achebe, the purpose of using his oral legacy consists, first and foremost, in rescuing the image of his world from European Eurocentric discourse as Abdul Jan Mohamed indicates in his essay entitled "Sophisticated Primitivism: the Syncretism of Oral and Literate Modes in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" where he writes:

Faced by the colonialist denigration of his past and present culture and consequently motivated by a desire to negate the prior European negation of indigenous society, the African writer embarks on a program of regaining the dignity of self and society by representing them, in the best instances, in a manner that he considers unidealised but more authentic. This negative dialogue transcends the literary polemic about authentic "images" of Africans and manifests itself in opposition of forms as well.

(Quoted in Bloom.2004:41).

Thus, the use of some elements from oral tradition becomes a means, to Achebe, to reclaim the lost heritage through an appropriate use of the cultural and linguistic tools available to him. The task is done mainly in reviving past history found in oral traditions and the memories of old people. The Igbo people, as Achebe maintains in his article entitled "Chi in Igbo Cosmology", did not construct a rigid and closely argued system of thought. They explain the universe and the place of man in it. They prefer the metaphor of myth and poetry. Anyone seeking an insight into their world must seek it along their own ways. Some of these ways are folktales, proverbs, proper names, rituals and festivals. The prevalence of orality within Achebe's written narrative emerges as:

Repeatedly as a telling of history, and as an interpretation of other cultures; the complexity of oral communication and its centrality in the Igbo order of life is

frequently emphasized through the abstract logic of the proverbial speech, and through the complicated system of drums, which, similar to literacy, defies distance and demands advanced reading skills”.

(Katiadu.1998:22).

In *Things Fall Apart*, the devices Achebe relies on, to give form and pattern to his novel, are forms of traditional African oral literature such as proverbs, myths, and figures of speech.

As with the Igbo society, Kabylia communities have a vibrant oral tradition that has been transmitted from mouth to mouth through several generations. The oral legacy takes the form of songs, folk stories, poetry, proverbs and other types of oral performances from which Feraoun draws inspiration for his literary creations. Oral tradition has been the fountainhead for most of Feraoun’s narratives superseding its association with folktales and proverbs. Storytelling also occupies a prominent place in Kabylia culture in that it affords people the best chances for sharing experience across it. The cultivation of language sensibility takes place in the context of storytelling as a creative activity. It recognizes the value of memory as the key to people’s relationship with their past, their heritage and sense of identity, as people tend to remember in the present the things which in the past had borrowed significance for their existence.

As it is mentioned earlier, Feraoun went to schools of western education, but his instruction and socialization process started around the family’s cooking fires after the evening meals, when all the family assembled to listen and participate in story telling sessions. Feraoun grew up with tales about human beings personified as animals and animated trees, nature and spirits which constitute the largest corpus of the Kabyle oral stories. As a child, Feraoun was greatly influenced by the tales that his aunts (Khalti and Nana), used to tell in the nights around the firelight (Kanoun). In his *Le fils du pauvre*(1950), the author narrates the traditional folk approach of organizing night stories and riddles around his aunts who usually place themselves at the edge of an audience in a circular formation and start by the traditional formula, "Machaho tlem chaho atidba rabi amousarou", the equivalent in meaning of the English "Once upon a time". The formulation serves to capture the attention of the audience and establish a close link between

the orator and the listener. Feraoun describes his early immersion in story telling through his literary counterpart, Fouroulou Menrad as follows:

When sleep fails to come, we tell stories while Nana works. I have to say that These stories drew me strongly towards my aunts [...]. During storytelling, she and I were in another world. From whole cloth, she knew how to create an imaginary realm over which we were rulers. I became judge and benefactor of the poor orphan who wanted to marry a princess, all powerful, I witnessed the triumph of little Mquidech, who overcome the ogress, I whispered wise answers to Hechaichi, who tries to escape the chambers of the bloodthirsty Sultan [...] The story flows from Khalti's mouth and I drink it avidly.

(McNair. 2000:121).

The stories were used in educating child into the culture of his people, teaching him ethical principles and moral values, and anchoring in him the feeling of the group. In addition to this, the stories also provide recreation and entertainment.

As a schoolboy, the influence of oral tradition on Feraoun continued. During the holidays, Feraoun and some of his friends enjoyed playing the flute and singing in the summer nights. He listened to some of his friends reciting stories and poems of the famous Kabyle bard, Si Mohand ou Mhand. Feraoun was greatly influenced by Si Mohand's poems which he collected and translated into French, under the title, *Les Isfras de Si Mhand ou Mhand* (1960). The strength of Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* lies in its author's strong allegiance to orality and the popular traditions of the folk tale. Feraoun reproduces the rhythms, sentence patterns of Kabyle speech, rural images, analogies and maxims which directly come from oral tradition. Similar to Achebe, Feraoun's evocations of cultural traditions serve two purposes: first, it is a counterclaim to the French allegation that Kabyle are uncivilised. Second, it is to provide a background justifying the narratives insistence on its own realism as A.Lounis rightly suggests:

Feraoun n'est pas un simple transmetteur traducteur du verbe populaire, ni seulement le reproducteur de schémas culturels bien précis, mais un artiste doté d'une imagination riche et féconde. Celui-ci, indubitablement infiltré par la tradition orale Kabyle a su s'emparer d'une parole vagabonde et d'un imaginaire errant propre à sa culture, les agencer aux niveaux esthétique et narratif pour enfin les exposer par écrit dans une sorte de 'conte romancé'

[Feraoun is not simply a transmitter and translator of the popular verb, or only the reproducer of specific cultural patterns, but an artist with a rich and fertile imagination. He is undoubtedly infiltrated by Kabyle oral tradition and he

manages to take hold of wandering speech and imagination of his own culture which he mixes to the narrative and exposes as a kind of ‘fictionalized tale’].
(Lounis.1993:105-107).

The passage indicates the importance of oral tradition for Feraoun and its recurrence in his novels. There are hardly any of Feraoun’s novels that do not employ proverbs as literary devices which he borrows from oral literature to localize his novels in Kabyle culture. Apart from serving as means of cultural preservation, these devices also facilitate access to the novels through familiar images and sayings.

Recurrence of Proverbs in the Two Novels

A notable feature of oral tradition that is extensively exhibited in his *Things Fall Apart* is the use of Igbo proverbs. The narrative is full of proverbs and Igbo dictums which contribute to the evocation the cultural milieu in which the action takes place. It is useful to know that a proverb is a sentence or a phrase which briefly and strikingly expresses some recognized truth or revealed observation about political life which has been preserved by oral tradition. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses proverbs as generally accepted truths, ascertained through experience, and they are marked by the concise and figurative turn in their expression. The author records around twenty seven proverbs; all of them deal with all aspects of life. They are used to emphasize the words of the wise ancestors, and are the stock-in trade of the old people, who use them to convey precise moral lessons, warning and advice. The proverbs make greater impact on the mind than ordinary words and Achebe uses them as a tool to explain anything which is found difficult to understand. Proverbs teach morals as fables do but they are closer to real life than fables, some of them are partly true like common sense. So, Igbo people consider their use as a sign of intelligence. Achebe uses many proverbs in his novel because they are highly cherished in the society he has set himself the task of portraying: "the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which the words are eaten" (P.5). The proverbs are composed of gnomic and proverbial sayings and deserve attention both as literary forms as well as commentaries on the unfolding events.

Achebe's insertion of old sayings and proverbs start from the opening pages of the novel. For instance, he appeals to an Igbo proverb to show the wisdom of his people through the voice of Unoka about his debts, he says: "The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them (P. 6). Achebe then adds an Igbo saying to explain the early story of Okonkwo's passionate desire to do extremely well in order to diminish the image of his father which he fears his clansmen to equate with him: "when the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for walk (P.7). It is followed by another proverb which warns Okonkwo about his over confidence: "Those whose palm-kernels were crooked for them by benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (P.19). Many other sayings follow and here are some of them: "a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness" (P.16), " a chick that will grow into a cock will be spotted the very day it hatches "(P.47), " a child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into his palm"(P.48), " when mother cow is shewing grass its young ones watch its mouth"(P.50), "Eneke the bird was asked why he was always on the wing and he replied: "Men have learnt to shoot without perching on a twig"(P.183) "I cannot live on the banks of a river and wash my hands with spittle"(P.150), and "if one finger brought oil it soils the others"(P.89)

All these proverbs and old sayings are used to preserve the residual 'glory of the Igbo oratory'. Through the many proverbs used, Achebe penetrates the spirit of the world he represents and evokes the authenticity of his traditional Igbo culture. It is this individual effort to valorize local speech rhythms, idioms and culture specificities that Bernt Lindfors refers to when he observes that Achebe, at his best, manages to convey an Igbo flavor through skilful use of English language. He delineates people whose actions, behavior and responses are shaped by a language different from English. What is even important, however, is that the characters are shaped by their use of proverbs that function not only as accounting for the cultural and historical authenticity of the novel, but also as an important narrative, thematic and stylistic device. To anchor his argument, Lindfors maintains:

Achebe is a skilful artist as he achieves an appropriate language largely through the use of proverbs. Indeed Achebe's proverbs can serve as keys to an understanding of his novels because he uses them not merely to add touches of

local color but to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, and to focus on the values of his society he is portraying. Proverbs thus provide a “grammar of values” by which the deeds of a hero can be measured and valued. By studying Achebe’s proverbs were better able to interpret his novels.

(Bernth Lindfors(1998)Quoted in Wittaker.2007:68).

Besides the abundance of proverbs, Achebe fleshes out the picture of his Igbo environment with Igbo names. All of them are used in an appropriate way and are followed by their meanings to give them an Igbo dimension. They are deep and full of meaning because the Igbo culture attaches a great importance to personal names. This importance appears through Ekwefi’s change of the names of her babies to keep them alive (P.70). In addition to Igbo names, Achebe also deploys local symbols and some images from the Igbo environment as devices in such a way that they echo the artistic experience of the Igbo people with almost as much concern and enthusiasm. Likewise, the most obvious marker of orality that is displayed in *La terre et le sang* are proverbs. Kabyles, as Igbo, valorise the person who is most skilfull in handling proverbs. They respect most those who are persuasive in their speech in using proverbs. Inside the Kabyle society, proverbs are often referred to give weight to bare statement of fact. Feraoun appeals to some proverbs and sayings which contain simple but clear messages and moral teachings. Through the use of proverbs, mothers try to project to the children what they expect of them as sons and daughters in family and community. They show that the sayings expect the children to demonstrate responsibility through reciprocity and honesty and loyalty through mutuality and deference, faith and compassion through inner strength and self-control. They also focus on the importance in human living and consideration for others. The children are warned against greed and individual interests as major sources of conflicts and the young child are warned against them (Makilam.1996:222).

Feraoun, like Achebe, incorporates some proverbs deriving from his “terroir” to flavor his borrowed French language. *La terre et le sang* contains some proverbs which are borrowed traditions and modified to suit the socio-cultural context intended by the author. They are didactic and are uttered to achieve a certain purpose. Feraoun refers, for example, to life as: “L’existence

est une ruade perpetuelle” [The existence isaperpetual kick] (P.59). The author compares some people’s lack of gratitude to an old dictum which says:”Ceux qui élèvent des neveux dressent des serpents pour leurs cous” [Those who raise nephews prepare their necks for snakes] (P.71). Feraoun uses another proverb to express his people’s belief in God almighty: “les desseins de Dieu sont impénétrables” [the designs ofGod areimpenetrable]. Proverbs are also used to criticize a kind of behavior. People say when they mention a wicked person or a bad behaviour: “que dieu lui garde ses pêchés” [May God keeps him his sins]. We have observed that when Feraoun uses a proverb or a maxim, he uses not only the prosodic form but also the content, the morality or the social insight it contains. Some proverbs are directly translated from the local stock of proverbs into French. For instance: “quand on sème le bien, on le récolte” and “celui qui attend Dieu n’est jamais déçu” [When wesowgood, wereap it] and [the one who waits God is never disappointed] (P.129). What Feraoun intends to communicate through all the used proverbs is similar to Achebe’s recurrent use of Igbo proverbs. Like Achebe, Feraoun enriches the French language with the rich resources of Kabylean proverbial lore, Kabyle old dictums and thought patterns that cannot be rendered into French. In so doing, he creates a sense of ambiguity and aesthetic distance by retaining these Kabyle proverbs and phrases. The author, therefore, increases his authenticity and credibility and lends greater authenticity to the written words.

2- Use of Rural Images

The other element of style which Achebe draws from his traditional oral tradition is imagery. Nearly all of them derive from natural sources and are part of the Igbo environment. In his essay entitled ”Igbo Cosmology and the Parameters of Individual Accomplishments”, Clement Okafor explains that the term ‘Cosmology’ is used by Achebe to convey the sense of his society’s perception of the world and to explore the complex interlocking relationship between human beings and the pantheon of forces that function within its universe” (Okpewho.2003:70).

Achebe uses a lot of rural images throughout his novel. At the very beginning of his narrative, Achebe compares the main character’s reputation to the Harmattan: "Okonkwo’s fame had grown like a bushfire in the Harmattan"(P.1). Furthermore, Achebe measures up Ikemefuna’s growth to a yam, a kind of crop which is seen, in Umofia, as the king of harvests (P.47) while he

parallels the weakness of Nwoye to: a bowl of pounded yams throw him in a wrestling match (P.59). Furthermore, the author likens Ekwefi's grief to that of a hen whose chick has been stolen by a Kite (P.93). Achebe also links Obirioka's compound to an ant-hill because of its orderly and harmonious aspects. Another image is that of Okonkwo, after killing Ikemefuna. His sorrow is compared to a rat caught by its tail and dashed against the floor (P.45). At the end of the narrative, Achebe describes the village's clash due to the white men's invasion to that of locusts which symbolize destruction and ruin (P.100). In addition to all the above images, Bu-Buakei Jabbi adds the recurrence of the fire image in the novel. The critic writes in his article, "Fire transition in *Things Fall Apart*", that Achebe mentions frequently the fire image which symbolizes not only Okonkwo's pride, strength and dignity but also his personal shortcomings as well. Fire is associated with achievements and success as well as with violence and destruction, concludes the critic (Okpewho.2003:203).

The traditional Kabyle community, as the Igbo one, has a complex cosmology and a system of beliefs which Feraoun explores for creative inspiration. Rituals and ceremonies like marriage and burial rites are daily occurrences among the Kabyles, and Festivals in the communities are occasions of cheerfulness and festive celebration through which ritual sacrifices are offered by the community members in order to control and dominate the natural forces around them. In reading Feraoun's novel, we notice the pervasive use of traditional images drawn largely from the general environment of traditional life and Kabyle cosmology. For instance, Kamouma, Amer's mother is compared to an old oak "un vieux chêne" (P.13). As that defiant and strong tree, Kamouma faces all kinds of hardships she has met during her miserable life. Her skinny legs are like "des bûches de chênes" (P.127), to mean that though she is old and undernourished, she can still face the hardships of her tempestuous life. Furthermore, the same character is compared to a dry pitted reed, "un roseau fêlé"(P.5) which means that she lost nearly all her teeth. The same image of "reed" renders the way people, in the traditional Kabyle society, save their excess figs. They are collected, at the end of summer, and put on platforms made of reed to dry. They are, then, put in 'Ikoufen', square decorated clay jars, to be conserved and consumed during the long winters. The other image taken from the Kabyle environment is that of "ces fanges bleuâtres qui

sortent des maisons"[These bluish muds coming out of houses] (P.5). Such an image shows the simple traditional life and none existence of means for water evacuation. Some of the images used are associated with the villagers' activities. For instance, the image of "la poule qui gratte la rigole" [chicken-plucking the gutter] (P.118) reflects a part of the Kabyle way of life in domesticating some animals. Feraoun also refers to the difficulty of life in Ighil-Nzman combined with the impact of some harsh traditions in comparing Salem's life to a burned and carbonized oak "était un vieux chêne à moitié carbonisé» [was an old oak, half charred] (P.155). The common denominator of all the above images is that they combine aspects of nature with those of Kabyle culture.

The other similarity, commonly noted in Achebe's and Feraoun's novels, is the use of oral tales and folk stories to maintain an older African discourse as part of their African identity. The use of this oral feature as a deliberate technique in their novels is meant to reconcile an old world reality (pre-colonial) with a new reality.

3- Storytelling and Folktales in *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang*

The other feature of oral tradition that persists in Achebe's novel is the use of folk tales. The fictive form of the folktale tend to function as modes of cultural education because Achebe and Feraoun's novels mirror the life, reflect what people do, what they think, how they live and have lived, their values, their joys and sorrows. Three phases describe the spatial and chronological progression of the protagonist of each of the novels: the happy, incessant period when the hero is in the village, a well-structured universe with its norms and social values. Then follows the difficult period when the hero is in an alien setting, an environment which does not help the hero to make choice. The final stage corresponds to the hero's return. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has a tripartite structure. The first part is the longest because it contains thirteen chapters and ends with Okonkwo's exile. The second part with its six chapters covers the period spent by Okonkwo and his family in his mother's land, Mbanta. As the second part, the third and last part is composed of six chapters and is devoted to the main character's return to his village, his disappointment due to the changing situation, followed by his suicide. The narrative structure and temporal arrangement of the first section of the novel is not linear because it moves backward

and forward in time. In the second and the last parts, the plot follows a linear line. David Whittaker parallels the move from a disrupted plot to a linear to the disruption of the oral culture which will be replaced by the written one. As the novel ends, argues Wittaker, the oral organization and its order decline and disappear. The book of the District Commissioner and its administration take their place (Whittaker.2007:32).

Storytelling technique appears right at the opening pages of the novel. Achebe uses "And" to keep continuity: "Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him", "and so although Okonkwo was still young, he was one of the greatest man of his time....", "And that was how he came to look after the doomed"(P.6). So, the opening pages are reminiscent of the convention used at the beginning of many oral tales: 'Once upon a time'. The other formal feature of the oral narrative is the episodic nature of the action. The first part of the novel is a good example of the case because its content is composed of many short stories or sub-tales which can be read as self- contained stories: the first one tells the story of Okonkwo's trouble and his anger (P.9). It is followed by another oral tale of Okonkwo and Unoka. It starts with the death of Okonkwo's father: "when Unoka died..."(P.6), which can be added to the story of Umofia's glorious actions: "Umofia was feared by all the neighbors, it was powerful in war and magic"(P.8). Then, the reader is told about how Okonkwo many years earlier, struggled the first year on his farm" (P.10). After that, we read the story of Okonkwo's strength and prestige "There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo's village that has..." (P.14). Always in the same part, Achebe also inserts other short folk stories like Ezimna's story which is told by her mother Efwefi. It is about the quarrel between the sky and the earth. It also narrates the story of the tortoise that flew with the birds and fell breaking its shell into pieces (P.71). Achebe selects the folktales according to their structural importance and for their ability to advance the meaning. For example, the folk tale Achebe includes about the feast of the birds, the rise of the tortoise and its fall (P.69), corresponds to the rise of Okonkwo to a highest position as an Egwugwu which is followed by his fall as the novel ends. The story is also used to predict the main character's collapse and tragedy. Achebe connects the quarrel between the sky and the earth to Okonkwo's conflict with Nwoye, the former relies excessively on masculinity while the latter is effeminate. In the same

token, Charles.E. Nnolin, in an essay entitled “Folk Tradition in Achebe Novels”, links the same folk tale of the “quarrel of the earth with the sky” to the Igbo myth which attempts to explain why vultures have bald head and ragged-looking feathers. The myth explained that the rain fell and fell so that up to now, vultures’ feathers still look wet (Nnolin.From Ariel Magazine.1993: 40).

However, Achebe's insertion of all these stories within the narrative of his novel leads Charles Larson to write that *Things Fall Apart* is a plotless novel. Larson's argument rests of the fact that the narrative is fragmented and cut into some sub-tales which can be understood alone. For instance, the insertion of the tortoise story (P.69) can be read as an independent story from the novel (Larson. 1971: 49). However, *Things Fall Apart* is not plotless because the whole narrative structure of the novel is framed on folkloric procedures of ‘exile and return’ which formula offers the basic tripartite structure of the novel. The beginning of the narrative revolves around Okonkwo before his exile. It corresponds to the rise of his rank and fortune. It is followed by the period of exile, and finishes with Okonkwo’s return when his social position decline, his fortune sink, and his life ends in suicide. By the structuring of the narration along lines that parallel those of a folktale. Achebe’s judicious use of these oral features makes his work distinctly African in flavor though the material that the author borrows from oral tradition is expressed in a non African language. In this context, Kalu Ogbao is right to assess that Achebe writes with his two hands: the right hand representing the Igbo story-telling skill he acquired while growing up in Ogidi, and the left hand the formal western creative writing skills he developed while studying at the university. The successful combination of the two apparently divergent but necessary skills resulted in the narrative techniques and craftsmanship that characterize *Things Fall Apart* (Ogbao.1999:74).

Feraoun uses many forms of art from his oral traditions as core elements. He, as we mentioned earlier, was brought up by his aunts who early in life, inspired his interest in Kabyle mythology and folklore, a fact which apparently accounts for the predominance of Kabyle lore in his literary works. Feraoun is significantly influenced by African oral traditions which he borrowed from the rich Kabyle verbal art forms to create new visions of life and new poetic idioms with remarkable originality. These borrowings occur in the form of Feraoun’s imaginative

use of storytelling. This oral narrative device constitutes the vehicle of the plot and the dramatic action in *La terre et le sang*. As we have indicated earlier Achebe's novel structure includes three parts. The same pattern is to be found in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang*. The author exposes the traumas of an Algerian idealist young man, Amer, coming back from France; he attempts to reintegrate himself into his native village life. The tragic consequences of Amer's emigration and his encounter with the European cultures reveal certain problems of French colonialism. The time of the narrative spans over twenty years. The story begins with Amer's departure to France and ends with his death. In France, Amer stays fifteen years. As in *Things Fall Apart*, *La terre et le sang* contains retrospective movements, described by Genette in his *Narrative Discourse* (1980), as analepses that differ from conventional flashbacks, referring to related incidents which have occurred before the time of their narration. Through these analepses, the narrator departs from the present story of Amer in his village to inform the reader of some earlier events. Feraoun uses ellipses to depict, for example, the origins of Amer's alienation, the various hard conditions of emigrants in France, and Amer's involvement in Rabah's murder.

As with *Things Fall Apart*, the structure of Feraoun's second novel is grounded in the paradigm of storytelling and oral folktales which appear in the circular passage of Amer through a series of adventures which start, with his departure from his native village, Ighil-Nzman, through his nomadic life in Europe, and his decision to return to his fatherland. The quest for a return to his origins, and his efforts to reintegrate himself in his native village, all correspond to the pattern of the Kabyle story-telling. Amer resembles the hero of Kabyle oral folk tales since he makes a circular journey in crossing the sea to France then returning to his village of birth. The second stage is represented by the withdrawal from home by Amer into France where he loses all sense of identity. The withdrawal is further intensified by being made into a completely alien environment. As folktale heroes, Amer views life outside his village as chaotic; he discovers that people he has come across during his journey to France tend to behave contrary to the villagers of Ighil-Nzman. But unlike, the heroes of folk tales, though Amer gains lucidity as a result of his journey, he remains unable to integrate himself into his community. His quest results in rupture, not in reintegration. Amer fails to adapt himself in his time and place because he is not in tune

with his culture and does not possess the moral means to meet the eventualities of the story. He neither respects the values of his community nor collaborates in their preservations. He rather transgresses 'the code of honour' and becomes socially maladjusted, out of tune with his native culture. His love affair with Chabha does not conform to the conventions of his community. Therefore, his clansmen stigmatize him because he disobeys the customs. Amer's conflict is caused by social circumstances which change his intentions and prevents him from reaching his objectives. Feraoun uses another folktale to show the wisdom of ancestors. It tells the story of a Cheikh and the Sultan, told by Si Mahfoud to his visitors (P.79) and it is expressed as a piece of advice to Slimane.

So far, I have shown that proverbs and rural images present the bulk of material used by Feraoun. It must be emphasized that other forms of oral narrative, notably storytelling and folktales, also provide material, although they are used to a much lesser degree than in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. I have established the many ways Achebe and Feraoun use the various elements from oral traditions which have an important place in their communities. Both authors use them as a way to enrich their narratives, to give them form and structure, and from there, to imbue them with meaning. Achebe and Feraoun's borrowing of material from their respective oral tradition range from their use of familiar images and symbols, myth, proverb forms, songs to fables including the morality they preach, and vision they express. All of them are assigned a function in the narrative. So, we can deduce that the hold that oral tradition exerted on Achebe and Feraoun is so strong that we can say that, although Achebe and Feraoun are greatly influenced by their readings of Western writers, there is sufficient evidence of their use of African traditional material. Both borrow the vocational and cantatory devices from oral traditions and used them imaginatively to draw attention to their respective traditional societies. The contact between both authors and the West is also displayed through the themes they deal with.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above textual analysis of Achebe and Feraoun's novels, it should be clear by now that both authors successfully combine "local" and "global" cultural forms and

literary techniques. Though written in English and French, both novels carry an African sensibility, world view, as well as the rhythms, structures and techniques of oral tradition. The use of language whether that be Achebe's own African English or Feraoun's reliance on Kabylean speech patterns in the form of proverbs and other literary materials. Both of them adopt rhetorical tropes, and conversational style from traditional African orality, expressed in the traits of an apt imagery, lucidity, and classic simplicity of language that is rooted in communal communication. *Things Fall Apart* and *La terre et le sang* become testimonies to the cultural fusions during the periods of the British and French colonizations of Nigeria and Algeria. They are also historical novels, morality tales, and above all great literary works that celebrate the two authors' milieus, cultural heritages, and moral values and make them familiar to the world. Although written in French and English, Achebe's and Feraoun's novels are definitely storytellers' stories making greater use of African folktale elements than of western conventions. In other terms, by drawing on a double heritage, Achebe and Feraoun create therefore an encounter between two traditions which come together to form their own written stories. In so doing, they combine the contexts in which these traditions develop the identity of the storyteller and the traces of the European literary tradition. All these elements illustrate the argument provided by Walter Benjamin concerning the role of the storyteller. In his *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections* (1968), the German theorist discusses function of the storyteller who takes what he tells from his own experience or that reported by others. And in turn, makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale (Benjamin (1968) Trans.H.Zohn.2007:87).

Achebe and Feraoun can be linked to Benjamin's idea through the manner their novels make clear that oral literature is not exclusively verbal art as it is inevitably intermixed with music, ritual and craft. All of them are not produced in the community for aesthetic pleasure only. Instead, they are integral parts of the community's daily life because they carry with them the imprints of the supernatural as shaped in the myths and reflect the fears, anxieties, and aspirations of the community's collective consciousness. Feraoun's and Achebe's contribution to preserve and revalue their respective cultures can be summed up as follows: firstly, their novels are important texts in the re-evaluation of national, ethnic and other identities. As a result of colonial

chaos, various identities are re-negotiated and border spaces are re-crossed determined by the necessity of certain socio-cultural conditions and contexts. Both novels envisage, to paraphrase Achille Mbembe, the emergence of an “Afropolitan” community that is determined by a questioning and a re-ordering of the local versus foreign dichotomy. In my view, both authors, as bearers of flexible identities, remain faithful to their traditional values and also cross cultural boundaries for a fruitful exchange. Both consciously experiment with traditional oral forms and their efforts suggest a concern for affirming links with their traditions. But more significant is the unique and original manner in which they employ oral forms in Western literary genres. They drew on folk forms such as folktales, proverbs, and myths and synthesize them with the novel form to achieve their artistic ends. Achebe and Feraoun’s attitude to their culture is that of preservation. They celebrate it while, at the same time, acting as cultural critics. Their preservation is displayed in the high degrees of intervocality that somehow undermines intertextuality. The former reads as stylisation while the latter is marked by hidden polemics and parody.

However, if the “intervocality” in the novels is marked by linguistic hybridity, I shall try to show, in the next part that the attitude of African writers towards their culture changes. It becomes one of refinement marked by the modernist mode of writing in which the folk hero tradition subordinate historical facts to fictional representation. Throughout the second part, I compare the way Kateb and Ngugi deploy of paradigms of organic and intentional hybridity. A writing strategy that has, according to Bakhtin, ever been a hallmark of language and literary development, organic, or linguistic, hybridity is the process through which the two writers produce works of imagination that absorb Western texts, generic and narrative patterns and character types, and transform them into original, hybrid textual artefacts.

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Part Two

Refinement of Culture in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *A*

Grain of Wheat and Kateb Yacine's Nedjma.

Writing opens up a space that invites movement, migration, a journey. It involves putting a certain distance between ourselves and the contexts that define our identity. To write, therefore, although seemingly an imperialist gesture, for, it is engaged in an attempt to establish a path, a trajectory, a, however limited and transitory, territory and domination of perception. Power and knowledge can also involve a repudiation of domination and be invoked as a transitory trace.

(Ian Chambers)

For about a century, perhaps since 1885 when it was partitioned, Africa has been ruefully nursing the wounds inflicted on it by its colonial past. Remnants of this inevitable colonial heritage intermittently erupt into discordant social, political, and even economic upheavals which some many say, are better forgotten than remembered. But this 'heritage' is difficult, if not impossible to forget; aspects of it continue, like apparitions to rear their heads, haunt the entire continent in various jarring and sterile manifestation: How do you forget unhealed wounds?

(Ajibola)

Introduction

The preceding analysis demonstrated that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mouloud Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* provide a pertinent illustration of synthesizing worldviews in colonial Nigeria and Algeria. Both writers indicate that colonialism imposed a foreign worldview on Africans and created an irreversible cultural hybridity. Their act of preserving their cultures in using oral features as something of value, with the other artistic models, narrative structures, and tone voices, become an act that decolonizes their writings, providing the two authors with both distinct literary voices and strategic positions from which they speak. What is important is their apprehension of African world in terms of concepts embodied in properly African cultural forms which they consider to have artistic merit. Therefore, both writers can be considered as glocal cultural workers associated with new cultural politics who challenge the monolithic and hegemonic in the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity.

The subsequent part continues to investigate the manner in which African writers as "Strategists" engage in literary struggle for representation and identifies more heterogenising processes within the discursive realms of their languages of hybridity. Glocality in relation to Kateb and Ngugi's novels can be understood in its historical depth. In the context of cultural instability, elements are selectively revealed from the remembered past and integrated in an instable present to make better sense of that present. I shall try to show how the Algerian author,

Kateb Yacine and the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o refine their cultures by combining poetry, everyday experiences, historical memories, African epic tradition, and Western literary forms to expand the possibilities of their craft beyond its traditional boundaries towards a social and political commitment as a reaction to colonial domination. In other terms, I shall try to demonstrate how both authors achieve detachment from what Adorno scorned as "the administered world of readymade forms and prefabricated homes" which they replace by a "plurality of vision" which contributes to shape their texts as "nomadic" and "glocal".

My comparison of Ngugi and Kateb's novels will be studied under two headings: revolution and literary innovations. On this basis, the investigation is laid out in two steps which correspond to the two chapters which are organized as follows: First, I explore the concept of "heroism" to understand how Kateb and Ngugi refine their cultures by borrowing from the African epic tradition to show its political bearing and decolonizing function. The best way of responding to the question is to compare the novels through the way they deal with historical heroes and events as part of fictional epic performances. The second chapter deals with another aspect of revolution through which I analyse Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* as series of experiments in narrative form, experiments driven by the authors' quest for an appropriate style for representing an increasingly complex social formation. Ngugi and Kateb, as I shall show, share their penchant for innovation to express themselves in forms so far removed from the prevailing traditional ones, a way for both authors to express their originality.

Chapter Five

The Form of the Content: *Nedjma* and *A Grain of Wheat* in the African Epic Tradition.

The present chapter examines the African folk heroic tradition as a reflection of cultural refinement in Kateb's *Nedjma* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*. Both writers frame their narratives about identity in a historical context where they face multiple historical trajectories and cultural realities. Both invoke different histories and appropriate myriad cultural bits and pieces to make sense of their present-day identity. Conversely, the present is also projected onto the past, in so far as the experience of a double identity makes it imperative to construct a past that justifies the state of the present. Ngugi and Kateb employ heroic creation to "cover cracks" in the basic structure of their cultures, so that the ideal image of itself can be projected as if it were actual. The relationship between differential identity as a function of culture building and heroic creation as a culture has been the element most often missing in discussions of the hero in Kateb and Ngugi's novels where heroic creation has the greatest interface with culture. The absence of a perception of this relationship has been particularly evident in the fact that characters in both novels have been seldom discussed as symbols of Algeria and Kenya's cultural identities. To show how heroes of the two novels are able of serving the culture refinement needs which is maintaining cultural identity and values, I focus my attention on The characters-type, in both novels, particularly, the way of undertaking actions which are defined within a model of heroism assuming that, at some point in the past, there existed an "heroic age" which established a set of heroic values and actions for all the time and all people.

On this basis, I emphasize the way both Ngugi and Kateb are able to subvert the one-sided way of looking at the armed nationalist struggle in Kenya and Algeria, and how both argue that, on the contrary, the two revolutions are wars bound to yield positive results. The historical haggle over the Keblout and Kikuyu heroes is of great interest to Kateb and Ngugi and such notions of heroism and poetic form are often cited as characteristics of the Epic; which offers a more personalized version of history because the motivations of great events are rooted in the desires and emotions of individuals. In his *Epic Traditions of Africa* (1999), Stephen Belcher

reiterates that heroism is a culture bound concept and heroic creation is a process very much like culture refinement. Epics are products of a combination of social and historical circumstances and various verbal genres and heroes act with values-systems and narrative conventions. All of them are aspects of African oral tradition that might be called the building blocks of the epic tradition (1999: 14).

The relationship between Kateb's *Nedjma* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* to the African epic and heroic tradition can also be explained by the argument that one of the social functions of the intellectual (writer) is to "set the masses in motion"; the idea that a writer plays an important role in his society as "the voice of vision" in his own time as his writing extend not only into social realms, but also into the domain of engagement. The two novels were written at crucial moments and the dilemmas of their historical meanings are the centre around which narratives revolve. The former drew his novel's contents from the Mau Mau Rebellion, 1952-1956, the latter from 8 May Uprising which led to the Algerian War for independence. The two writers' works are bound up by representing the two revolts as pivotal struggles in glorifying the memories of its participants as they want to be actors who assume important roles in the tragedy their countries experienced. For them, the conditions and heroic values of earlier age cannot only be operative, but also serve as "a guide" for future actions in the real life.

However, to show folklore as a reflection of the socio-cultural experiences of those who create it, I first explain and outline features which are common to African Epics and applicable for my comparison. In his discussion of the Arab Epic Tradition, Dwight.F.Reynolds, using the information mainly provided in Ibn Kaldoun's *Muqaddima* defines an epic as:

A poem or narrative which focuses upon individual heroes rather than corporate social units such as tribes and dynasties. It tells the birth of these heroes and their youthful exploits fighting battles and wooing beautiful maidens whom they bring back to the tribe as brides. The motives for their adventures are rooted in individual honor, glory, jealousy, lust, and retaliation. Its version constantly valorizes personal motives and characteristics of honor, love, and bravery over political maneuvering or power strategies. Epic retains a reflection of history that focuses on events and lessons that are relevant to its current audience, issues of ethical and personal behavior, perseverance against misfortune, and the preservation of one's honor. Written history narrates the rise and the fall of dynasties, the Epic describe the rise and fall of individual heroes.

(Dwight.F.Reynolds in Komstan.Raaflanb.2010:408)

The definition as well as the features of Dwight.F.Reynolds can be useful to better understand the commonality of historical experience that Ngugi and Kateb share. Their common colonial background, one whose most defining characteristics are the Setif Uprising in 1945 that was followed by the Algerian Liberation War for independence in 1954, which ran in parallel to the Kenyan Mau Mau Rebellion and the State of Emergency declared by the British colonial government in 1952. The two authors also have in common the avant-garde tendency that put them in the first rank of intellectuals' euphoria for independence in the 1960s and both were greatly influenced by the emergence of the Democratic and Civil Rights movements of the 1970s. Ngugi and Kateb share the ferment of revolutionary ideas which lasted from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s in their radical and uncompromising stands against colonialism, neo-colonialism and their instruments of domination and exploitation. All of the above similar historical, political, and personal experiences, in my view, do not only create a bridgeable distance between their novels and the African Epic Tradition but also explain the various affinities between their literary works. The two writers' innovative perspectives are not derived only from their direct or indirect involvements in their countries' struggle for independence, but they are also generated from their ideological standpoints. More importantly, the mixing of different genres shows that both writers construct their identities on the move between different worlds, and entertain the idea of "glocality" and "nomadism" as irrevocable condition of world culture.

Kateb's *Nedjma*, the novel was published in 1956 and is based on an episode of Algerian history. The story of the novel is about four characters caught in an inescapable sphere of violence. Rachid, Lakhdar, Mustapha and Mourad live in Bône. Nedjma, Kamal's wife, the daughter of a French woman born out of wedlock, obsesses all of them. The novel is also a narrative of an intra-clan conflict against the background of violence and disunity inherent in Algerian society under French domination and colonial rule. In an answer to Djamel Amrani, a journalist, concerning the content of his novel, Kateb answers that his novel revolves mainly around:

Une société en état de crise larvée et saisie de brutales poussées de fièvre
va lever le défi et se relever après 132 ans d'opprobre et de séisme colonial.

Sur fond de cadre politique finement et fermement dessiné, il y a Nedjma et une histoire d'amour.

(Le Matin. 29/10/1992:14).

[A society in a state of crisis and drenched by brutal spells of fever will rise the challenge and will stand up after 132 years of colonial shame and upheaval. Behind a finely political drawn framework, there is *Nedjma* and a love story].

With regard to Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*, the novel was published in 1967. But, the story of the novel is based on the few days preceding the celebrations of Kenya's independence in 1963. The novel forms a loose sequence of snapshots that record Kenya's history from the time of the initial colonial encroachment to the outburst of violence and the years of emergency. Ngugi depicts the Mau Mau war which took place between 1952 and 1956 as a destructive force against colonial oppression and traces the characters' relationships with the 'hero of the revolution', Kihika, hanged by the colonial authorities. The author sums up the novel as follows:

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

(Howard.1973:112-113).

The excerpt shows that Ngugi provides a description of the Kenyan people's struggle through a group of heroes though not without flaws, following each one in his own way, and chronicles their struggle to get rid of British colonialism.

It is clear then that neither Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* nor Kateb's *Nedjma*, each produced in a period of tremendous political changes, can be understood on its own. Rather, the full meaning of each novel emerges in relation to the historical and cultural contexts in which it was written and which its author tries to represent. The overlapping discourses of violence highlight tensions between the personal and political and between individual and the community. These interpositions constitute the two novels' main narrative strategy. The language borrowed from historic violence accounts for the mixture of individual experiences of violence within collective trauma. Kateb's *Nedjma* was published in 1956, during the Algerian Liberation War.

Its author was part of the immediate context while Ngugi was linked to the drama of land alienation, British colonial terror and the Kenyan nationalist resistance through his family. It is true that, Ngugi published his *A Grain of Wheat* in 1967, four years, after the independence of Kenya. But the novel, to put it in Simon Gikandi's words, was written under the strains created by the ghost of colonialism. It is a narrative where the colonial past still haunts independent Kenya (Gikandi.2000:121).

Ngugi and Kateb produce accessible revolutionary texts glorifying the nation's heroes, to see how revolutionary and reconstructive practices can be seen as an attempt to exercise control over the various mechanisms of power. I address the issue of revolution in terms of the specific and common manner in which Ngugi and Kateb elevate their peoples' struggle for independence to "epic narratives". To make apparent the revolutionary nationalistic overtones inherent in the two novelists' discourse, the task is to explain the importance and reappearance of 'revolution' in the two selected novels and investigate, through a textual analysis, how Ngugi and Kateb turn a 'revolt' into "a revolution". By 'epic', I mean, quite simply, how Ngugi and Kateb employ certain particular kinds of heroic behaviors that have been characterized as epic over centuries. But before, there are two questions I ask and to which I shall try to respond. What are the main factors which contribute to shape Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* epic narratives? And what type of revolution is foregrounded in the two texts? Some provisional answers are not hard to come by because the two novels cannot be divorced from the colonial moment in which they came into being. The recurrence and the importance given to the theme of revolution, as indicated earlier, stem from Ngugi and Kateb's first hand experiences of war and the immense suffering resulting from it. To a query about the reappearance and importance of revolution in his literary works, Kateb replies in one of his interviews, saying: "Nous avons vécu un cataclysme, une révolution, ce n'est pas rien et c'est ce que j'écris" [We experienced a cataclysm, a revolution, it is not nothing and that is what I write] (Awal.1992: 88).

The same experience applies also to Ngugi. Though his third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* was published four years after the independence of Kenya, the Mau Mau war stands as the cornerstone of its narrative. The reason for such an emphasis is due to the fact that early in his

adolescence, Ngugi grew up, as Charles Eantalupo writes, during the high noon of colonial oppression and native resistance (1952-1957). He was deeply scared during the Emergency though he was not personally involved in the struggle. Several events took place and had a defining effect on Ngugi's life. The following year, his step brother was shot dead, his older brother joined the Mau Mau, and mother was subsequently tortured by the British authorities. In 1955, his village was destroyed as part of the anti-Mau Mau campaign. Therefore, revolution and the Mau Mau war come alive in the majority of his novels and plays. Painfully, Ngugi recollects the events upon the historical representation of the Mau Mau fighters. The author depicts the Mau Mau revolt not as a merely uprising that was confined to a small area or as an anti-colonial resistance waged by a group of Agikuyu, but as a national phenomenon (J.C.Hawley. 1998:318).

The same critical assessment comes from G.D.Killam, for whom the theme of revolution derives from the general historical experience of late colonial Kenya in which Ngugi grew up. Ngugi's use of historical facts aims mainly at providing the reader who is unfamiliar with the history of Kenya with a background to understand the novel adequately. The writer does not ignore the condition of his war-torn country because his fiction in general and *A Grain of Wheat* in particular, examine the roots of brutality, injustice and oppression. At the same time, Killam explains how some social forces which affect the individual leading him very often to deterioration and destruction. Ngugi, contends the critic, invokes the rhetoric of a heroic past and the novel as a whole is a tribute to the freedom fighters who won for Kenya her independence from colonial rule (Killam.2004:108).

Likewise, Kateb's youthful years coincided with Algeria's intense struggle for liberation from oppressive French rule. The author grew up in the midst of that turbulent phase and his bitter and painful firsthand experience of the 8 May Rebellion of 1945 had a profound effect on his imagination. He was expelled from school because of his involvement in the uprising, was arrested and caned by the police for innocently participating in the riots, and was jailed for a brief period by the colonial authorities. During his stay in prison, his mother became insane because she thought that her son has been killed. Kateb, then, was in touch and had an intimate understanding of the central events narrated in his novel. *Nedjma*, then, imitates that bitter reality

and provides a realistic picture of the Algerian resistance against French domination. Its central action revolves around the war, making the novel a narrative of revolution.

The next place to search for the factors that shape the revolution in Ngugi and Kateb's novels is their ideological standpoints. Another no less important similarity between Ngugi and Kateb is, without doubt, their leftist ideology. The Marxist literary circle, that gathered around Ngugi's teacher, Arnold Kettle, influenced the Kenyan writer. His stay in Leeds from 1964 to 1967 constituted an important phase in the development of his Marxist thought. Ngugi managed, as he reiterated it, to free himself from the influence of his colonial British education as well as from the Kenyan political regime that kept him blind to the plight of the masses (Ngugi.1993: 08). The impact of Ngugi's Marxist leanings is evident in *A Grain of Wheat*. For instance, Ngugi's view of violence resembles that of Frantz Fanon. In "concerning violence", Fanon argues that the long history of violence wrought upon the colonial peoples by their masters can be overcome only by violent revolt on the part of the former victim of colonialism. For him, the colonial subjects must rise up in violent rebellions of their own. The influence of Fanon appears in the speeches and ideas of Kihika, the central character of the novel. In addition to the espousal of Fanon's conception of violence, Ngugi believes in a collective class struggle, based on Marxist ideology. By 1970s, Simon Gikandi writes, Ngugi was not merely content with representing the narrative of colonialism and decolonization; on the contrary, he wanted to produce narratives that would intervene in the cultural sphere, agitating for, and promoting change, effectively using literature to rectify what he saw as the failure of national consciousness. As a Marxist, Ngugi identified the working class and the peasantry as the agency of the kind of changes he envisaged (Gikandi.2000:36).

Indeed, Gikandi is right because in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, *I Will Marry When I Want*, and *Matigari*, Ngugi shows his Marxist leanings which appear in his strong sympathy for the working class and his urging of the workers (voiced through characters) to organize and react against the oppression of their capitalist bosses.

There is evidence that Marxism influenced Kateb too. His Marxist militancy was due mainly to his interaction with poor militant workers and Dockers. During the Algerian Liberation

War, he was sympathetic to the Communist Party. Kateb had also a great admiration for the Vietnamese people. His respect, consideration and friendship for Ho Chi Minh, motivated him to write *L'Homme aux sandales de Caoutchouc* in 1970. The author also expressed a great respect for Communist leaders such as Marx, Lenin, Mao and Stalin. In his literary outlook, Kateb's Marxist militancy started with the articles and poems he wrote in 1950s. Among them, « La chanson d'amour pour la fille des prolétaires », « Aux mains durcies au service du capital ». Other poems were dedicated to Nazim Hikmet, "Le poète de l'internationale socialiste". In addition, Kateb's Marxism reoccurs in his plays, which deal with the workers and their struggle for a better life.

Ngugi and Kateb, then, share an interest in the theme of revolution and wished to experiment with it as a mode of expression. Though produced in different historical periods; the central theme on which the two narratives rest on is the struggle of the common people of Kenya and Algeria to come to terms with colonialism. Both authors deal with the psychological damage that colonialism had on their countrymen. Ngugi's and Kateb's novels are bound by the common way their authors shape their countrymen's struggles as revolutions. What appears in the two narratives is that Ngugi and Kateb explain human suffering in terms of social, political and psychological factors. The two authors reflect the highly wrought emotional atmosphere of the war years. They also convey with special intensity, the internal conflicts, tensions and terror, which are the fundamental elements of a revolution.

Before beginning to look closely at the revolutionary features which may be found in the two novels, it is worth taking the time to establish, first of all, what it is I refer to when I speak of revolution. The very term 'Revolution' is a vague concept that changes over time. Its meaning is variously understood or intended, depending upon the shift from one context to another, from one period to another, and from one theorist to another. However, one explanation of the word 'revolution' which can be applied to our comparison of Ngugi and Kateb's novels is provided in Daniel Moran's *Wars of National Liberation* (2001). Moran's definition, as far as I can see, matches Kateb and Ngugi's visions of revolution in the sense that the theorist maintains that wars for national liberation are frequently represented as episodes of spontaneous combustion

produced by pervasive misery and injustice. Yet, adds Moran, the opposite dynamic is equally apparent. Revolution can be a product of war waged by a committed vanguard whose outlook does not command widespread support at the start, and who may obtain only grudging acquiescence at the end. The use of violence, suggests Moran, is a frequent aspect to any revolution or for a war for national liberation. The violence occurring in the past revolutionary period cannot be regarded as the only foundation upon which the perception of heroism and its age is built, that perception also looks at the particular spiritual universe of the combatants, who are seen as the disrupters of constricting and limiting forces. The adherents of any revolution, concludes Moran, are responsible as individuals for breaking an obstruction that had previously curbed their energy and restricted their choices (Moran.2001: 26).

Furthermore, in his analysis devoted to the Algerian Liberation War, Moran maintains that the Setif Uprising was an important step in the progress of Algerian nationalism because it was from it that would grow the F.L.N militants committed to direct action, which would make the Algerian revolution (P.103). The climate of violence and terror, continues Moran, was fostered by economic hardships, brought by population pressure, the concentration of landownership in the foreign settlers' hands and the general deterioration of material conditions resulting from the Two World Wars (P.104). The two definitions accord well with the revolutions described in *Nedjma* and *A Grain of Wheat* as the the novels' crucial events elucidate the dilemmas of two societies under colonial rules. Ngugi and Kateb consider colonialism as the root cause of poverty and abjection which characterized their communities and consider that the violence inherent in the colonial oppression created the conditions for militant resistance and revolution. In *A Grain of Wheat* and in *Nedjma*, Ngugi and Kateb respectively, foreground the dehumanising process of the colonial system through the way they shape their characters. The process resembles the violence and horror which the colonial French and British regimes inflicted on their countrymen. On this basis, both authors people their novels with a group of revolutionary characters who cooperate to bring a cessation of French and British colonialism. They seek by all means, including violence, to dismantle the colonial apparatus that has dominated their countries for a long time.

Having explained what a revolution is, the question which poses itself here is how Kateb and Ngugi combine social, historical circumstances and various verbal genres. The answer will be provided by examining the African folk heroic tradition as a reflection of cultural values grounded in the two authors' cultural experiences. In his discussion of the Black folk hero, John.W.Roberts points out that the embodiment of the exploits of a particular figure in folk heroic literature is not designed to provide a model of adoptive behaviour in a literal sense. Rather folk heroic literature offers a conception of attitudes and actions that a group perceives as the most advantageous for maintaining and protecting its identity in the face of a threat to values guiding actions. Folk heroic literature always portrays the exceptional actor whose exploits offer the group a glimpse of its own possibilities in handling similar situations in everyday life and specific situations. A group for which culture-building proceeds through warlike confrontations would be more likely to conceptualize an individual as heroic who selects war-like actions and displays a warlike personality in the face of any threat to group values. Roberts adds that folk heroic creation as an emergent process is a way by which cultural groups attempt to facilitate adherence to group values during periods of intense change (W.Roberts. 1989: 6).

For Kateb and Ngugi, the use of the African folk hero tradition is an expressive embodiment of their ambiguous situation of Africans brought about, in that instance, by conditions which forced them to accept an identity as inferior and dependent beings in the colonial system. For the two authors, both cultural transformation and folk heroic creation become almost inevitable as they seek under indirectly adverse conditions to maintain their identities and values through cultural enhancement. Moreover, to maintain and enhance reconcilability as African people transformed their historically severed cultural patterns and forms to develop a cultural response to colonialism and the obstacles that it created. Thus, the folklore of heroism created by Kateb and Ngugi reflect the values of a people who do not have their roots in Western tradition either historically or culturally, even though behaviours which reflect Western values had a profound and incessant impact on them. In my view, the creative responses of both authors to such an impact facilitated rather than inhibiting their maintenance of a value orientation and aesthetic tradition deeply rooted in the African cultural heritage. The heroes in

Kateb and Ngugi's novels reflect and reveal the colonized feelings of rebelliousness against the values of the colonial system which denied opportunities for their self- definition. The chief purpose is to enumerate the African folk heroic features and show how they are displayed in Ngugi's and Kateb's selected novels through characters and themes.

1-Heroic Features in the Two Novels

The revolutionary aura that prevails in both Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* is suggested by the revolutionary temper, engagement, and resistance of the protagonists. Broadly speaking, in the course of the two tales, the awakening of national consciousness evolves with the growth to maturity of the different characters. What makes the two authors' depiction of the two revolutions heroic is without doubt the yearning of these characters for liberation, references to the countless individual heroic acts performed and lives sacrificed, every one of which deserves to be memorized and glorified in an epic manner. The African epic as a narrative form, as John.W.Roberts points out, is not necessarily centred on the deeds of one hero who is always the driving force behind the action. Although the epic is developed around the heroic career of a central heroic figure, the actions of other figures aid in clarifying the message of the epic and the historical and cultural information that it contains. African epics celebrate the deeds of war heroes and served as more than an expressive vehicle for transmitting the exploits of these figures. An epic, in John. W. Robert' s words, frequently includes genealogies of the ruling groups, collapsed with methodological material pertaining to the origin of the world and the like. The strength of culture is fully reflected in the exploits of its epic hero who serves an emergent function perceived as important to culture-building [...] The epic hero can be considered as the official "protector" of his culture; he reinforces and validates the moral values and offers African groups an important model of behavior for protecting themselves from threats to their survival and well-being by acting to enhance their collective power. In clinging tenaciously to the values guiding actions recognized by the group, and in essence, living up to their own image of themselves. In the end, Africans celebrate the superiority of their values and identity in epic which allows them to survive and prosper under the most destructive conditions that human beings can create (J.W.Roberts.1989: 124-131).

Kateb and Ngugi, like African bards, turn to their African heritage for an expressive model to convey a conception of a folk hero to reveal a moral quality and preserve a sense of balance between the actions of their protagonists and the values of their societies which they make essential to a complete understanding of the meaning and function of heroic epic narration. Their attribution of power to their main characters (Kihika, Lakhdar) reflect the undeviating influence of the values associated with African heroic tale and epic tradition on the heroic action. Both create a model of behavior to protect their identity and values from the threat posed by the actions of the colonizer. The epic and heroic tradition provided by J.W.Robert's fits the young heroes of Kateb and Ngugi's novels with a focus for celebrating their past heroic history and refining their cultures. Both authors celebrate the actions of epic heroes as symbolic of the "ideal forms of behavior" reflecting their values and identity and reflect them in both their historical and emergent dimensions. As an illustration, Ngugi's epic characters rise at a crucial moment in the Kenyans' history, characteristically perform actions which offer people a model of behavior for protecting their values from both internal and external threats occasioned by their existence in a hostile war-like atmosphere. The writer embellishes upon the historical representation of the Mau Mau as a radical entity that will not settle down into a stable contestatory position. His fictional embellishments, notes Barbara Harlow, transgress the colonial framing of the insurgency (Harlow in Irele Abiola.2010:62).

The same holds true for Kateb's *Nedjma*. The novel's tale narrates the grandeur of the Algerians' resistance and their fighting against foreign forces of exploitation and domination. The nationalist agenda of Kateb's characters appear in their solidarity to overcome oppression as they come face to face with the colonial forces. Kateb foregrounds mainly the emergence of resistance and celebrates the deeds of violent insurrections through memories of its legendary warriors. In *Nedjma*, the memorable and rebellious characters who people Kateb's novel are all trying to understand themselves as human beings in a time of crisis. Among the numerous characters, the most important ones are Lakhdar, Nedjma, Mourad, Mustapha and Rachid. Many indications point to the fact that they are idealised symbols. They also stand for their countrymen's longing for liberation and freedom. Lakhdar, Mustapha, Mourad and Rachid can be linked in terms of

their common scorn for colonialism and their discontent towards the existing oppressive colonial order which seems to bear all the injustices that characterised the colonial period. These characters are conceived as prototypical figures of resistance in a struggle for political and cultural determination.

2- Revolutionary Characters in *A Grain of Wheat* and in *Nedjma*

The determining action in the novels of Ngugi's third novel is the concern with exposing the colonial practices and dismantling its structures in favor of revolution and the main protagonists assimilate these ideals and undertake the task of engaging in revolution. There is critical agreement that the recurrence of the theme of the Mau Mau revolution is generated from Ngugi's will to celebrate more than sixty years of Kenyan people's struggle to claim their own space. For John.C.Hawley, Ngugi questions the accuracy of the documented historical accounts of the Mau Mau fighters and reverses the idea of the freedom fighter as insane individuals without vision for the concerns of the people. Ngugi makes a conscious effort to confront, nullify, and transcend western misrepresentation of Kenya's history by revising the anti-colonial struggle waged by Kenyan peasants in their efforts to combat forces of imperialism (Hawley in P.N.Perekh. S.F. jagne.1998:318).

By using the history of the Mau Mau struggle as a framework for the narrative, Ngugi deliberately counters the myth fostered by colonialism that the Mau Mau movement was purely evil and its adherents were mere terrorists and primitive savages driven by blood lust (P.6). In his counter argument, Ngugi presents the Mau Mau rebellion as a heroic revolution against colonial oppression, instead of an outbreak of native African savagery. In so doing, Ngugi grants an important historical and legendary dimension to the struggle, postulating that the Mau Mau is the highest expression of people's commitment to the economic, political, and cultural struggle (Ngugi.1981: 20). The narrative of Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* evolves around an action of a historical magnitude. It centres on the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s. The revolt takes the form of a heroic attempt by the Kenyan freedom fighters to challenge colonial oppression, to unite the people and instil in them a sense of pride and dignity. Through his idealised representation of Mau Mau fighters, Ngugi celebrates the socio-economic causation of communal violence and

describes their revolt as heroic. His third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* stands, without doubt, for the author's preoccupation with a need, to put it in his own terms:

To celebrate the struggles and remember those who died in mountains
And concentration camps of the British colonial state. I wanted the spirits of
the fallen to be with Kenyans at the moment of hoisting the flag of
our Independence, the result of years of bloodshed.

(Ngugi.2009:60)

Ngugi, then, alters colonial misrepresentation of the Mau Mau fighters by an opposing description of the movement and its leaders' lives that had come to revolve around the emergency. It is a way for him to make reparation through historical retrieval. In the process of narration, Ngugi's depiction is unconsciously elevated to the status of the primal event of the late colonialism in Kenya. In one of his political essays, Ngugi even compares the Mau Mau fighters to Prometheus who stole the fire from Gods and lightened the path for liberation. For the author, the Mau Mau fighters are symbols of resistance and their struggle is also paralleled with the war waged by David against Albion Goliath. (Ngugi.1981: 111)

Throughout the narrative of *A Grain of Wheat*, the Mau Mau fighters are considered as "heroes of deliverance, local sons who were courageous enough to challenge the oppressive state and its agents" (P.16). They challenged the colonial state laws in order to dismantle not only its economic exploitation, but also political oppression and racism (P.203). In addition to the epic posture with which he endows the main character Kihika, Ngugi completes his picture about heroism with portraits of defiant and self-determining Kenyan leaders who sacrifice themselves over a period of more than sixty years for their country's independence from British domination. The list includes names of leaders such as Waiyaki, Kimathi, Harry Thuku, and other warriors who joined the long line of resistance (P.83). Their actions are recounted in the narrative for historical reasons, more specifically to show their inspirational effect on the main character, Kihika. Ngugi glorifies the Mau Mau revolt through his overvaluation of the fighters and the organisation of events develops gradually around facets of these mythical-like figures's life story. Ngugi uses the main character, Kihika, to celebrate the notion of heroism. But before dealing with the heroic deeds of the character, it is worth highlighting concisely the concept of "An epic hero",

as it is put forward by Joseph Mbele, in *The Hero in the African Epic* (1986). Mbele's definition applies to Ngugi's novel in the sense that it evolves around the personality of Kihika, a person of high public importance, the instigator of the Mau Mau revolt in the 1950s. As an exceptional political activist who carries within him a touch of greatness. Most of his speeches make of him an even more powerful symbol of resistance to British oppression. Ngugi elevates Kihika to the rank of folk epic heroes such as Moses who, it is believed, freed his kinsmen from slavery and led them to freedom in the Promised Land. Heroism is most notable in some scenes describing Kihika's eloquent speeches about Kenya's past. His willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of his country's liberation and for the restoration of the ancient national prophecy is celebrated in the novel. The question that should be answered is what are the epic features embodied in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*? A revealing answer will follow my explanation of what is an epic hero.

In his *The Hero in the African Epic*, Joseph Mbele tracks the various features that shape an epic hero in the African context. The hero is central to the epic and acts as a focal point for change. Whether he existed or not, he becomes emblematic of change, the agent who revitalises the people as they carry the images of past experiences and conquest into a new world. He is part of both realms and he would be able to take his people within him if he were not identifiably a part of the cultural past. He has a vision of the new world even if he dies in the process of realizing it. Mbele maintains that the action of the epic shows the ideals of the individual. Through such values, as evidenced by the great hero, the requisite courage and fighting skill in the battles with direct action describing heroic behaviour in the service of nationalism. An epic hero, as Mbele sees it, is an individual of a particular incident, which means that he or she intervenes in some critical situations in an extraordinary fashion, acting outside, above, or with disregard to normal patterns of behaviour, especially in putting his life at risk. The list of the various features that an epic hero is endowed with includes the fact that he is devoted to combat and confrontation. He is a risk taker and is prepared to seek out the aspects of the quest involving strategies, threats and violence. An epic hero should also display courage, cunning, wisdom, strength, determination, faith, love, compassion, and many other traits to answer the

challenges which he meets in the course of his quest. An epic hero's fall, adds Mbele, comes not because of his personal flaws but because he is related in a symbiotic relationship to a weaker partner, whose death affects or drains away some of the supreme prowess of the stronger figures (Mbele. 1986:15- 26)

Moreover, an epic hero deals with a violent death and seeks to remain a solipsist, always apart, in mediating mode. He even anonymously, acts from within a post-mortem place, to fertilize and protect human society and especially that important new formation "the immortality" granted these human beings lift them up beyond mere humanity and towards a semi-divine status. In the usual heroic life pattern, the hero trades his early life for immortal fame (P.129). Fame, argues Mbele, will bring the only immortality that the hero can enjoy, since his physical death is emphatically assigned inevitable heroic proportion. Under some certain circumstances, the powers of the hero do not die because there is an existence beyond death (P.131), The mind of the hero is usually solid, meaning, if not actually lithe, its most fervent bent is simply on confrontation, hard-won fame, personal honor, and it possesses few "neurotic" interstices in which complications and frustrations could lodge to produce the disoriented images of moral illness, concludes Mbele (P.150)

Of the various characteristics assigned to or displayed by an epic hero, some if not all of them, seem to be particularly built-in to the main character of Ngugi's third novel. The narrative of *A Grain of Wheat* centres on Kihika, a superlatively courageous, honourable individual, capable of taking up the challenge posed by the colonial authorities. As an epic hero, Kihika is an ideal warrior, embodying the special epic description of his struggle against the British coloniser. He is known as "the terror of the Whiteman" for "He could move mountains and compel thunder from heaven" (P.16). He is feared and admired in so many guises because he is "a man who compelled trees and mountains to move, the man who could go for ten miles crawling beyond the arm of the white man"(P.17). Kihika is also a unifying figure and is described as a leader in the messianic tradition because he regards the vision of national freedom and unity as powerful (P.167). Ngugi shapes him as a kind of 'black Moses' who recalls greatly Dedan Kimathi, the legendary Mau Mau leader who, after exhausting the British soldiers, had been captured then

executed by the colonial authorities. Like Kimathi, Kihika is endowed with a great knowledge of history, religion and philosophy (P.88). He is a kind of person who carries out heroic deeds and knows how the Christian doctrine was used to lure Kenyan people and make them forget their traditional and religious beliefs (P.12).

The other facet of heroism in Kihika is almost certainly his sharp and bloody dignity, his posture of insouciant threat, his core of perpetual challenge, and his ferocious bravery. Like epic heroes, Kihika engages in a fight, which stirs not only reverence and recognition, but also a feeling of pleasure and respect. He is endowed with power and courage which excite astonishment and exhort admiration through his indestructible will to liberate his country. Ngugi's hero possesses many other virtues such as the passion for justice and a moral sensibility, which can be added to his great capacity for suffering. Kihika also emerges as a proud nationalist hero, a dedicated fighter and a prominent organiser, who speaks eloquently (P.16). He is totally engaged in his people's liberation struggle and is ready to sacrifice himself for its sake. In a way that echoes the epic hero, Kihika shows an immense courage and significantly, a genuine solidarity with his people, as he affirms: "we don't kill just anybody [...] we only hit back" (P.167). Kihika's strength and endurance are shown through the various scenes of torture he undergoes and his refusal to abdicate to his teacher (P.76). Kihika's uncompromising Kenyan nationalism is also evidenced through his rejection of the various temptations of the British (P.73). All of them fail to divert Kihika from his engagement to rid his people of colonial domination (P.13).

To situate Kihika's unquestionable commitment for liberating his country in a wider and global context, Ngugi equates the Mau Mau fighter's devotion to justice and liberty with other leaders of a similar nature. First, he parallels Kihika's engagement in the war to Mahatma Gandhi, the Saint leading the Indian people against British rule (P.73). The author also compares him to Moses who led his Israelite compatriots to liberty. Moreover, Kihika's martyrdom is paralleled to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Kihika, like Jesus, is able to put his doubts behind him as he is able to defeat the temptation of betrayal to which Mugo and Gikonyo succumb. In addition, Kihika sacrifices his life and his love for his country's liberation. He becomes a patriot

and a fighter leaving his pregnant lover behind him. The willingness to suffer for the benefit of the Kenyan cause is of course a noble gesture and represents the central idea behind Ngugi's characterization of Kihika.

Finally, Kihika, like any epic hero, accepts death and his extraordinary prowess, his manifest perfection, and his exceptional physical qualities made it a no easy task for the British authorities to kill him. After his death, he becomes a special warrior ancestor for his people and comes to stand for inspirational strength in times of war. He is evoked not just as a means of inspiring the others for action, but as an agent for success and is presented as the icon of anti-colonial struggle and the phantom that haunts the British officers. As an epic hero too, Kihika's violent death is neither due to any conflict inside himself nor to any error. The Gikuyu hero falls victim of his friendship to a weak character, Mugo who sells him to the colonial authorities (P.193). However, all of Kihika's virtues survive after his execution by the British soldiers. His execution makes of him a martyr, a symbol with which to energize the very movement for liberation. His killing which was meant to squash the struggle becomes a symbol of his people's aspirations and a tool to reach victory and to fuel the revolution. To execute him remains then futile because he is himself only a symbol of social forces which could never be put down by a gun. Kihika's name, as Mugo voices it, "would never die from men's lips" (P.169). Indeed, Kihika dies while carrying arms in the Kenyan anti-colonial struggle; his memory is treasured as an inspirational model for those who survive to build the new nation. He becomes transformed into an extraordinary being that they had never really known. The way Ngugi shapes Kihika as an epic hero shows another interconnection between the written and African derived- oral traditions. His epic hero reminds the reader of the African prize discourse in describing the success of African mythical ancestors' heroic deeds. On this basis, therefore, we may deduce that Kihika's death does not constitute a loss but fulfilment and victory. His execution is transcended by a drive towards a mythical immortality because his end is transmuted into a moral triumph. His heroic death becomes then a powerful tool for anti-colonial activists and his grandeur remains undiminished as he becomes an icon of resistance to British colonialism.

The other figure who is granted, to a certain extent, some heroic features, in *A Grain of*

Wheat is the main character's sister, Mumbi. She is endowed with a symbolic and a mythical status through which Ngugi conveys his attachment to his ancestral traditions and values. The position as well as the role the character is given is significant because she is placed in the centre of a web of relationships and is endowed with a powerful influence over the male protagonists. Mumbi clearly has her authors' sympathy, as is obvious from the way the story is worked out. In addition to Mumbi's beauty which pushes male characters to covet her, she is also brave, resilient, resourceful and morally a courageous woman in mediating the conflict between the male characters. She is Kihika's sister, Gikonyo's wife, and the mother of Karanja's child. Mumbi is also the confessor of Mugo and exerts such an influence on him, that he confesses his crime. Ngugi refers to Mumbi's physical force, her good looks, and her strength of mind, which allows her to face the hard times of the Emergency Period (P.143). In this regard, G.N. Sharma notes: "Mumbi exercises a wholesome influence on the other characters, arousing them to a better knowledge of themselves. The honesty with which she told her own story to Mugo made him ashamed of his morbid secretiveness" (Jones.1979: 173).

Like Ngugi, Kateb manipulates history to serve his ideological purpose by presenting the Algerian waves of revolts as a model of heroism and resistance. From the very title of the novel, *Nedjma* is a revolutionary cry of defiance, an affirmation of existence, and accusation of the oppressor that is depicted as a compelling force in the actions of the protagonists as well as in the themes of novels. Kateb is engaged in the recuperation of the epic to accommodate his revolutionary vision of the Algerian War for Independence. He does not only favor rebellion towards the colonial system, but also praises his people's revolts and celebrates their communal resistance through his reference to L'Emir Abdelkader and his followers who fought long and well. Abdelkader is described by Kateb as 'Algeria's most renewed nation builder' and a military and socio-organisational genius. He epitomizes ancestors and warriors. Kateb praises the frequency and magnitude of Abdelkader's revolt and regards it as one of the most important instances of tribally rooted resistance to the French conquest. Abdelkader forged a confederation of several tribal groups, led the tribal warriors and fought with surprise attacks. Though he and his companions failed, as was the case of the Mau Mau fighters, they remained a model of heroic

collective resistance. Though French soldiers put into custody the leader thinking to mark an end to the war, but his arrest was followed by unrest and other uprisings. It proved that his detention and exile, by no means, led to the pacification of Algeria. Through Abelkader and other ancestors, Kateb suggests that heroes of the past have transcended mortality to become god-like heroes and are traditionally believed to participate in the military affairs of the living. Their presence reinforces the nationalist of an unbroken chain of resistance to colonial rule. Kateb's interest in the communal aspect of the rebellion is magnified as follows:

Le peuple était partout, à tel point qu'il devenait invisible, mêlé aux arbres, à la poussière, et son seul mugissement flottait jusqu'à moi; pour la première, comme à Sétif, je me rendais compte que le peuple peut faire peur [...] Et la foule se mit à mugir. Attendre quoi ? Le village est à nous (P.56).

[The people were everywhere; so much that it became invisible, mingled with trees, the dust, and his only roar floated up to me first, as in Setif, I realized that the people may scare [...] And the crowd began to roar. Wait for what? The village is ours].

The passage describes the revolutionary atmosphere of the novel which is set in the period before the Second World War and Kateb employs a tremendous quantity of historical details, which are fused with the historical material concerning the 8 May 1945 uprising. In order to understand fully the first outburst of Algerian nationalist revolution, reference to the 1 May 1945, seems important. During that day, many nationalist leaders resolved to mark the approaching liberation of Europe with demonstrations and claimed their own liberation. Meanwhile, the Friends of the Algerian Manifesto (AML), organized demonstrations in twenty-one towns across the country to support the claim and to ask for the freedom of Messali Hadj, the leader of the Algerian People's Party (PPA). They mainly required the recognition of their right to independence after having contributed to the defeat of Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The demonstrations led to the eruption of violence in some localities, including Algiers and Oran, leaving four casualties and dozens of injured that day. (Harbi.1980: 29). To Kateb, that historical moment was so familiar and provides a clear example of the fact that history is shaped by the struggle of ordinary people against their oppressors. It became for him, without doubt, a source of inspiration. In *Nedjma*, he stresses the continuity of the struggle and shows the power and the will of the

Algerians to end with oppression. The following sentence is a telling example: “la répression, loin de briser l’élân populaire, ne fera que le pousser dans la voie d’une lutte encore plus déterminée et plus consciente” (Abdoun. 1983: 40).

Kateb dramatizes the events through the intervention of several representative characters that embody the different attitudes to that historical situation. Each move is interpreted in relation to the great mythical or actual heroes of the past. The names of figures such as Abdelkader, Jughurtha are sufficient enough to evoke glorious past struggles. In the fifth part of *Nedjma*, Kateb provides a complete depiction of the 8 May revolt, starting from the eruption of violence with “le Porte drapeau s’écroule” to Mustapha’s grandfather, “vieux montagnard debout sur sa mule, qui tira sur les gendarmes” [the flag bearer collapses, to Mustapha's grandfather, the old man from the mountain standing on his mule, firing on police] (P.56), including the ruthless outcomes of the revolt in the days following the uprising. Kateb reports similar situations and happenings such as imprisonment, torture, and death (P.118). Jacqueline Arnaud, Kateb’s biographer, considers the description as “la force de vérité” [the force of truth] (Arnaud.1985: 208). The young Kateb was shocked by the violence used by the French police and was very affected by the number of people killed during that period of troubles. The dramatic circumstances of the event are narrated in Mustapha’s diary (P.83). Towards the end of the narrative, Kateb refers to a well-known nationalist figure, L’Emir Abdelkader, who played a central role in the struggle for independence. Kateb recalls how he and his followers set out as young men to join in the 1871 rebellion. The author regards it as the most revered of the uprisings in Algerian history and summons up the heroic deeds of that heroic figure in his conference entitled: “L’Emir Abdelkader et l’indépendance d’Algérie” (1947). On the basis of this, Kateb fills *Nedjma* with a group of representative characters coming from different social layers which make up Algerian society and makes them, at the same time, members of a single community. Even the secondary characters in *Nedjma* are defined largely through the kindness, generosity, and the support they provide to others in time of need.

However, the character who is endowed with many epic features and who is perhaps most similar to Kihika is Lakhdar. The different aspects selected for his presentation shape him as a

leader contesting a colonial mentality in all its aspects. Mbele identified three sources of epic grandeur: the hero's attitude towards his mortality, his relation to the community, and the dual dimension of time and space. All of these features apply to Lakhdar who is tied to the history of his country's resistance. All of the elements enumerated in my discussion of Mbele's conception of an epic hero are relevant to Lakhdar's childhood, his arrest, and torture in prison (P.54).

Like Ngugi's most admirable figure, Kihika, Kateb's main character, Lakhdar is fully engaged in his country's liberation war and is extensively involved in the revolt by taking part in the 8 May uprising. Through his participation in the revolt, Lakhdar is faithful to his ideals and stands as an expression of the respective moralities of struggle against colonialism and all forms of domination. The nationalist commitment of Lakhdar appears in the narrative through his rejection of colonial education. Lakhdar's expulsion from school because of his participation in the 8 May demonstrations (Kateb.P.52) can be paralleled to Kihika's escape from school by jumping through the class window prior to his involvement in the rebellion and becoming a Mau Mau activist (Ngugi.P.87). Another common trait between Kihika and Lakhdar is that both favor rebellion and can be linked in terms of their heroism. Like Kihika who was a Mau Mau fighter who suffered and challenged the British government, Lakhdar experiences prison twice. The first time he was jailed as a troublemaker because of his participation in the 8 May revolt. The second time, he was arrested for hitting back against the violence of his foreman, Mr Ernest (P.50). In addition, Lakhdar's torture, and his undergoing of some degrading and inhuman punishments (P.60) can be applied to Kihika too. Analogous to some epic heroes, right from the beginning of the novel, Lakhdar emerges as man who is impelled by a noble ideal, that of giving his people their lost sense of identity, and a distinct cultural personality (P.11). He is also conceived as an admirable leader and organiser (P.12). He is committed to the liberation of his country and is convinced that only blood sacrifice can redeem it. Kateb's main protagonist, Lakhdar fights to preserve something greater than himself, he opposes with vehemence the situation in which he finds himself. He does not accept his fate meekly and he cries against oppression and has consented to sacrifice his life so that others may derive joy from a free life. Ismail Abdoun in his book entitled, *Lectures(s) de Kateb Yacine* (2006) reiterates that the novelist describes the

Algerian revolt in a patriotic manner that comes to sight through the way he shapes his main characters. The narrative is centered on the 8th of May 1945 which is a repetition of the 1st November 1954 and the radical claim of Algerian independence that is explicitly stated in the novel. The Algerian identity denied by French colonialism is clearly affirmed with force through the evocation of legendary heroes who symbolize the millennium struggle of the Algerian people against the various invaders. For the reviewer, Kateb reverses the relations of domination between colonizer and colonized subjects by the power he grants to Lakhdar and Mustapha in front of their French classmates when they were young and later on during the demonstration of May 1945. For the critic, at an early age, the two characters challenge the colonial power and their behaviour announces their rebellious temperament as adults. The characters' early insurgence appears in the novel when:

Lakhdar and Mustapha sont les premiers en classe, s'accaparent les fillettes et s'octroient les plus haut grades dans le jeu de guerre. Ce sont des généraux incontestés d'une armée de petit Français qu'ils malmènent à leur gré. La violence de Lakhdar en particulier frôle déjà la dissidence et la révolte.
(Abdoun.2006: 141)

[Lakhdar and Mustapha are the first in class, grabbing the girls and giving themselves the highest grades in the war games. They are the undisputed generals of a Frenchsmall boy's army who they manhandle at their will. The violence of Lahkdar particularly already brushes against dissidence and revolt]

More significantly, Kateb links the revolt of the characters to the history of the Numidia and North Africa that the novelist elevates to a legendary dimension which comes to sight through his description of the challenging cities of Bone and Constantine. Through ruined by the different invasions, they stand as reminders of the glorious past of its renowned leaders' struggle against the different colonizers. Lakhdar's heroism is evidenced in his unquestionable commitment and self-sacrifice. The magnitude of Lakhdar's commitment to liberate his country appears clearly in the following prose verse:

Je suis parti avec les tracts.
Je les ai enterré dans la rivière.
J'ai tracé sur le sable un plan de manifestation futur.
Qu'on me donne cette rivière, et je me battraï.
Je me battraï avec du sable et de l'eau.

De l'eau fraîche, du sable chaud. Je me battraï.
J'étais décidé. Je voyais donc loin. Très loin (P.54).
[I went with the leaflets.
I did enter the stream.
I drew on the sand a plan for a future demonstration.
I was determined. I saw so far. Very far].
Give me that river, and I will fight.
I will fight with sand and water.
Fresh water, hot sand. I will fight.

It appears from the excerpt that the revolutionary rhetoric that accompanies Lakhdar's desire to rise and overthrow the unjust colonial masters demonstrate his apparent resemblance to Kihika's conviction that a simple reform will not suffice to empower people and incite them to get rid of colonialism. Therefore, Kihika and Lakhdar's thoughts account for the social and political conditions, which prevailed in their respective countries during World War II. The period of history was associated with the rise of discontent and the characters are located within this form of atmosphere loaded with violence. They reveal the conflict between the colonised and the coloniser and their personal events have political parallels and implications. For instance, Lakhdar's revolutionary temper can be equated with the determination of Kateb's generation to free themselves from colonial domination during and after the Second World War. Lakhdar participate in the demonstration, is imprisoned and tortured like Kateb and some of his friends. Kihika and Lakhdar's commitment produces admiration and reminds the reader of what Georg Lukàcs calls "typical characters" because they are typical of the historical situation of their classes and are presented as being bound up in a general dialectical movement of history (Lukàcs.1971:67).

The parallel situations of Kihika and Lakhdar and their community intersect throughout as connected points of a single story. Lakhdar's desperate yearnings and striving for freedom and dignity are the same yearning embodied in that of his countrymen. Both strivings share a common horizon and hope, and it is in this double representation that Lakhdar's complicated journey becomes symbolic. What he seeks is also what the community gropes for but is unable to achieve. The two characters decide to embrace their loss and death as the enabling condition for a new identity, but at the end of the story, they come to realize that there is no identity outside the locus

of the community. Kihika and Lakhdar are certainly exemplary and examples of figures able to undergo profound self-transformations and to forge their own individual identities under difficult circumstances. Both characters stand for historical personalities who led effective military resistance against Africa's invaders. Their military invincibility and their past achievements are appraised and are designed to inspire confidence in the African peoples. The delineation of such noble models is also part of the epic and African praise discourse that Ngugi and Kateb use in their novels.

It is important to note that heroism, a main feature of an epic revolution, is also embodied in the way Kateb shapes some of his other main characters. As Lakhdar, Mourad, Rachid, and Nedjma, each in his way, dare to defy all powers that be, challenge authority, and all contribute to convey a picture of revolution. For instance, Mourad and Rachid think that liberty can only be made real through action and concrete achievement (P.28). They take part in revolutionary activity to escape from the hell in which they live. All of them are united by an unmistakable assertion of solidarity around common values such as justice and liberty (P.39). For instance, Rachid fights to change the political conditions. He refuses to submit to the colonial regime. He becomes an outlaw as he deserts the French army and he is wanted by the police (P.36). He prefers imprisonment to submission to colonial orders (P.179).

The other character that rebels against the coloniser's oppression is Mourad. One of Mourad's significant acts of heroism occurs when he intervenes to rescue the Arab servant from a beating by Mr Ricard (P.28). In my view, Kateb's insertion of Mourad's violent reaction embodies a discourse that resembles the one developed in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Mourad's will to sweep aside the oppression of Ricard by forceful reaction equals Fanon's description of the violence done to the native psyche by colonialism. Such violence suggests Fanon, is itself responsible for encouraging a complex of inferiority. The criminality, the impulsiveness, and the violence of his murders are therefore not the consequence of the organization of his nervous system or his originating character, but the direct product of the dreadful and oppressive colonial system which alienates him and makes him hate himself (Fanon.1965: 67).

Indeed, the violent behavior of Mourad is no more than a logical reaction to that of his French boss, Ricard. When faced with Ricard's beating of the servant, Mourad has no other means but to hit back. The unjust and dreadful behavior of the French character, Ricard, creates in Mourad the will to violence which compels the former to kill the latter on the day of his marriage. It is important to note that Fanon does not embrace and prize violence per se, he rather sees it as necessary to depose colonial rule and end its oppression. Fanon, to remember, used the term revolution through violence in reply to the atrocities and violent repressions he witnessed during the Algerian war. For him, colonialism means violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence (Fanon.1965:37). Therefore, the only way to get rid of colonial violence is through counter-violence. In his *Frantz Fanon And the Psychology of Oppression* (1985), Hussein Abdelahi Bulhan explains that, according to Fanon, the practice of counter-violence fosters cohesion among the oppressed, purges their complexes, and rehabilitates the alienated. In short, the revolutionary counter-violence of the oppressed brings forth a new language, a new people, and a new humanity (Bulhan.1985:117).

Along very similar lines, Mourad's deliberate killing of Ricard in his own house the day of his wedding is also interpreted as a means of destroying the illusion that white men are not vulnerable. Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal notes the intertextuality of Kateb's description with Albert Camus. Mourad's murder, according to Maougal, is nothing but an answer to Albert Camus's *L'étranger* where Meursault kills an unknown Arab on a beach in Algiers in 1942 (Maougal. 2004:46).

In addition to the rebellious male characters, Kateb presents the rebellion of his main female character, Nedjma, in an implicit way. The character would on a superficial reading seem to be voiceless, passive and obedient, but a careful reader will not fail to notice, on the contrary, the rebellious temper of the character. Though she does not appear frequently in the narrative, she never disappears from the centre of the action. Nedjma is conceived as an attractive and elusive person wishing to enslave men. She is "une femme faite d'adversité, "une fleur irrespirable", "une étoile de sang jaillie du meurtre", and "l'ogresse qui mourut de faim après avoir mangé ses trois frères" [A woman made of adversity, an unbreathable flower, a star of blood which sprang

murder, and the ogress who died of hunger after eating her three brothers] (P.169). She causes the loss and ruin of every person who dares approach her because she is the generator of conflicts, rivalries and hate between the four protagonists and becomes the target of jealousy and envy. First, Nedjma engages in an adventurous relationship with Lakhdar while her husband Kamel is on the way to Constantine to see his sick mother (Kateb. P.232). She is the main cause of Rachid's instability and wandering, "La fille de ma propre tribu que je poursuivais instinctivement de ville en ville", confesses Rachid to the public writer [The daughter of my own tribe I pursued instinctively from a city to city] (P.167). Therefore, the possession of Nedjma is doomed to failure. Even her recuperation by the tribe is achieved through the murder of Si Mokhtar, presumably her father. At the symbolic level, Nedjma is given ultra dimensions of inaccessibility and independence. She indicates colonial connection, but emerges as a catalyst for a nation too. She defies stories of pure genealogy of ancestry while she offers new images of self-sufficiency and independence. She combines in her character the real and symbolic. She is beyond the reach of specific person, but she lives and exists in the minds of all. Nedjma's challenge to her lovers as well as her resistance echo that of the Berber queen, Kahina, who, it was told was a symbol of age-old resistance and a marker of national syncretism as she resisted the Arab conquest.

In addition to praise names, Kateb also refers to cities and names of towns such as Constantine, Bone and Carthage to give a sense of the strong metaphysical attachment people have to their places of origins, no matter how long they may have lived elsewhere. The names, in the context of the novel, do not appear as belonging to separate African groups; rather they serve as deep structural and inspirational symbols of racial and cultural affiliation and continuity. Kateb uses the towns as metaphors particularizing African culture that draws upon visions of an African ancestry. For instance, Rachid is forced by the colonial oppression to dwell in a land far away from his origins. Therefore, he imaginatively, particularizes the name of places and cities in order to authenticate his identity.

Comparing Ngugi and Kateb's characters reveals that both authors show a preference for a group representative characters whose attitudes to the colonial system are strikingly similar

to fragments cited in African Epics as they come down in oral tradition. By retelling the stories, praising feats of bygone heroes, Kateb and Ngugi use their heroic aspect as a focal point to trace the rise of anti-colonial resistance in their respective colonised societies. The two novels are then presented as a sort of a web, linking the private lives of the various characters to historical events and vice-versa. Ngugi and Kateb show how colonial domination and oppression shape people's lives in bringing to the surface their strengths and weaknesses. Ngugi's and Kateb's characters are depicted as individuals with distinctive characteristics and personal stories, but they are also representatives of large social and historical situations. This conception of character is reminiscent of Georg Lukács's notion of "typicality". The argument is that protagonists in effective and eminently realist novels achieve their connection between public and private realms essentially through the technique of "typicality", that is by the creation of characters who are distinct individuals and "typical" representatives of large historical forces (Lukács.1971:67). Lukács's argument is particularly relevant to the way in which Ngugi and Kateb carefully connect the large public events of their narratives with the private experiences of specific individuals. This is done by interweaving the life histories of individual characters from a variety of backgrounds with one another and with the history of Kenya and Algeria.

However, it is important to notice that Ngugi and Kateb's allusion to the past is not just an evocation of it, but a distancing from the colonial history that teaches that those who started the resistance to colonialism invented their nationalism in colonial schools, not by emulating the resistance of their ancestors. In the two novels, the historical personalities who led the most stubborn and effective military resistance efforts against the French and English colonial presence in Africa can be linked to Edward Said who maintains that for the liberation and nationalist fighters, leading the struggle against European power, legitimacy depends on their asserting an unbroken continuity leading to the first warriors who stood against the intrusive white man (Said.1993: 193).

In this regard, Ngugi and Kateb's novels are colossal achievements in every sense. Both contain a seemingly endless parade of striking images, vivid details about their countrymen's history of revolutions. Such images and details are reminiscent of African tribal narratives

interspersed with poems, or a full-fledged epic with characters that seem mythical and larger than life precisely because they are so rooted in real life. The same figures contribute to convey the historical discourses of both authors.

3- The Reconstruction and Call for the Past Through Memory

The next comparative feature between Kateb and Ngugi's novels is the way both authors mix the epic narratives with history. The understanding thread, in this section, is the relation of Epic and historical traditions. Kateb and Ngugi historicize particular accounts and cover a broad historical period. Ngugi's use of history focuses on recapturing his culture based on a reconstructed past. To achieve his purpose, the author creates a tale of heroic deeds and glorious past. Likewise, the different illustrations indicate the extent to which Kateb deploys particular facts and formal devices to describe the Algerian resistance. Kateb fills his novel with scenes of violence, repression and terror that are essential ingredients of the colonial past. Therefore, the two narratives can be regarded as the expression of events quite parallel in their moments. They are products of the periods of high political tensions that characterized the two societies at a specific moment of their respective histories.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, the Mau Mau revolt and the Kenyan war for independence from British colonization form the cornerstone of the narrative. At the very beginning of the narrative, Ngugi embraces the whole contemporary history of his country and traces the history of the movement for freedom. He starts from "the arrival of the white men with guns". He particularly refers to the early days of Waiyaki, the protest of "Harry Thuku, and the birth of the party". Ngugi mentions the "detention camps" and "the Emergency Period" too. To grasp fully the origins of the events of the war and gain an adequate understanding of the content of the novel's narrative, we need to go back to the first British settlements and colonization of Kenya which started during the last decades of the nineteenth century, when European countries especially Britain and Germany, began to colonize an area of British East Africa now called Kenya. The foreign intruders started their incursions as explorers, peaceful traders, missionaries and finally became colonizers at the end of the 19th century. That period marked the beginning of most of

Kenya's contemporary political, social and cultural troubles; all were linked to land expropriation (Davidson.1978: 87).

The British conquest had its roots in the Berlin Congress of 1884/1885 when the European powers partitioned Africa in zones of interest under their political control. The British expansion in Kenya began with the conquest of 1887. The British Imperial East African Company, a trading organization under government control, rented the land from the sultan of Zanzibar, who ruled over the area. A year later, Great Britain obtained a concession for the whole country, which became a British Protectorate. In 1896, the Land Acquisition Act, allowed the colonial administration to acquire lands for a railway line. Meanwhile, Europeans, living through a 'fin-de-siècle' economic and social crisis realized that the sparsely populated land promised political and economic opportunities. The British government issued a Land Ordinance Act in 1902, allowing the white settlers to acquire lands in Kenya by expropriation, turning the "natives" off their lands (Maloba.1998:10). In 1915, a second Ordinance Act increased the power of the colonial governor who was given total authority to "grant, lease or otherwise alienate, on his Majesty's behalf, any Crown lands for any purpose and on any terms as he may think fit". The Ordinance not only stopped the expansion of the natives by reducing their lands, but also forced them to live in reserves after establishing boundaries in the Gikuyu Highlands. The problem of expropriation and the British policy of land confiscation and the deprivation of the Kikuyu of their land holdings was the major cause of violence and rebellion (Ibid.26). In 1920, Kenya became a colonial state. The British settlement increased prominently and the white settlers were given all the economic and political tools to dominate the local populations. Basil Davidson elucidates the foreign settlers' power as follows:

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

(Davidson.1994: 178).

Davidson also indicates that by 1915, white settlers occupied about 4.5 million acres of excellent Kikuyu lands and they focused their attention on the central part of the Rift Valley, taking the

lands of the Kikuyus which they legitimated by claiming the Kikuyu did not have rightful ownership over the land (Davidson. 1978: 118).

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

Whether the land was stolen from Gikuyu, Ubabi or Nandi, it does not belong to the white men [...] The white man owns hundreds and hundreds of acres of land. What about the black men who squat there, who sweat dry on the farms to grow coffee, tea, sisal, wheat and yet only get ten shilling a month (P.85).

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

Besides the material benefits, the land has a spiritual importance for the Kikuyu. It is the soul of all the tribe. Its members work it according to the tribal norms, following its social organization based on help. But the white man changed the order in his attempt to “civilize” the “natives”. The confiscation of land, the introduction of currency, and the concept of taxation resulted in the destruction of the traditional customs and the social order of the tribe. This issue is widely discussed in a book by the prominent political leader and president of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, frequently mentioned in *A Grain of Wheat*. Kenyatta’s anthropological book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), describes the importance of land and the deep attachment of the Gikuyu to it. The second chapter of the book, entitled “Land tenure”, evidences the twofold importance of land as a “mother” who feeds her people by being a source of material goods and a link that binds the Gikuyu to their ancestors. The natives regard the land as the foundation rock on which their tribal economy stands and is the only effective mode of production that they have. The result is that there is a great desire in the heart of every Gikuyu man to own a piece of land

on which he can build his home, and from which he and his family can derive the means of livelihood. The Gikuyu people depend entirely on the land which supplies them with the material needs of life and through which spiritual and moral contentment is achieved. Communion with the ancestral spirits is perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe are buried. The connection of land with the ancestors was made physical, according to the Gikuyu tradition of the shedding of blood in the rituals of circumcision undergone in adolescence (Kenyatta.1938: 22, 54).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi mentions the “conscription of labor on the white men’s lands” and “taxation” (pp, 61,218). The two practices are related to the economic system, which prevailed during the colonial period. Once the British colonial authorities had driven many Gikuyu families off their lands, they attempted to force them into a situation where they would have nothing to sell but their labor. The landless farmers were forced to work hard on the whites’ farms at low wages. It was a manner adopted by the settlers to achieve complete domination over the “natives”. The politics adopted by the colonial government during the labor crisis following the end of the First World War was harsh and heightened the sufferings of the Kenyan population. In addition to this the colonial government imposed taxes, called Poll and Hut taxes, which had to be paid in cash by Kenyan farmers from their work on the whites’ plantations (P.62). Through the tax system, the colonial authorities secured a monopoly of cheap labor or even forced labor. Because of the First World War deficits, the colonial government doubled Hut and Poll taxes and tried to impose the ‘Kipande’, referred to in *A Grain of Wheat* as “a pass-book” (P.146). ‘Kipande’ was an employment card with the holder’s fingerprints that the ‘natives’ had to carry constantly outside the reserves. The white settlers justified the measure, as a means aimed at keeping track of their workers and cutting down crime (Maloba.1998: 46).

The increasing alienation of Kenyan land, decreasing wages, and proposed legislation of increased hut taxes added to the burden of the Kipande card led to the emergence of discontent and protest which was to emerge in the formation of pacific nationalist political organizations and the beginning of the rise of nationalism in Kenya. Elleke Boehmer is right to suggest that Ngugi wants to represent himself a subject of his own past. To cancel the colonial stereotypes, he looked

for evidence of a rich and varied heroic past deeds of military victory against colonial forces. The critic reiterates that Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* is bracketed by the Mau Mau rebellion. Set during the four days leading up to Uhuru, the author telescopes the emergence of the Kenyan, or in this case, Gikuyu nation, from its earliest times. The focal point of that history, adds Boehmer, the Mau Mau struggle, is told in the form of recollection by a group of historically representative characters, both collaborators and heroes of resistance (Boehmer.2005:187).

In much the same way as in Kenya, Algeria was subject to many invasions and conquests. The Kenyans' colonial experience of land confiscation can be compared to the extensive French expropriation of Algerians from their fertile lands. As a colony of settlement, the colonial regime naturally seized the "tribal" lands, imposed heavy taxes and pass books. Consequently, the effects of land alienation long, deep and enduring, and were the forming factors of the Algerian revolution.

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

The French conquest began in 1830, when the French troops landed on the shores of Algiers and took hold of the capital. Once the French soldiers had satisfied their rage of plunder, they began to secure their gains by penetrating further into the interior. In 1834, Algeria became a French 'department' and was declared as integral part of France and a territory for settlement (Dunwoodie.1998:15). By the beginning of the twentieth century, Algeria had already been ruled

for many years as a French territory and the French settlers, living in Algeria, preserved their civic rights. For example, they elected their own ‘députés’ to the National Assembly in Paris and exercised a steady pressure on French politics. As a French ‘department’, Algeria’s political authority was placed under a Governor General, a high ranking-officer, invested with civil and military jurisdiction responsible to the Minister of War. The French policy that prevailed at that time was known as “le régime du sabre” whose purpose was to reduce the populations to economic, social and political inferiority (Lacheraf. 1978: 48).

In the second section of his novel, Kateb alludes to the large-scale confiscation of cultivated lands, which followed the crushing of many local resistances in Algeria. For instance, Rachid’s and Mourad’s fathers had been victims of land confiscation (P.72) The process of land expropriation in Algeria is widely discussed in Peter Dunwoodie’s book, *Writing French Algeria*(1998) where the author states that the gradual dispossession of the native Algerian during the period took two forms, “official” and “independent colonisation”, meaning respectively state take-over and property sales. Dunwoodie suggests that the estimate of European property around 1930 is 240000 hectares or 1/8 of the best usable lands. In 1840, General Bugeaud embarked on a policy of relentlessly expelling Algerian tribes and replacing them by European colonists. But, even this drastic policy could not provide a final answer to the problem facing the French, because it was clearly impracticable to push all the Algerian tribes into the Sahara. A specialised and productive agriculture developed on the basis of this solid land ownership of which the settlers were very proud. With the support of the banks and customs regulations, agricultural activities immediately sought foreign and metropolitan outlets. Officers, administrators and metropolitan speculators traded land on the coast, abandoned as families fled during the hostilities of the military operations in response to the various uprisings or confiscated as part of the conquest. It was followed by random implantation of European immigrants; the operation of “cantonment” deprived the tribes of their lands and forced them to pay taxes called “khardj” to the French administration. Such measures pushed them to infertile lands and mountainous zones (Dunwoodie.1998:17)

Land alienation was restricted mainly to the fertile plains of the Tell, which received regular quantities of rain. As a reaction to land confiscation, many rebellions rose against the French occupation. In *Nedjma*, Kateb praises the ‘échec plein de gloire’ of the revolt organised by Abdelkader and regards him as a hero, “L’homme de plume et d’épée, seul chef capable d’unifier les tribus pour s’élever au stade de la nation”(P.96). The author mentions also the outcomes of the “tribal revolts”, and Bugeaud’s ruthless reprisals in expropriating the lands of a great number of Algerian families in favor of the foreign settlements (P.72).The confiscation of land became extensive after the crushing of the local revolt in Kabylia led by El Mokrani in 1871. The French colonialists confiscated 500,000 acres of “tribal” land, reducing the local populations to misery and hopelessness and placing the region under what was known as “le Régime d’exception”. The terrible situation that prevailed at that time was worsened by a disastrous drought, which had struck Algeria in 1866, ensuring several years of starvation, famine and pestilence (Lacheraf. 1978:18).

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

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

[Before the Second World War, the settlers have taken over the richest and most productive land (65 per cent of agricultural production). French capitalism, which controls banks, trade and industry, has the monopoly of the Algerian market. The framework of the country is almost exclusively European].

As the occupation continued, the French colonial State had not only a total domination of the Algerian economy, but sought also to assimilate the Algerian population by spreading the French

language and forbidding the teaching of Arabic. The fact is denounced in *Nedjma* through Rachid's father, a teacher of Arabic "suspendu à plusieurs reprises, puis révoqué pour n'avoir pas tenu compte des sanctions" (P.147). The colonial government encouraged and regarded French education as an excellent means of undermining the influence of the Marabouts and the Maderssas. The elites formed in the colonial schools were used as 'Trojan horse' to reinforce French hegemony and as tools to pursue and reinforce its domination. The colonial effort of assimilation, as Mohamed Harbi explains, is due to the various ways the colonial state used to undermine the "native" culture and to promote its own. Harbi sums up the French attempt to assimilate the Algerian population as follows:

La séparation de la religion et de l'Etat est appliquée au christianisme et au Judaïsme mais non à l'islam dont les muftis, imams, etc, sont nommés et révoqués par l'administration coloniale et non pas soumis au contrôle des fidèles [...] La langue arabe, persécutée, a été déclarée en 1939 langue étrangère au pays. **(Harbi.1998:91).**

[The separation of religion and state is applied to Christianity and Judaism but not to Islam whose muftis, imams, etc., are appointed and dismissed by the colonial administration and not under the control of the faithful [...] The Arab language persecuted and was declared in 1939 as a foreign language in the country].

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

Ngugi and Kateb's interest in public resembles the case in traditional performances. This socio-political dimension makes the artist a private individual concerned not only with his own private world, but with public life intellectually, culturally, and politically. The first way the two authors display their public interest is their use of history. They make history very much present in allusions to historical events. The past in the two novels is a distillation of generation of experience reflecting particular world views, and therefore, must be understood in the broader context of cultural transmission, it is useful to note that by using the past heroic deeds, Ngugi and

Kateb use selective periods to forge a new identities. So, if modernist literature is known for its fascination with technique and its disengagement from historical reality, we may observe that the most common feature of *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* resides in their authors' use of history as primary material. The use of history proves that Ngugi and Kateb do not imitate blindly the elitist conceptions of the Western modernists because they draw heavily upon their respective countries' folk culture and endeavor to repudiate the colonizing culture in order to unearth and develop their indigenous heritage through the use of history.

A notable feature of this heritage, extensively exhibited by Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat* is, without doubt, his preoccupation with the Mau Mau revolt. Ngugi grants an important historical and legendary dimension to the struggle, postulating that the Mau Mau is the highest expression of people's commitment to the economic and political struggle. (Ngugi.1981: 20). Throughout the narrative of *A Grain of Wheat*, the Mau Mau fighters are considered "heroes of deliverance, local sons who were courageous enough to challenge the oppressive state and its agents" (P.16). They challenged the colonial state laws in order to dismantle not only its economic exploitation, but also its political oppression and racism (P.203). Ngugi refers to names of leaders such as Waiyaki, Thuku and other warriors who joined the long line of resistance (P.83). To illustrate the extent to which Ngugi glorifies the Mau Mau revolt, we may refer to his overvaluation of the fighters. For instance, Kihika, the 'Black Moses' who recalls Dedan Kimathi, the legendary Mau Mau leader, is endowed in *A Grain of Wheat*, with a great knowledge of history, religion and philosophy (P.88). Moreover, in one of his political essays, Ngugi compares the Mau Mau fighters to Prometheus who stole the fire from gods and lit the path to liberation. The Mau Mau fighters are symbols of resistance, their struggle can be paralleled with the war of David against Goliath the Albion (Ngugi.1981: 111).

A comparable evaluation can be applied to Kateb's *Nedjma*. Christiane Achour and Jacqueline Arnaud, for example, have noted that Kateb blends fiction with the history of Algeria's long and enduring struggle against foreign occupations. In *Nedjma*, Kateb praises the Algerian resistance and revolts against the colonial presence and reports his own experience, thoughts and visions. Christiane Achour and Jacqueline Arnaud also argue that *Nedjma* is

grounded in its author's personal experiences and his historical, socio-political and cultural environment. In her *Anthologie de la littérature algérienne* (1990), Christiane Achour stresses Kateb's intense commitment to defend the cause for which his country was fighting. By reference to his early work, namely the conference given in Paris in 1947, under the title, "Abdelkader et l'indépendance de l'Algérie" to affirm that Kateb is motivated by a sense of commitment to social change, he uses history as a means of resistance against French oppression and the conference shows also Kateb's political awareness and his early engagement. The following passage sums up her ideas:

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

(Achour.1990: 48).

[To an unstructured and destabilized people, he [Kateb] proposes a rewarding image of a past which acts upon the present [...] the conclusion leaves no doubt about the goal of the young activist and immediately places the text as an essay of the resistance]

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

From what precedes, it seems clear that Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* came into being because of the dramatic political, social and cultural transformations caused by colonialism in Kenya. Felix Mnthali is right to the point in writing that Ngugi's novel can be regarded as one of the

most incisive and personalized examination of the colonial situation, and its effects on both individual and community. The critic also points to Ngugi's quest for identity through the use of certain historical facts and real events. Ngugi's powerful historical contextualisation of the struggle for freedom helps the reader to realize the depth of the motives of those who struggle for their liberation. The struggle is portrayed as something much deeper than a war between blacks and whites. It is a struggle for land and a struggle for human dignity (F.Mnthali. 2004: 39).

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

4- Revolutionary Violence as a Leitmotif in the Two Novels

The other predominant aspect of heroism that reappears and dominates the narratives of *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* is violence. The theme of violence is carried with an even greater plausibility for Kateb and Ngugi who watched its course. What appears to be most manifest in the spectacle is that none of its participants could control the course of events.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, revolution appears, first and foremost, in the conflict-based structure of the narrative which turns around certain characters caught in a sharp conflict with the noble ends and the ignoble means that constitute revolution. All of them wrestle not with their families or their immediate personal concerns, but with the oppression and violence of the colonial world in which they struggle to survive. Violence and pleasure intermingle as characters repeatedly struggle to make sense of each other's words and actions. The remains of the past and the violence of present events weigh heavily upon the characters forming and restricting their actions and their attitudes to one another. Ngugi puts emphasis on the protagonists' struggle to escape the environment of violence in which they are trapped. The atmosphere of gloom and terror is announced from the very first scene that shows Mugo, a half-outsider as a result of his apolitical inclinations. As a child, he was victim because he was an orphan adopted by his drunken aunt. Mugo was compelled to bear the burden of his unhappy childhood and is haunted by his remembrances and memories. As an adult, he becomes aloof and reserved, he is depicted as mysterious, overwhelmed with confusion and despair. From the very beginning of tale, the portrait of Mugo is shaped by his inner fears, personal frustrations, and psychological breakdown. His silence along with memories of his boyhood experience with a drunken aunt still haunts him and shapes his perception of things (P.7). As an adult, he is circumscribed within a marginal position because he is reluctant to take part in the Mau Mau rebellion. Mugo's loneliness and isolation are amplified by his participation in the murder of Kihika. His involvement in Kihika's murder leads to his state of confusion and unrest, which he voices as follows: "If I don't serve Kihika, he will kill me. They killed Rev Jackson and Teacher Muniu. If I work for him, the government will catch me. The white man has long arms. And they'll all hang me" (P.194). At the beginning of the novel, Mugo is seen as a national hero and a symbol of anti-colonial struggle

because he shelters Kihika and does not confess the oath during his long stay in various detentions camps where torture and degrading inhuman punishment are common (P.59).

However, Mugo is not the only character to suffer from colonial violence. Gikonyo, Mumbi and all the other characters, to a varying extent, are victims of colonial oppression. For instance, Gikonyo's reminiscences of his enduring torture in prison, illustrate the atrocities of degrading inhuman treatment the British officials inflicted on the Kenyan prisoners (P.29). Ngugi also describes the torture of Kihika by the Special Branch to get some information about the other Mau Mau fighters (P.17). In its attempts to crush the insurgency and to separate the fighters from their network of supplies, the British army was given power to establish 'a regrouping policy' or 'settlement camps' and 'villagisation'. Villages were surrounded by barbed wires under searchlights where the villagers were compelled to respect the curfew. Anyone suspected of collaboration with the rebels was directly sent to a detention camp, which were spread over the country. As in many other detention camps, brutal methods were used against the captured insurgents to break their psychological resistance and force them to denounce the oath (P.131). Out of prison, violence dominates the lives of the Kenyan civilians. To illustrate the point, Mumbi recollects her past memories to narrate the harsh and bitter conditions of the Emergency Period. She provides a vivid picture of the nightmarish situation when she recalls the years of oppression and brutal exploitation that she and the other villagers of Thabai had been victim of during the same period (pp, 143-146). Some critics suggest that the violence which dominates the narrative of the novel derives from Ngugi's influence by Frantz Fanon. For instance, Simon Gikandi writes that, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi, after reading Fanon's treatise on violence as a weapon of decolonization, Ngugi comes to interpret the emergency in Kenya as the highest point of African resistance against the British colonial regime. His main argument was since colonialism has instituted violence as an instrument for conquest and rule, the colonized has no option but to adopt it as a key tool to break down the European system of rule (Gikandi.2000:71).

Correspondingly, set during the war itself, Kateb's novel is redolent with scenes of destruction and violence haunting the author. *Nedjma* can be regarded as the story of Kateb himself. His novel was written in a period characterised by repression and terror. Those turbulent

times had a great impact on Kateb's existence. His adult life was psychologically conditioned by memories of his youth, especially that of the uprising of Sétif in 1945. The experience refuses to vanish from his mind and remains a central theme and motif in the novel. The author then finds his source of inspiration in the Algerian revolution in projecting a picture of characters caught in an atmosphere of violence. The author was convinced that revolution was the ultimate way to represent the bitter reality and to portray the Algerian revolution. The opening of Kateb's novel dramatizes powerfully, as no prose fiction could have done, the struggle of the common people against the colonial oppression, a struggle which suggests in microcosm the difficulty the colonized people have in representing themselves. The first scene is intended to show and used to obscure the reality of the suffering and the loss imposed by a colonial exploitation and domination supported by a military force. In *Nedjma*, the possibility of conflict is announced from the beginning of the novel and is represented by Lakhdar and Mourad and Rachid who are totally determined to fight against colonial exploitation and injustice. Far from being impelled by a sense of despair, the young characters are positive in their determination to rid the Algerian people of the shackle of French tyranny. They express their sufferings, pains and obsessions which appear from the very beginning of the narrative. Kateb's novel opens with scenes of "police arrest" and "lock ups" (P.11) that only begin to make sense as the tale goes on. The conversations of the characters contain the seeds of the violence that will follow and then dominate the tale. The narrative begins with an atmosphere of terror under an unjust and a dreadful system of oppression that has itself created in characters a common ideal of freedom and an intense longing thirst for justice. All the characters live in troubling times, and they know, or hope that change will be imminent. They work to implement and control that change, but as the rest of the narrative demonstrates, such expectations are fruitless.

Kateb also refers to the torture and brutal interrogation methods used by the French soldiers to get information from detainees. A description of some of the practices used is provided in *Nedjma* through Lakhdar's arrest. (pp, 55-56). Kateb's reference to these practices can be closely linked to Algeria's anxieties engendered by the French defeat in Indochina which led French soldiers to wage a campaign of repression against the FLN and its collaborators. The

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

Throughout *Nedjma*, Kateb highlights moments of complicity and collaboration between various power structures and social actors that serve to accentuate social tension and rivalries. This is important in displaying how colonialism was able to exploit the conflict and capitalize upon the oppressive impulses of authoritarian colonial subjects themselves. As an illustration, he creates some situations in which antagonism and exploitation are the most apparent features in the relationship between Europeans and Algerians. They are brought out most vividly in the opening scene of the novel. Lakhdar escapes from prison because of an offence against his French employer. The scene is followed by another example of exploitation in a construction site where Algerian workers are exploited, overworked and badly paid by Mr Ernest, a foreman who mistreats his labourers. “Y a qu’à faire ce que je dis. Vous travaillez dix heures. On vient le samedi” [You have just to do what I say. You work ten hours. We come on Sunday] (P.45). In *Nedjma*, the French characters stand for the worst form of exploitation and repression. As an illustration, Mr Ricard is portrayed in an unpleasant way as he is inflicted with many defects. He is ridiculed and described as follows: “Bien que tout lui appartienne en propre et qu’aucun associé n’ait surnagé avec lui, M. Ricard persiste dans l’étrange travaillisme primitif qui lui tient de doctrine” [While all is in his own possession and no partner has floated with him, Mr. Ricard persists in his strange and primitive Labourism he holds as a doctrine] (P.17). He is brutal, always drunk, as he is also “un propriétaire en rupture de ban” [an owner at odds] whose wealth does nothing but isolate him and increase the number of his enemies. He is also “taciturne, cupide, mal accoutré” [taciturn, greedy, and poorly dressed] (P.14). The ironic tone reveals Kateb’s sarcastic attitude towards the French master. Ricard is conceived as excessively strict, cruel and stands for

the type of colonialist who always favors violence. Kateb depicts Ricard's monstrosity the day of his marriage when he beats the Arab servant so badly that Mourad reacts violently by killing him the day of his wedding (P.28). The same pattern of violence appears and reoccurs in Kateb's *Nedjma*. Most of the characters are caught in an atmosphere of an inescapable violence and oppression.

It is true that Kateb cannot be influenced by Fanon as his *Nedjma* had been published before the appearance of Fanon's seminal book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965). Yet, the use of violence by certain French characters, such as Mr Ernest and Ricard and the counter-violent reactions of Lakhdar, Mourad, and Rachid are strikingly similar to what Frantz Fanon puts forward as "terror counter-terror, violence counter-violence". Fanon argues in his essay entitled, "Concerning Violence" that the native reacts violently towards injustice, oppression and the circle of hate from which emanates the violence of the oppressor. The theorist of revolution reiterates:

The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the native balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity. This reign of violence will be the more terrible in proportion to the size of the implantation from the mother country. The development of violence among the colonized people will be proportionate to the violence exercised by the threatened colonial regime [...] Counter-violence is a cleansing force because it frees the colonised native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction.

(Fanon.1965:74).

The overall atmosphere of revolution is conveyed through the presence and recurrence of violence since neither Ngugi nor Kateb miss an opportunity to make violence and war serve as ingredients in their novels.

5- Use of Revolutionary Songs and Verse Fragments

The other element which creates an epic aura in Ngugi and Kateb's novels is the use of songs which have, in my view, two important functions: first they are used to bring relief to people and are meant to underscore their deep and silent miseries. Second, they are regarded as a symbol of the fusion point and to reproduce the necessary motivation for action. They are expected to express hope in spite of pain and misery.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, the songs are not mere texts created orally and passed on from one generation to another; they are rather a pragmatic art with utilitarian values. They are meant to move the audience to action and serve to arouse a war-like spirit. The author's insertion of songs that glorify the Mau Mau revolt is meant as an engaged poetic voice to stir up public sentiments against the danger that threatens the community and stress the virtues of group strength heroism and patriotism. Ngugi's appeal to these songs is twofold. On the one hand, it is a means to grant his novel an African flavour. On the other hand, the different songs contribute to create an atmosphere of revolution and convey a sense of an epic struggle against oppression and injustice. The songs are entirely performed in Gikuyu. From the very beginning of the novel, women give voice to the community's power and resistance. The extended use of Kikuyu songs look to the end of imperial rule and voice the Kenyan resistance to colonial exploitation. The songs also celebrate the rebellion against white colonial government (P.126). The dances and music are rooted in Ngugi's native culture and aim also to show mainly the brutal and mindless oppression inflicted on his countrymen (P.20). The songs recall wartime and the period of colonial oppression. They glorify the grandeur and heroism of the Kenyan people's resistance to exploitation and domination (P.189). The songs function in the novel, as Gilbert and Thompkins note, as a mode of empowerment for the oppressed characters and emerges as a locus of the struggle in producing and representing individual and cultural identity (Gilbert-Thompkins.1996:242).

Revolutionary songs also appear in Kateb's *Nedjma*. The author incorporates songs with poetry to depict psychic pain and fragmentation of the prisoners (P.40). Similar to Ngugi, Kateb uses the songs as an alternative discourse and a cultural signifier which acts as one of the few means of political resistance available to the Algerian people. Prominent auditory elements include the voice of the singer who incites the freedom fighters to redeploy in the mountains, to gather their forces, and to come back more powerful than before (P.54). The song represents the voice of the all people and functions as a national consciousness that not only sides with the freedom fighters but also incites them to continue their struggle for liberation. They also function to praise the fighters (P.227). The fragments Kateb cites are so clearly from epic tradition as it has

come down orally and it is displayed in the specific oral formulae and verse fragments whose origins go back to the tribal Arab poetry and oral historical narratives of the Arab world.

In the preceding chapter, I explored folk heroic creation as a normative cultural activity intimately related to both writers' efforts to refine their African cultures through an evaluation of the actions of characters in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* which provide important insights into their link to the African folk heroic tradition. Kateb and Ngugi incorporate various genres of folklore into their texts to achieve various effects, to comment on the action of characters to highlight and reinforce moral social values of their peoples. So, in answer to the two questions posed in the beginning of the chapter, the responses are: Ngugi's and Kateb's novels share the central characteristics, if not all the formal elements, that constitute an 'epic narrative'. These elements range from a focus on the pivotal actions, the heroic and mythical shape of the main characters, recurrence of violence, to the use of songs and verse fragments. All these cultural elements contribute to heighten the sense of heroism and convey an atmosphere of revolution. Both authors glorify their countrymen's revolutions in narrating the stories of the heroes and heroines so as to offer them up as examples for future generations. However, the similarities between the two novels do not stop at this level, but can be furthered through another examination of other common points. To the folk heroic as an expressive culture, Kateb and Ngugi refine their cultures in mixing their African oral heritage with Western models. Both authors construct their fictions through modernist mode of writing. In what follows, I examine how Ngugi and Kateb succeed to harmonize and combine their revolutionary ardour with the finesse of the aesthetics, themselves combined to shape their novels.

Chapter Six

Form of the Content: Revolutionary Aesthetics in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma*

In *A Grain of Wheat* and in *Nedjma*, both authors experiment with various styles of literary presentation to determine which form is the most suitable vehicle to convey their messages to their audiences. I shall refer particularly to some features of Modernism that appear in the two novels, but it should be made clear that my analysis should not be taken to represent a thesis on the influence of Conrad on Ngugi, and Joyce or Faulkner on Kateb which would be banal in any case. The importance of some prominent western writers' works for Ngugi and Kateb are well known, but as it is indicated in the introduction, the African reader should have every reason to be suspicious of the concept of language of influence. As Abiola correctly assesses, it is a kind of force that only works in one direction (Abiola. 2001:160).

On the Border of Modernism.

1-Modernist Characteristics in Kateb and Ngugi's Novels

What I intend to show is the force imparted by the two authors' colonial education and their reading of western canonical texts to the two novels. This is an important factor in the historical circumstances of their emergence and the mode of their existence. But not less important is the way both authors make their fiction different from their precursors' writings. What the following section aims to display is "A border case" by which I mean "the border situation" that overlaps Ngugi and Kateb's novels including two realities altogether. It is a situation that transforms the style of Modernism by its very different colonial relationship to space, while still retaining many characteristic features of modernist writings. In other terms, I shall show how Ngugi and Kateb explore the physical and psychological space of Africa instead of dealing with space only by transforming it into the formal and aesthetic space of modernism. Before addressing in detail the modernist features which appear in the two novels, it is worthwhile to list some of them and provide a short explanation for each of them. To understand the complicated intersection between Ngugi and Kateb's novels and Modernism from which the two authors draw a common

inspiration, it is necessary to be aware of the important principles of a modernist novel. In his analysis of the modern genres in modernist literature, Jesse Matz summarises the way modernist writers distinguish themselves from their predecessors as follows:

Modernist writers 'make it new' by trading the novels regular forms for experimental forms of flux, perplexity, openness, scepticism, freedom and horror. They replace omniscient with fixed or fallible perspectives, broke their chapters into fragments, made sex explicit, and dissolved their sentences into streams and flows of interior psychic life. Time and space dissolved as well, as did any faith that the world appearances could reflect its realities, or that 'objective' truths existed.

(Matz in. Bradshaw. Dettmar.2006: 125).

It appears from the above passage that a modernist text depicts modern life and shows ambivalence towards it. It is verbally ambiguous, paradoxical, and fragmentary as it eliminates the devices that help its reader to make sense of it. Its narrative contrasts an orderly past with a chaotic present and considers the past as an altogether more solid ground. It conveys a pessimistic image of life that only art can transcend. Art can rise above the disorder and the chaos of modern life. The modernist text also experiments with time, implying a grand philosophy in which time is non-linear. Time is rather based on a "spatial form", where the reader should contribute in the construction of meaning by rearranging narrative events into their chronological sequence, as a self-conscious display of formal mastery. What makes a work of art valuable is its form, not its subject matter (Ibid.P:45).

One of the primary features of modernist aesthetics is undoubtedly its obsession and fascination with formal matters and technique. Malcolm Bradbury and John Fletcher note, in their essay entitled "The Introverted Novel", included in *Modernism* (1985) that the modernist novel sets forms over life, pattern and myth over the contingencies of history, the power of the fictive presides. The best art does not report; it creates. (Bradbury & Fletcher.1985: 406-7). The question which rises here, and to which we try to respond is to ask whether some of these modernist features appear in Ngugi and Kateb's novels? If so, where do they appear in the two narratives? As a starting point, we can hypothesize that the distinctive features of the modernist novel which are established by M.Bradbury and J.Fletcher have a particular pertinence in the light of Ngugi

and Kateb's representations. Both authors's appeal to modernist aesthetics is apparent in their use of complex structures, multiplicity of viewpoints, use of myth, symbolism, psychological stress in characters, and the theme of alienation. The sections that follow will bear out these hypotheses. With regard to Ngugi, in his initial attempt to prove his capability in mastering Western culture, the author chooses a modernist mode of writing and departs from the realist mode of his two first novels. Instead, he draws upon the experimental forms as well as strategies akin to Modernism, which were after all, originally intended to put an end to the conventions of 19th century realism. Ngugi's desire for change and his search for a new style, begins by a fascination with and an imitation of the old writings as Roland Barthes suggests in his *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953). Barthes states that even though a writer can assert his freedom by choosing a mode of writing that suits his purposes, in his beginnings, he can never develop a new style without gradually becoming a prisoner of someone else's writing. Barthes maintains: "L'intellectuel n'est encore qu'un écrivain mal transformé, et à moins de se saborder et de devenir à jamais un militant qui n'écrit plus [...] il ne peut que revenir à la fascination d'écritures antérieures" [The intellectual is still a badly transformed writer, and unless he scuttles and becomes for ever an activist who doesn't write [...] he can only return to the fascination of previous scriptures. The return to old models «se manifeste par une servitude invisible dans les premiers pas» [Such return is manifested by an invisible servitude in the first step] (Barthes.1953: 43, 66).

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

2- Disrupted Structures and Fragmentation of the Narratives

The first modernist common feature common to both *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* is their similar structure and design or the way Kateb and Ngugi build the patterns of their respective

novels. Yet given that critics use the term pattern in various senses, we think it worthwhile to explain what we mean by “pattern” on the basis of E.M. Forster’s theoretical approach. In his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), E.M.Forster makes the difference between “Plot”, and “Pattern”. For him, plot appeals to our intelligence while ‘pattern’ appeals to our aesthetic sense. It makes us see the book as a whole. Forster compares the pattern of a book to a house design (Forster.1927: 134,146). It is relevant to say that E. M. Forster and many modernist critics put stress on the fact that a novel should be of “a pattern” in which the sensibility of the central characters consorts and co-operates with the consciousness of the author to produce form. It is the making of the pattern and wholeness, note Bradbury and Fletcher, which makes art into an order standing outside and beyond the human muddle, a transcendent object and a luminous whole (Bradbury & Fletcher. 1985: 407- 408). Also relevant is the fact that a narrative, according to modernist theorists, typically follows the passage of time as it is experienced within the minds of its characters rather than the straightforwardly direct moving plot of standard realism. Time appears as it is lived freely by the subjective consciousness and differs from the time as we understand it through the authoritative yet arbitrary confines of the clock and the calendar. It is rather a continuum in which the past and the present interpenetrate or melt into each other. Consequently, it can take hundreds of pages to cover the period of only one day and far less to move across centuries and centuries. The idea of a non-linear time is experienced by the mind as an all encompassing flux and a “spatial form” or a linear sequence of events, as Virginia Woolf suggested, “Life is as a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to its end” (Cited in Parson.2007:111).

Also important is the fact that for most modernist writers, the most accurate record of life is one that weaves its way incessantly along distant but interrelated moments. Nonlinearity results: a moment can seem to last for years, years can seem to pass in moments, and a typical day can compose itself out of the past, present and future moments all at once. Writing’s truth and value depend on this effort to depart from chronology to time shifts, and reversals, as narrative time is set itself against the clock and is replaced by what Virginia Woolf calls “moments of being”(Ibid:222).

The above defining principle of modernist novels is embodied in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma*. Both narratives do not have a plot. Rather, they have several plots. The two narratives are presented to the reader in an episodic way, designed to present a view of disrupted life during the war. As such, the two novels centre on the episodic nature of the action and take their interest mainly from what they progressively reveal from the description of the characters. They are presented as individuals with their own histories, desires, and needs rather than by a sequential arrangement. All the characters in the two novels, though separated synchronically, are linked by some shared mental images and memories that suggest an underlying common paradigm of human existence.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi inserts an array of literary devices, such as a complex and an unusual narrative structure and a broken plot. As in modernist novels, the plot is constructed around the minds and acts of thought of the main characters rather than on any 'external' activity. Ngugi makes it appear clearly through his use of ambiguous characters, such as Mugo and John Thompson, who recall some typical Conradian figures like Haldin and Razumov, the main characters in *Under Western Eyes* (1911). The narrative of *A Grain of Wheat* is divided into four parts; each of them is introduced by an Epigraph. In the first part, Mugo is presented with his psychological breakdown. The second part is composed of five chapters; each of them carries a function. Here, we are provided with the portrait of the different characters inside a society in trouble caused by the Emergency. The author focuses on Karanja's admiration for the white men. Chapter eight reveals Karanja's attitude and his kindness to Mumbi. In part three, Mugo is admired for his courage shown in Rira Camp. In the fourth part, we have a description of "Uhuru" Day. The novel ends with a note of hope with the reconciliation of Gikonyo and Mumbi. The story as a whole lasts four days and four nights, but through lengthy flashbacks, the narrative moves to the past then back to the present and each shift to the past makes the present actions and behaviors clearer.

The four characters return to the past through their memories and remembrances. All their present choices, made on the eve of their country's independence, are explained through the past. To widen and deepen his narrative and its description of the Kenyan situation, Ngugi employs

several time frames. The present time action of the novel takes place over four days preceding Kenyan independence. The stories of the lives of characters take place over twelve years and Ngugi moves easily backward and forward from 1896 when the annexation of Kenya began to the description of the four days preceding the Kenyan independence in 1963. The moves appear through the characters recollections of their pasts. As an illustration, Mugo evokes in the very beginning of the novel his quarrels with his aunt about the missing money (P.7). Gikonyo, for his part, narrates his stay in prison and recollects his reminiscences of his youth, and his love to Mumbi with which he justifies his confession of the oath (P.29). Furthermore, in a long flashback, Mumbi recollects her past memories to narrate the harsh conditions of the Emergency Period as well as the way she submitted involuntarily to Karanja's sexual desires (P.143).

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

In my view, the same fragmentation is strikingly found in Kateb's *Nedjma*. The complexity of novel is due to its disrupted plot that appears fragmentary and removes all the devices that help the reader to make sense of the text. The novel is divided into six sections and each of them is composed of twelve or twenty-four chapters; each of them is independent from the other. The division is indicated through Roman letters. The first, the second and the fifth sections contain twelve chapters while the third; the fourth and the last are cut into twenty-four chapters each. Kateb's plot revolves around the characters' perceptions, motives, memories and desires. They have lost their coherence and their standard 'fixed qualities'. The first part of *Nedjma* begins on a violent note, which may be taken as an early hint that tension and violence

will take over the narrative. Hence, to present a view of life during the war, Kateb begins his narrative with Lakhdar's escape from prison after hitting his French boss, Mr Ernest. Another event inspired by a violent real life occurrence follows the scene. Mourad, Lakhdar's brother, while attending the wedding of Ricard, kills the latter because of his beating of an Arab servant. Mourad is then sent to prison where he meets Rachid, arrested after a street fight. In the second part, the four protagonists work on a construction site where the attitudes and the behaviors of the different characters are described. The third part opens with Mourad's description of Rachid's arrival to Bone with Si Mokhtar. Then, Rachid narrates at length the history of his ancestral tribe Keblout, as Si Mokhtar told it to him. However, the important event with which this part ends is the kidnapping of Nedjma by Rachid and Si Mokhtar and their return to the ancestral world of Nadhor. In part four, the narration is taken up to Nadhor after the rapt where Rachid, Si Mokhtar and Nedjma are found. The narrative ends with a return to the beginning, mainly with the four protagonists drinking in a room, before they separate, thinking of the missing friend, Mourad.

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

In spite of the fact that Kateb's narrative is told in a complicated and none sequential manner, *Nedjma* has a coherent structure enhanced by devices such as the journey motif, dreams,

memories of past events and psychological conflicts. Kateb's *Nedjma* is also given coherence by a dominating element of the war and ramifications of its effect on the characters. To summarize, the two narratives are not chronological because they contain a series of flashbacks that reconstruct the history and the lives of the two authors through the memories of the characters and their consciousness. But despite the episodic arrangement of events, Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* have a pattern that gives them coherence. It lies in the way Ngugi and Kateb hold together the different parts by the event of the war and its disruptive effects on the characters.

3- Multiplicity of Viewpoints in the Two Novels

The next modernist feature which is displayed in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* is narrative technique. By narrative technique, we mean the methods adopted by Ngugi and Kateb for the presentation of characters and action that revolve mostly around point of view. Put differently, we mean that the perspective form by which the two novelists present their material can be classified under two broad categories: the first, the third person, and the point of view of the characters. This technique is used by modernist writers, as Bradshaw and Dettmar note: truth in modernism became "subjective" because adequate representation demands many tellings, and the full story comes out only as an alternative version presented from its different sides. Correlative to this interest in multiple perspectives is a belief in relativity of truth. Modern novels deal with no absolutes-moral perceptual, or cultural. Rather, they take the truth to be a relative thing, contingent upon circumstances, changing with time and place. For the modernist writers, truth became "subjective" relative perspectives ruled out objective styles of seeing and speaking, debunking the faith that knowledge or judgment could be free of bias, motive, or error. The shift from objective to the subjective took place most prominently in the rejection of the third-person omniscient narration. Traditional narration conducted with objective impersonality as if from a comfortable and authoritative remove from the objects of narration had come to be seen as unrealistic, or at least, ineffective in conveying the reality of limited human experience and knowledge. By contrast, the subjective narrator speaking or overhead in the act of living, directly involved with people, objects, and concerns of his or her narrative world, or aligned with some

particular characters' point of view became the only way to achieve narrative verisimilitude. Depending on the temperament of the writer in question or the mood of the story, this stress on subjective experience could be negative or positive (Bradshaw. Dettmar.2006:219).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi uses many viewpoints and the tale is told through various narrative strategies: the events are described by the village members of Thabai, through the remembrances of the main character, and by an omniscient narrator. The story is narrated in the third person singular through dialogues that tell about a situation of high intensity. Ngugi uses a narrator who is a member of the Thabai community and whose voice is different from that of the author. In addition, Ngugi refers to villagers as "they" to denote some degree of detachment between him and his subject. Furthermore, the different characters express their experiences and feelings using the first person singular. But, there are instances when the omniscient narrator reflects the views of the collective, the "we" voice, by identifying himself as one of them. We may single out passages where the narrator changes his status from an outsider (omniscient narrator) into a participant involved in the action using the inclusive first person plural possessive "our". The key example, which illustrates the author's intrusive voice, his inclusiveness and shared identity in *A Grain of Wheat*, is when Ngugi describes the villagers in chapter fourteen as follows: "We saw the following morning as we went into the field near Rungei, where the sports and dances to celebrate "Uhuru" were to take place" (P.204). The influence of this kind of narration, as David Cook notes, is manifested by the author's dual position as both an interpreter and judge of experience (Cook. 1983:81).

The same stylistic method is to be found in *Nedjma* where Kateb relies on a multiplicity of viewpoints. The first part of the novel is narrated in the third person singular "he", what is also called "le récitobjectif". The story and events introduce the protagonists with a description of the violence and hostility that reign in a colonial society. In the second part, however, the third person is alternated with the use of the first person "I", also called "le récitsubjectif". Kateb uses two narrators, one seems omniscient, the other "I" of characters, mainly Rachid in his journey into his own self and Mustapha's diary. What is interesting to observe is that, as with Ngugi, at times, Kateb's omniscient narrator describes himself as a member of the community and we feel that the

writer does not adopt the position of an outside observer who stands above the characters and their experiences against the social norms. It is, on the contrary, the voice of the writer who tries to become one member of the community or their spokesman. We also feel the implication of the narrator in what is narrated which appears in the instance of the description of the 8 May Uprising (P. 57).

From the examples provided above, it seems clear by now that *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* share an alternation between the first and the third person narrative voices added to that of the protagonists. This is done on purpose to establish a connection between private and public experiences. The following parallel between *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* with the modernist novels are reinforced by Ngugi's and Kateb's incorporation of symbolism as a common technical device.

4- Use of Symbolism in the Novels

The next modernist feature, integrated in both *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma*, is Ngugi's and Kateb's use of symbolism. In the manner of modernist fiction, the two novels are heavily marked by symbols, which emanate, first and foremost from their titles. According to modernist philosophy, the novelists must transcend history that is regarded as degenerate and replace it by symbolism. From this point of view, a work of art must be poetic and symbolic and aims to look for the lost reality of the past. It intends rather to search for and find the artistic means for its recreation (Bradbury & Fletcher.1985:405).

Ngugi's use of symbolism appears first in the novel's title. *A Grain of Wheat* as title is highly allegorical because it symbolizes fertility, regeneration and rebirth as represented by Kihika. He is "the grain which must die in order to be reborn". He is the one who sacrifices himself so that many others might live. Kihika reinterprets Christianity in order to encourage Kenyans to unite and fight, and if necessary to die so that all Kenyans can live free. He stands for the will of Kenyan people, for social justice and liberation. The grain must die in order to be regenerated (P.69). To the two examples above, we can add the use of images to express certain emotions or an idea such as hope. As an illustration, the idea of hope is symbolized by the writer's most persistent use of water symbolism. At the beginning of the novel, the image of

water is negative and oppressive because it increases the anxiety of Mugo: “The drop fattened and grew dirtier as it absorbed grains of soot” (P.1). However, the image of water at the end of the novel becomes purgatory and positive. It represents the rain that will clean and purify the soul of Mugo from the sin of his betrayal of Kihika. Rain is also used to water the grain of wheat, the symbol of rebirth and regeneration of the Kikuyu society. Next to water imagery, the train symbolizes the advance of colonialism while the stool is a symbol of hope and reconstruction. Through Gikonyo’s acceptance of the child and his reconciliation with Mumbi, the carpenter promises his wife to carve a stool which stands for hope and a better future.

Like his fellow Kenyan writer, Kateb employs symbolism, first and foremost through *Nedjma*, the title and the main character of the novel. It symbolizes the first political party, the North African Star (ENA) founded in 1926 by Messali Hadj in France, which claimed a total liberty for Algeria. *Nedjma* also stands for the woman Kateb loved or his own mother. Finally, *Nedjma* symbolizes, as Jacqueline Arnaud suggests, the mother country, Algeria, “L’Algérie déchirée depuis ses origines, et ravagée par trop de passions exclusives” [Algeria, torn from its origins, and ravaged by too exclusive passions] (Arnaud.1985: 255).

In the manner of Modernist writers, Kateb resorts to an excessive use of images and symbols to convey the atmosphere of violence that spread through his society. He uses concrete objects or things to express certain ideas. For instance, “Prison” and “Cell”, in *Nedjma*, symbolize not only confinement and separation of Arabs from the French, but they are also symbols of oppression and repression. While the above analysis points to parallels with modernist literary devices, another perspective on the speech, especially its particular uses of animal imagery and references to African warriors, would stress the use of African oral derived forms. To give but one example, Kateb uses insects as threatening symbols. For instance, “ants” and “flies” stand for the idea of invasion and conquest. They are symbols of colonization and expropriation. The animal metaphors mark also the traditional African oral discourse where “ants” are frequently compared to soldiers. Moreover, the image of the “spider”, which terrifies Rachid in prison, can be compared to Mugo’s fear of a drop of water. The use of symbolism, in Kateb’s *Nedjma* extends to

include the recurrence of crime and the use of violence. This is made concrete by the author's use of a knife.

It derives from the illustrations provided above, that both Ngugi and Kateb use symbolism and imagery extensively in their two fictions. More significantly, both writers endow their symbols with a new semiotic framework that elicits new meaning which make them belong to Western sources and African oral poetics alike. The reconciliation of the two literary traditions aims to mortise boundaries. Besides an extensive use of symbols, Ngugi's and Kateb's respective portrayals of their characters operate within modernist mode of writing which both authors transpose to an African context.

5- Psychological Insights (Subjectivity) of Characters

The other link between Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* with Modernist writing is found on the manner in which two authors exchange the traditional representation of their characters' social development for the expression of the protagonists' individual psychological being. The external descriptions of scene are exchanged for the internal revelation of consciousness, and the chronological narrative and dramatic plot for the flux of momentary thoughts and impressions that constitute their mental lives. Subjectivity means to pay close attention to the individual human psychology, very often called, "the movement inward" and "consciousness". According to Mary Ann Gillies and Aurelea Mahood, the two crucial features of modernist novels in relation to characterization are: first, it showcases a deep interest in the inner workings of the ordinary mind. Second, it presents an intense concern to that mind's response to the contemporary moment as filtered through the weight of history. The two critics explain that modernist writers seek the truth of real temporal experience, against the false linearity of clock time and try to make fiction more true to the heterogeneity of human temporality. They try to make it more true to the vagaries of human memory making the past illusive in contrast to what is familiar. Stories and records imply easy accessibility. The past returns when we make no effort to retrieve it, some past moments utterly lost to us unless chance return them to us. The modern imperative to attend to the individual and interiority transfigures the literary landscape and adds a diversity of voices and styles that is so rich (Gillies.Mahood. 2007:9).

The technique discussed by the two critics dominates the narratives of Ngugi and Kateb's novels. Both narratives offer intense psychological portraits of men and women experiencing different forms of dislocation. The forces of history come to bear on individuals' private lives. In both novels too, their authors report the impressions, emotions to which consciousness can variously fall prey. This aspect can be illustrated mainly in the two writer's focus on the passages of their protagonists' consciousness and their similar recourse to the use of interior monologues and stream of consciousness. The two writing techniques are among the defining features of the modernist novel. They are identified as its principal themes and techniques which are derived from William James' description of the way in which thoughts and perceptions, memories, associations and sensations in their entire multitude are experienced by the mind. In his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), James defines this method as "continuous and unbroken": "it is nothing jointed", it flows. A "river or "stream" are metaphors by which it is most naturally described. He calls it the stream of thought, of consciousness or of the subjective life". Unlike the intuitive, anti-representational quality of duration, the stream of consciousness, as James conceives it, refers to the never ending associative flow of our conscious or half conscious thoughts and perceptions and feelings, the activity of the mind that we are always at least vaguely aware of (In Bradshaw.Dettmar.2006: 80).

Moreover, according to M.Gillies and A.Mahood, two of the most important modernist techniques for gaining access to a character's mind are 'Free direct discourse' and 'Stream of consciousness, which they define as a mode of narration which reproduces the character's half-conscious thoughts and sensations without any authorial intrusion. Through the two techniques, writers express the 'myriad impressions' a mind receives in the course of a day. "Trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel", the writers record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order which they fall, trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness (Gillies. Mahood.2007:8).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi takes an in-depth interest in characterization and examines the varied psychological and complex mental and emotional lives of his characters. Thus, a great deal of interest is given to the depiction of people's hidden lives, their fears, hopes, loves and hates. The author looks deeper at the inner worlds of the characters. He describes their secrets and their longings, which impel them to take certain actions in spite of themselves. For instance, Ngugi analyses at a deep level the factors which lead to Mugo's psychological troubles. The description of Mugo as a child, victim orphan adopted by a drunken relative announces his crisis. The character becomes duty-bound to bear the burden of his sorrowful childhood and is continuously haunted by his remembrances. As an adult, he turns into an unfriendly, reserved mysterious person plagued with confusion and despair. All these factors contribute to explain his individuality and his disturbed state of mind. In addition to Mugo, Ngugi also scrutinizes the mind of Thompson, probes his deepest thoughts about his departure and highlights the character's deception and sadness (P.38).

The same technique is noticeable in *Nedjma* where we may observe that the stream of consciousness, the diaries and the reminiscences of the protagonists complement the flashback narration. The technique increasingly shifts the centre of the reader's interest towards the character's stream of thoughts. For instance, Rachid reports his memories of the past and his experiences. The remembrances can be read like a continuous flow of thoughts, which run over many pages. Rachid returns to the past and narrates how he met Nedjma in a hospital. It is followed by Rachid's trip to Mecca with Si Mokhtar (P.117). Furthermore, Rachid's interior monologue describes also his return to his ancestral world of Nadhor with Nedjma and Si Mokhtar (P. 127). We notice that Kateb's Rachid shifts to the conscious first person but without direction of speech marks or of the third person's insertion of "he thought". The ellipses convey the associative flow of Rachid's mind, but also the ineffable moments that remain untranslated into either the language of thought or external imagery. Kateb uses the recognizable technique of interior monologue to present the thoughts and impressions of this character as he follows Rachid's journey for self identity and describes sensitively his struggle and suffering in his efforts to survive the painful experiences of colonialism. Among the diverse methods of healing his

wounds, Rachid resorts to fruitless nursing of negative bitterness, he indulges escapism so as to evade his past lack and present distress, and, ultimately, direct positive anger towards personal failure. Left alone and wounded, Rachid is physically and psychologically sick due to his inability to deal with the deep scars inflicted upon him by the oppressors. He therefore directs anger against himself in drinking as an escape mechanism to deal with his wounds. It is important to acknowledge that the focus on the interior life of characters which populate Kateb's *Nedjma* does not mean that the social world in which they lived is frequently pushed to the side.

6- Theme of Alienation in the Novels

One of the major themes of modernist writings is alienation, which can be explained as a state of man's incompatibility with his milieu. It appears in some modernist texts through the characters' loss of coherence as a result of: unified selves fragmented into such a welter of conceptions, motives, memories, and desires that fictional people cease to have the fixed standard "qualities that had made them engaging and memorable in the novels of the past. They can also be lost within their mental flux; they ceased to have strong engagement with the outside world, lapsing into "solipsism". The construction of the dissolving selves was an opportunity to focus in on the "essence" of selfhood, to turn away from merely material identities, and to discover the new and very process of soul-making"(Gillies, Mahood.2007:221).

The theme of alienation is exhibited in Ngugi's and Kateb's respective works, but not in ways characteristic of modernist texts. The theme of alienation in both novels is created by colonial oppression. The disintegration of the character's dream of bliss by the realities of oppression is noticeable in the two novels through the characters of Mugo and Rachid. But all indications point to the fact that the two characters are compelled by their environments to lead an alienated life. Our study of *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* reveals some resemblances between the two characters' state of alienation. The portrayal of Mugo resembles that of Rachid since the two characters can be compared in several ways. The similarities between them stem from their family backgrounds. As children, both were victims because they were orphans and were adopted by their relatives. Both characters were compelled to bear the burden of their unhappy childhood and are haunted by their remembrances and memories. As adults, they become aloof and

reserved. They are depicted as mysterious, overwhelmed with confusion and despair. Mugo and Rachid are comparable also in terms of their lack of social commitment, their individualism and their disturbed states of mind.

From the very beginning of *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo is disoriented by guilt and isolation from ordinary life. He finds at the core of his afflicted self an array of inner fears and personal frustrations that distanciate him from a “stable self”. His silence along with memories of his boyhood experience with a drunken aunt haunts him and shapes his perception of things (P.7). As an adult, he is circumscribed within a marginal position because he is reluctant to take part in the Mau Mau rebellion. Mugo’s loneliness and isolation are amplified by his participation in the murder of Kihika. At the beginning of the novel, Mugo is seen by people as a national hero and a symbol of anti-colonial struggle because he shelters Kihika and does not confess the oath. At the end of the narrative, people discover the other side of Mugo, a man who has strangled the hero of the revolution, Kihika (P.223). Mugo fails to see the truth about his betrayal and when he does finally discover the objective reality behind his subjective vision, the result is more anguish and alienation.

Similarly, in *Nedjma* the same role seems to be devoted to Rachid. Kateb gives a full description of this character’s strange physical appearance, state of mind and tormented personality. Like Mugo, Rachid is conceived as a discrete character, different from the others. Unlike Lakhdar and Mustapha, Rachid is not a nationalist militant and does not take part in the revolt of May 1945. Rachid’s isolation arises mainly out of his father’s mysterious death, assassinated in unknown circumstances, leaving four widows and many children of whom Rachid was the last one (P.146). Thus, the tragic event and the depressing knowledge surrounding his father’s obscure death weigh heavily on his mind and reveal a lack in Rachid’s personality. As with Mugo, Rachid is haunted by past events and memories, which emerge as an oppressive factor that make his daily life intolerable (P. 85). As Mugo, Rachid gets involved in the murder of Si Mokhtar and confesses it to the public writer: “Je suis mêlé à trop de morts, trop de morts ...” [I’m involved in too many deaths, too many deaths ...] (P.174). Of course, such an expression does reveal the inner state of trouble that Rachid feels. Thus, Mugo’s loneliness, isolation and

hesitation matches Rachid's insignificant and futile life, as the protagonist himself expresses it: "Je me sentais comme un morceau de jarre cassée, insignifiante ruine détachée d'une architecture millénaire" [I felt like a piece of a broken jar, an insignificant ruin that is detached from a millennium architecture] (P.166).

The similarities between Mugo and Rachid are reinforced by the fact that both of them are attached to their loneliness and isolation and stand as outsiders in their respective communities. Mugo's encroachments are close to Rachid's confinement in closed spaces such as prison and a room in a hotel. Rachid lives in a sort of "société secrète mi-nécropole, mi-prison" [A secret society half-necropolis, mid-prison] (Kateb.P.160). In order to escape his loneliness, Mugo finds refuge in religious fantasies and reveries (P.25). For his part, Rachid resorts to an excessive use of drugs to forget about his failure to cope with his environment (P.164). One of the striking scenes in *Nedjma*, which exemplify Rachid's delirium due to the effect of hashish, is apparent in his inability to distinguish between things after the murder of his companion, Si Mokhtar (P.134). A further convergence between Mugo and Rachid is that both characters have a mythical connotation with their ancestors. If Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat* is connected to the legendary Kikuyu prophet and seer Mugo Wa Kabiro, Rachid is linked through Si Mokhtar to the legend of Keblout. He is constantly haunted in his dreams by the founding ancestor of the Keblouti tribe (P.126). In addition to their common mythical dimensions, Mugo and Rachid are arrested and put in prison. Mugo alludes to the period of time he spent in detention camps (P.131). Likewise, Rachid refers to the period of detention as an army deserter (P.179). But, prison does not alleviate the two characters' suffering. At the end of the two narratives, Mugo and Rachid manage to enjoy a sort of relief. If Mugo comes to the rest he had longed for once he avows in public his involvement in the murder of Kihika, Rachid comes close to happiness when he returns to his ancestral homeland with Nedjma and his mentor Si Mokhtar. Finally, Mugo and Rachid can be linked through their similar tragic fates. Mugo prepares himself to pay for his crime by death while Rachid loses Nedjma and his companion Si Mokhtar, and is chased from his ancestral world.

However, the questions that are pertinent at this level of our analysis are: can we consider Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* as merely modernist novels? And can we afford to say that the two novels are only outcomes of the two authors' western-oriented education and readings? The answer is definitely no, and the following reasons can justify my answer. This section, then, examines the various ways in which Ngugi and Kateb sought to emphasise their difference from modernist texts. As a starting point, we have seen earlier both Kateb and Ngugi appeal to the rich oral tradition of their societies to express the attitudes of their people based on their personal experiences of colonialism.

Ngugi and Kateb's Detachment from Modernism

Ngugi's and Kateb's attempts to refine their cultures led them to restore their ancestral traditions and customs that the colonialists discredited through their use of the myths of their ancestors. Their appeal to myth becomes then an integral artistic device to subvert certain elements of a foreign-imposed culture. In other words, Ngugi's and Kateb's use of myth can be seen as a way of finding a detour around the forms and formulations of the colonial culture, which aims to trivialize or to ignore the whole traditional mode of life and its spiritual framework. In addition to myth displacement, we argue that the two writers distanciate themselves from the modernist writers in many other ways.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo, the most alienated character in the novel, suffers from loneliness, but he is far from resembling the heroes of the modernist novel. Mugo neither celebrates his loneliness and isolation nor seeks to deny his society. He is sad because of his impotence. He cannot take a messianic role nor seek redemption in art. Mugo's isolation is oppressive until the day he confesses his guilt and achieves his self-discovery by his return to his community and thus expiation. The same point holds true for Rachid in *Nedjma*. All indications show that the character is directly involved in an inescapable conflict against the oppressive milieu in which he lives and attempts tirelessly to escape it through a return to the past. Kateb introduces the theme of alienation in *Nedjma* and much of the loss arises from Rachid's loneliness, isolation and apathy (P.159). Rachid is remote and uninvolved in the troubles of his

society. Kateb shows him locked in a universe of confinement and solitude. From the beginning, Rachid is marked by an almost total absence of family relations and as he grows older, he becomes more and more estranged from his community. Rachid's tormented vision stems also from his addiction to hashish. We may say that the alienation conveyed in *A Grain of Wheat* and in *Nedjma* does not resemble that of idealistic or spiritual soul which triggers the situation of conflict nor that of artists or intellectuals who have detached themselves from a way of life which they see as corrupt and contaminating.

The second reason which differentiates *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* from modernist novels is that the latter are characterized by despair and hopelessness, while Ngugi's and Kateb's fictions are full of hope. The characters of the two novels struggle to live free as Mumbi says in *A Grain of Wheat*: "We have the village to build" and "children to look after" (P.242). Hope is expressed also at the end of the novel through the reconciliation of Gikonyo and Mumbi. Similarly, Kateb's *Nedjma* is not entirely bleak and suggests hope, a hope that emanates from the title of the novel. The name Nedjma means star in Arabic. The star shines and provides the light in order to illuminate the other stars and satellites. In the novel, Nedjma illuminates the path to liberation and freedom, and symbolizes great expectations for a better future. Maurice Nadeau is to the point when he notes that Nedjma is part and parcel of a stellar universe around which other stars gravitate (Quoted in Mortimer. 1990:89).

What also distinguishes *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* from modernist writings is also the autonomous status of the narrator. As it is indicated earlier, in the two novels, there are some instances where the two narrators represent the collective voice. Ngugi uses a narrator; a member of the community, but the voice of the author is heard from time to time, denoting a sort of intimacy with the community. Some instances show the author as one of the group. For example, "Most of **us** from Thabai first saw him at the New Rung'ei Market [...] as **we**, the children, used to sing". (P.178). Ngugi's inclusiveness is evident when he mentions also the day Kenyatta returned from England: "**We** saw the man in the rain". Here, Ngugi considers himself as one of the villagers addressing his reader by "you". Therefore, we may deduce that Ngugi does not really succeed in dissociating himself from his characters as modernist writers do. The identity of the

narrator in the novel remains paradoxical. The reason is that there are many instances when the narrative voice adopts a traditional omniscient position and maintains strict distance from both subject and the reader. But there are also moments when the voice of the narrator astounds the reader by its identification with both sides making of the narrator an integral part of the same universe of discourse as the narrator. For Simon Gikandi, the narrative voice can be, therefore, personal and empirical. Sometimes, the narrator relates the basic historical facts with the detachment of a journalist. The critic explains Ngugi's ambivalence of enunciation as a symptom of the complication that arises once the grand narrative of colonialism has collapsed. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the narrator is both outside the events as he disengages himself by adopting a neutral position vis a vis certain events. But sometimes, he is also inside because he is present as a witness, a participant, and a commentator of some events (Gikandi. 2000:122).

The same experiment appears also in Kateb's *Nedjma*. Kateb uses flashbacks and Rachid's interior monologues to distance himself from his characters (PP.117- 127), but the reader feels that the author has not succeeded in detaching himself from them. This is explained by the fact that *Nedjma* is somewhat an autobiographical novel based on Kateb's own traumatic experiences. An example to illustrate this point is Kateb's comment and his idealization of his characters, especially, Lakhdar (P.53). Ngugi and Kateb lack distance and have been criticised for not detaching themselves from their works, by failing to achieve what T.S.Eliot calls: "the impersonality of the author". Ngugi and Kateb alternate between public and private experiences. This kind of link was precisely obliterated in modernist writing; as Gikandi writes:

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

(Gikandi.1987: 134).

1- Myth Displacement in the Two Novels

The other, not less important formal characteristic typical of literary modernism is the tendency towards the use of myth which is present in both Ngugi's and Kateb's novels. The

modernist texts reject modern life and valorize myth over history, spatial form over time, an orderly past over the chaotic present, and the transcendence of art over the pain of life. Such a tendency can be found in the works of Yeats, Joyce, Woolf, Pound, Eliot, and Faulkner among others. Modernist writers employ mythic allusion and mythic patterning as an “organizing structure” because it orders the world and creates patterns for the text, as T.S. Eliot maintains in his review of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, published in the *Dial* in 1923. The use of what T.S. Eliot calls “mythical method”, is the *sine qua non* of modern literature because it allows the embattled present to find roots in the deeper strata of the Indo-European past in its mythic unconscious. T.S. Eliot, as David Trotter writes, elevates the mythic side of the unconscious in order to stem the tide of history (Trotter in Levensson.1999: 87).

However, Ngugi and Kateb’s use of myth is multidimensional and can be interpreted as contradictory sites for identification with African origins, culture, and identification with the imposed view of the past. In my view, myths in both novels are simultaneously sites of estrangement, empowerment, and refiguring of the past as they contribute to help people go beyond the sorrows of the colonial situation to something new. It is not just a link with the past but most importantly projects a new cultural product of cultural plenitude in which something new is developed in relation to the past in order to create a new communal identity. Ngugi and Kateb stress this cultural plenitude as a cure for the sense of loss, lack, and rejection with the power of the ancestral past. This section indicates that even though Ngugi and Kateb appeal to myth like modernist writers, the way they use it can in no way be an exact replica of the modernist implications. The use of myth in both *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma* has different connotations as well as a decolonizing function. More significantly, Ngugi and Kateb require critics to shift from the tendency of deriving meaning of the two authors’ novels from its location in the fixed field of its Western literary tradition and place them in a larger discursive context that includes the way they modify their western heritage to suit their ideological and artistic commitments. In my view, some interest should be put on the way both authors rely on some semantic ties between two discourses, Western and African to forge a synthesis from their African and Western literary traditions.

The greatest common reality for Ngugi and Kateb, as we indicated earlier, is certainly their first hand experience of colonialism. Both went to colonial schools where French and British colonizers, with an eminently paternalistic sense, sought to make them alienated and stripped them completely of their African origins in the way Robinson Crusoe did for Friday. The objective of the colonial education aimed at leading them to believe the imperialist mythology that is constructed on the idea of Africa as a blank space devoid of history and civilization. During their colonial school education, Kateb and Ngugi were forced to claim the “the British and French” as their ancestors while their African roots were consigned to dark oblivion. In this context, Ngugi maintains, for instance, that the ambitions of the British colonial scheme of constructing an African whose historical, physical, and metaphysical geography begins with European memory was almost realized with the production of such a native class dismembered from its past history and social memory (Ngugi.2009:28).

Therefore, the fact of writing in and about a colonial situation for Ngugi and Kateb becomes an act of restitution which demands a process of reversal and a reconstruction of an identity that can be reflected in cultural, formal and linguistic reintegration. The narrowed view of their countries, devoid of civilization and a history of their own, gave birth to the struggle over representation that emerged quite clearly within Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb’s *Nedjma*. Throughout both novels, the two authors seek to correct the images that their western-oriented education conveys about their countries. Because their writings arose out of the desire to introduce an African perspective to the socio-political vision of Africa, both writers, then, construct some distinctive traits by incorporating ancestral African myths into their two novels to rescue their respective societies from western distortions. In so doing, they help lower the ‘fixity’ and the authority of colonial discourse as Charles Bonn rightly suggests in his review of Kateb’s novel. The reviewer writes that Kateb: “renverse, ainsi, le rapport du même et de l’autre en posant comme exotique l’univers colonial” [reverses, thus, the link between the self and the other in posturing as exotic the colonial universe] (Bonn. 1986: 53).

The two questions which arise here and which we attempt to answer are: why does the myth of origins and ancestors hold such a fascination for Ngugi and Kateb? And where do these

myths appear in the two authors' novels in question? One way of confronting questions about the scope of categories like these is to look for the "myth of ancestors", by its standard definition, and then to seek for what it means for these two authors. Following Northrop Frye's explanation provided in his *The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance* (1982), myth takes root in a specific community and one of its fundamental functions is to explain a culture. Myths transmit a legacy of shared allusion to that culture. They are part of a society's knowledge of itself, the understanding of its traditions, its customs as well as its situation in the world. Frye adds that myths are "social stories" that heal. For myths supply more than the moral taglines we learned early on to associate with nursery and fairy tales. Properly read, myths bring us into accord with the eternal mysteries of being, help us to manage the inevitable passages of our lives, and give us templates for our relationship with the society in which we live and for the relationship of these societies to the earth we share with all life. (Frye.1982:09).

The foregoing definition of a myth underlines its universality, communality and contemporaneity, however, for the purpose of the present analysis; it is better to rely on Joseph Campbell's view of the function of myth which, it seems to me, accords well to the context of my analysis. Campbell considers myth from a literary perspective as an aesthetic creation with rich symbolic significations. It contains images or "archetypes", traditional expressions of collective dreams, developed over thousand of years, of symbols upon which the society as a whole has come to depend. These archetypes, revealed in people's tales, establish patterns of behaviour that can serve as exemplars, as when we note that the lives of many heroes and heroines share a remarkable number of similar features that can be identified as worthy of emulation. Myth, as Joseph Campbell suggests, in his *the power of Myth* (1991), and *The Hero with Thousand Faces* (2004), has some connotations with ideology and contributes to the bringing into being of certain changes in a given society in different ways. The link explains the theorist, is that myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth. If one's private myth, i.e, dream, happens to coincide with that of the society, the individual is in accord with the group. If it is not, it is merely reduced to an adventure in the dark forest ahead of the dreamer (Campbell. Moyers.1991:65-67).

Campbell means that if one's private dreams are in accord with the public mythology, the individual is more likely to live healthily in that society. But if the person's private dreams are out of step with the public, that person becomes merely a neurotic. On this basis, myth must be understood as a type of discourse characterised by its power not only to preserve and carry forward certain elements of truth, but also to embody in its texture a series of implications about the importance of particular perspectives in language and culture. It is in this context that we read and analyse Ngugi's and Kateb's use of myths, as Patricia Ann Lynch puts it forward, not only to learn about the culture in which the myth is organized, but to discover what was in the hearts and the minds of the myth makers (Lynch.2004:vi).

Myth is deeply embedded in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma*. Both authors did not use myth to explain their societies as such. They rather sought to use it as an ideological means to counterclaim the myths fostered by colonialism. Both authors use their ancestral myths that centre on the legends of Kikuyu and Keblout; such myths were transmitted orally from one generation to another. The myths of origins are used in the two novels along with symbols and images not only as a way for the two novelists to link their peoples with their cultures and origins but also to deny and subvert colonial discourse, which presents the African people without history. Reference to tribal origins and local institutions becomes then vital to restore Africans to their history. Myths serve, in this case, to remind the two communities of their ancestors' heroic deeds, their customs and traditions, as Basil Davidson precisely sustains:

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

(Davidson.1994: 49).

Ngugi and Kateb's use of myth can be linked to Davidson's excerpt through the common way both novelists return to a distinctive thing in their heritage to recall a prominent idea which is never lost to African people but forever present and recoverable, making the present more meaningful by evoking the enduring discourses that mark these people and attach them to a

culture from which they cannot be separated. Quite significantly, Ngugi and Kateb's appeal to myths can also be linked to Mercia Eliade's notion of myths that serve as models for ceremonies that periodically re-actualize the tremendous events that occurred in the past. "The revivification and the re-actualization of a primordial heroic myth" serves to preserve and transmit the paradigms and the exemplary models for all the different activities in which man engage. Such a re-actualization comes to sight through the use of historical personages as exemplary heroes and historical events as mythical categories. By virtue of the paradigmatic models which existed in mythical times, society is regenerated. Eliade goes on to say that the mythicization of the historical prototypes takes place in accordance with the described situation, and the characters are shaped after the "image" of the heroes of ancient myth (Eliade.1959: 37, 42).

What follows deals with the way Ngugi and Kateb show that any mythological tale can allow a thousand and one interpretations because the peoples who have lived with and used the story have, over time, transferred different meaning into it. This wealth of meaning with which the story is endowed is the secret of the power of any myth.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi takes advantage of the dual heritage of the African novel by combining the resources contained in his African Kikuyu mythologies with some borrowed European ones. The Kikuyu creation myth and "the mythicization" of historical personages play important roles in Ngugi's third novel. For instance, the author resorts to African and Biblical mythologies from which he displaces the 'Mumbi Gikuyu' myth to associate it with the main female character, Mumbi. In so doing, he tells the story of the Creation and his ancestral origins through an emphasis on the connection between people and the land of Kenya (P.153). The myth is directly linked to the Kikuyu legend of 'Gikuyu and Mumbi', the founding ancestors of the Kikuyu community. The story recounts that Gikuyu, the founder of the tribe and Munkuyu, also called Marugu, created Gikuyu and Mumbi under the big tree, situated in the Mountain of Brightness. It was said in the creation myth that God took the very first man and woman, Gikuyu and Mumbi, to the highest ground and handed to them the land. The myth was also what connected the tribe to a "Kyama", a sort of a secret society, which sought to repossess the land lost to missionaries and colonial invaders and return it to its real owners, the Kikuyu people. In *A*

Grain of Wheat, the main woman character, Mumbi symbolises fertility, regeneration, and stands as the spirit of a new mother of Kenya. She belongs to Kikuyu mythology and embodies the primeval “mother” of the tribe, endowed with force and wisdom (P.11).

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

The borrowing of Christian myths appears, furthermore, through Ngugi’s attribution of the deity’s name to Kihika who symbolises the messianic figure of Moses whose quest is reinterpreted through Kihika’s actions. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the longing of the Kenyan black freedom fighter for liberty resembles the Western myth of the quest, including the historical search for the legendary Promised Land. The strong desire for liberation, in the novel, is paralleled with Moses in the myth, which relates the story of the Jewish leader’s wanderings in the desert of Egypt in the quest for freedom and peace in the Promised Land of Canaan. Ngugi’s recourse to the Judeo-Christian mythology is exemplified in the novel through the comparison of Kihika to Moses. The analogy also reminds the reader of the Jewish leader’s visions and his career, leading his wandering people in a quest for freedom and peace. If the mythical figure was ordered by his God to ask Pharaoh to let the slaves (the children of Israel) go out of Egypt across the desert, Kihika, the Kenyan leader, was given the task to lead the Gikuyu people to get rid of the British colonial domination in the direction of independence and liberty (P.191). In addition, Kihika is also compared to Jesus Christ. Such a comparison can be read in the letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, followed by the Verse of St John. In both passages, Kihika is compared to a seed

that must fall to the ground and die in order to give birth to a corn of wheat (P.201). Kihika is identified with a category, an archetype, to paraphrase Mercia Eliade, which, entirely disregarding his real exploits, endowed him with a mythical status which it becomes impossible to avoid in his combat against the coloniser. We may add another reference to the Bible, in chapter three, when General R, a character in *A Grain of Wheat*, refers to Kihika's crucifixion and compares him to Jesus. Kihika's desire to sacrifice himself for the good of the others is voiced in the novel as follows: "But a few shall die that many shall live. That's what crucifixion means today". Kihika's will of personal sacrifice makes him a true Christ (P.191).

The next mythical figure that Ngugi refers to is Mugo, an enigmatic and lonesome character who betrays the hero of the revolution, Kihika. Mugo has a double mythical connotation. On the one hand, he is connected with the Kikuyu ancestors because he stands for the legendary Kikuyu prophet and seer Mugo Wa Kabiro. On the other hand, the same character is also compared to Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples who betrayed Jesus Christ. The disloyalty of Mugo towards his friend Kihika is similar to Judas's betrayal of his companion, Jesus Christ. Although Ngugi draws heavily on Christian mythology, he, nonetheless, adapts it to his Kenyan context and modifies it to suit his ideological stands. As an illustration, Kihika selects a new emphasis for his favourite Biblical quotation and adjusts it to relate to a communal revolutionary situation. He does so by insisting that Christ should be understood in Kenya not as an individual, but as a collectivity. This is evidenced mainly in the passage proposing a multiplicity of Christs, "Christ is not one person. All those who take up the cross of liberating Kenya are the true Christs for us Kenyan people" (P.85). Ngugi, then, displaces the Christian myth to suit his nationalist and ideological stances. In short, myth in Ngugi's novel stands as a universal metaphor for revolution and change. Its relevance occupies a space beyond the creek of Africa. It is restorative and therapeutic.

Transposition of history into myth and the "mythicization" of historical personages also appear in Kateb's protagonists who are closely connected with historical prototypes. As with Ngugi, Kateb's use of myth is motivated by an ideological standpoint. Two reasons may be advanced for Kateb's use of his ancestors' myth. First, it is a way to describe the deeds and values

of the ancestors and negate the fallacious myths fostered by colonialism. Second, like Ngugi too, Kateb is involved in a process of reviving his cultural heritage to demonstrate that Algerians are not a people without a culture. For Kateb then, the use of myth and the return to the past is very significant as it is not an end in itself. It is rather used to enhance Algerian cultures. The appeal to myth, in this context, has an ideological connotation, referential depersonalisation and the determination to fight against it. Kateb's mythical foundation in *Nedjma* is based on the myth of the Keblouti tribe and its ancestors, which the author recreates to describe pre-colonial Algerian society, complete with legal, religious and social organisations, which worked for order and equity. The society is not necessarily inferior, but of equal value with the European one. The nostalgia for the old tribal order with its values and customs is apparent in Kateb's references to religious feasts and rituals. Among all the ceremonies, we may single out Lalla Fatma's and Nedjma's visit to the temple of a Saint, written in Mustapha's diary (P.232). The ritual worship of visiting temples and offerings for saints is widespread in Algeria. Women trust the elders whose prime concern is to maintain a peaceful and prosperous society. The inclusion of the scene is to demonstrate the presence of an indigenous legal system that is an integral part of the Algerian life, beliefs and values. The myth of Keblout is also linked to a tribe situated in the East of Algeria, in a region called Nadhor, situated about 30 Kms from Guelma. There are two versions of the myth of Keblout. The first version says that the members of the clan were from Morocco. They immigrated to Algeria and settled in Nadhor where their mosque was built. The second version, provided by Kateb himself, says that the tribe came to the Maghreb with the Beni Hillal from Spain. They crossed Morocco and settled in the East of Algeria (P.117). The myth recounts that before the French invasion, Algerian society was characterized by a tribal life. The tribal order was based on Islamic traditions, which recommends the strong holding of the family honour, and forbids the loss of land. Besides their respect for the land, according to Rachid and Si Mokhtar, the Kebloutis were known for their long resistance against foreign intruders and any one who sells his land or abandons it is cursed and doomed to death (P.142). Rachid's will to return to his ancestral tribe, Keblout is a way or a kind of reference pole and a hope for the future and

the character voices it saying: "Et c'est à moi, Rachid, nomade en résidence forcée, d'entrevoir l'irrésistible forme de la vierge aux abois, mon sang et mon pays" [And that's to me, Rachid, a nomad assigned to forced residence, to glimpse the irresistible form of the Virgin at bay, my blood and my country](P.140).

Rachid, like Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat*, is granted a symbolic and a mythical status through which Kateb conveys his attachment to his ancestral traditions and values. Rachid's quest for cultural identity is a central subject and it is suggested mainly by his determination to look for his past and origins because, for him, memory is never absent. The myth of the Keblouti ancestors appears through this character journey for self-understanding and his quest is twofold: first, Rachid and his mentor, Si Mokhtar travel in a pilgrimage to Mecca. Second, Rachid, Si Mokhtar and Nedjma return to the ancestral world of Nadhor. The two quests end in failure because in the first journey, the two characters do not reach the Holy Land while the second one finishes with the mysterious murder of Si Mokhtar and the expulsion of Rachid from the ancestral world by Mabrouk, the Negro guard of Nadhor. But, some critics, such as Mildred Mortimer, do not accept the hypothesis of Rachid's failure. Mortimer suggests that Rachid's quest is not completely a failure since it provided him with knowledge about his past and origins. Instead of uncovering the murder of his father, Rachid's trip to Mecca as well as his return to Nadhor allows him to gain information from Si Mokhtar, about his ancestors, the Koubloutis, and discover his cultural heritage (Mortimer.1990: 178).

Throughout Kateb's *Nedjma*, the figure of Keblout, the ancestor of the tribe is a symbol par excellence of the past. Kateb's reference to it does not register a form of a nostalgic piece of the past; it is instead essential to modernity and the release of new identity. From this central figure, the Algerian man again draws most of its identity markers. Rachid is constantly haunted in his dreams by the founding ancestor of the Keblouti tribe (P.126). Kateb writes that Rachid:

Dévoré par je ne sais quelle passion où il montrait de l'amour pour Nedjma, et dell'adoration pour le fondateur de la tribu, le vieux Keblout, dont il était peut-être lui

aussi le descendant [...] Car l'histoire de notre tribu n'est écrite nulle part, mais aucun fil n'est jamais rompu pour qui recherche ses origines (P.142).
[devoured by an indescribable passion when he shows his love for Nedjma and adoration for the founder of the tribe, the old Keblout, whom he was perhaps also the descendant [...] For the history of our tribe is not written anywhere, but no thread is broken for what concerns the quest for origins]

Furthermore, the founding ancestor of the Keblout tribe appears in Rachid's dreams while he is a deserter prisoner and the author shapes him as follows:

Lui, l'ancêtre au visage de bête féroce, aux yeux sombres et malins, promenait son superbe regard sur sa tribu, la trique à portée de main; il racontait ironiquement par ce seul regard l'histoire de chacun, et il semblait à ses descendants que lui seul avait réellement vécu leur existence dans toute son étendue (P.126).

[He, the ancestor with a ferocious beast-like face, dark and malignant eyes, casting his superb look on his tribe, a cudgel in hand, he has sarcastically told with only one glance the history of each, and he seemed to his descendants that he had really lived their existence in its full extent.

The excerpt displays the involvement of heroic dead in the affairs of the living and shows particularly the way it is permanently affective in the consciousness and the activity of the living. For example Rachid keeps alive the image of the legendary old Keblout with a terrifying and fabled appearance. He has long whiskers and tiger-like eyes with a stick in hand. The passage is particularly significant because it magnifies and elevates the status of Keblout by suggesting that he has the power and is proclaimed as the unconquerable warrior. Such a description can be linked to the African oral prize discourse.

The other mythical figure is Mabrouk. Though the figure of the Black man is one of those characters with peripheral status in Kateb's novel, his presence is quite significant and enigmatic as it is subject to multiple interpretations. The figure of the Black is a landmark of cultural identity and an indisputable symbol of the "Africanness of the Maghreb". It is also a generic reference point. Indeed, Mabrouk is not presented as merely a Black, a single common name. It is used to affirm the black African presence in the heart of the Keblouti tribe, at the very feet of Nadhor. The character takes advantage

of his environment and is presented as a key figure in the tribe. He is not only responsible for ensuring the values of the tribe but also becomes the guardian of its rites and traditions. The group's existence depends on him as he is the keeper of magic charms, a great hunter, a wonderful tom-tom player, the doctor of the poor, and the guardian of the ancestral values (P.141). He also may be even 'a son of Keblout' (P.137), and therefore, the keeper of a genealogical branch of the tribe as well as a dispenser of knowledge of cultural, social and multiple identities. Mabrouk has a mission, he is sent by the spirits to watch over the girls of Keblout. The Negroes, states Si Mokhtar, are the messengers of God (P.134). The Negro appears only in the central passage of Nadhor (the centre of Keblouti tribe) as a "black sun". He suspends the riddle of the origin while revealing its unique presence, and many other puzzles. Mabrouk appears at a point when the narrative is extremely complex, supported by Rachid who, mad with desire and jealousy, tells this vision in a circular and confused way. The appearance of the Negro is held in an almost idyllic space (between reality and magic) which plunges the narrative into a form of mythological tale.

The following excerpt is a key illustration:

De la clairière où Nedjma m'avait installé, je voyais le figuier grossir à la chaleur, feuilles et branches survolées par d'énormes guêpes en état d'ivresse, et il me semblait apercevoir un nègre dissimulé sous un autre figuier (il contemplait Nedjma qui s'ébattait dans le chaudron) et il était trop tard pour céder à la jalousie, trop tôt pour engager la lutte avec le nègre qui pouvait s'avérer ne pas être un rival, ni même un esthète capable d'apprécier le tableau, et peut-être, de sa place à lui, voyait-il plutôt le rebord du chaudron que les ébats de la femme nue, bien que le figuier cachant le nègre fût situé plus haut que celui qui me cachait, à moi, le corps de l'amante (P.128)

[From the clearing where I had installed Nedjma, I saw the fig tree growing under the heat, its leaves and branches are invaded by huge drunk wasps, and it seems to me that I have perceived a Negro hidden behind another fig tree (he was contemplating Nedjma who frolicked in the cauldron) and it was too late to give way to jealousy, too early to engage in a fight with the Negro who could prove not to be a rival, or even an aesthete capable of appreciating the view, and perhaps, from his own place, he rather saw the rim of the cauldron rather than the antics of the naked woman, although the fig tree hiding the Negro was located higher than the one I hid in, to me, the body of the lover].

It appears from the passage that the Negro is a partner more or less useful for the principal mythical figures who, in order to meet or benefit must at all costs, adopt certain specific signs, which allows the narrative to enter the world of myth. Mabrouk's simple manifestation, allows the reader to enter an imaginary and atypical environment which makes the novel a narrative about myth. More significantly, however, I think that the inclusion of Mabrouk in Kateb's narrative suggests a movement from one geographical area to another. It is not only suggestive of the unity of African race, but can also be interpreted as an abrogation of geographical borders among Africans.

The other figure of myth in Kateb's novel is, without doubt, his female character, Nedjma. Her presence as a myth and a symbol is central to the structure of narrative. The figure of Nedjma illustrates best the closeness between woman and mythical space. She becomes the articulator of diverse and paradoxical myths: the myth of the quest and origins. She stands for the resistance of the Keblouti tribe in a similar way to the Berber Queen, Kahina. She is the incarnation, as Mildred Mortimer suggests, of Algeria "La patrie perdue" [the lost patry] and the search for Nedjma equals a quest for a restored country in a mythical manner (Mortimer. 1990:89). Behind her strictly literary dimension, Nedjma also has a magical essence. Though she speaks rarely, due to her imposing and mysterious character, she may, for example, appear as the product of a place. Rachid compares her to the city of his childhood, Constantine with shapes and dimensions of a utopian fantasy. Nedjma is a universe without Sultan, a woman without a country. Nedjma becomes the symbol of modern Algeria, the figurehead of acculturation: "women homeland" of the new man, Nedjma, as Zahia Boutaleb maintains: "c'est un amour d'enfance, c'est la femme éternelle, c'est l'Algérie. C'est l'obsession du passé, la quête de l'inaccessible, et la résurrection d'un peuple. Nedjma, c'est la femme patrie" [It is it is a love of childhood, it is the eternal woman, it is Algeria. Nedjma is the obsession of the past, the quest for the unattainable, and the resurrection of a people. Nedjma is the mother country] (Boutaleb.1983:67). In the episode in

the bath in front of Rachid and Mabrouk, Nedjma secretly takes on the appearance of a water maid which is reminiscent of the image of the mythical West African deity, Mammy Water, the heroine of tales and legends in West Africa. The deity is often called “the mother and the spirit of water”, as it covers so many symbols. It embodies all the virtues of hope, as many spells as fears. The following passage illustrates Nedjma’s resemblance to a water maid:

Le même sang nous porte irrésistiblement à l’embouchure du fleuve passionnel, auprès de la sirène chargée de noyer tous ces prétendants plutôt que de choisir entre les fils de sa tribu. Nedjma menant à bonne fin son jeu de reine fugace et sans espoir jusqu’à l’apparition de l’époux, le nègre prémunit contre l’inceste social, et ce sera enfin l’arbre de la nation s’enracinant dans la sépulture tribale, sous le nuage enfin crevé d’un sang trop de fois écumé (P.127).

[The same blood leads us irresistibly to the mouth of a passionate river, near the mermaid who has drowned all her pretenders rather than choosing between the sons of her tribe. Nedjma has successfully concluded her game of a fleeting and hopelessly queen until the appearance of the husband, then the negro fore-armed against social incest, and it will be finally the nation tree which is rooted in the tribal sepulchre, under the cloud that finally bursts with a blood too often scoured].

What comes to sight in the passage indicates that Nedjma is a sort of concentration of ancestral presence and femininity. She stands for certain cultural roots in Africa itself, too often forgotten. It is important to note that Kateb’s mythmaking ability transcends the pantheon of Algerian mythology to include that of Africa at large. Furthermore, Kateb relies on the story of the great Abdelkader and his militia which he links together with the myth of Numidian knights to exhort people fighting for freedom and independence. Their mythic power is enhanced by the combination of the two myths and imbues them with urgency on the subject matter of the revolt. To sum up, Kateb’s and Ngugi’s use of myth veers between being an oppositional device against acculturation and a tool for rehabilitation of their respective cultures. Both authors appeal to the myth of ancestors as a medium to help their societies to regain belief in themselves and discard the complexes of the years of vilifications and denigration which they have met during their pernicious learning in the colonial schools. The two authors’ insertion of these rituals and myths highlights the fact that colonialism did not destroy

local pre-colonial customs and traditions. As an illustration, when faced with the British disfiguration of his country's history, Ngugi delves into his past, not branded with shame but with heroism to dismiss the colonial discourse of colonialism. The author believes that there is no healing, no wholeness, only a dislocation of the national psyche. In not remembering the past, there are no inherited ideals by which to measure the excesses of the present (Ngugi.2009:60). In *A Grain of Wheat*, the quest for a self-constituted identity brings together the discovery of historical roots with attempts to remake and modify the colonial myths fostered by colonialism about the Mau Mau rebellion as an outburst of savagery and its leaders as mere butchers and terrorists. In so doing, Ngugi was firmly convinced that he would restore the older order of things that had been disturbed and violated by British colonialism. Ngugi, then, adopts and adapts a Christian paradigm for contrasting an identity which has been erased by colonialism.

One comes to a similar conclusion with regards to Kateb's use of myth of ancestors. The author's appeal to myth and its recurrent use is nothing but a tool against the manifestation of a historical order established in order to denigrate and deny French cultural superiority as well as to dismiss the myth of the colonial discourse of "his ancestors, the Gauls". Therefore, we can say that Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal is right to state that the incorporation of myth in *Nedjma*: "Vise à résoudre le problème des origines identitaires" which will be replaced by: "Une épopée historique dans laquelle la question des mythes fondateurs de la personnalité collective et de la conscience sociale va se régler" [aims to solve the problem of the identity origins which will be replaced by a historical epic in which the question of the founding myths of the collective personality and social consciousness will be solved] (Maougal.2004: 42).

More significantly, in my view, Ngugi and Kateb have created a new discourse out of their past. They suggest that modern African nationalists join forces with the Algerian and Kenyan in similar way other ancestors did in the course of African's liberation struggles. But in carrying forward these references through their narratives, the two novelists broaden their cultural references to offer them as the proud property of the whole of Africa and the world, thus giving

their texts a more international character. The content of the myth in both novels foster its universal understanding and move in and out of borders, create peculiarities of space and then cross the frontiers. Ngugi and Kateb vilify oppressive acts and erect Kihika and Lakhdar as liberators. The point of similarity is that both resolve the contradiction of the chaotic world in the realm of symbols, the realm of mythmaking. Both novels reinforce the idea that even the local myths can be understood across borders. The space occupied by the created myths take the shape or form of other spaces. I believe that it is Ngugi's and Kateb's recurring references to their respective countries' past as well as the revision of it using the myth of origins and ancestors as their tools that makes both undoubtedly keepers of their African memories. Yet, it is useful to notice that both works provide a counter discourse that takes part in a reconstruction of the African self. Both challenge the myth behind the scramble for land and its impact on their countries. Finally, we deduce that the preceding arguments have produced evidence about the close links between Ngugi's and Kateb's works with modernist literature. These connections can, however, be extended to include other modernist themes. The other element which makes Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* differ from modernist writings is the authors' use of history and their call for it through the characters' remembrances and their use of elements from African oral tradition.

More significantly, Ngugi and Kateb did not content themselves with mere displacement of myths. After all, the process of hybridization which is the novels' most crucial dynamic means that their ideas derive from many sources other than the modernist one. Both Ngugi and Kateb explored other ways of affirming their respective identities. In their common quest for a close identification with their respective peoples, they incorporated folk traditions and legends into their artistic works as an act of cultural rehabilitation.

2- The Use of African Orature in the Two Novels

The last but not least way in which their works differ from modernist writings is how Ngugi and Kateb borrow from their African oral cultures. Both writers draw upon a wide range of traditional African poetics and cultural elements. These include mythocultural elements, songs and legends. The superabundance of African oral forms creates a link between Ngugi and Kateb

through the way they shape the time in circular way. The concept of time in the two narratives refer to a return to ancestral memory and it is conceived not as a lost time, but rather as a living manifestation of the present. The context of such recurrent borrowings and use of elements from oral tradition is explained, as we pointed out in the previous chapters, by the fact that Europeans tended to see Africa as a “tabula rasa” that needed to be filled by European concepts and ideas which, in their view, were the only forms of knowledge and culture worthy of being transmitted. Therefore, much of African literature has often been a reaction to the concept of the African universe depicted as a negation of history in European literature. For Ngugi, the role of the African writer consists first and foremost in correcting the images of his world defined by European languages and delivering it from the total grip of eurocentrism. The task can be done mainly in reviving past history found in oral traditions and in the memories of old people (Ngugi. 1993:22). The use of elements from oral traditions becomes a means for African writers to reclaim their lost heritage through an appropriate use of the cultural and linguistic tools available to them.

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

Similarly, Kateb’s *Nedjma* is grounded in traditional Algerian oral formulae. Many aspects of the novel reveal Kateb’s borrowing from the popular mode of speech and appeal to oral culture, which is evidenced in the dialogues of the characters. One of the most striking aspects of *Nedjma* is the language in which it is written. Though parts of the narrative are conveyed in

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

Les quelques Algériens qui ont acquis la connaissance de la langue Française n'oublient pas facilement qu'ils ont arraché cette connaissance de haute lutte, en dépit des barrières sociales et religieuses que le système colonial a dressées entre nos peuples. C'est à ce titre que la langue française nous appartient et que nous entendons la préserver aussi jalousement que nos langues traditionnelles [...] on se sert pas en vain d'une langue et d'une culture universelle pour humilier un peuple dans son âme. Tôt au tard, le peuple s'empare de cette langue, de cette culture, et il en fait les armes à longue portée de sa libération.

(From *Lettres Nouvelles*, Juillet, 1956, in Authier, Julien and Camelin. 2010: 108).

[The few Algerians who have acquired knowledge of French language do not forget so easily that this knowledge is ripped by a hard struggle, in spite of the social and religious barriers that the colonial system has erected between our peoples. It is for this reason that the French language belongs to us and we intend to preserve it as jealously as our traditional languages [...] We do not use in vain a language and a universal culture to humiliate a people in his soul. Sooner or later, the people will seize the language of that culture, and use it as a long range weapon for his release].

The technique reminds us of Michael Bakhtin's dialogic model discussed in his study of *Rabelais and his World* (1984). Bakhtin's concept of dialogue rejects any authority on the part of one culture or another suggesting a democratic encounter between them (Macey. 2000: 28). Kateb's subversive use of the French language may both be considered as nationalist attitude and an expression of his non-conformism with the dominant French culture. In other words, it not in vain that he uses a language and a universal culture. In this respect, I agree with Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal who considers Kateb's *Nedjma* as:

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

[It is a text that is kneaded with reminiscences of Arab and Amazigh claims more or less obvious. The inclusion of this Arab identity in Katebian literature is so strong and so blatant that it seems to make of this francophone writer, the most Arabised and most Arabophilian among Algerian writers].

The linguistic texture in *Nedjma* is supplemented by the periodic insertion of patriotic songs like: "De nos montagnes l'élève la voix des homes libres" (P.217) which reinforces the thematic material of the narrative and suggests a strong connection between the novel and Algerian culture. The connection between *Nedjma* and Algerian oral culture is discussed by Khadidja Kelladi in an article entitled: "Archétypes et paradigmes littéraires dans l'oeuvre de Kateb Yacine". The author does not only point out the close relation between Kateb's Novel and Algerian and Arab orality but also ascertains that *Nedjma* is dominated by that culture as the following excerpt testifies:

La critique, si divisée sur la perception de l'oeuvre de Kateb est unanime sur ce point: la présence en texte de façon marquante de traces indéniables de la culture populaire, souvent orale. Tant si bien que les premières lectures de l'oeuvre les ont tout naturellement suivies comme lignes directrices et indices d'une quête identitaire: mythe légende, conte, poésie orale, rites, chant sont le signe d'une confrontation entre la langue maternelle confisquée mais résistante et la langue d'expression séduisante quoique imposée. Entre la parole et la langue, le jeu de l'attraction/répulsion si caractéristique de l'écriture katébiennne bouleverse toutes les normes. **(Khelladi, Cited in J.F Authier. Camelin. A. Y Jullien. 2010: 161).**

[Though critics are so divergent on their perception of Kateb's literary works, they are nonetheless unanimous on this point: the presence in the text of traces of popular culture, very often oral. If so although the first readings of the work have naturally followed as guidelines and evidence of an identity quest: myth, legend,

fairy tale, oral poetry, rituals, songs are a sign of a confrontation between the mother tongue confiscated but defiant and the seductive language of expression although imposed. Between speech and language, the game of attraction/repulsion so typical to Katebian writing upsets all the norms].

It is clear from the above passage that there is sufficient material in Kateb's novel indicating that the techniques used can still be interpreted as legitimate attempts to counter European cultural domination. Therefore, Martine Mathieu-Job is right to the point when she assesses that: "Ce qui apparaît flagrant en ce qui concerne [Kateb], c'est en tout état de cause que dès ses premières essais littéraires, et surtout dès le coup du Maître qui est sa première œuvre narrative, il apparaît en mesure de se confronter aux études occidentales les plus audacieuses et les plus récentes tout en imposant sa radicale originalité (Ibid. 145). In transcribing orality into writing by the inclusion of oral textual features and writing into orality, Ngugi and Kateb aim to destabilize the fixity of their texts. In other terms, by mixing genres (oral and written), the two writers exceed the boundaries of fixed systems of categorization and redefine the traditional notion of orality and writing. In so doing, they contribute to dismantle traditional genre designations in working with two traditions, something both oral and written. By combining oral and written modes, something of each discourse is embedded in the other to create a new literary medium. The inherently hybrid aspects of the two novels transform the duality brought about by the collision of two cultures into an artistic asset. Something new having elements of both, but nevertheless unique in itself.

From all that precedes then, it is clear that though each of the authors writes as an individual artist, commenting on life of both from the individual and socio-political point of view; they both turned to traditional African past for inspiration. To emphasize this perspective, they spoke with a consciousness of their African heritage and the need for validation of that consciousness. Ngugi and Kateb's novels therefore express unity and diversity, a unity that is displayed by the pervasive presence of the specific discursive characteristics of African-derived oral textual features. Unity and diversity is further embodied in the heterogeneity impulses of the two texts where a socio-political vision of the universal liberation struggle that is built on African oral discourse. The mixing of discourses and cultures by these writers is particularly interesting in terms of its revolutionary potential and its use as an instrument of public protest. The mixing of

discourses creates reconciliation and correlation between orality and appropriated features. In other terms, the modernist textual features are appropriated and recycled into African cultural icons. The two writers make them enter into different contexts and give them meanings, the most pertinent being that derived from African oral tradition. Therefore, the two texts intersect with the appropriated Western forms to reflect an African identity that goes beyond the boundaries of the African.

Ngugi and Kateb, in my view, take the ideals of the central importance of African identity forward to de-emphasize the colonial cultural imprint on the African psyche and to allow their cultures to move forward into the lime light. Ngugi and Kateb use a strong political message to fight against erasure and affirm their African identity in the African world wide cultural mosaic. Both have borrowed from Western literary traditions to serve their nationalizing tendencies and the most interesting information lies in the manner in which these adopted influences have been adapted to the African context. Both novelists oppose the slavish imitation of western forms and ideas and are informed with a deep concern for and intense engagement with their popular culture. In *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma*, Ngugi and Kateb borrow from traditional oral sources. The borrowings occur in the use of history, African symbols, proverbs, language, myths and legends. All these elements indicate that Ngugi and Kateb did make a profound difference in a form which deserves to be seen as distinctive. Such a distinction evidences how Ngugi and Kateb used their forerunners' texts to create a new space for their own creations, as Harold Bloom states in his *Anxiety of Influence* (1997), the better the poet, the stronger the misreading which becomes a necessary condition for producing a new narrative, one that will include the previous narrative in a distorted form that validates the progression of the new (Bloom.1997:04).

Conclusion

The final conclusions resulting from my examination of Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* can be summed up as follows; firstly, the construction of cultural identities, for Kateb and Ngugi, fuses with the discourse of nationalism and stands at the service of ideology and can be a weapon for the mobilization of people and a call for

individual and collective participation in the task of national construction. It can also be a bridge of fraternity and solidarity between peoples and indicates the writers' faithful and uncompromising work in the service of revolution. The idea of revolution that the two novels display can be compared to the African heroic tradition in terms of characters. Secondly, Ngugi's and Kateb's fictions are classified as modernist writing because of the two authors' use of techniques akin to modernist writers. Ngugi and Kateb were involved in a quest for style and wanted to affirm their individual talents in African literature by giving importance to form and language. However both Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb's *Nedjma* cannot be considered as merely modernist novels because of the priority that the two authors accord to their respective countries' history and their borrowings of some elements from their folk culture and oral tradition. Ngugi and Kateb engage with history in their fictions because war and rebellion are important motifs that govern the reading of *A Grain of Wheat* and *Nedjma*. Ngugi's intentions are to shed light on some hidden parts of history in order to correct them. The writer revises the myth fostered by colonialism. That is why the novel can be considered as a re-inscription of history, and Ngugi can be regarded as a judge and an interpreter of his society.

Running parallel to Ngugi's use of history, Kateb describes in a realistic way the 8 May uprising, an experience derived from the author's own life and that of his friends and countrymen. Thirdly in their attempt to reconstruct their African heritage, both Ngugi and Kateb draw from their native cultures through their appeal to folktales, legends and myths. Ngugi and Kateb can be regarded as catalysts of energy, using their novels to transform their societies, reflect their people's ideals and aspirations, while rediscovering traditional literary forms and infusing them with a new revolutionary content. In so doing, they succeeded to reaffirm and rehabilitate the value of their popular culture. Both of them refuse to be merely writers preoccupied with sterile aesthetic because they have

creatively highlighted the abstract tendencies that unite their texts with their political visions and with different spaces and borders, but with shared memories, dreams and consciousnesses in common. Borders, according to the two authors, should be marked with care and with comprehensive consideration for spaces of others since unavoidably Africa's borders are fragments in the vast constellation of the world revolutions. Ngugi and Kateb relentlessly denounce the oppressive and tyrannical nature of colonialism in making political commitment remain an integral part of their novels. Yet, they also endeavour to reconcile this agenda with artistic ends by refusing to subordinate aesthetic considerations to those of content, and therefore, ensured that the message articulated have not killed their creativity.

After the independence of their countries, African writers were not neutral figures standing far from political and cultural events, just pontificating. They get involved in the political and cultural situations and kept in view through their works accounts of the post independence era. The role of African writer becomes that of a "Trickster" who urges on the world towards the objective by helping the society to identify its troubles, determine their origins, and situate individual and collective responsibility. Their tricky depictions which were characteristics of the widespread disillusionment and floundering hopes rather than fulfilment and happiness will be the concern of the fourth and last part.

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Part Three

Revision of Culture in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The
Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Rachid

Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné*

Our pens should be used to increase the anxieties of all oppressive regimes. At the very least, the pen should be used to ‘murder their sleep’ by constantly reminding them of their crimes against the people, and making them know they are being seen [...] Let our pens give voices to silence.

(Ngugi Wa Thiong’o)

The worst illiterate is the political ignorant. He does not listen, does not talk, and does not participate in political events. He does not know that the cost of living, the price of beans and fish, flour prices, rent, the price of shoes and drugs depend on political decisions. The political illiterate is so stupid that he boasts and swells the chest that he hates politics. He doesn’t know the fool, that it is his political ignorance that produces the prostitute, the street children, the thief, the worst of all the bandits and especially the dishonest, liar and corrupt politician, who licks feet of national and multinational companies

(Bertold Brecht)

Introduction

Throughout the foregoing parts, I tried to show how the four compared novelists suffered from a double dislocation. The first being the loss of roots; the second is the linguistic dislocation as they use an alien language; the same language they use as an absolute weapon to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power, based on binary oppositions of “colonizer” and “colonized”. The “glocal” aspect of their novels come to sight in the way of crossing limits and destroying walls imposed by history upon the perspective of the continent whose hopes they have been determined to articulate. They develop, in part, from a history of active resistance to the colonial encounter and their main concern is to rescue the history of their people that colonialism had controlled as they respond to the urgency and inevitability of the historic mission. What is most important on their mind and central to their works is the urge to put the record straight and illuminate the threshold between past and present, thought and action, self and other, and their countries and the world. While Achebe and Feraoun are informed by similar desire to preserve and celebrate their cultures in appropriating the Kabyle and Ibo oral traditions by playing the role of protectors and translators of their societal values in an alien language and form, Ngugi and Kateb combine political commitment with artistic creativity in their attempt to dismantle all the mechanisms of power through revolution and

dismantling traditional narrative form to refine their cultures. When independence was gained, the formal end of colonialism embossed a remarkable new character on the thematic concerns of the African writers. After the end of the colonial period, the African writer suffered from a triple dislocation: in addition to the loss of origins and linguistic dislocation, he also suffers from a social disruption: he loses his place and finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behaviour and codes are very unlike, and sometimes even offensive to his own. Therefore, he finds himself obliged to find new ways of describing himself and his society.

Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Rachid Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* (1982) were published when censorship prevailed and their two authors were neither allowed to speak nor possessed the physical power to openly challenge their authoritarian governments. Consequently, like trickster figures, both writers develop their tactics blow by blow, adapting themselves to the developing situations. They adopt "the art of the weak and of the wit" as survival strategies which are not based on an open, direct force, but on subtle cunning to subvert, circumvent, and transgress the masters' authority. Their novels become emblematic of the Ananse and Djeha whose comic appearances signify that most serious cultural values are challenged. Just like these mythical trickster figures, Armah and Mimouni write figuratively in a symbolic code to question the social order and play with fundamental social structures to revise them. They use African folkloric and rhetorical devices that allow them to denounce all kinds of injustices, corruption, and will to power and thus end up regenerating the creativity under modified shapes. Their use of language as a rhetorical and cultural tool of resistance against domination also contributes to fashion a pattern through which they explore the ills of their respective societies as they use their novels for social criticism and as the best means to unveil "bourgeoisie reduced to nothing but the role of consumers". Their novels' "glocal" facet appears in their weaving of the material from Western and African popular cultures and their narratives centre on familiar episodes or "circumstances" where representation of creaturely suffering occupies the centre of the stage events driven by didactic intent. Both novels display similar "devices" akin to African folktales that are visible in the movement of the plot, the course of time, and characterisation. If the Akan folklore has survived in the work of Armah through Ananse,

whose struggles against dislocation within the Akan lore, the same hold true for Mimouni's narrative where the presence of the Algerian trickster, Djeha, the hero figure in folktales prevails. Adopting the tricksters' subtle tools, the two novelists express discursively practices of imperialism and critique that probed alternative meanings of neo-colonialism and corruption. As documents of post independence political criticism, the two novels have great deal to tell about post-colonial social and political problems and form a central part of African radical intellectual political tradition.

One of the ways, for Armah and Mimouni, to adjust dislocation is become a kind of 'a subversive voice' for the people who are unable to speak for themselves. As "intellectual tricksters", the two authors provide instances of laughter which serve to outmanoeuvre stronger opponents, though they are disadvantaged and weak, they constantly contest the will to power through indirections and mask wearing through playing on the gullibility of their adversaries to outwit them. They give no thought to right or wrong. They rather use their wits through humorous and serious commentaries to convey solemn social analysis on the inequities of existence in countries where the promises of democracy were denied to a large portion its citizens. So, both writers' artistic works become synonymous with subversive documents voicing a protest against, often onerous, obligations connected with the social order. By including local and global issues, they make transparent how the nationalistic hopes give way to disappointments and disillusionment of the corrupt post independence state that Fanon simultaneously described and prophesized in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

As mentioned earlier, most of the African writers were commanded by the dilemmas of the post-independence situation and showed a commitment to denounce the social and political tumult of their post independence societies by concerning themselves with the description of the burning problems which their young independent nations face. They use their novels to uncover the pathologies of governance that contributed so

massively to the tragic unfolding of post-colonial conditions in Africa. The novels of this category depicted corrupt and repressive political systems that were seen as being trapped in a network of power relations manipulated by foreign interests, which left few opportunities for individuals to define their own lives. Whereas the early years of national liberation gave much hope, the ways in which the transition took place, in which many of the new African leaders were or became puppets of the old colonial regime, would lead to a growing bitterness because independence had brought not the solace and succour that it had promised but deepened misery and misfortune. In most African countries, internal colonialism had merely replaced external colonialism. What made the situation even more galling was the fact that in most cases, 'yesterday's freedom fighters had become today's remarkable tyrants'. In other terms, Africans in the words of some local wits "had only exchanged monkeys for baboons". Not unexpectedly, African writers when faced with the dictatorial regimes of autocratic rulers quickly reacted violently and returned to questions of politics and power as major sources of inspiration. They describe how the colonial powers departed, and yet the whole continent seems more awry than ever, oscillating between supposedly democratic and anti-democratic military regimes, both of which are enormously inefficient and monstrously corrupt (Szeman.2003: 117).

The post-colonial condition has determined a strong dystopian current that has found its most powerful expression in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Rachid Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné*. It is on the basis of the foregoing background that I propose to examine and substantiate the above arguments through a comparison of the two novels as fine examples of their author's narrative style, political and social concerns in describing vividly the escalating socio-temporal dislocations of the postcolonial period. Armah and Mimouni have been profoundly affected by Africa's post independence political situation and their novels turn the page on the novel of resistance

to colonialism and formalize the necessity for critical assessments of their present situations by making their novels both moral and political fables about post-colonial Algeria and Ghana. Therefore, my exploration of the two works will follow Edward Said's assertion that one cannot look at African writing except as embedded in its political circumstances of which the history of imperialism and resistance to it is surely one of the most important (Said. 1994:288).

Moreover, what follows addresses the two novels as hybrid texts, symbols of cultural plurality where the boundaries between the "local" and the "global" influences are not clearly differentiated. The two novels reflect the existence of a variety of historical and cultural forces whose combination with one another are as manifest at the local as they are visible globally. To show the variety of cultural influences, I try to provide answers for these pivotal questions: How Armah and Mimouni's novels describe the precipitating post independence changes and how the works combine a definitive political impact with some forms of aesthetic transgression which make them texts part of the "glocal literature".

The most efficient way to broach this connection is by focusing on the way both authors made efforts to distance themselves from Western models and incorporate certain features of traditional storytelling about tricksters in their novels. As "trickster figures", Armah and Mimouni contest irrational authority in a rebellious way and with a kind of moral integrity, which is not readily apparent on the surface. The trickster tale traditions, especially those in which animals acted as human, were ubiquitous in the cultures from which Armah and Mimouni come and it forms the basis for all their novels. To get a sense of these interconnections, it is necessary to explore the African trickster tradition to see how Armah and Mimouni's novels are fictional accounts reflective of real-life situations. In exposing, the repressive non-egalitarian and undemocratic role of the

political leaders, Armah and Mimouni bring forth the evaporation of all dreams of greatness, nationalism, and liberation from the colonial yoke. To the question of how the two authors' literary stances can be interpreted as a reaction against euphoric political discourses, as a critique of the national condition, and a subversion of the official ideologies in Ghana and Algeria, the answer will be the concern of the first chapter. It will be devoted to some affinities between *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Le fleuve détourné*, in terms of the two authors' shared approaches and tendencies to break rules, transgress boundaries, destabilize hierarchies, and question authority of different types following the African Trickster tradition. In my view, both writers play a prominent role in the political transformation of their societies due to their analytic function in diagnosing the character of the social sickness and in presenting it to the public. They become in W.B.Dubois' words, the healers of the sick, the interpreters of the unknown, the comforters of the sorrowing, the supernatural avengers of the wrong, and the ones who rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing and disappointment of a stolen and oppressed people (Du Bois [1903] 1964:144).

As typical intellectual tricksters, they depict the quotidian existence lived out by the masses in fields and streets which make their novels not only brave and challenging, but also pessimistic according to their reviewers. The subsequent brief critical evaluation of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Le fleuve détourné* substantiates the point.

Chapter Seven

Critical Responses to Armah and Mimouni's Novels

The mode of writing in the two novels embodies and evokes the mood of total degradation which is at the core of the two authors' motivations. Armah's first novel is a bleak and a mocking depiction of the corruption which has ruined the hopes of ordinary Ghanaians. It is packed with images of the rot, decay and defecation that infected the early vision of an African

socialist state, of a new and shining future. Armah describes how once the injustices and inequalities of the colonial rule had been removed, they are perpetuated by consumer capitalism and corrupt African leaders. The story is told by an anonymous railway clerk who is despised by his wife and community as a whole because he refuses to join in the extensive practice of accepting as well as offering bribes. The narrative describes a country where nothing is produced and only consumption and waste reign. It is also characterized by bribery, election rigging and manipulation of people through political speech-making. The politicians use fear and distrust among people in order to strengthen their own support, and turn their attention away from their scandalous financial dealings. Consequently, the author's ugly depiction of his society caused considerable stir in literary circles occasioning a great amount of praise from Western reviewers and much disapproval from African critics who criticized Armah's first novel for its allegedly despairing tone.

In their assessments of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, literary critics condemn the ontological status of the author's vision of social reality in Ghana where a paralyzed, thoroughly corrupt social order reigns. Some reviewers consider the closing moments of the novel as emanating from the optimistic school of thoughts while others perceive the work as an expression of the profound philosophical pessimism of its author. Regarding the first category of critical evaluation in favor of Armah, Irele Abiola notes that African novels focus on the major historical moments and Armah's novel is notable among such novels for its intense allegorical critique of the failures of Nkrumah's government and its specially Fanonian view point on the source of the failure. Novels in the vein of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* illustrate the unique power of literature to deepen emotional awareness while bearing witness to disappointments of dispossession and betrayal (Abiola.2009: 165).

However, there are several critics, most of them Africans, who disapprove harshly Armah on various issues. Some of them find the author's reclusive attitude rather uncomfortable and terribly pessimistic. As an illustration, Chinua Achebe, Richard Nnolim, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Eldred Jones, to cite just few, are troubled by the sordidness

of his scatological imagery and the pessimism which dominates *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Achebe criticises Armah's first novel on the ground that its author has no respect for Africa. For the Nigerian novelist, Armah is an alienated writer manifesting all the symptoms. Unfortunately, Ghana is not a modern existentialist country. It is just a West African state struggling to become a nation. So, there is enormous distance between Armah and Ghana. A man is never more defeated than when he is running away from himself (Achebe. 1975: 40). Charles Nnolim supports Achebe's thought by stating that Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is a mere outcome of its author profound philosophical pessimism. The novel refers to abstract human conditions and has, therefore, nothing essentially Ghanaian about it: no specifically Ghanaian mannerism or special brand of politics, and no language in the local idiom of the people (Nnolim, cited in Moss.Valesstuk.2000:109). Similarly, in his critical assessment, Eldred Jones, the editor of *African Literature Today*, for his part, states that Armah has taken the predicament of Africa in general and Ghana in particular, and distilled its despair and its hopelessness in a powerful, harsh, deliberately unbeautiful novel (Jones (1969) in Jagne and Parekh, 1998: 50).

Nevertheless, to the critics who deplored Armah's alienation, pessimism, and excess of despair, Neil Lazarus replies that the critics of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* have not found it easy to distinguish the relationship between an affirmative vision and a degraded reality expressed through the work. Armah's first novel depicts a post-colonial Ghana enthralled by the "gleam" of Western capitalism and thus trapped in the bourgeois ideology of its colonial predecessors. The incandescent rage of the writer against the decadent system appears through the narrator who tells the reader early in the book that it is striking "how completely the new thing took after the old" (Armah.P.10). The same corrective assessment comes from Ode Ogede who reiterates that criticism of

Armah's works has been unable to change ground from the critical premises that were introduced by his early reviewers to the point of becoming so repetitive and boring. For Ogede, Armah has not only the daring voice to fix with a steady stare the seamy side of life but also the voice to attempt to catch, reflect upon, and diagnose it. By bringing the ugliest human experiences from the dark corners into bright light, he forces his readers to confront and examine the world in which they live. The critic assumes that Armah's harsh reviewers are simply inattentive to the distinctive contours of his voice. Ogede points out that position of the narrator and his voice in relation to experience are central to the form, value and meaning of the novel. The narrator is the link between characters, their individual experiences, and the larger historical events which are dramatized in the novel. He is the agent of particularisation, the person who pins the events of the story down to a particular period. By denouncing the political leadership of his country and railing against its corruption and incompetence, Armah becomes experimental and innovative writer who should enrich our conscious-ness to an exceptional degree (Ogede. 2000:5).

When this selected criticism is taken into account, I personally maintain that Armah's bleak description has nothing of pessimism or existentialism. Rather, as any dissident author committed to a change for the better for his society, he wants his readers to be shocked, intellectually stimulated, and motivated to take action against an unjust and corrupt society, to awaken them to social responsibility. In other terms, the author's purpose is mainly to sharpen his readers' critical ability and to shake them out of their complacency. In so doing, he expects more from the text than a mere entertainment. His text becomes a medium with which the author lays bare the moral hypocrisy of his corrupt society as inevitable products of the political system. When one turns to his novel's storyline, it becomes even more evident that it is truthful and daring exposé of these problems. Armah describes Ghana as a country which has slipped into darkness because of corruption, political abuses and decay. The author divides the narrative of his

first novel into two parts. The first proceeds at a distressingly slow pace and follows an everyday working day of an anonymous character and finishes with a one-chapter account of the following workday. The Man's day begins with the usual bus ride on the way to the railway office where he works as a traffic control clerk, a job that Armah describes as heavily monotonous. He also combines it with disheartening scenes of a barren environment, sights and smells of human excrement, filth, and graffiti. The author occasionally stops to regard the beauty of nature referencing the sky and the ocean which are not yet contaminated by rot. During the day, a timber man comes to the Man's office and offers him a bribe, but the Man refuses. After work, the Man meets an old classmate, Joseph Koomson who has become a government minister accompanied by his wife, Estella. The Man invites the Koomsons for dinner the following Sunday evening and their visit is to initiate the events which will form the second part. After a hard day, the Man returns home where the relations with his wife, Oyo, are stressed because his integrity prevents her and her three children from having a comfortable life. The tension pushes him from the house to seek a sympathetic shelter in his former teacher who is in the same painful situation. The Teacher, too, refuses to succumb to the attractions of material comfort. The only difference between the two men is that the Teacher is single and has not encumbered himself with a wife and children. His function in the novel is to authenticate the main character's predicament. The teacher offers attachment and support to the Man and Armah devotes a lengthy chapter six to the Teacher's monologue about his past experiences, his youthful hopes and his present growing despair. The man's visit to his friend, thus, ends with an unexpected hopelessness. Back home, the Man wants sexual relief with his wife but is immediately repelled by the hideous caesarean scar left by the birth of their third child.

The following workday, the Man awakes from a nightmare in which he is threatened with complete isolation. He moves about the silent house getting ready for work, decides to take the train instead of the bus, and prepares for another routine day at the desk, but is offered unexpected relief. A young colleague, eager to learn the trade, volunteers to take his place. He uses the afternoon off to walk along the sea and the quayside, experiencing the freedom of nature, which momentarily puts him in touch with hope and beauty. The last two-fifths of the novel revolve

around the Man's relationship with party members and his total disappointment after his friend's visit. The reason for the visit is totally utilitarian: Koomson wants to use Oyo and her mother as the official purchasers of a fishing boat, a business venture unsuitable for a Socialist Minister. The Man realizes that the purchase will not only be made with corrupt money but also that his wife and mother-in-law will never actually own the boat. Therefore, he declines to take part in the business, but goes with Oyo to the Koomson's house, in the wealthy district of the city, to sign the papers. By the time Oyo suspects the truth but she continues to believe and resent her husband's doubt.

The climax comes when Kwame Nkrumah's government falls and Koomson loses everything. He comes to the Man's home in order to evade arrest. The latter escorts the ruined party man out the back way before the military police enter the house. Together, they must, however, exit through the stool of the outhouse; they escape amid reeking of excrement along the beach to the recently purchased boat, by means of which Koomson is to leave the country. But at the end of the narrative, the anonymous character realizes bitterly that he will find no lasting comfort, no relief from the pain of living day-to-day in his corrupt society because the new government will not be different. It may be clear, from what precedes, that Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* reflects some aspects of the political and social situation in Ghana. What remains now is to demonstrate that Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* also meets the same criterion.

Like Armah, the majority of the critics consent that Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* is a political fable. Before its publication in France, it was rejected by the state-owned publishing house (Société nationale d'édition et de diffusion, SNED). But the novel's high critical acclaim in France made its publication in Algeria inevitable. Like his Ghanaian counterpart, Mimouni has been criticized by many of his literary Algerian reviewers. Some of them described Mimouni's style as harsh, offensive, and sometimes shocking. They base their criticism on the fact that Mimouni's characters are mere agents for the author and their negative portrayals

combined with Mimouni's obsession with politics led them to equate the novel with exaggeration and distortion that reflected the author's own rage at what he considered a betrayal of nationalist hopes. Farida Abu-Haidar remarks that Mimouni has been praised by some as a writer whose works expose his country and all its malaise. *Le Fleuve détourné*, *Tombéza* and *L'Honneur de la tribu* is a trilogy which depicts the Algeria of post-independence years, as seen by a generation for whom independence did not prove to be the panacea they were led to believe it would be. Although the novels are specifically about Algeria, they are relevant to other countries with colonial histories and postcolonial single-party regimes. *Le fleuve détourné*, for instance, describes the turmoil and havoc that occurs when autocratic leaders take power to rule the country despotically, squandering the wealth of the nation. Meanwhile, adds the reviewer, Mimouni has been condemned by others as a controversial writer who, by raising highly sensitive issues, seems to be betraying his country (Abu-Haidar. 1995: 2).

For some other critics, Mimouni, on the contrary, is one of the most important figures of his generation, owing both to the thematic breadth of his literary production and its considerable aesthetic evolution as a critic of his own independent society. A prolific writer in the French language, Mimouni was young when he died, only fifty years old, and with his early death, a promising writing career came to an abrupt end. Mimouni is the author of several novels, which, from *Le printemps n'en saura que plus beau* (1978) to *La malédiction* (1995), address issues of political corruption, patriarchal tyranny, and religious zeal. Calculatingly disruptive and controversial, Mimouni's narratives reflect a politically combative and poetically aggressive view of literature as a tool for subverting and reversing the dysfunctional structures of the social order that he himself once declared to a journalist: « Pour moi l'écriture est un acte de transgression [...] il n'est pas possible d'ignorer la misère, l'injustice, la corruption [For me writing is an act of transgression [...] it is not possible to ignore the misery, injustice, and corruption] (Middle East Magazine.1992). Mimouni proposes in his literary production in general and his *Le fleuve*

détourné in particular, an irreverent critique of the ills that have plagued Algeria since its independence. Christiane Achour links Mimouni's critical stance to that of Fanon when she asserts:

Rachid Mimouni ne cherche-t-il pas à attiser les braises dont parlait Frantz Fanon, qui observait qu'après l'indépendance, on peut se rendre compte de l'existence d'une sorte de mécontentement larvé, comme des braises, qu'après l'extinction d'un incendie, menacent toujours de s'enflammer?

(Achour.1990:151).

[Doesn't Rachid Mimouni seek to fan the embers Frantz Fanon spoke about, when he observed that after independence, people will realize that there is a kind of latent discontent, like embers, after extinguishing a fire, always threaten to catch fire?]

Achour parallels the satire used in Mimouni's novel to a richly evocative work by Fanon which warns against the petty African bourgeois leaders who replaced the colonizer.

Similar to Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* is a dystopian text in the extreme with its summations and reasoned indictments playing simultaneously on the real and the allegorical. Most critics tend to agree on their admiration for the "beauty of ugliness" in Mimouni's novel. As an illustration, in his book entitled, *Mimouni entre littérature et engagement*, Nadjib Redouane explains that Mimouni's insights into the nature of the dilemmas facing the Algerian society are innovative and he is to this date, an uncompromising voice on the role of the intellectual in his society. Redouane sustains that:

Mimouni focalise son regard sur la vie quotidienne des Algériens qu'il recrée de manière véridique, en revendiquant son droit de représenter la réalité de son imaginaire. Aussi déviant, il est l'interprète des souffrances, du malaise et de la déchirure du peuple, se définissant d'emblée comme un écrivain de l'amertume qui décrit un monde déchu, transgresse les conventions et les mythes, dévoile ce qu'il faut cacher et remet en cause la légitimité du pouvoir politique

(Redouane.2001 :14).

[Mimouni focuses his gaze on the lives of Algerians and recreates it in a truthful way, asserting his right to represent the reality of his imagination. Although deviant, he is the interpreter of suffering, discomfort and tearing apart of the people, defining himself at once as a writer who describes the bitterness of a world, transgresses the conventions and myths, reveals what must be hidden and calls into question the legitimacy of the political power].

Mimouni's third novel, as Nadjib Redouane concludes, lays the ground for a new generation of dissident narratives that make of him the moral interpreter of its complex ethos. Shocked by events he personally witnessed, the novelist sets out to write of them before an illness cut short his promising literary career. Mimouni, restates the reviewer, wrote his most allegorical and poetic text which transcends the mere dystopian statement of contemporaneous facts into a thematically multi-layered narrative.

Amid the above selected criticism, I can say that Armah and Mimouni's disillusionment is hard to dislodge because it seems to be the only logical reply to political failure and economic stagnation in Africa which the two novels imaginatively mirror. In my view, both authors refuse to be mere bystanders and silenced by the political authorities, they insist on acting as true witnesses of their age. In so doing, they adopt an oppositional mode to official discourses, refusing to engage in its prescriptive formulations and rejecting its ideological agendas. Their novels' subsequently analyze the various "maux" that have contributed to the "shameful situation" and provide striking indictment of totalitarian rule. A closer look at the themes in the corpus of their works will better contextualize the various forms of power, physical, sexual, and governmental that Armah and Mimouni target, challenge, and undermine. Their protagonists' mad trips contest the existential primacy of an emblematic "impasse" which is their authors experienced in reality. Armah and Mimouni's main characters wonder "why has the national political universe become so closed, so crushing?" Such a wondering is directly linked to the disenchantment which followed Ghana's accession to political independence that paralleled the Algerians' disappointment with their authoritarian and arrogant ruling leaders. Common to both authors, therefore, is the common way they reflect on the circumstances which prove that there was a glaring gap between the hopes and aspirations of the anti-colonial struggles and the realities of the post-colonial worlds with its authoritarian one-party or military rulers, ethno-nationalist crises, collapsed economies, political instability, unemployment and deepening mass poverty. The new regimes have merely accentuated the repulsive and anti democratic character of the colonial rule.

From the two novels' summaries, I can readily deduce the way historical realities merge with fiction emerging as a common factor in Armah and Mimouni's narratives. Both offer a philosophical analysis of the ruling elites' concern with their own pockets than caring about the welfare of their peoples. Both authors provide sites that produce crucial knowledge about corruption and betrayal and insights into the complexity of power, its mode of acquisition and its abuses in "hijacking democracy and human rights". In exposing, the repressive non-egalitarian and undemocratic role of the political leaders, Armah and Mimouni bring forth the evaporation of all dreams of greatness, nationalism, and liberation from the colonial yoke. To the question of how the two authors' literary stances can be interpreted as a reaction against euphoric political discourses, as a critique of the national condition, and a subversion of the official ideologies in Ghana and Algeria, the answer will be the concern of the following chapter. It will be devoted to the affinities between *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Le fleuve détourné*, in terms of the two authors as "intellectual tricksters", shared approaches and tendencies to break rules, transgress boundaries, destabilize hierarchies, and question authority of different types. The grotesque mode of writing, in the two novels, embodies and evokes the African trickster folktales in which the characters mix different genres and include many disturbing devices such as irony, laughter, disgust, and satire to contest the truncated narratives of 'patriotic history' disseminated by the rulers' discourses.

The Form of the Content: Rhetoric as Transgressive Narrative Strategies in Armah and Mimouni's Novels

What follows also aims to display the way both Armah and Mimouni, as trickster figures, succeed in making the necessary connections between the artistic and political worlds and construct a rich metaphorical framework in which two opposed groups of ideas struggle. On the one hand, to paraphrase Selman Rushdie, the idea of entropy, meaning that things fall apart (pessimism) is bound to the profane, which means a democratic spirit. In the opposite corner, stands paranoia which means that everything has meaning. It is just we don't know what it is. It is called optimism because of its opposition to its meaninglessness. The struggle of the two opposing ideas is explained by the fact that writers and politicians are natural rivals who fight for

the same territory. Both groups try to make the world in their own images. And the novel is on way of denying the official politicians' version of truth (Rushdie. 1991:125).

Armah and Mimouni's novels become arenas on which the great debates of society are conducted. The debates are reflected mainly in their discursive strategies through which both authors tricksters challenge and question the official discourses. Armah and Mimouni infuse their discourses with a moral and ethical code which would prevent the behaviors associated with the trickster from invading and destroying their own ranks. They attempt to inculcate an appropriate attitude towards trickster-like dupe. One of the reasons, it seems to me, which the trickster folk tradition may be of great help to expand the understanding of what the role of a writer stands for, is my belief that Armah and Mimouni's bleak descriptions are not the result of their own pessimism, but reflections on the way real people behaved in a contradictory post independence Africa and the world at large. Their role aims to clarify the problems of African societies, to make the sometimes opaque manipulations of power and prestige a little more transparent. In so doing, they provide a more didactic than an example of "art for art's sake, a kind of an "applied art as distinct from pure" in the words of Imre Szeman (2003:178).

I concentrate on how techniques tale narration in Africa has influenced the manner in which Armah and Mimouni have gone about their narration. The elements of the tale are plot, structure, characterization, and the use of time. In my view, both Armah and Mimouni fit William.J.Hynes and W.G.Doty's idea of a "Trickster figure" that they discuss in a book entitled, *Mythical Trickster Figures. Contours, Contexts, and Criticism* (1993). First, the two novels follow the African trickster tradition of the hero trickster who baffles his interpreters and his adversaries because he embodies a purposefully ambivalent language. He shapes culture by means of sex, laughter, ties cosmic process to personal, history, empowers divination to change boundaries into horizons, and reveals the passages to the sacred embedded in daily life. In both the North African and Sub-Saharan contexts, the trickster exists not as an archetypal idea, but as a symbolic pattern embracing a wide range of individual figures (Hynes.Doty. 1993: 123).

To link the two authors' poetics of transgression to politics, I also reads Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Mimoun's *Le fleuve détourné* beyond the

folkloric aspect of African Trickster tradition of “ Serious Laughter”, to connect them to Julia Kristeva’ idea of “Abjection”, and Ian Miller’s “concept of “Digust”. The two novels accomplish what many critics could not forgive: they reverberate with laughter where one would normally expect awe and silence. The outrage and indignation the two novels received were directed primarily at their abundance of alleged scatological and blasphemous scenes, by means of which Armah and Mimouni express their revolts and disgust against the will to power, corruption, and contemp of the African new governments. The period from the end of the war well into the sixties was a time when in the two authors’ views democracy was stifled by the new governments and their new authoritarian father figures. To foreground the view of amazement and how the vision of the laughter emerges from Armah and Mimouni’s disillusion with their African post-independence period, I will try to show how these influences appear in the two novels’ complex structures, the wretchedness of their settings, the distortions that the societies imposed on characters, their extensive use of irony, satire, abjection, disgust and the reoccurrence of various scathing images.

1- Fragmentary Narrative, Discontinuity and Multiplicity of View Points

Very characteristic of African folktales are the fragmentary nature of the narrative and the use of time. For instance, in the folktales, the story is narrated long after the actual event. There is a separation between the time of the actual performance of the action and the time of the narration about the action. In other terms, there exists a separation between a retelling of a past and the complete action. The time, as far as traditional African is concerned, is therefore not a linear progression but rather a circular development. The reversible nature of time and of events is also brought out in the use of tense markers. Most events describe an action that is capable of being re-enacted in the retelling, the narrator moves in the course of narration from the past to current events of re-enactment and swing back and forth making the time flexible. In Armah and Mimouni’s narratives too, the normal sequence of time is deliberately upset to emphasize the

fundamental point of the reversibility of time. Such technique of “time reversibility” is displayed in the movement of the plot as well as from the course of time.

Parallel to African folktales, Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* follows the structure of a storytelling session with its ambiguities and ambivalence. It is shaped on plot line that follows straightforwardly the unnamed protagonist’s work over a day and a half. It describes an everyday life of a lonesome depressed man amidst a corrupt and decaying society. The author also provides an inner depiction of the man’s conflict and his struggle to keep his moral values intact. But in chapter six, the narrative is interrupted by the Teacher’s long monologue when he traces the Ghanaian experience from the Second World War to the overthrow of Nkrumah in February 1966. The character recollects his past memories to indict the Ghanaian political leaders. He, for example, accuses the lawyers and the “Yessir men” for their love for their colonial oppressors. He then turns to charge Nkrumah of betraying his people and even his own ideals. Through a series of questions, the Teacher calls into question the euphoric and luring discourses of the political leaders and points to their betrayal of the people’s aspirations for joy and happiness when independence came. After the chapter, the story returns to the present and describes the visit of Koomson to the man, the coup, the party man’s escape from Ghana to exile, and the perpetuation of corruption with the new country’s leaders. It is important to note that the narrative is circular because it opens and ends with the Man’s attempts to reach an end to the conflicts and struggle. The novel’s end is also its beginning, a formal feature which enhances the concept of the cycle of violence and decay. The three final chapters deal with the hours just after the collapse of Nkrumah’s regime in February 1966. From the beginning to the end of the story, Armah describes a fragmented society where confusion and anarchy reign. It is an old, decadent, and corrupt universe where nothing works and nothing is produced because the economy is depressed. It is a country controlled by rampant materialism, bribery, and corruption at every level of the political hierarchy. Its deceptive political leaders become agents of the former coloniser reducing, therefore, their people’s hopes after independence to mere illusions. They steal the public money, betray and mock the socialist ideology and lead an opulent way of life at the expense of the poor classes who dwell in decaying and insalubrious quarters.

In addition to its complex structure, examples of trickster figures surfaces across the novels “plurivocality” and ambiguity which are, according to William.G. Doty, essential to trickster tales because the trickster figure encompasses many different social positions, it is used by different societies to inculcate various types of behaviour, and may have manifold modes of appearance even within one culture. In breaking the rules, the trickster confirms them and by acting at the boundaries of order, the trickster gives definition to that order (G.Doty.1993:9-20).

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah uses ‘multivocality’ as a mode of narration to detail the conditions during the time of the coup and the fall of Ghana’s first president, Kwane Nkrumah. The novelist uses two view points: that of the narrator and the Man’s “I” point of view which expresses the decay of the Ghanaian social order. For instance, the Man voices his despair through some questions as: “how can I think (P.60); and “I also am one of the dead people (P. 61). The subjective referent “I” convey the loss of a communal vision because the Man as a person who seems to take the action is after all one man among the others. In chapter six, however, the author uses the Teacher’s voice to reinforce the idea of degeneration. Armah uses an unconscious flow in the character’s mind and introspections that lament the decay through questioning. As an illustration, the Teacher wonders: “Why do we waste so much time with sorrow and pity for ourselves? (P.62). Analogous questions follow mainly about the irresponsibility of the Ghanaian leaders (P. 81) and many other questionings of the past, the dreams and absence of hope. The teacher is a mouthpiece of the writer towards his society. His words are charged with a constant excitement that implicitly suggests the impossibility of a radical and real change.

A similar but more structural complexity appears in Mimouni’s *Le fleuve détourné* where fragmentation rests, first and foremost, in the disconnected organization of its narrative, its disrupted plot, and its multiplicity of voices. The writer alternates the present descriptions with

some reminiscences and recollections of the main characters' past memories. The story does not follow a clear chronological path because the author has chosen to present it through six centres of consciousness that correspond to the six parts of the novel. The narrative is presented in fragments and all of them are preceded by numbers that isolate parts of present and past of the "I" of the narrator. Its narrative evolves in the form of a series of centrally arranged, interior monologues replete with formulaic repetition. From beginning to end, it rests on six parts, each one divided into a number of sections. The emphasis is thus not on the exterior world but, much more obviously on the psychological responses to the world as it displayed by divergent voices, the multiplicity of viewpoints, and a mixture of genres. F. Bendjedid aligns such temporal and narrative shifts with the author's insubordinate discourse on power that she qualifies:

Dans *Le fleuve détourné*, se manifeste tous les ingrédients de l'écriture subversive: Le rêve éveillé ou le délire, le rêve et le désir, les fantasmes, le mystérieux, le surnaturel, les paradis artificiels, la folie. A ce monde de la fantasmagorie, se mêle le réel qui prend des aspects hallucinatoires, le rapport entre le fantastique et le réel trop souvent produit le ton de l'humour, de la dérision et des sarcasmes **(Bendjedid. 2005 : 123).**

[*The Diverted River*, includes all the ingredients of subversive writing: the waking dream or delirium, the dream and desire, fantasy, mystery, supernatural artificial paradises, and madness. This world of fantasy mingles with a reality that takes certain hallucinatory aspects; the relationship between fantasy and reality too often produces a tone of humour, irony and sarcasm].

Bendjedid's idea is right because there is no single coherent voice in Mimouni's novel and it is with the array of voices that life is opened up to questions and is no longer reducible to one expression or discourse. The shift from the present to the past in the narrative is carried by a duplicitous narrator who shares isolation and destitution with the most extreme non-conformist outsiders. The reasons for their confinement are not very clear. The same narrator is also the unnamed protagonist that is both a participant in the action standing inside and outside the story and within and aside from his tale. Mimouni also uses a radical narrative technique in which he mixes the many view points of the six characters who narrate their fragmented thought processes. The first person narrator imparts fragments of the story and comments on the action. Although the text does not present the Man with great sympathy, it does give readers access to his interior

panic and denial. At times, the voice of the narrator moves from past to present action and hence provides a situation in which past hopes merge with present despair. Based on the narrator's thoughts, he reproduces a series of extraordinary and disconcerting moments in which the man responds to the text narrative itself rather than to the narrator's words. The effect is to enfold the traditional distinction between narrative and dialogue, between what is conveyed to the reader and what is conveyed among the characters.

Next to the anonymous narrative voice, Mimouni bends the text out of shape, blurring the boundaries between narration, and dialogue between narrator and reader, and between the text and the world that the text describes. In addition, he appeals to satire, uses irony, and the limited or partial voices of his characters in order to debunk the official discourse of the Administrator. In so doing, he creates multiple selves rather than arriving at the original creating self. The characters' voices are directed against this specific context, since "irony", notes Colebrook, "allows for detachment and an 'eternal' point of view; the ironic self can question whether life might not be otherwise, whether 'we' might create ourselves differently. Indeed, irony detaches itself from any recognized 'we' in order to question and disrupt the norms. Irony is provocative, disruptive but also hierarchical-setting itself above everyday life and opinions" (Colbrook.2004:120-137).

One of the clearest examples akin to African trickster tradition is polarization which occurs in Mimouni's gathering of various voices that form Algerian society. There are many representatives of diverse social categories, ranging from the intellectual, the woman, the policeman to the old and wise men. All the major social groups in the novel are polarized through their functions. The technique allows a dialogic interaction among the social groups and foregrounds the social contradictions. Mimouni's egalitarian plan of allowing the 'voices' to tell their own stories provides an effective framework with which the various discourses can be highlighted in turn. The discourse of Mimouni serves to highlight the sterility and non-authenticity of the official discourse and provides a striking and immediate example of precisely the sort of voices that it excludes from his text. Once this example is offered, the official discourse is

unavoidably contaminated and it turns into a parody of itself. Mimouni's characters in *Le fleuve détourné*, as F. Bendjedid notices:

Se chargent de dénoncer le pouvoir et tous les dérèglements et dissolutions d'une société qui assume très mal sa modernité et sa reconstruction. Les disfonctionnements se généralisent au point que le texte le traduit par l'imbrication de plusieurs codes génériques qui fracturent l'hégémonie du récit réaliste normatif comme le fantastique, le déliriel, et le poétique
(Bendjedid. 2005:16).

[(characters) are given the task of denouncing the power, all the dissoluteness and dissolutions of a society that assumes its modernity and reconstruction badly. The dysfunctionality is widely spread that the text interprets them by many generic codes that fracture the hegemonies of the realistic and normative as fantasy, delirium, and poetic narrative].

The above passage indicates the heteroglossic piling up of tale upon tale, style upon style and point of view upon point of view as the novel proceeds can do nothing but further undercut the stability of the Administrator's position. The tension between the Administrator and the other characters is due to his desire to reinforce political hierarchies and strengthen social boundaries and his voice is threatened by other voices willing to debase the boundaries. Situations are presented, retraced, and then presented again to the point where it is nearly impossible to tell what is "really" happening from what occurs in dreams, paranoid fantasies, and drug-induced hallucinations.

To the fragmentary aspects of the two novels' structures, their polyphonic and multiple voices, I may add two other characteristics akin to African folktales, namely the strategies of "Signifying and Reversal" which are displayed, in the two novels, first through their sordid and disgusting settings. The two techniques form another link between Armah and Mimouni to African trickster folktales which rest on their focus on the power of signs to produce effects. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Le fleuve détourné* illustrate such a vision in the wretchedness and the chaotic settings and the ugliness of the areas where the actions revolve. It is a world in which corruption and will to power replace honesty and loyalty.

2- The Power of Signifying and Polarization in the Novels

In his article entitled “Inhabiting the Space Between Discourse and Story in Trickster Narratives”, Anne Doueïhi makes a distinction between a story that she defines as a sequence of actions or events which are independent of their manifestations in discourse while discourse includes the presentation or narration of events. For Doueïhi, there is a flagrant juxtaposition of the discursive, signifying aspect of the narrative and the referential, signified aspect of the text as story. Doueïhi maintains that folktale stories can be read as texts-open onto a plurality of meanings, none of which is exclusively “exact”. As the narratives develop, the conventional level of meaning ceases to be appropriate. The “signified” that is a local functioning in a specific field where it makes meaning possible turns out to be a “signifier”. The language of the narrative loses its referential values and becomes profound. On the other hand, the stories lose their solidity and breakdown into open-ended play of signifiers. In other terms, language becomes a semiotic activity. In this game played with and through signifiers, meaning is made possible by the space opened between signifiers. It is the reversal and discontinuities in language of the narratives that meaning is produced, not one meaning, but the possibility of meaningfulness. The other features which are commonly ascribed to the trickster, Doueïhi adds, are: contradictoriness, complexity, deceptiveness, and treachery. All of them are features of the language of the story itself. The trickster shows a way to see the world by opening the minds to the spontaneous transformations of a reality that is always open and creative. It is only to the closed, ordinary mind that the trickster stories seem absurd or profane. It is in the language out of which they are constructed that trickster stories make accessible the deeper wisdom about the nature of reality. By dividing himself, so to speak, into narrator and character, he both tells the story and is “in” the story. Just one cannot grasp or define the trickster, but only say how he seems to be. So,

the story can only be approached by seeing how the language of the discourse “seems to be” a story. The reversal and breaks in the narrative perspective produce openings in the story that allow a number of meanings to be read in it. Treating the two narratives as stories and ignoring the breaks and contradictions that tip off the language of the two stories into a free play of signifiers, a play of discourse with its own possibilities of being meaningful (Doueïhi in Hyne.Doty.1993: 129-200).

While critics have sought to establish a link between Armah and Mimouni with the existentialist philosophy of absurd, my approach to Armah’s use of “signifying and reversal” goes beyond and differs from other critics’ analyses. Rather, it suggests that the form of reversal displayed in Armah and Mimouni’s novels resemble what Boueïhi calls “the power to signify”, a kind of tool expressing a strong revolt that can productively mediate culture and politics. “Reversal” is an expression of “resistance” whether it is a priori, opposition and manifestation of hostility towards authority and to generate the type of consciousness susceptible to generate systematic revolutionary action. It explores the ideology of literature with respect to the way Armah and Mimouni’s writings turn away from the nation as a site of political hope. Far from reinforcing any given myth, their novels are transformed into a privileged instrument of demystification, a demystification of a country that had been reduced to nothing than the stooge of a state that would never raise the task with which its people had entrusted. In the universe of Armah and Mimouni’s novels, everything is a sign of something and the relationship of their narratives to reality and a concern with current and topical issues is significant. Both novels are representations without any epic or tragic dimensions. All the events have an immediate and even crudely familiar contact with living contemporary present and echo ideological issues of the day. The two authors do not rely on legends but on experience which make their tales resemble cynical exposés which reveal the true character of their societies and uncover the contradictions in making the strange and alienating conditions familiar. They are full of allusions to great and small events of the epoch and show newly emerging types in all layers of society. They are a sort of diary where the writers seek to unravel and evaluate the general spirit and direction of evolving

contemporary life. The critical aspects of the two novels and their interest in the topics of the day are characteristics of the trickster folktales. According to Robert Pelton's analysis of Akan and Ashanti folk hero Ananse, the trickster represents the human race individual and communally seizing the fragments of his experience and discovering in them an order sacred by its very wholeness. The trickster discloses the radically human character of the whole cosmos while showing the holiness of ordinary life and causing reflection upon the boundaries, upon the very nature of social order. He represents "metasocial commentary" [...] the recurrent theme in trickster tales is that often taking into account all the bumbling and archaic social behaviour, the trickster contributes to the birth and evolution of culture. His role is that of a mediator and a saviour whose power comes from opposing the social structures that uphold the cultural rules (Pelton in Hynes. Doty.1993: 23-24).

The story of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is full of astonishing, shocking, and horrific elements. All of them appear clearly in the author's conception of the setting. The events are set in Armah's home town, Takoradi, one of Ghana's major port cities where puzzlement and disorder reign. The place is described as old, decadent, and dirty. The author starts his description with a juxtaposition of contradictory aspects that form the city divided into two very distinct zones. Takoradi takes the shape of a modern composite centre where massive buildings such as Atlantic Caprice, new firms, and upper class residential quarters grow. The area stands for richness, excess and prosperity (P.141). At the same time, the Man sees it as a decadent city full of dirt and corruption. All the modern buildings exist side by side with garbage and slops. The second abject aspect of the city is Eisei Market place which suggests an atmosphere of death, decomposition and rot. Originally, it was the site of a lagoon which dried up, and was transformed into a desolate landscape beset by prostitutes, drug addicts, and homeless people (P.49). It is haunted by the spectre of degeneration which stems from the "dust and perpetual mud covered over with crushed tomatoes and rotten vegetables" (P.40).

Armah creates two opposite poles, one resplendent with high buildings and villas for the upper class residents while the other is a village populated by thatched or mud dwellings. Most of the time, the repulsiveness and the grimness of the settings are made rhetorical metaphors which either parallel the corruption of some characters such as Koomson, or render the state of social decadence which characterizes his country. Besides the two opposed zones, the reader of Armah's novel will not fail to observe that over the entire country broods a mood of hopelessness and gloom and the prospect for most of the people is bleak. Their lives are marked by spiritual sterility, boredom, and loneliness which ranges from the night clerk's cry of anguish that he voices "But I sat here alone" (P.15) to the soul destroying monotony of colourless jobs in oppressive offices that is hardly more endurable because home is much worse for the Man (P.47). The author makes it clear that the optimism of bright young hope is all too easily replaced by distress and consciousness of failure. Inefficient civil servants stretch thirty minute's work over a whole day, there is the irresponsibility of the ministers whose main preoccupations are night clubs, parties and girls, and there is the contrast between the opulence of the ministers and the squalor of the people who put them in power.

Moreover, Armah extends the view of degradation to depict the insensitive and unbearable living conditions of the Ghanaian people to call into question the glorifying discourses of the political rulers and to refute their supposed political and social achievements. He places emphasis, as Robert Frazer observes, on the epoch's social, political and economic shortcomings and foregrounds the leaders' corruption and misrule which affects critically the main character's life. The sterility is not limited to the stagnant, unproductive economy, but extends to the consciousness of the new ruling elite whose narrow self-serving welfare makes them powerless to find a social policy that might put an end to scarcity, exploitation and desolation that are part of the inheritance of

the colonial past. The problem is dramatized by the plight of the unnamed man at the centre of the story who struggles to maintain his honesty in an environment where ethical values have been completely subordinated to the values of market place (Frazer in John Lutz, 2003: 3).

A comparable discursive device and the same sordid and confined settings appear in Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné*. The fiction is set in the context of an unnamed country reminiscent of the mythical places of Djeha's stories. The narrative can be read as an "unrestricted play of signifiers" where the difference between metaphor and factual data tends to blur. It depicts not just a symbolic or metaphoric representation, the reader finds himself rather in a sort of cartoon world where the rules of regularity and morality do not apply. The outlandish setting of the story echoes the mythical time where African folktales take place. Yet, Mimouni's mythical country is a thinly veiled rendition of his homeland which he allegorizes to provide a vision of Algerian life as a depressed landscape cluttered with dirt, perverse oddities, and populated by pitiful wrecks. The author blends his re-telling of the main character's story with that of Algeria in general. The landscape in which the story is located takes the allure of twilight and darkness, and its background is heavily overcast with gloom and withered men. Mimouni shows the world as confusing and confused and also the people who inhabit it as they cling in desperation to whatever they believe might help maintain optimism while turbulent waters throw them amid the tempest. This universe, as Mimouni captures it, is a generic place with ambivalent forces that are both obscene and virtuous. It is also a place with opposing realms where order and disorder seem to collide. The narrative confirms itself as a reservoir of potential strategies to tackle other soul-rendering dislocations; it is set primarily in a prison camp situated in the desert. Several characters such as political opponents, delinquents, depressed persons, all of them are considered subversive by the authorities and are interned in the camp. They spend their time exchanging their despair and their fantasies. The opening chapter depicts a world of chaos which its residents passively accept both their conditions and the inevitable consequences of pain and death. But as the tale progresses, we follow the protagonist coming back to his native Douar

where a mysterious epidemic disease has spread. As a stranger, the man cannot enter his village as entry is forbidden to foreigners. The man's quest leads him to an ugly and overcrowded town while looking to find his wife and son. The narrator's relentless quest, then, merges gradually with the wounds of his country people. The town is divided into two parts: the town and the "new town" which reminds us of Armah's Esi Market. It is a muddy place full of moist and mud, a sterile universe for the marginalized and the poor who live in a graveyard where the carcasses of cars, trucks and buses sink into the mud. The "new town" is described as the reverse parody of the myth of the radiant "socialist towns" promised by the political leaders in the euphoria of independence. Mimouni's notion of environment extends beyond the animalistic and the prison-like conditions to include post-colonial Algeria's entire dreadful environment devoid of compassion. During his trip, Mimouni's man lives in a dust, rotting, and sterile environments. His village and the town are places where the self is threatened and dissolved. All of them are half-built and remain full of wounded or shell-shocked persons, victims of marginalization and state neglect. The alien oddness of the present places is juxtaposed with the man's memories of his childhood of deprivation, derisory living conditions, the non-existence of sanitary commodities, and misery.

In the course of the narrative, Mimouni forces the reader to recognize that the decay is the result of a double mutilation, the result of colonial and post-colonial injuries. The prevailing decadence that dominates the narrative events is, on the one hand, an outcome of an accelerated colonial modernization added, on the other hand to the "corrupt" post colonial spirit of the Revolution which has been betrayed by its own new leaders. The reader follows the man with broad takes of the physical landscape with close and intense portrait of victims, ranging from the man himself to the other characters who try to solicit in a place where political abuse, indifference, corruption, bureaucracy have been instituted to become a daily common currency. Their desperate attempts to escape from the rot lead all of them only to self-destruction. The condition of the man and his prison mates serve as illustration of the situation.

However, above and beyond the desolate and degenerate settings of Armah and Mimouni's novel, the discursive features of their stories reveal that the trickster embody the power that

makes meaning possible, the power sounds, noises, signs, to be significant. It is the power of signification, the possibility to mean, that Armah and Mimouni, like the mythical trickster figures, celebrate in their polarized descriptions of their main characters. Both authors represent the two main characters as aimless and rootless wanderers outside the pale of society through recourse to African trickster tradition. The main protagonists' depiction reminds the reader of the folktale trickster vagabond and intruder to proper society. Christopher Vecsey, in his discussion of Ananse the Akan trickster, refers to the state of restless of the trickster figure. His wandering aims to evaluate, explain, and reflect upon realities, thereby making them clearer and more profound to the people who tell and hear them. During his journey, the trickster breaks the patterns of a culture and helps define them. By acting irresponsibly, he helps define responsibility. He threatens, yet he teaches too. He throws doubt on realities but contributes concentrate attention on them. He abhors injustice and immorality against hardworking and defenseless people (Vecsey in Hynes. Doty. 1993: 107).

3- The Allegorical Journey Motifs in the Two Novels

In African storytelling, the journey motif in allegorical terms reflects a person's progress in life. In reflecting the process of life, the narrative becomes a representation of the life-journey through which good actions to follow and bad actions to avoid are delineated. The tales therefore not only deal with the motif of the journey, they also set up the polarities of right and wrong. In the case of Armah and Mimouni's novels, the same passage of life is at the core of the plot structure. The departure of the two main characters, their initiation, and their return closely parallel the rites of passage. According to Amanor. S. Dseagu, three phases depict the spatial and chronological progression of the protagonist of each: the happy, innocent period when the hero is in the village, a well-structured and intact universe, with its norms and social values. The problematic period comes when the hero is in a foreign or urban setting, in an environment where values and norms are in a state of flux, and where the hero does not know which values to adhere to,

the traditional or the modern. Finally, the tale ends with the weak and feeble period which is characterised by the return of the protagonist to the village (Dseagu.1992:595).

The use of the symbol of the journey as a reflection of the rites of passage is the basis on which both Armah and Mimouni's novels rest. Like trickster travels through the world that allows him develops self, and create for mankind haphazardly, by chance, by trial and error without advance planning. He re-enacts the process that is central both to perception and creation, to the constant human activity and modifying them in the light of experience. The two men do not travel to foreign lands; their quest is limited to a crossing of their respective societies where they discover worlds which had previously been unknown to them. The journeys of the protagonists, from one place to another, take in a variety of sceneries and social strata. On the road, they come across characters from all economic ranks and from various layers of society. The encounters happen while they are on the road and serve to reinforce the atmosphere of exploitation, neglect and degradation. At each turn, they are presented with new aspects of their culture. The blending of an unusual assortment of caricatures and occupations, in the two men's travels, provide the reader with a vision of many social elements mixed into one: the pastoral socializes with the urban; the victims intermingle with the unlawful elements of society while the bottom group associates with the elevated. It is in their journey that these components work together. The contrasting of opposites, of the various aspects of society reflects a questioning of ideas, ideologies, and cultural beliefs. The questioning instances of interrogation occur in the dialogues which dissect the disorder and contradictions that are prevalent in society. They also furnish an atmosphere for probing the very beliefs which make up that society.

The journey predisposition in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is displayed by the plight of the depressed main character that wanders and struggles to salvage his

sanity in a world with which he has little in common. The novel is dominated by a trickster-like spirit of contradictions which trigger a new way of conceiving reality. The nameless character symbolizes, as Jagne F Siga and Naida, Pushpo Parekh observe, the wretchedness of the ordinary Ghanaian in the post-colonial era. He is as much the result of the author's desire to paint an ordinary life of a Ghanaian person as it is in order to show sympathetically an imperfect humanity in an uncertain environment. What makes his life restless is the fact that he lives and acts not as a character or subject with an essence and identity revealed through speech, but as an enigmatic character in constant creation and formation (Siga.Parekh. 1998: 47).

The unnamed character has little influence over the events of the novel and his actions and decisions are for most of the time "passive and fruitless". Like Ananse, the spider trickster of the Akan and Ashanti folktales, he remains a solitary figure in an ocean teeming with corruption. His deep sense of morality forces him to struggle to keep his honesty uncompromised. But, because of his conflict with his family and society, he remains unable to make decisions and finds himself rejected by his community members. At the very beginning of the narrative, the author describes in naturalistic detail a boring day in the Man's life, his way to and from the work, the oppressiveness of the physical surroundings, the dull and trivial responsibilities of his job and the coming back home to an uncaring and critical wife (P.47). Exceeding all these difficulties is the railway clerk's relentless endeavours to maintain his honesty and integral. He struggles to sustain a mode of personal definition that is in contradistinction to the environment. He is torn between a desire to keep his moral values intact and a will to please his wife and children who see that a person's value is expressed only through the amount of money he possesses. Such a view appears in the insult of the bus conductor to the Man as: "An article of no commercial value". The insult is suggestive of the extent to which the value of the market

place squashes any other possible basis for estimating the merit of human being. In the society in which the human subsists, as John Lutz points out, the only nexus remaining between human being is naked self-interest and callous cash payment, personal worth has been completely dissolved to exchange value (Lutz.2003: 4).

Therefore, Armah's anonymous protagonist must make hard choices between easy money that would enable him to provide an adequate and comfortable life for his family and his own principles, which prohibits his acceptance of bribes as a means of getting rich (P.56). Through the main character's towering over his society, the places change through the novel but corruption is always there to stimulate not only the Man's eagerness to resist corruption but also the writer's attitude of protest and condemnation of the new ruling elites who pursue the "gleam" of materialism and consumption that make them appear in the man's eyes as disgusting. Despite the slightly optimistic turn with respect to the end of the narrative, the large scale of the rush to materialism and the precarious economic conditions that pervade the text makes it an allegorical tale. The repetitiveness of the Man's story, the recurring verbal violence, his frequent frustration with which he arrives home from his job every night are, in my view, a synecdoche of a society caught in a deadlock, which follows a predictable pattern of trouble, crisis, escape and resolution. All of them mirror the increasing frustration which independent African nations inevitably embrace the pervasive alternating realities of historic of authoritarian models and military regimes. The endpoint of each circle, as in episodes of an allegory, is structurally similar to the previous. Very often, the national experience of disaster in many African nations does not help prevent very similar patterns and events from happening again and again.

One can find similar episodes of journey common to trickster prose narratives throughout Mmimouni's novel. The wandering motifs are strongly embedded in the delineation of Mimouni's anonymous main character in the midst of the foul veneer of his society. The journey is displayed in the broken up structure of *Le fleuve détourné* and reflects not only precarious existences of the individual but also the deadlock and endless lack of progress in the country. The tragicomic adventures of the main protagonist, structured in an episodic narrative typical of

Algerian oral folktales, are mixed together with his quest for identity. The story revolves around an unnamed, sad, and unbalanced war veteran who is supposed to have died during the Algerian Liberation War. A victim suffering from amnesia, the nameless character is unable to recover his memory; he could be anyone or everyone. Many years pass until one fateful day, he recovers his memory and makes it a matter of principle to return to his native village to meet his family and his wife left pregnant. From that day forward, his life becomes a nightmare and the reader follows the character's ups and downs during his quest. For instance, the man's involvement with the Algerian Revolution, which he hoped would help him to break from the hold of death, leads him to a form of alienation and dissolution which hurts him much more because it is built around the illusion of hope.

When back in his native village after several years of absence, his appearance from so far away surprises his family while no one in his village recognizes him. Everyone in his Douar believed him to be dead. Officially, he was killed in a bombing by the French forces of a camp of the FLN during the Algerian War. The ghost-like character makes quite a comeback, motivated by his desire to know and understand the changes and their origins. He insists and wants to find his wife and son. And then starts his long journey like a shadow across his country and his sad voice bears witness that although the apparent social order of his country may have changed with political independence, many of the ills of colonization are still in effect. During his stay in the "New Town", he is taken under the protection of Said, a shoemaker, who helps him to get a job as a garbage collector, a job he drops precipitously in the wake of a strike where he gets involved and is accused of being its principal instigator. At many different times throughout the novel, the reader may react with amazement when the man is labeled as a public agitator acquiring the reputation of a trouble maker. The last stage of the man's calamitous quest leads him to find his son who denies his paternity. Therefore, at the end of the narrative, the unnamed character remains unable to recover his identity in a corrupt and oppressive society that has diverted from the ideals of the revolution and his story, far from a heroic struggle, becomes a nightmare from which he cannot awake.

Like the allegorical figures of African tales, the man travels through an absurd nightmare where old values have given way to a mentality that sets up the lies and demagoguery as ubiquitous rules. He faces several violent incidents and experiences events of corrupt and lustful for power. The anonymous country is described as a “cartoonish territory” where the ruling party has spread its “web” of control that kept the country in its grips. Sometimes, he seems to be outside and distinct from the follies he witnesses. Either the descriptions he gives are self-betraying or the absurdities he views are allegorical. For example, we first encounter the man in chapter one in the company of many detainees. Suddenly, the voice of the narrator breaks the circle of death to recount the story of an ordinary man who leans away from typical social patterns towards mystery and the unexpected. The use of the fantastic to describe the human body and all its processes is well illustrated, first and foremost, in the portrayal of the main character’s strange and unbelievable story. The absurdity of the tale resides in the strategy of novelistic space that Mimouni adopts by making the opening of the narrative coincide with its closure and is thus suspended between two points.

The story is that of an allegorical figure that is meant to embody the spirit of Algerian freedom fighters who should assume an active role in the independent country and who becomes paralyzed by hesitation and compromised by past errors of judgment. The novel opens with an unidentified narrator, complaining about his mistaken stay in a detention camp where the stench of human waste and rampant violence are the norm. This dramatic opening is certain to raise questions in the reader’s mind as to the narrator’s identity and moral character. What has he done to merit this ignominious treatment? Throughout the narrative, the duplicitous narrator looks for his lost identity in a ruthless world. He wanders in search of his lost being, his wife and his son, but his quest remains without redemption; the more he seeks for them, the more his existence is denied by an environment to which he is bound by no allegiance. He becomes an outcast forced to live far away from family and at the periphery of the community.

Through the way Mimouni shapes the main character, he suggests that the country's sovereignty is pure illusion since people are not only robbed of their identity, but they are subjected to enslavement, oppression, and all sorts of injustices. Both human and social

oppressions appear in the story of the disillusioned main character. The protagonist is the sole survivor of the bomb-attack by French soldiers. It is from the world of the dead that he returns back to his people. He tells his story to a circle of friends who attend the prison camp in which he finds himself after killing his wife's predators. Equally baffling is the fact that his normless and amoral friends are all so completely out of touch with reality that they remove themselves each in his own way, in suicide, illness, resignation and oblivion. At the end of the narrative, when the man finds his son, the latter is corrupted by the necessity of survival; the son denies his father's paternity and stands as the representative of the new generation that remains without a future, which looks at a shining future without being able to find it. Even more astounding and monstrously aberrant is the protagonist's alienation, not only because the authorities do not listen to him, but also because even his closest family is not prepared in any way to awaken the ghosts of the past. It is better to leave them buried. For instance, Ahmed, his cousin, the Mayor of the village, talks to him in strange terms when he goes to regularize his administrative situation (P.57). His wife Houria prefers him dead because she is afraid of losing her war widow's pension. Therefore, the man should resume and keep his status as dead. He becomes so disgusted by the answers of his fellows that he is left no other option but to converse with the dead. Mimouni reminds the reader that the man is a desperate, a suffering creature and thus in some ways deserving of our pity. At the same time, he makes the episode seem somewhat comic when he describes how the man during his efforts to find an attentive ear, engages in a serious discussion with Si Cherif, his Commandant during the Algerian Liberation War (P.81). It is the disgust with his society that drives him to escape into the world of the dead, entirely divorced from the real world. The story takes a fantastic twist when the man finds that Si Cherif remembers him, understands his plight, and answers that he can do nothing for him. In this scene, the bizarre is suggested by the idea that the visible world is incomprehensible and unregenerate, and that the individual is floundering in a sea of contradictions and incongruities. The entire shocking and indecorous scene stands for the author's will to present a strange world devoid of justice where the idealistic innocent suffers. The same scenes are characteristics which can be found African oral tales.

The importance of signification as a defensive strategy of powerless characters against the strong ones is displayed through Mimouni's stress on the man's metamorphosis and his gradual moral degradation. The author uses an invective language to describe the man's journey whose account begins badly, but his situation eventually becomes worse and worse. The man voices his tragedy by a foolish misjudgment: "His presence in the camp is erroneous". However, its irony seems less obvious because the smiles it provokes are often tinged with guilt. We cannot help being amused by some of the Administrator's predicaments. The true nadir appears when the man is physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. More bizarre still in some ways than the physical degradation Mimouni's man undergoes is his steady spiritual or emotional decline as he becomes even more nihilist by the end of the story. In the beginning, the man remains admirably courageous, motivated in his thought and feelings despite the profound change in his community. By the second half of the story, he becomes more and more aggressive, impatient, more threatening. His transformation, in other words, has become both physical and spiritual. Thus, one of the outrageous scenes in the shocking story occurs when the man faces his wife's physical metamorphosis and her decline (P.167). Her narration suggests not only lack of decency but reveals the height of incongruity and the farcical shame she has endured bodily.

The exasperation of the man reaches its apex when he loses his temper and feels rage when Houria tells him of her horrible adventure. A little later, full of resentment, bitterness, guilt, shame, and vengeance, the man tries to escape the situation but then comes the death of his wife's predators who, in their wordless pathos, are pure victims of their desires, excesses, and lust. Even in their death, they remain grotesque, as they: « tâtonnaient, rampaient sur le tapis, comme des vermisseeaux. Fou de terreur et de souffrance, criaient et suppliaient. Comme des vermisseeaux. Comme des porcs. Trois d'entre eux avaient déféqué dans leurs pantalons" [groping, crawling on the carpet, like worms. Mad with terror and pain, screaming and begging. Like worms. Like pigs. Three of them had defecated in their pants](P.181). The quotation stands as an invitation to death and this is exemplified by the man's killing of his wife's aggressors. It indicates that the man plays the game to satisfy and revenge his wife, and in the foolishness of the moment, he feels happy at performing the heroic things that were expected all

the time. But confronted by the true reality, he realizes the heavy price he has to pay for his act. By the end of the story, then, the man comes to seem less ideally human, not only physically, but also morally in his emotional and mental responses. The novel ends with the sudden descent into hell in which the narrator finds himself suddenly and profoundly alone which is another link with the African story telling. Once more, the full dramatic effect is elaborated through a failure to meet the Administrator and recover his lost identity. The man's decline and loss are not completely felt until the closure of the tale.

As with Armah's main character, the man remains asocial rejecting any participation in the events of his society, the arbitrary arrest, rampant corruption, and political abuses that have been put on show as so compulsive throughout the tale. His final position of disgust with his social environment is abject not just because he absurdly sees himself as other than human while occupying the very body he cannot bear, but because of the position of the Administrator and his indifference. The way Mimouni shapes the man is intended to display the cruelty, the violence, the unjustified, meaningless enjoyment and delight of the political leaders at the suffering and the fall of their people. The novel ends the same way it begins with a flourish of grotesque, undeserved and unnecessary suffering. Such an end, in my view, is meant to show that Mimouni emphasizes the socio-political circumstances as fundamental motivations for the attitudes of characters. The clash between them means a clash between two social phenomena which are produced by certain circumstances which exist in the society.

However, it is relevant to notice that, in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Le fleuve détourné*, it is not only the two men who are transformed during the course of the two stories, nor it is only they who exhibit grotesque behaviors. The two novels are structured around the misshapen representations of many human bodies in pain. By the end of the two narratives, a number of characters come to seem monstrous, each one in his own way and all of them increase the reader's sense of amazement. In short, Armah and Mimouni's novels are wonderful adventures in questioning life, society and its ideas. At the same time they are journeys of "Abjection and Disgust", in Julia Kristeva and Ian Miller's the words, that promote an overall

tone that is negative or stagnant because the displacing nature of this kind of laughter immobilizes character development.

4- Instances of Abjection and Disgust in Novels

Of all the selected narrative “tools” through which Armah and Mimouni narrate the psychology of corruption and the conditions that lead to a situation in which power and privilege are flagrantly abused in such a way that the majority of people nevertheless do not dare rise up and challenge the abuses of their leaders resembles the African folktale’s “Serious Laughter” . Such a technique can also be linked to Kristeva’s concept of abjection. As it is discussed in her book entitled, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection* (1982), Kristeva defines the term as one of those violent, dark revolts of the human being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, and the thinkable. It beseeches worries, sickens, and rejects. It is also an object that is thrown away, radically excluded and draws one toward the place where meaning collapses (Kristeva. 1998: 02).

It is also “something that a person does not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing significant, and which crushes the person on the edge of non-existence and hallucination of a reality that, if the person acknowledges it, annihilates him. The difference between an object and abject, according to Kristeva is that abjection is not the lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, and order. It is closely linked to what does not respect borders, positions and rules, the in-between, and the ambiguous. It can also be provoked by the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, and the killer who claims he is the saviour. Abject is immoral, sinister, scheming and shady. It happens in cases of a terror that dissembles hatred that smile, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you, and a friend who stabs you. The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes prohibition, a rule, or a law, but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts, uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them, and curbs the other’s suffering for its own profits. Corruption is its most common, most obvious appearance, a socialised form of the abject, concludes Kristeva (Ibid. P.16).

The similar way Armah and Mimouni express the various misbehaviors of the political leaders by means of an aesthetic transgression can be related to William Ian Miller's concept of "Disgust" too. Miller's notion is very close to both African popular cultures' idea of serious laughter as well as to Kristeva's notion of abjection. In its simple sense, the term disgust means something offensive to the taste and it is linked to foul odors and loathsome sights. It can also be a complex sentiment that can be lexically related to things and actions which are repulsive, revolting or give rise to reactions described as revulsion, abhorrence as well as disgust. Miller relies on the definition provided by the psychologist Paul Rosin who bases his theory of disgust on food eating and its rejection. Rosin indicates that disgust centers on oral incorporation and food rejection (Miller. 1997: 06). However, in addition to food and its rejection, Miller states that disgust includes five additional domains like: sex, hygiene, death, violation of the body envelope (gore, amputations), and socio-moral violations. All of them are gathered under a new generalizing theory of disgust. Miller adds that some emotions, among which disgust and its close cousin, contempt, are most prominent, have intensely political significance. They work to hierarchise our political order: in some settings they constitute righteously presented claims to superiority. Miller also argues that disgust is a moral sentiment that figures in everyday moral discourse: along with indignation it gives voice to our strongest sentiments of moral disapprobation. It is bound up intimately with our responses to the ordinary voices of hypocrisy, betrayal, cruelty and stupidity. But disgust ranges more widely than we may wish, for it judges ugliness and deformity to be moral offences. It concerns all that revolts and repels. It is not the rosy view of the world. Disgust, contempt, shame, and hate all join hands in the syndrome of self-loathing (P.9).

In this respect, Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* can be regarded as "an African fable" which mirrors the corruption that engulfed his native Ghana during the years immediately after independence. The corruption is displayed by the author's juxtaposing of the sumptuous life-style of African leaders with mass squalor and poverty of population. The author stresses the way the ruling elite use ideology as a cover for their materialistic ways. However, what first attracts the reader's attention and impacts on his senses is the vivid and disgusting

insistence on the filth, the excrement, and the vomit that one touches and breathes in the city. Armah links this bitter reality to the political and moral corruption that the society is plagued by. In fact, the first chapter provides a detailed picture of an overflowing garbage can and a two-page philosophical treatise on the various types of grime on a banister (P.7- 8). As the narrative progresses, the outhouse seems to captivate the narrator's interest and provides the main source of disgust. The protagonist's bowel movements are frequently and explicitly depicted and Armah makes clear that the odors have the power to contaminate; they irrevocably destroy all desires and poison his overtly sensitive consciousness. When Koomson visits the Man's house, he is shocked by an unnamed neighbour's violent diarrhoea.

Furthermore, the novel's climax describes how the protagonist and Koomson must squeeze through the sewer of a communal latrine. Koomson's difficult escape through the latrine stands as a self-pitying man swimming in his own excrement; sweat and stench begin to arise from his sinful deeds and his fear. The second symbol special to Armah's novel is the chichidodo bird, which despises excrement but survives on the worms that the excrement nourishes (P.47). The Man, as much as he endeavours to remain far from filth and corruption, finds himself caught up in the social guilt. This aspect of the novel, as Joyce Moss and Lorraine Valestuk observe, has received a great deal of attention from the reviewers. Some critics, such as Charles Miller, applauded it because, "it calls for no small gift to expound on excreta and neither offends nor bore [...] Armah brings it off". Others deplore it suggesting that "Armah's belief that realism comes only by spelling out very crude action, by rubbing the reader's nose in every vile smell, makes it impossible to recommend the book generally". So, why does Armah devote so much attention to filth? First, it physically represents the novel's themes of decay, corruption, and waste in describing Ghana as a figurative cesspool. More importantly, it provides a literary register for the protagonist's disgust at his surroundings. He finds using the bathroom a nauseating, but necessary, ordeal, as is negotiating the needs and expectation of his peers (Moss.Valestuk.2000: 18).

A similarly or more disgusting atmosphere is brought to the surface in Mimouni's third novel. As with Armah, the author's commitment to virtues and bodily cleanliness, to

the loathing of corruption, cruelty, and hypocrisy of the political leaders appear in the novel through the theme of disgust which is bound up intimately with the Mimouni's response to the ordinary vices of hypocrisy, cruelty and stupidity of some Algerian post independence political leaders. Several scenes in Mimouni's novel depict a world in which bad smells, loathsome sights, contempt, corruption and political abuses are present. He spares no detail in describing a population at the mercy of a few power-hungry individuals, and a society afflicted with hypocrisy and false beliefs. He exposes to critical scrutiny certain elements of Algerian's postcolonial order and depicts a world of hopelessness, randomness, moral chaos, and despair where only stench thrives, making the atmosphere so poisonous and depressingly frightening. There is malnutrition and squalor everywhere in the country, yet those in power are oblivious to the basic needs of the people. They continue to squander money while the rest of the population goes hungry. The man sees that the only changes in the country are superficial ones: the import of refrigerators, colour television, Gruyère cheese, mini-skirts and rising inflation (p 49). The same leaders who dream of building a prosperous country allow the birth rate to increase, but do not want to provide housing for the expanding population. They insist on the use of literary Arabic, which few people can understand (P. 70). In trying to rebuild the country according to their caprices, they seem to have left nothing unturned. They have even drawn straight lines on undulating hills, and diverted the course of the river (P. 49).

Some upsetting episodes in Mimouni's *Le Fleuve détourné* emerge through a drastic denunciation of economic exclusion and cultural erasure that engulfs the protagonist in a world without mercy and pity. The man's journey is an aggravated situation of shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and of an exceptional sensibility of disgust, primarily provoked by an arbitrary arrest and later by several spectacles of

humiliation and violence. By focusing in his fiction on marginalized members of his society, Mimouni introduces a critique of the power structures in place and indicts poverty, urban abjection and the absence of spirit and hope in Algerian society where insanitary living conditions, long trails of dirt, lined walls, hay heaps, and filth are daily ubiquitous metaphors. Foul smelling excrement with its stench expands to capture the odour of decay and poison the reader's senses. Such images are uttered by certain voices and all of them condemn political oppression, militarism and poverty. The world is filled with disgusting sights which provoke disgust and shame. People are doomed by the strong smells from the lagoon. The odours offend because of their contaminating powers. These images carry enormous social and moral significance. Disgust is prompted by contact with a contaminating substance, and more important, by witnessing the shameful and disgusting behaviours of people forced to violate ethical norms. As an illustration, certain families are obliged to do something disgusting, they are compelled to defecate inside the house where they live. But Mimouni is careful to show that these people do it not by choice, they are dirty by necessity. The author creates the impression of an awful stench that no one would expect. The emanation of such a horrible stench that one could hardly bear is shameful not because it forces people to violate ethic norms. What is revolting is rather the behaviour of the authorities that leave people without proper sanitary conditions.

Furthermore, Mimouni is a master of descriptions of revolting squalor. His account of man's quest to find his family throughout the village and the town reveals that nothing in the main living quarters of the town is even cleaned (P.129) Disgust, we are made to feel, cannot escape the moral implications that come with it. In the lagoon for instance, the air is hypnotizing, the humidity is nauseating, and the misery is murderous. It is a world dominated by fluids of bad odors, filth, and spit. The suffocating heat counters the seemingly cold gaze of passive dwellers.

All these abject and disgusting episodes are reinforced by the two authors' use of revolting imagery and symbols.

5- Armah and Mimouni's Use of Obscenity and disgusting Imagery

The use of rude mockery and scatology in trickster tales, in J. Hynes words, is not simply anti-religious or anti-social criticism; the tales can be seen as moral examples re-affirming the rules of society and serve as model for these rules, demonstrating what happens if the prescription laid down by society are not observed (Hynes.1993: 7). I suggest that the trickster material is useful within the context of Armah and Mimouni's novels because the breaching and upending initiated in their challenges to the accepted ways of doing things highlights the possibilities within a society for creative reflection on and change the society's meaning. According to Achille Mbembe, grotesque and obscene are characteristics of the postcolony. They constitute a means of resistance to the dominant culture and a refuge from it, obscenity and the grotesque are parodies that undermine officialdom by showing how arbitrary and vulnerable is officialize and turning it all into an object of ridicule (Mbembe.P.103). Armah incorporates these attitudes of popular culture into his novel, there by crossing the boundaries between orality and literacy, but also simultaneously redefining and transforming the parameters of novel as genre in order to accommodate these voices. The next relationship between African folktales and Armah and Mimouni's novels is evident in their use of corrosive images.

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, as the title of the novel suggests, Armah appeals to figurative language to demystify the ideal of Ghana's independence in representing his country through the metaphor of the old decrepit bus which is held together: "by too much rust ever to fall apart" (P.01). The metaphor goes together with the sordid image of the amount of waste and excrement that populate the novel's world. Both images are closely linked to material consumption; the miserable abject life lived among mountains of waste and dirt, and the needs and desires that have gone unmet by the ruling authorities (P.7). The author also lampoons the national condition by describing the Ghanaian folks as: "walking corpses" (P.2) and "living dead" (P.22). Most of them have run away from the society as it is the case in the mad journey of the main character. The pervasiveness and recurrence of the rot and the image of decay leads the

narrator to say: “it is understandable that people spit so much, when all around decaying things push inward and mix all the body’s juices with the state rot” (P.40). The same image of rot comes to view with “the caked excrement in latrine”, “the aged mud on the shoreline”, and the novel’s many dead and rotting things. Derek Wright suggests that in the atmosphere of total corruption provided by Nkrumah’s regime, Armah’s excremental master-metaphor tirelessly constipates voices, crushes breath, and turns aspiration into urination to mock the persons who strive effortlessly to pursue the “gleam”. The author, adds the reviewer, targets those who break the monthly cycle of debt and borrowing, borrowing and debt, and scorns also Ghana’s official ideology. For example, he taunts the country’s vision of socialism by reducing it to popular latrine graffiti: “socialism chope Make I chope” (P.106) marked next to other jobs such as: “pray for detention Jailman chope free” and “vagina sweet”. Read together, the slogans suggest Armah’s intention to dethrone the symbols of Ghana’s official discourses and reveal his aim to reduce his country’s political orientation to the sphere of material, bodily and socialism to a vulgar eats and let eat doctrine (Wright.2003: 5).

The other representation of the grotesque also appears in the gross forms and nauseating imagery of urine, waste, and excrement. Yet, the most repulsive place described in the novel is the Man’s latrines which furnish the only issue of escape for the fugitive minister. The author describes it as being pervaded by “the powerful smell of particles of shit doing a wild mixed dance with drops of stale urine in the small space latrine” (P.166). Armah also forces the reader to feel disgust as the picture of a woman who sucks her child’s nostrils (P.35), not to arouse one’s indignation against the character, but to react against the authorities which allow her to languish in poverty, squalor and ignorance while they fatten themselves on their country’s richness. An analogous sickening image of dirt is established in the opening moments of the novel, with women who empty their slops into the drain outside the house. Furthermore, Armah juxtaposes excrements and sex in the country where the most corrupt men are notable for their sexual activities (P.147). Armah’s master-metaphor, to paraphrase Derek Wright, is taken largely from the filth and waste of the consumer materialism which haunts, possesses people with such a thorough-going attraction that it turns them into objects. For instance, Estella, Koomson’s wife’s

perfume is paralleled to the excremental unpleasant smell of her corrupt husband. The other metaphors which are given importance in the narrative are: lightness, whiteness, and ghosts, all of which do more than capture the arbitrariness of the word “concept control” and the operations of “value persuasion” in the Ghanaian totalitarian state where honesty becomes a vice by dissenting “saboteurs” and nation wreckers (P.95) whose main activities consist in competition for government power and consumption of wealth. The ghost image associates the whiteness of these ruling elite with all things deadly and decaying especially with the false gleam of European goods that kill their spirits. For instance, Armah compares the wigs of human hair which are scraped from a decayed white woman’s corpse to be given along with European clothes and perfumes, as payment to prostitutes by the party men, to the new African elites feeding off the corpse of colonialism, imaged of the “silver flesh” and “torn white body” (P.147). All the images convey the philosophy of the survival of the fittest that justified the desperate actions of the man who lives in drastic conditions in which the political leader’s deceit and individualism compromise his honesty and communalism.

In addition to sickening images, Armah uses swearing and cursing as a form of descriptive language. It is made plain through his recourse to such abusive language as insults and diatribes. For instance, the novel starts with a comic and a puzzling situation that provokes disgust. It describes a man staring at the bus conductor with a steady gaze that fills the air with voices of those innocent people deceived and tricked by the driver (P.2). But later, the observer reveals himself to be a sleeper who pollutes his seat with the ooze of saliva. Even his efforts to clean his place are doomed, and under the threat of the bus conductor, he feels obliged to wipe it off with his own back (P.6). In the first chapter, the man is presented as an object of abuse and ridicule which stirs the other characters to abusive expressions. Some illustrations are provided by the bus conductor who abuses the man and considers him as “bloodfucking sonofabitch! Article of no commercial value!” (P.6). As the narrative goes on, the man is also slandered by the taxi driver who sees him as an: “uncircumcised baboon” and a “Moron of a frog” (P.9). The man is also ridiculed and insulted by the timber contractor for his refusal to accept bribes. The contractor assimilates and likens the man’s integrity with weakness and wickedness which he vows as

follows: “a very wicked man who will never prosper” (P.30). But what hurts and affects deeply the protagonist is the humiliation that comes from his own wife, Oyo who likens her husband’s honesty to a ”chidodo”, a bird who hates excrements but is fed by the worms which grow in it (P.43). From what precedes, I deduce that the image of Ghana in the *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is puzzling, brutal, materialistic, and chaotic.

Parallel to Armah’s first novel, Mimouni’s *Le fleuve détourné* is an allegory as well as an extended metaphor of the various problems inundating post independence Algerian society, especially its political leaders’ interpretation of how power should be exercised. Therefore, Mimouni uses the power of words to comment on the political leaders’ denial of people’s rights and freedom. Through the use of imagery, the writer creates a therapeutic device for soothing the pain of their economic and social dislocations. Such imagery is first suggested by the novel’s title, *A Diverted River* which can be interpreted as the Algerians’ loss of identity. The river is the guarantor of fertility and life; it is the symbol of memory and soul of the people. In Mimouni’s novel, the river is deviated from its course and the memory of people is amputated and forgetful because it parallels the river which is diverted from its natural course. Mimouni also provides pictures of the gulf that make people even more violent and their behavior dislocating. The tale as a whole paints a dismal picture of political and economic decay. It is also a commentary of political events in Algeria with special stress on the ruling authorities’ misappropriation of public funds, nepotism, massive bribery, graft and complete disregard for people’s wellbeing. Like Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Mimouni attacks both the colonialism that controlled Algeria for more than a hundred years and the Algerian leadership that replaced the French administration after Independence. The new regime seems little different from the old since colonial oppression, injustice and other abuses have not disappeared. The promise of self-rule soon has given way to disenchantment which appears from the opening pages of the novel. The story begins with the main character’s loss of identity and self which can be regarded as a metaphoric representation of the great national malaise, disillusionment and loss. The language of risk and tyranny appear, first and foremost, through the image of the main character’s mad journey. The man represents Everyman; he flees the prison-like atmosphere,

passes through many tribulations and disturbing experiences to find his wife and son. On his way, he meets various figures who convey rigid, frightening, pitiable, and sometimes laughable images. It is this complex combination of effects and images of an arbitrary existence that make the whole tale bizarre.

However, nowhere is this grotesque image more apparent than in the novel's representation of woman's body, and in particular in the series of injuries and grievances that clutter the novel's plot. As an illustration, the image of suffering woman in the name of being a sexual object becomes Mimouni's mode of satirizing the administration's preoccupation with generalization and neglect of what is important. Many of the novel's dramatic conflicts arise from the profoundly different attitudes towards woman's body that the narrator and characters hold. The acts are disturbing enough, but the gap between actions, and words are even more so. The ugly image, for instance, comes into sight in Mimouni's mingling of extreme horror with ludicrous action and incongruous images with lived experience (P.91). In so doing, it seems to me, he does not only make the discourse of the ruling elite murky, morbid and outlandish; he also riddles their language with obscenities, and makes their names ludicrous and stiff. Through the use of burlesque and image reversal, Mimouni downgrades and ridicules ruling elites' temporal powers that inflated them to monstrous proportion. Through the use of satirical metaphors and images of violence, the author vents his wrath on the bureaucrats who pervert language and use it treacherously to hoodwink people and cow them into total submission (P.44). While some scenes are of course comical, the horrifying absurdity is further underlined. It is difficult to search for any aspect of laughter as a primary device of the theme in *Le fleuve détourné* whose abiding gloom is so heavy, who's reading of human destiny and human actions are so starkly tragic. One example of such distorted and bizarre behaviors appears in the scene which describes a man who abuses his wife. Most of the time, he comes back to his home drunk and in a fit of rage, he beats her repeatedly like a beast. When the agitated and exasperated wife goes to the police station in order to complain, she uncovers her clothes to prove her husband's violence by showing the traces of his beatings on her body. Unexpectedly, the answer of the police officer is astounding. He, who is supposed to assure the woman, is not only indifferent to the complainer's grievance

but takes no security measure to lessen the supplicant's plight and distress. He does not take the request seriously and obliges the victim to return to her brutal husband (P.75). The author depicts the scene as an act of representational violence against woman who is domesticated, subordinated and tyrannized.

In addition to the monstrous behavior of the police officer, Mimouni also exposes the moral and physical squalor through the various images of dirt and filth spread through the countryside and the town zones. The juxtaposition of filth and food is an implied comment on the negligence and the lack of concern shown by the authorities towards the masses. First, a corrosive image is voiced by the narrator who states: "chez les familles, les mères n'osent plus laisser sortir leurs filles et les obligent à faire leurs besoins dans la pièce même où elles vivent. Cette zone est devenue un immense dépotoir. La puanteur est suffocante" [among families, mothers do not dare let their daughters go out and force them to defecate in the room where they live. This area has become a huge cesspit. The stench is suffocating] (P.92). This sordid image of such unbearable living conditions constitutes an assault on the senses and stands as a metaphor for the complete disregard of the ruling leaders to the plight of their population whose wellbeing they are supposed to serve, protect, and guarantee.

Moreover, profusely employed, animal imagery connotes the ideas of political leaders' bestiality and predation. Some of these animal images portray them as inhuman, contemptible, corrupt, and rotten creatures that live a dissolute life which is characterized by loss of control of the body and of the mind functions. As an illustration, the juxtaposition between a widow and a divorced woman threatened by some powerful bulls grazing in the field and threatening the peace of the cow is an illustrating metaphor of such violence and brutality against women (P.169). The image of the fat and oily "bulls" stands for the ruling officials who are envious of holding power and seek for it by dominating every aspect of society (P.170). The same sickening images of the notables' bestiality occur in the episode which depicts the sexual debasement of the main character's wife, Houria. The scene is followed by a shocking and absurd passage, narrated by the man's son, of the school director who sexually degrades his newly appointed teacher and abuses

her in order to prove his manhood (P.209). The outrageous behavior of the school director and his sexual appetite prove that the man's psychology is dysfunctional at every level.

Mimouni also links the political leaders' incompetence and disastrous misrule to the barren land which produces nothing. The leaders have turned the country upside down and seem to have left nothing untouched. They have even drawn straight lines on undulating hills, and diverted the course of the river which once flowed "calm and free" (P.49). Thus, there is malnutrition and squalor everywhere in the country while those in power are oblivious to the basic needs of the people. The image of drought is associated with the barren land turned into an unproductive and rocky desert. The voice of a fool but wise man, Ali, met by the anonymous main character, not far from the Douar, notes that the land's infertility is not, however, due to the lack of water, but rather to its invasion by "hyenas" (P.52) Mimouni uses the image of "hyenas" because of their destructive power. It epitomises the officials' incredible haste in controlling everything in society. Their disastrous misrule is facilitated by the support they drew from gullible, opportunistic and unskilled collaborators, who Mimouni refers to as the Sioux, who are, like the political leaders, skilled in lining their own pockets rather than attempting to ensure the wellbeing of the population (P. 27). The next animal image is the one of red and black ants engaged in a terrible and ruthless battle. The image epitomises the author's particular and personal reaction to the Algerian leaders who are committed to bizarre political posturing and rely on power acquired and sustained solely through violent coercion which allows them to stay in power in spite of the disasters they inflict on the progress and stability of their nation (P.188).

In addition to the metaphors and scathing images, Mimouni's novel includes some examples of verbal insults and verbal abuses, another "weapon of the weak" akin to the trickster tradition that symbolise the political leaders' powerful statements of outrage and disgust at the betrayal of popular aspirations. The subsequent passage denounces the

Administrator's cruel treatment of people and show the connection between the moral corruptibility of the political leader and his violence against people. Mimouni uses the Administrator's discourse to convey his stupid megalomaniac and repulsive lust for power (P.14). The language of the speech is used as a strategy to signify the horrors of corruption, incompetence and misrule that he conveys through insults. The following excerpt is the most indicative:

Votre inaptitude à assimiler la science et la technologie moderne est aujourd'hui irréfutable. On en a fait l'expérience. Grâce au pétrole, qui vous a permis d'ignorer la vertu de l'effort, fleurissent de gigantesques complexes industriels importés de l'étranger, mais qui restent à l'arrêt, car vous ignorez tout de la façon de faire fonctionner ces machines rutilantes. L'Administration le sait bien qui ne consent à vous confier qu'un travail dérisoire et vain. Vous nourrissez les poules, qui ne suffisent pas à vous nourrir. Et vous êtes contents à suer ainsi toute la journée, à vous faire mal au cul, comme si c'était vous qui pondiez les œufs. Vous êtes stupides, c'est la raison pour laquelle mon plan est irréalisable(P.27).

[Your inability to assimilate science and modern technology is now irrefutable. We have the experience of this. Thanks to oil, which allowed you to ignore the virtue of effort, huge industrial complexes imported from abroad flower, but they remain at a standstill because you do not know how to make these gleaming machines function. The Administration is aware of it. That's why it consents to assign you merely ridiculous and trivial works. You feed chickens, which are notable to feed you. And you're happy to sweat all the day, to hurt yourself in the ass, as if it was you that lays eggs. You're stupid, that's why my plan is unworkable].

This excerpt is very typical of Mimouni's parody of the Administrator's speech which aims to punch holes in the snobbishness of the leader's allocution that excels in causing and creating confusion and banning any kind of thought. Mimouni reduces the Administrator's portrait, by using his own discourse uttered in Arabic, which few people understand, to a crude, devilish buffoon, and a sadist who derives a great deal of pleasure from insulting and inflicting pain on people. Like Djeha, the hero of wit and reason, Mimouni shows, through the politician's abject words, that he has not the least sign of possessing a modicum of intellectual power. His knowledge easily and merely exposes his stupidity, carelessness and irresponsibility. The objective of such a description is not

mean to display the Administrator's stupidity but also to denounce the political system he represents for its ineptness. There is an abundance of other images blatantly reflecting physical violence, disgusting lack of hygienic standards and the struggle for food. The economic marginality, scarcity of goods, the vivid description of bad living conditions are references to Algerian and Ghanaian realities which are shared tropes with African trickster tradition. Further to this, the grim portrayal of the socio-economic reality also includes the vivid description of bodily excesses where excremental motifs can function as a kind of disturbance of inside and outside models. What reinforces the bodily grossness in the two novels is the two authors' recurring use of ironic and charged satiric tones.

6- Sharp Irony and Satirical Tones of the Two Narratives

The next strategy that Armah and Mimouni use to describe the existence of an all-other dominant aspects which relates the novels to African trickster folktales is use of irony. For similar reasons, both writers draw upon their popular culture in which macabre mockery of the oppressive authority is displayed through the use of sarcasm and irony. In his analysis of the Youroba Trickster, William Lynch notices that irony, in most of the sources from Socrates to the present, has been regarded as politically ambivalent. Irony is both questioning and elitist, both disruptive of norms and constructive of higher ideal. On the one hand, it challenges any ready-made consensus or community, allowing the social whole and everyday language to be questioned. On the other hand, the position of this questioning and ironic viewpoint is necessarily hierarchical, claiming a point of view beyond the social whole and above ordinary speech and assumptions. The language that befits the image of human mind and imagination in dialogue with all being is the language of irony. Such irony is a "patterning" of facts, a re-composition in which the fact is seen within the creative presence of a contrary. Lynch argues, however, that irony has its own structure. Neither mere coexistence of opposites nor "the co-presence of contradictory elements" is truly ironic, for the usual quality of irony is the unexpected coexistence, to the point of identity, of certain contraries. Irony, then lies in yoking together without losing their

contrariness, in a dialectic expressing their inter-dependence and their power actually to transform the being and the we look at it. Thus, “the way down is the way up” which he calls composition. By the term “composition”, Lynch means style, method, and decision all at once. It involves bringing into true relationship the hidden and the manifest elements of life, the low and the high. Through the ironic mode, the trickster as well as his society forge a pattern of life at once more stable and more permeable (Lynch.1973: 84-132, cited in Hynes. Doty.1993:123).

Throughout the narrative of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah uses irony as a device for social criticism. The writer associates the failure and the decadence dominating his society with the failure of its political leaders, who instead of safeguarding the ideals of the revolution, traditional moralities, and assuring the welfare of their people; spend their time in accumulating fortunes and competing for higher political positions. Many ironic instances come to light in the character’s contradictions, their way of speaking, their attitudes, and their behaviours. As an illustration, Koomson is described as the champion of “the gleam” who is attracted by vulgar material property such as cars, houses, and imported luxuries (P.35). The sinister side is that all of the party man’s luxuries are brought from theft of public goods. Irony is visible through the way Koomson lures Oyo and her mother to put an end to their poverty by purchasing a fishing boat. Beyond the fraudulent aspect of the character, the portrait of the corrupt party leader does not only resemble the corruption of the ancient chiefs, but also that of the post independent leaders who ape and step into the shoes of the former colonizers in imitating blindly their manners and way of speaking. Satire surfaces in the depiction of the fat, perfumed, and fleshy man with flabby softness of the hand, to paraphrase Armah, through his imitation of the white man. The writer provides an episode of mimicry when he spoofs the party man’s speech and suggests it through his shouting at his servant Attinga in which the main protagonist perceives: “a particular kind of shout, the kind made by Whiteman trying to utter African names without any particular desire to pronounce them well” (P.147). Irony comes to sight when Koomson shouts and pronounces in a distorted way the name of the servant, his way of uttering it shows clearly the depersonalized individual he is. His speech mannerism shows his uprootedness and distance from his African identity and reduces him to a mere agent of neo-colonialism who

works to sink his country into sterility through his blind imitation of western values. It is important to notice, however, that Armah does not only target Koomson's imitation of the British tone of voice. The writer extends his mockery to all those who blindly imitate the British. For instance, he scorns the British accent and snobbishness of the clerks at the control office and the clerk's air of importance (P.126), showing that his caustic wit reaches unpleasant, scatological depths. He furthermore, shows the ridicule and the deformity of one of "two Ghanaian men with prosperous-looking bellies when he tries to imitate the British tone of voice in saying: "Jolly good shot. Jolly good" (P.125). In carrying an ironic mood, Armah shows his standpoint which can be interpreted as the reaction of a dissident writer against the Ghanaian political leaders' discourses and ideologies. These he sets out deliberately to debase by using irony and satire as devices.

The same denigrating atmosphere dominates Mimouni's novel and, in similar ways to Armah's novel, is sustained by the author's vehement appeal to irony and satire. In *Le fleuve détourné*, Mimouni's use of irony is harsh and mocking. Its reoccurrence in the narrative indicates that the author wants to shock us into realizing the shortcomings of the Algerian political leaders. Irony is so all-pervasive, ranging from the inversion of a single word or phrase to the thematic idea itself that it grants the novel a most striking and most elusive aspect. The novel as a whole is full of mordant irony and the satiric aspect of the narrative highlights the author's attitude towards his society leaders. However, the novel's opening chapter provides more interesting examples. Mimouni starts his tale with the voice of the narrator who uses the collective point of view "We" to state "L'Administration pretend que nos spermatozoids sont subversifs" [The Administrator contends that our sperm are subversive] (P.9). This ironic twist is reinforced by repetition of the same sentence as well as by the one that follows: "C'est la raison pour laquelle elle a entrepris une vaste operation d'émasculatation dont elle nous a expliqué en detail les différentes phases" [That's why it has undertaken a vast operation of emasculation and explained in detail its various phases] (P.16). The voice of the narrator mocks the Administrator in a parody of his own conclusions: "Nous avons engagé les plus grands spécialistes mondiaux, qui nous ont démontré, de façon irréfutable, que vos spermatozoïdes sont

subversifs (P.17). The same voice goes on the same sarcastic way by using the first point of view, "I" this time:

Je me suis rendu compte que l'ablation de nos glandes génitales ne constituait pas une mince affaire. L'Administration est bien consciente de l'énorme tâche qui l'attend. Elle affirme vouloir mener cette action scientifique. Elle a donc confié l'étude préliminaire à une société américaine. Il fut impossible de mettre en doute les conclusions du document final car les paiements se faisaient en dollar. A la suite de ces recommandations, on importa de l'étranger un matériel ultra-moderne, le seul de son genre en Afrique, et des experts en vue de superviser le travail des cadres nationaux. Comme ces experts n'omirent pas d'apporter des bouteilles de whisky pour l'Administrateur et des parfums de Paris pour sa femme, tout alla très bien. Nous nous trouvons ainsi sous une permanente surveillance médicale. L'Administrateur ne cesse de nous rappeler la sollicitude des dirigeants à notre égard (P.16).

[I realized that the removal of our genital glands was not a simple affair. The Administration is well informed of the enormous task ahead. It says it wants to pursue this scientific action. It has therefore entrusted the preliminary study to an American company. It was impossible to doubt the conclusions of the final document because the payments were made in dollars. Always following these recommendations, we have imported from abroad an ultra modern equipment, the single in its kind in Africa, and some experts to supervise the work of the national executives. These experts did not omit to bring bottles of whiskey for the Administrator and perfumes from Paris to his wife, all went very well. We find ourselves in a permanent medical monitoring. The Administrator continues to remind us of the concern of leaders for our respect].

The above sentences and the entire passage following immediately upon an abrupt shift of the narrator's point of view can be regarded as a trenchant ironic commentary upon the incompetence, irresponsibility, and the corruption of the state bureaucrats. The quotation also indicates that the Administrator's discourse is abject because of his clammy and false cunning appeal to ideals that no longer exist. The same discourse can, however, be applied to nearly all African leaders, who stress proudly that they work for the happiness of their peoples. Obviously on the surface, readers are reassured by the idea of an enormous commitment, although once they start to consider it seriously, they notice how monstrous it is that anyone can claim to do it. It is at this point that Mimouni's real insight, then, is to show how the discourses are mere masquerades that are used as rigid defense for leaders' own interests.

Furthermore, Mimouni uncovers pettiness, graft, cruelty and incompetence in the actions of the Administrator. Irony offers an example where competence is called into question,

suggesting that the Administrator is anything but competent. There are cases where irony is used as a device to deflate and defeat the Administrator's discourse and those who believe that all life and value can be managed through rhetoric and forceful oratory. Mimouni exposes the lack of sense at the heart of the discourse by exposing how empty and unstable the Administrator's discourse is. In so doing, the author allows the reader look for another meaning far from the received ideas. Mimouni's use of the word "discourse" is Socratic irony in so far as it works against the common usage and value. By naming the Administrator's competence, he does not only mean the opposite, rather he uses the word to show the discourse in all its emptiness and poverty. It is precisely because of "its emptiness" that the word means more than it says: the Socratic mode of irony does not simply negate the concept; it must bring out how the concept is misused or corrupted and what the concept seems required to mean. Thus, there is a clear irony lying in the absurdity or limitation of the narrator's voice. In addition, Mimouni's novel offers two modes of extended irony: to begin with, the irony is a typical example of excessive praise signaling irony (P.9). Irony shows the blindness of the leaders and debunks their ideals of commitment to the welfare of their people (P. 51).

More interesting yet, in chapter two is Mimouni's use of the word "strike" as a kind of ironic motif, the term is repeated many times, each time with lengthening implications and heightened ironic effect. In the sixth section of the first chapter, the reader is informed about a strike and demonstrations because of potato shortage (P.14). This motif reappears in the opening section of the second chapter when the reader is told that the hens are on strike and refuse lay eggs. To solve the problem rapidly, the administration announces, with the complicity of its television, that it intends to import eggs from Spain as they are better than the ones produced locally, not for their taste, but rather for the good-looking form. Few pages further, the voice of the narrator mocks the decisions of the administration using its own contradictory discourse. On the one hand, the administration does not want to engage in reprisals against the hens, and on the other hand, it intends to kill all the hens because they have no reason to exist (P.38). By means of an ironic manipulation of the term "administration", Mimouni reduces the respectability and competence of the state institutions to a hypocritical façade as well as a convenient justification

for cruelty, irresponsibility, and indifference. Mimouni's novel is a satire in two senses. First, it targets the corrupt, inapt and irresponsible ruling class. Despite the journey to the absurd and impossible, the man discovers the same human desires that dress themselves up pompously as absurd ideas, persuasive discourses and unkept promises. The other object of satire is a particular moral and political discourse. Mimouni's use of voices and dialogue is grounded in some grounding value: that of social dialogue and exchange itself, as opposed to merely the received and repeated values of the Administrator. Therefore, Richard Miller is right to the point when he writes that Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* is:

Soutenu par une ironie ininterrompue et une écriture d'une belle fermeté, le roman de Mimouni peut être considéré comme une parabole qui nous donne à lire l'itinéraire d'un homme simple dans un pays qui a évolué sans lui et qui, pour cette raison, le rejette, une vie 'réglée par un destin implacable'. Depuis l'enfance pauvre dans le Douar jusqu'au camp, où au plus fort de la déréliction, la quête devenant intérieure, le narrateur n'est plus que regard ouvert sur l'absurdité du monde
(R.Miller. *La Quinzaine littéraire*.01/10/1982).

[Supported by a continuous irony and nice firmness of writing, Mimouni's novel can be seen as a parable which allows us to read the itinerary of a simple man in a country that has evolved without him and that, therefore, rejects him, a life which is regulated by a relentless fate. From childhood spent in the poor Douar up to the Camp where at the height of the abandonment, the quest becomes interior, the narrator becomes merely an open gaze at the absurdity of the world].

The passage centres on the idea that Mimouni employs with telling effect a technique of ironically leveling the reader's normal assumptions and expectations. Irony lays both in the man's sincere, but self-betraying repetition, in his wondrous descriptions of all the practices that are more intense versions of the incongruous.

To recapitulate, the examination of the subversive and transgressive devices used by Armah and Mimouni reveals some common characteristics of the methods used by both authors to express their dissent through their novels. First, Armah and Mimouni have not established either temporal or spatial settings for their novels in other words have not defined where and when the two stories take place. The two novels are, thus, not isolated countries but rather a schematised documentation of the entire post-colonial African experience. The two stories are set in a period of disruption when the dream of wholeness invoked by the war for independence is

threatened by the hard realities of the post independence periods in Ghana and Algeria. Both narratives move from a distant ideal, through a contemporary state of disruption towards a future of recapitulation of the first ideals. Armah and Mimouni's own versions of their new countries' decadent situations are reflected in the sordid settings where the two novels' actions take place. The next most comparable characteristic of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* is their persistent, and at times even oppressive, ironic tone. Irony and satire are used repeatedly by the writers to examine and indict the post-colonial African governments' misrule. Their use of irony is different from the transcendental strivings of the romantics because it is meant to attack the conventions of their postcolonial contexts and their novels can be read as exponents of the failure of authority in their attacks on conventions, authority itself and fixity of anti conformism. In addition to irony, there are many different respects in which the plot, the characters, imagery and symbolism of Armah and Mimouni's novels might legitimately be called "monstrous". From the examples discussed, it seems clear that there are broad convergences in the content of the images of disgust and actions of the two novels. Disgust in Armah's novel surely has some close affinities with Mimouni's because both authors are not quite able to wrest the nose away from the excremental, nauseating odors of revulsion. However, what disgusts startlingly, are not the odors which smell revoltingly bad but rather the disgusting and contemptible behaviors of the administration and state officials towards the population. Intense disgust is not focused on vile substance like the excrement but on state officials who do not treat people with dignity. Thus, Armah and Mimouni, in typically mordant and incantatory style, express their mixture of indignation and disgust at the pose in the particular form which it was adopted by the ruling leaders. In the novels, both authors use shocking scenes which are known to produce the emotions of disgust, resentment, anger, indignation and outrage and use every means to elicit them. Similar to the novels' narratives is the aim to make the reader increasingly disgusted by what the two unnamed main characters see and think because standing by their side; we see undoubtedly a wretched landscape. By the conclusion of the two stories, the reader is left wondering what is more bizarre, the two unnamed men or people who treat them with great indifference and contempt. However, Armah's corrosive descriptions, in *The Beautiful*

Ones Are Not Yet Born, are not as fiercely and nearly apocalyptic as the ones provided in Mimouni's novel. The reason is that Mimouni's descriptions are more contemptuous and his culminating vision at the end of the narrative represents an apotheosis of the monstrous. By the end of the story, the dignity of practically every character has been undercut and the theme of the "seekers'" path is made more complex by the end of the novel. The last section of the sixth chapter is even more striking in this respect. Here, the barrel of the cynic is inscribed into all the main characters' despair.

The other common feature between the two novels is that both stories have emphasized disgusting physical details, bizarre events, repulsive behavior, and strange juxtaposition of black humor and the horrific and macabre effigies, the inhuman and the absurd. More significantly, Armah and Mimouni's novels draw their power from a number of cultural icons whose efforts they intertwine for the struggle against oppression. They use the figure of Djeha whose strength, like that of Ananse figure in Black folktales, lives through his ability to use wit and diplomatic talent to uncover the dominance of the oppressor. Their sagacity and toughness surface in that of the men against Koomson and the Administrator. Armah and Mimouni achieve a monstrous effect precisely by making their anonymous main characters seem pitiable, ugly, laughable, and sympathetic all at once. The two men are courageous and what happens to them, i.e. their bizarre situations, does not prevent them from retaining their common sense and remaining calm. Moreover, throughout the two stories, Armah and Mimouni achieve effects that are ironic, satiric and bizarre through the dead pan style of the two narratives. The humor in both novels is incongruous, ironic, bizarre, and it is very often combined with either disgust or horror. The monstrous element of Mimouni's novel is not therefore located only in the suffering of the characters that people the story, but in the body of the text itself. The narrator, with his anti-climatic and cartoonish representations of suffering, is partly responsible for these formal grotesqueries. Armah and Mimouni's creeds and philosophies as artists proceed from a belief shared with Barthes that a writer's obligation is to demystify, to undermine by rhetorical subversion constructs supporting dominant ideologies. In March 1985, Mimouni articulated his

position as an “Eveilleur de consciences”, by means of his literary texts answering the question of a journalist from *Libération*, he declares:

Je crois à l'écrivain comme pure conscience, probité intégrale qui propose au miroir de son art un monde à changer, à reconstruire. Je crois à l'écrivain qui s'insurge, qui dénonce, qui crie, voix toujours discordante à marquer la fêlure au concert des bonnes causes définitivement balisées [...] Je crois à la littérature comme cheval de Troie pour corroder de l'intérieur la forteresse des mystificateurs qui nous affirment que notre ciel est toujours bleu. Je crois à la littérature qui met le doigt sur la plaie. Ce faisant, bien sûr, elle ravive la douleur, mais la littérature est vertu d'exigence. (*Libération*, March, 1985).

[I think that the writer should be a pure consciousness which can reflect artistically with complete honesty a world to change and to rebuild. I believe in the writer who protests denounces, and cries, a discordant voice to mark the best crack in concert of causes which have been clearly signposted [...] I believe in literature as a Trojan horse that corrodes from inside the fortress of hoaxers who tell us that our sky is always blue. I believe in the literature that puts a finger on the wound. In doing so, it is true that it rekindles the pain, but that's the very requirement of literature].

It appears from the quote that for Mimouni, a good writer is without doubt the one who uses his texts to describe experience and the free thought that grows out of it. In this sense, his fundamental task is to challenge any oppressive ideology and distort the official myth by way of subversion. Mimouni's intention to demystify can be related to Roland Barthes' idea of an “artificial myth”. Barthes explains in his *Mythologies* (1972) that it is very difficult to vanquish myth from inside for every effort one makes in order to escape its stranglehold becomes in its turn the prey of myth (Barthes.1972:134)

Chapter Eight

The Content of the Form: Polarization and Reversal Through Characters

If in the foregoing chapter, I have brought into comparative analysis the different literary devices that Armah and Mimouni commonly appeal to in order to demystify the glorifying discourses of their countries' political leaders and denounce their revolutionary romanticism, the subsequent chapter continues to examine how Armah and Mimouni reflect similar trickster qualities to shape their characters. African laughter is based on transgression as a means to achieve a symbolic

inversion; “a reversible world” which is defined by Barbara Babcock as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary, artistic, religious, social and political (Babcock [1978] cited in Stallybrass.White. 1986: 17).

From this perspective, I try to show the extent to which characterization, in both novels, resonate with points of antagonism overlap and intersection between high and low provide some important symbolic dissonance in culture. To map parts of transgressing where body, group, identity and subjectivity interconnect, I emphasize the way Like Armah, Mimouni show that the period of Algerian history is associated with the failure of the Algerian ideals of revolution and the perversion of the country’s traditional moralities. They they turn to behaviors which allowed them to subvert the “officials’ authority”. The techniques of “Polarization”, “Laughter”, and “Reversal” become parts of the tactics with which they shape characters; the same techniques are characteristics of the African trickster tradition. Armah and Mimouni make their characters the mouthpieces through which discourses are pondered; the overall objective of such method is to take a cultural belief or ideology and inject it into a realistic arena of life event within a text with the purpose of allowing the reader to decide whether it is flawed, problematic, and to what extent it is deficient. Fundamental to oral literatures of several people, the trickster figure can take up various shapes, from animal to divinity, but all seem to share some basic features: “they cause laughter”, they profane nearly every central belief, but at the same time, they focus attention precisely on the nature of such beliefs. The spider trickster Ananse from the Akan group is a taboo-violator; he constantly breaks social rules ending with a final moral meaning. Other violated taboos include the scatological dimension with a didactic function (Deandrea.2004: 25)

Characters in both novels illuminate the discursive sites where social classification and psychological processes are generated as conflictual making ideology and fiction conjoin. The first link between Armah and Mimouni’s novels and African trickster folktales lies in the names given to characters. Most of them are generic and functional rather than individual. The writers’ common way of shaping their characters as allegorical figures stand for the authors’ discourse and critical stance regarding the future of democracy in Ghana and Algeria. Both authors place

the blame on the shoulders of the neo-colonial ruling class and shape their characters to force their readers to recognize that the responsibility must now be located not only in the colonial legacy but also in the multiplicity of opportunistic and often selfish practices undertaken by African agents with competing claims for power and self-interests. In both novels, all the characters represent the primary social and political forces in the postcolonial power field. Armah and Mimouni explore, through these symbolic figures, the various ways in which a post-independence oligarchy controlled and exploited a formerly colonized people. In both novels, the characters are often distinguished by their function. The men resemble tricksters; the teacher and writer are the helpers while Koomson and the Administrator are the dupes. No attempt is made to give any of these characters any extra distinctive personality apart from their functional representation and in all folktales, the principle is the same: the character is easily identified for what he stands for, and no effort is made to give the character any psychological specificity. In Armah and Mimouni's novels, the characters are not made only generic, but also contrasted as polarities illustrating certain social propositions. Both writers use characterization for the effect of polarization and reversal. For instance, the man, in Armah's novel, is polarized against Koomson and the same polarization for comment is made of Mimoun's anonymous character and his reliable friends with the Administrator and his followers.

More significantly, as in African tales, Armah and Mimouni use characters not as an expression of individualism; but as a reflection of the ideals of communalism, group solidarity, and conformity to emphasize the principles of Africa's morality. In both novels, they are representative, functional, and typical in their preoccupation with social order. They are shaped in terms of their moral positions which they occupy in the scheme. To emphasize the functional and representative aspect of characterisation, Armah and Mimouni assign generic rather than specific names to their characters. On the whole, both writers can be said to have turned the generic pattern of character-naming into a system. The main characters in the two novels do not bear a name, if by name, it means a specific tag of identification, the characters of Armah and Mimouni go by the

very anonymous name of “the man”. Their functional names are mainly generic in the sense that they are universal rather than specific. By such a construction, the two writers undertake, for instance, the complicated task of exposing and undermining the various power mechanisms they have observed along with the various circumstances which have enabled figures like Koomson and the Administrator to acquire, maintain and manipulate power. Power in both novels is structured as a corrupting phenomenon, the appetite for which appears to grow: it can manifest itself as a sexual or as appetite for power and its various emblems. There are various textual examples in the two novels of the political nomenclature enjoying the material components of power as luxury palaces and villas, unlimited access to food, and sexual partners.

Throughout *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah uses the Man and the Teacher’s perceptions and peoples his first novel with “witty” and “dupe” characters which stand for the two categories of characters which populate the Akan folktales. The same paradigm is used by Armah to mirror the Ghanaian society of the late 1960s and 1970s. Among the “weak and the witty”, one finds the unnamed man who incessantly knows that his incapacity to join the corrupt and successful ones is not due to a lack of courage but rather because of his honesty and integrity. The novel recounts the main character’s inner struggle between two impulses: one toward the “gleam” of prosperity and power; the other toward clarity and purity of the moral life. From the beginning, he is aware that the gleam which fascinates all his society members offers no satisfying solution, it rather kills the soul. For him, the understanding of the confused value system is never in question. What he is not sure of is the way to maintain his integrity. His doubts appear when he wonders if, in fact, the world offers any evidence of “corruption” being “unnatural.” Perhaps his inner sense of moral distinctions is an illusion and the most monstrous deviation of nature is part of the order of things. He feels himself trapped

in the never-ending cycle of birth and decays during which only one brief instant produces something beautiful. What makes his stress almost unbearable, however, is the pressure he gets from his wife, Oyo. As the other members of the city, she is attracted by the gleam because her mind remains permanently preoccupied by Stella Koomson's easy, extravagant, and bountiful life.

The second insignificant, anonymous, and "weak" character with a none defining name, is the Teacher, the type that in the Far and Near East countries is revered as a "Guru", that means a philosopher and a wise man (Parekh.Siga. 1998: 32). In Ghana, the Teacher is marginalised and completely ignored because the society in which he lives disregards the ethic of reflection that seeks to introduce progress and prefers the "fineries" of the West. The other victim of oppression is Kofi Billy, one of the many Ghanaian soldiers who participated in the World War II and outlived its horrors. Though he tries to find enough courage to forget, he never recovered from the conflict that he experienced. He finds it very difficult to endure the bitterness that followed his return home. Through the character, Armah assails the myth of liberty, happiness, social justice, and perfection promulgated by independence. Kofi Billy stands for all individuals and "wandering living ghosts" who cannot erase the war horrors of their lives. In an attempt to transcend his painful condition, to rise above that which alienated and estranged him, he invariably descends into a demonic world, obsessed by his weaknesses, evil and suffering. To rid himself of his horror, distress and boredom, he works hard, but loses his leg by accident (P.66). His handicap weighs heavily upon his mind and tortures his soul. So, he turns inward upon himself and acts out his agonies in extraordinary ways. His unbearable life and tortured self causes him to commit suicide to end the inner suffering which torments his heart.

Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* follows the same nomenclature. As in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Mimouni's novel focuses on certain characters in a dialectic way. Like Armah, Mimouni has recorded similar feelings of disillusionment among the various characters' response to marginalization and state neglect. Nonetheless, the duality becomes even more complex in *Le fleuve détourné*. The society that Mimouni refers to is separated out into two groups: the

oppressed, contained in a confined circle, and the oppressors in a white square that looks like a fortress that overlaps with the corrupt, and the insane. The duality is affected through a consistent polarity between the characters who represent the ideals of honesty, commitment and purity and those who deliberately transgress such values.

The first category of characters in *Le fleuve détourné* is made up of individuals whose rights as citizens have not only been abused by the state, but completely eroded. They feel betrayed by the government and there is no prospect for them. First there is the unnamed main character, whose anonymity stands as a metaphor of the marginalized freedom fighters and particularly conjures up an image of Algerian peasants, dispossessed of their family tribal lands in Algeria's most fertile valleys and forced to eke out an existence on much less productive earth. For instance, the misfortune of the man rests on the social evil of man in general. He faces the world in which he understands nothing. He waits for an answer with no tomorrow and his despair is echoed in the words of another out of touch old man, the wise man, met by the main character near his native Douar. He is himself a potential witness to the gradual disintegration of his society and in an incantatory but stifled cry, he says:

Que tombe la pluie! Que tombe la pluie! Sans répit. Alors, ses forces enfin revenues, le fleuve détourné, rugissant d'une veille colère, rompra ses digues, débordera de partout, inondera la plaine, et, prenant de court les calculs dessorciers, ira retrouver son lit orphelin pour reprendre son cours naturel (P.143).

[Bring on the rain! Bring on the rain! Relentlessly. So finally its returned strength, the diverted river, roaring with an old wrath, will break its banks, will overflow everywhere, flooding the plain, and making short of the calculations of the sorcerers, will find its orphan bed and return to its natural course].

The passage demonstrates how independence which rekindled hopes of asserting human value has been diverted by an inescapable power leaving people in distress. The character's hope is in vain because the rain stops suddenly. The main character's despair is shared by his family members. His wife Houria pours out her problems to her husband and tells him how she has become a prostitute at the mercy of the town notables while her son falls into debauchery for survival. The son of the protagonist-narrator sinks into depravity and corruption. He is the most victimized character because he is deprived and mutilated by the milieu in which he grows up. He

is haunted by a sad childhood, lack of affection, painful adolescence, and a social marginalization. In one word, he symbolizes a lost young generation and the meeting of two characters only reinforces the aspect of society without a future.

Mimouni uses the man's son as a discursive tool to examine the inadequacies of the educational system and persistent illiteracy which continued to plague 1980s Algeria. After having assisted at a dysfunctional school, he wanders in the streets and stands as one of the thousands of aimless young men, very often called "The Hitists" who have no prospects of employment and no hope of a good life. He and his generation are the very people who have been betrayed. His parents end up in trouble, he is betrayed by everybody, and he is unable to feel at ease. The writer uses the man's son for an implied criticism against the official authorities which always held out education as bait. The young man is unable to make headway because the reality is that school leavers have no opportunity to find employment. Mimouni also uses the man's son to display the gap which separates the Algerian society into two categories, a minority of well off and a majority of poor. The man's son stands for all the young men who were often called "illiterate in two languages" because they are unable to find jobs and they are stuck in the overcrowded slums ringing big cities often sleeping six or more in one room. They have the habit of lounging around with nothing to do, nowhere to go, no money to spend, and no entertainment. They stand in streets wandering and trying by all means to earn a living (P.210).

1. Identity Absence, Pain of Rejection, and Loss of Human Dignity

Besides the unnamed protagonist and his family, Mimouni's novel is populated by individuals who cannot erase the horrors of their lives. The main character meets a series of pathetic characters that reproduce in their conversations, the dialectic oppressor and its victim. Few images of peace, beauty and harmony populate the worlds of these characters and all of them are only brief interludes of order. Implicit in their behavior are all the conventions of the monstrous. The nightmare world, perversion, with satanic humor they wear their deficiencies of spirit as scars and as emblems of a world without order, meaning, or sense of continuity. In an attempt to transcend their painful condition, to rise above that which has alienated them, they invariably slide down into hell because they remain obsessed by their weaknesses, evil and

suffering. The character named Vingt Cinq believes that he has finished living. Therefore, he remains aloof and out of reach. He lives completely disconnected and flawed. His drug addicted and alcoholic companion, Rachid le Sahraoui suffers from the same feeling of loss and despair. After a last look at his dead friend, Omar, Rachid begins walking toward the fence to an unknown destination.

The other character who is destroyed by his ruthless social environment is Omar, the resigned student and artist. After a long agony, he commits suicide and thus leaving the scene furtively like Kofi Billy in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. In *Le fleuve détourné*, Omar stands against the corrupt leaders. He is intelligent enough to appreciate what is wrong; he stands for progressive and politically committed students who are repulsed by any kind of military dictatorship and state repression (P.184). Although greatly weakened by his country's decadence, and despite his incurable disease, and the abrupt loss of his beloved Hamida, Omar demonstrates a continued commitment to the national project, however restricted his base. Most of all, Omar stands as a virtuous character, a nonconformist intellectual who is deeply repulsed at the sight of the social and political degradation surrounding him. He also perpetually probes his society's shortcomings and desperately questioning his position in the community (P.182). For instance, in a long commentary on the corrupt practices of the members of the government, Omar indicts the ruling class who do not understand the concept of the responsive and accountable state which does not accept the need to act as the people's representative. Instead, they see their positions as a means of engaging in petty tribal and sectional wrangling, using words as a replacement for action, intimidating political opponents, enriching themselves and perpetuating their grip on power (P.183). Omar sustains that the state hegemony is maintained through the physical elimination of all opposition and by the subordination of the minds to the arbitrariness of the state. In addition to his political turmoil, Omar is desperate at being left alone with his suffering by his beloved, Hamida. At the end of the story, after he fails to achieve his moral peacefulness and lessen his physical suffering, he dies under mysterious circumstances. Without taking into account the version of the nurse, the Sioux confirms that the student's death is due to typhoid fever. As with Koffi Billy's tragedy, Omar's suspicious death incorporates the ugly and

the bizarre, the diseased and the horrific processes of decay that function as an avenue for social critique. Omar's death can be a necessary political elimination as he cannot be domesticated, tamed, or converted in a social environment in which there is no place for a nonconformist to the state ideology. The dissent and oppositional nature of Omar is closely indebted to a model of "engagement" that represents change for the better. His death symbolizes the persecution of those who challenge the univocal discourse of the state and refuse its party's guidelines, an act which has ominous implications.

The fate of Said, the shoemaker in Mimouni's novel is not different. Through this character, Mimouni raises the issue of the relevance of just behaviour within a chaotic society which has lost its moral referents. Said participated in the Algerian Liberation War to free his country from French colonialism and his naiveté is surprising because he believed in a better future when independence was gained. In fact, it is typical of the way that many Algerians, especially freedom fighters, reacted to independence. Said's viewpoint reinforces the widely held view that Africa's victims of colonial domination are further victimised by their own post independence governments who induce further internalisation of blame and inferiority in their citizens. The idea of consistent development through learning from experiences over time which inform and motivate future behaviour and eventually lead to maturation are literally made impossible. This picaresque non-development of the characters can be related to the non-development of the whole community. All these wretched of the earth, to paraphrase Fanon, however, express a good will to the world, as Robert Elbaz observes: "Les personnages chez Mimouni ne refusent point le monde mais c'est le monde qui les refuse" (Elbaz .2003: 94). [The characters in Mimouni's novel do not refuse the world; it is the world that refuses them]. The common feature for all the characters is that they are hardly figures in the usually novelistic sense: they are not shown in depth or breadth, complexity or ambiguity. They are allowed no variation of action or opinion, they do not grow or decline, and they are far more generic than realistic. All these features represent another parallel with the picaresque tradition.

2. Acquiring, Maintaining, and Manipulating Power in the Novels

Against the man and his wretched friends stand bureaucrats who are getting rich by exploiting their elevated positions. The characters are representative of an institution: the administration and its agents. Mimouni concentrates the description in the circles of the petty bourgeois ruling category with a definite class relation. In this sphere, we find the Administrator, his Chief and their partners. The Administrator is painted as arrogant, unconcerned with others' welfare, and ineffective in combating ignorance and poverty. The opening scene of the novel shows that, most African leaders on whom the Administrator is patterned love grandiloquent discourses (P.9). Through his words, Mimouni exposes the mechanisms exploited by the ruling leaders to entrench themselves in power. For instance, they convince people that power is monolithic and brooks no opposition. Not even language escapes the taint of his arbitrary rule. His contradictory stance reflected in the first lines of the novel provides Mimouni's strategic use of mimicry. His language is in a way a reflection of his misrule when he pretends that the evil comes as much from external influences and indicts suspicious foreign interference and hidden attacks (P.51). His language is replete with deceit and tergiversation. Thus, he finds a common interest in ridiculing and intimidating the population to render it silent. Mimouni makes it apparent that the main purpose of this ruling class is, in fact, a way to gather money by exploiting the workers (P.126). The Administrator is shaped as a caricature of known African despots who are committed to bizarre political postures and rely on power acquired and sustained solely through violent coercion. He exposes the character's violent intolerance of opposition and his urge to perpetuate himself in power. The Administrator's appeal to violence allows him to stay in power in spite of the disasters he inflicts on the progress and stability of his country. To divert people from the state's disastrous mismanagement, he keeps luring people with reference to suspected foreign threats which can hinder "the national development" (pp, 50-51). Concretely, the Administrator's words remain mere powerful statements of outrage and betrayal of popular aspirations. The character is further ridiculed by his inability to use terminology correctly, as when he shows signs of limited education and ignorance of the fundamental workings of the political process. Such a description can be interpreted as a literary device that Mimouni appeal to

and with which he contests the deep entrenched irresponsible political leaders who hinder any possibility of progress and development. The Administrator's stupidity is also underlined when he engages in emasculation project. Several prisoners are brought before him for providing the reasons that motivates him and his administration to undertake the project thereby providing a further case of counter discursive ridicule. Emasculation comes to signify the removal of the possibility of exercising power. There are repeated threats and castrations carried out to this effect to eliminate the possibility of resistance.

The Administrator's authoritarian state power is reinforced by the support he gets from many repressive and opportunistic military secret agents, named after certain American native Indians, the Sioux. In the novel, they are some loyalist repressive thugs who are more than ready to beat up those who do not fall into the ideological line established by the Administrator and his Chief. They are the ears and eyes of the state power and their job is to inform their superiors about every detail of the events happening (P.14). They also cover for all their superior's wrongdoings and lack of responsibilities. The overriding image we have of these Sioux is that of mere pawns in the wider and complex manipulations of power. They, for instance, affirm that Omar's death is due to a typhoid fever and his refusal to get the vaccines, but in reality, it is more probably a political elimination (P.213). Each of the figures mentioned above constitutes a principle of indifference and passive spectatorship in the face of the social need and catastrophe because their personal interests have scripted their very identities as human beings. Mimouni uses a hilarious and bloody satire to berate the extremities of "personalised" rule as presented by megalomania leaders. He also describes their greed in collecting money to spend in food and parties (P.76).) He degrades also the representatives of the rich class, which he considers both oppressive and ridiculous to shock the audience and stir its consciousness. Throughout the novel, many examples show the profound sarcasm mixed with black humour with which Mimouni mocks these typical bourgeois' emphasis

on ownership. For instance, irony pervades the scene with the long and seductive official discourse of the Administrator (P.15). To ridicule the character, Mimouni not only lets him speak in excess but also allows him to say that the state and its officials are caring for their people's welfare by writing a document that will answer all their questions and lessen their torments (P.15). At the end of the novel, Mimouni turns all the state Administrators and Bureaucrats into famished monsters (P.196-197). He does not only ridicule his bourgeois characters, but makes them also acknowledge their cynical determination to hide behind tempting discourses and an invented foreign nuisance. In so doing, the author draws attention to those aspects of Algerian society which he feels needs radical change.

The third building block of these political leaders is a system of payoffs, rewards to maintain support, as jobs in the bureaucracy may be available to loyalists and relatives of those in power. Fortunes can be made as the regime allows a share of "rents" to go into the pockets of supporters and collaborators. Mimouni reflects on this fraudulent practice through the character called Messie, a rich businessman among many others who lives a luxurious and lavish life on the back of others. The word 'Messiah' means the man of God, a saint and an honest person, but in Mimouni's third novel, he inverted to the man of the deviousness, an indicator aware of everything that happens. He is involved in networks of prohibited practices and works illegally with the benediction of the official authorities that take their part of the share. For him as for many other parasites, there are many ways of circulating money to those whose help is needed (P.151). Fraudulent situations, for instance, appear with the Messie who uses a great deal of tact and diplomacy to accumulate and enlarge his wealth. His behaviour and actions stand for all the many unscrupulous business men who are involved in illegal money making. They represent the traffics and illegal affairs that they undertake with the benediction of the

ruling authorities. The Messie and his cohorts stand for those who stay out of ruling party politics but seek to mobilize other networks and lines of patronage. They often look to use bribery themselves to gain access to the heart of the corrupt system that allows them to pursue their expectations of personal advancement and to enjoy extravagant lives (P.148). Whatsoever the price, bribery enables them to fulfil their own material desires. To maintain his high rank power in the society, the Messie offers bribes and presents for favours from behind high officials (P.149). He also negotiates and sides with the other bosses and bureaucrats on the back of the Algerian people to accumulate illegal fortunes (P.150). He creates illegal jobs and exploits poor people while he tries to convince the man that he defends poor people's interests (P.151) but, in reality, he only defends and protects his owns

The other character who is the epitome of treachery and corruption is the selfish and deceitful character, Si Mokhtar who uses corrupt and dishonest tactics to keep his high social rank. The faithful religious man looks rounded and resplendent from outside but is hollow and rotten within. Mimouni uses caustic satire on Si Hadj Mokhtar who manipulates people into using religion as a base for his hidden nefarious deeds. He is a wicked soul who pretends to be a good Samaritan. He lives in a beautiful and well guarded villa on the top of a hill, surrounded by a vast green garden with many varieties of fruit trees all around it. Si Mokhtar makes people believe that he is a generous saint coming back from the Holy Land. He slaughters many sheep, organises a feast for his V.I.P guests who come in large black cars (P.88). But behind the scene, however, the holy man is corrupt to the core because he is involved implicitly in livestock smuggling. He does not feel ashamed but continues to gain money illegally through this traffic. While Hadj Si Mokhtar is supposed to symbolise chastity, honesty and truth, concretely, he cheats and lies (P.89). To get rid of his incumbent nephew, Si Mokhtar sends the latter

to carry out a mysterious job by night. Innocently, the man thanks his uncle and goes to gain his living but shortly afterwards he is nearly arrested by the frontier police for smuggling livestock to the frontier. Yet, Si Mokhtar tries to conceal his corruption, treachery and vices behind a façade, called religion, when he tries to bypass and deflect his nephew's main interest in urging him to fulfil his prayer (P.100). The anonymous main character gets into trouble all the time while Si Mokhtar who is an unscrupulous hypocrite, repeatedly secures the moral high ground. Through the tones of the author, sardonically pointing to the gap between the moralistic discourse and the malevolent intentions it serves are the instruments of an authorial discourse about false virtue. The discourse, in my point of view, is theatrical and is close to a farce.

In sum, the Administrator, Si Mokhtar, Fly Tox, and the Messie stand for the history of Algeria distorted by privileged men whose main concern is wealth accumulation by any means. In some passages, by using these characters, Mimouni captures with precision some hidden practices and fraudulent acts such as black market where imported products are sold exorbitantly and financial impropriety that spelled doom for Algerians. The author also shows that drug smuggling, money laundering and all sorts of frauds have made Algeria synonymous with the illicit and black market. Yet, the foregoing instances are only few examples of the several situations in which Mimouni suggests that politicians and their relations are corrupt and sloppy, as well as reckless in perpetuating their lavish lifestyles and high ranked positions. Some officials even couple their corrupt practices with sheer intolerance of political opposition as is displayed by the police behaviour towards the main character, the man (P.73). It can be argued that payoff, patronage and corruption are present in all political systems, but the special feature of the Algerian regime is that there is no check on this practice. There is no accountability, no transparency. The public has no voice in these matters and no way of really knowing

what is being done in its name. People are supposed to keep their mouths shut as long as they are gaining some benefits such as good salaries which are used, according to Vingt Cinq, one of Mimouni's characters, to silence people and divert them from the real problems. For the character, the authorities raise the workers salaries either to humiliate them or prevent them from profoundly feeling bitter about the lavish lifestyles that some enjoy from their association with power (P.38).

From all the foregoing examples, it appears that Mimouni takes a transgressive approach to the problem of corruption by using every opportunity to explode the myth that the state created under the auspices of the FLN, and in accordance with its revolutionary socialist agenda, has worked for the benefit of ordinary citizens. The demystification is displayed in the text that acts out in its seemingly chaotic organisation and verbal sequences the spinning out of control of the chaos of Algeria. The plethoras of images detailing the deterioration of the Algerian infrastructure and rotten landscape that assault the senses accentuate the depth of the moral decay. Mimouni also indicates that every one knows what is wrong but few have enough strength to see the truth with their eyes wide open or are prepared to question every detail of corruption, even in its most disgusting manifestations. In addition to the commonalities in the way Armah and Mimouni shape their different characters, some parallels can be made between certain of them, we will start with the two main characters.

3. Undermining Official Discourses by Uncrowning the Father Figure

The next similarities between *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Le fleuve détourné* with the African trickster tradition is embodied in their dynamic and liberating discourse to resist, oppose, and debunk the political leaders' discourses. Like Ananse and Djeha, both writers challenge the social conventions while proposing alternative ways as displayed through identity absence of some characters. Both authors barely mask the identities of the principal characters with fictitious names as they construct their lives within the social circles in post independent

Ghana and Algeria. In the two novels, all the characters' identities are radically unstable; most of them seem to bear artificially created identities that they themselves have largely made up. One of the most vivid representations of this theme of unstable identities involves the two men who are physically cracking and fragmenting into pieces. The two men serve also as particularly apt figures of identity instability. Armah and Mimouni use the men's confiscated identities to assail the myth of liberty, happiness, social justice, and perfection promulgated by independence. Also common to both novels is the fact that all the characters are flat except the two men who have no identity. We do not know how they look, what they wear or who they are. The reason is their individual qualities are insignificant. What matters is what they stand for members of society and as human beings in general, they are nameless. The two characters are alienated anti heroes who deserve sympathy because they are basically correct in their moral attitudes and admirable for their integrity, but remain incompetent because the corrupt and rotten society in which they live defeats their moral values and considers them cruel, obstinate and insane. Armah and Mimouni trace the two individual protagonists from confusion and frustration to their losing of a sense of wholeness and communal belonging. Both characters call into question their identities and moral values because they receive no reinforcement from their societies and relatives. Armah and Mimouni identify the impotence and the extreme depression of the two sensitive individuals rejected by their societies and families.

The main character in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is intentionally given general anonymity, as a man. He works for the nationalized railway system in Ghana. He and his wife, Oyo, and their children live in poverty because of his constant refusal to accept bribes. He contents himself by living on his insufficient salary in a society that regards an honest conduct perplexing. In spite of the inducement that comes to him from all sides, the perpetual ragging of his bitter wife, and his own awareness of the difficulty his honesty imposes upon his children, he upholds his moral position. He stands for an idealized portrait of a truly dignified man in a despoiled society. His good will appears justified when a coup destroys the regime and its corrupt

officials are arrested. However, as he starts to celebrate the national clean up of corruption, he suddenly observes its reappearance. Thus, the hope of Armah's main character vanishes because it is instantly thwarted when the new leaders who had fought the corrupted government prove to be even more corrupt. When the bus forces its way through the barrier: "the driver gave his folder, together with the bribe to the policeman" (Armah.P.182). If the novel records the struggle and victory of the man, it also makes apparent the illusory success and fall of Koomson. While the man offers some evidence that moral values are just a fanciful dream, Koomson's individual failure does not mean the end of moral corruption. The new regime will simply produce more Koomsons. The central issue in Armah's novel is the relationship between the individual and his society. It is a depressing omen. The main character, the centre of consciousness has no name. He is anonymous because society does not recognize him. He is an outcast because he tries to hold on to moral values while the other members of his community succumb to bribery, corruption and materialism. Armah's main character is totally isolated by his community and even by his closest relatives. His wife, for instance, considers his honesty unnatural and incites him to get involved in the corrupt system. The unnamed man's dysfunctional family also demonstrates how disorder at the level of the family has been caused by the lower middle class's desire for material things. His wife and her mother constantly blame him for having refused to take part in the national "bribery game". They blame him for having brought them into poverty. This alleged guilt of neglect causes a major rupture between the man and his wife and increases the hate of his mother in law who never forgives his neglect of his family. The Man becomes the scapegoat of his family. Another element that weakens and worsens the Man's resistance is the distortion of his relationship as father vis à vis his children who want all the things that children usually dream to have, such as books, good food, and television. The following statement

voiced by one of the man's children shows it clearly: "Is television not very beautiful?"(P.121). Therefore, the main character concludes towards the end of the narrative that there is no way of escaping it except one, escape or death (P.154). The Man who has spent his life resisting corruption ends up helping Koomson who completely embraces corruption. From an ethical point of view, his assistance of the corrupt Koomson makes him guilty of something. In other words, though the Man stands above his corrupt universe, solitary and like the flower painted on the bus, inexplicable, and very beautiful, but ineffective, he also fails to keep his distance from the rot because he has no chance of triumphing over it (Gikandi.1987:85).

Like Armah's main character, the unnamed protagonist in Mimouni's novel stands as one of the agents of disillusionment. The central character is referred to only as the man whose anonymity epitomizes both the government's indifference to the individual lives of the population as well as the universality of his story. The man can be anyone attempting to recover his identity, regain his social status, and meet his family in a society delayed by tyranny, dishonesty, and self-interests. The wretched story of the unnamed man becomes then, a parable of the history of Algeria whose identity was erased by the colonizer to the point that the War of Liberation was not enough to give back to its heroes the right to recognition of their identity. Mimouni's anonymous character moves from one depressing situation to another and in between scatters a landscape of misery and despair. Like the unnamed man of Armah, Mimouni's main character is exposed to various humiliations. He is a stranger both to his community and nobody to his family. He goes on a journey through hell to find his wife and son, but he comes to realize his own powerlessness in front of the implacable transformation of his society. Throughout his quest, his courageous resolutions are transformed into an expression of dismay and disgust. He finally understands that his society has lost its values and ideals; he alone keeps his values in a rotten environment. At the end of the narrative, he bitterly avows his complete admission of defeat and despair. This passage shows clearly such despairing isolation:

Je n'attends plus la réponse de l'Administrateur. Je sais désormais qu'elle neviendra jamais. Qu'il se soucie de mon cas comme maintenant de son anciennevilla aux murs lézardés. Que mes lettres n'ont jamais été transmises àl'Administrateur en Chef, qu'elles ont dû finir dans la poubelle du bureau de lasecrétaire (P.214).

[I no longer expect the response of the Administrator. Now, I know it will nevercome. He cares about my case as he does for his former villa with cracking walls. My letters were never forwarded to the Chief Administrator, they had ended up in the dustbin of the secretary's office].

The passage indicates that the long-suffering of the man is revealed as fruitless. Mimouni renders not only a specific characteristic of the man's world and destiny but also, through his compressed yet emphatic repetition, the fate of people disillusioned by the hopes of independence. From the passage, we feel that Mimouni's anguished protagonist falls apart and the tension comes to a head when the he sees Omar who dies in frightful torment. The crushed man, then, describes himself as a man in perpetual rupture, but who still must choose his way. He can live like Vingt Cinq, his companion who thinks that his life is ended and everyday he wakes up, it is a supplement to his long tempestuous life. He is completely disconnected and without any ambition. The man can also follow the Writer, a lonely figure finding it more and more difficult to adjust to his own environment and remains victim of his own majestic hopelessness. He has a totally pessimistic vision which alerts him to the end of things even before they are initiated. He can also imitate Rachid who goes wandering in the desert, as he can also imitate Omar's descent into despair in putting an end to his suffering since, for this desperate student and musician, there can be no break from the cycle of decay. It is eternal (P.217).

The essential relationship between the man and the fallen social conditions of his society can also be discerned quite clearly in *Le fleuve détourné*. As Armah's main character, Mimouni's unnamed protagonist is trapped within the present, he has no sense of belonging to his society and lives in a kind of historical void which makes him question the very values that gives him sustenance. He struggles against a realistically depicted social universe which is both corrupt in its intent and oblivious to the ideals the character holds dearly. Mimouni's man is one of the dispossessed, born in poverty exacerbated by deleterious effects of colonialism on indigenous populations. During the war, he participated in the liberation war which offered hope, only to be

betrayed in the end. Thus, his longing for less problematic relationship with his family and friends is posited to be as dangerous as the Writer's total isolation. The character is anonymous and alienated, an emblematic figure who has been reduced to a lost soul while trying to raise himself above political maltreatment, corruption, and social injustice. All along the narrative, he continues the same in a society that is caught up in an ocean of madness. He is disgusted by the rejection he meets at every turn and comes into full contact with political abuses, social injustice and oppression. The experience of the man is used as a reference point by Mimouni seems to imply that everlasting hope is not in this world and any effort to reach joy and happiness is bound to fail. The author's naturalistic view appears in his description of an immoral society that permits no alternative other than money and power. It is impossible for an honest man to keep his morality unbroken. Though Mimouni's main character stands for virtuous, trustworthy and honest people, as he is the representative of those who fought for freedom and sought independence by their participation in the revolution against French colonialism and oppression, at the end of the narrative, a feeling of salvation and dignity similar to that of independence arises when someone comes to the Camp and announces the death of Staline and the end of dictatorship (P.217). The news is parallel to the announcement of the coup in Armah's novel. However, the feeling does not go far beyond a moment of false hope as the announcer was not really convinced of the coming change. Instead, he wonders if the new leaders only want to dupe their people again (P.218). The essential isolation and futile endeavors of Armah's man parallel the insularity and triviality which surrounds Mimouni's unnamed character who goes through a country where social and political corruption and bureaucracy signal his atrophy.

Common to Armah and Mimouni is a desire to shape their two protagonists as tense and determined, resolute but worried, clear in their judgments but unsure as to remedies and above all still removed from their immediate societies. The philosophical and psychological conflicts and tortured consciousness that plague the main character of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* resemble those of the main character's exhausted soul in Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné*. The two men find themselves in the course of a wasteland of greed and corruption. They are constantly pursued by misfortune that has left them no time to enjoy love and peace, and their

exhausted souls collapse and give up the last threads that tie them to their societies. In addition, both authors place the two main characters inside quarters of the teeming masses of the less fortunate people, which allows them to present, through the eyes of the two disillusioned heroes, the rapidly changing and adaptive perspectives of underclass citizens in their respective countries.

4. The Intellectual at the Margin (Teacher and the Writer)

The two other anonymous, insignificant and disheartened figures in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* that bear many resemblances are the unnamed Teacher and the anonymous Writer. Both represent the saner but despised voices in their respective societies. Their alleged mental inadequacies, their schizophrenia, their aimless confinements all combine to mark them as useless in the eyes of their respective societies, parasites on the margins of society. They spend their time locked away in dark and solitary confinement. Both claim faulty knowledge and are too frightened of authority to tell where events happened, but are not afraid to mock the authorities. No dialogue to determine the attitudes or opinions of the two silent characters because neither Teacher nor Writer has enough strength or willingness to stand in front of others and communicate. Communication is rather achieved through verbal silence and moral questioning of the self, by condemning the unreal dialogue that seems to animate their lives and make them real and worthy of being lived anyhow.

In Armah's novel, the Teacher is the man's mentor, spiritual guide, and adviser. He plays an important role in the narrative for two reasons: first, the character provides the man with the intellectual good reason necessary in his search for moral order to adjust himself to his antisocial and decayed society. The Teacher reinforces the man's personal determination with a philosophic model (P.85). Second, his lengthy discussions with the man in chapter six, allows the author to air his irritated reaction to the devastating corruption that plagues his country. The Teacher does not really stand against corruption;

he is a typical prototype of the African intellectual who, having believed in the post independence mottoes, the fight against colonialism, the brilliant “platonian” perception of the socialist ideology, has found himself accepting and even protecting the hideous side of the political game. The Teacher fails to provide real answers to the questions of the main character. Instead, he refers to feelings of disillusionment and the despair of his crushed memory. He recollects the period of Nkrumah and voices with regret: “I had so much hope before” (P.60). His recollections that form the sixth chapter sum up his life. Through a narrative flow, the character tells his friend his story as a socialist who trusted and believed in the distorted principles of an incendiary ideology that sent him to fight for unknown reasons (P.64). His monologue can be regarded as a kind of lesson by example. It traces his life from the end of World War II to the narrative’s present. The narrated events are observed, described or commented by the Teacher whose consciousness serves as the axe of a continuous questioning of society in its details, contradictions and sufferings. Like other Ghanaians who had fought abroad, he became depressed when he returned home to find that the war had changed nothing for Ghana (P.82). He was highly sensitive to the effects of colonial occupation. When Kwame Nkrumah became president, he and most of the Ghanaians believed that their liberator had come. The Teacher admired Nkrumah’s courage in fighting the British and his attack upon chieftaincy. However Nkrumah and other political leaders followed in the footsteps of their old colonial masters (P.89). Their love for the white masters made them forget their socialistic ideals. Ghana was sold the same ideology only under other names, the frail hopes of the unfulfilled dreams of the enslaved people under the slogan: “end of bribery and corruption. Build socialism and equality. Shit” (P.154). The disillusionment of independence and the destroyed hopes forced the Teacher to grow more and unhappy and alienated from society (P.93). Though he occupies the centre section of the novel, he

nevertheless, plays no active part in the events of the tale. Throughout the narrative, the Teacher remains an outsider who rejects his society as he lives cut off from any social or political activity. He resembles a deeply wounded soldier who has not recovered from his past injuries. His bleeding continues and intensifies further through the questions asked by the man to whom he has failed to give right answers. He simply replies through his experience of the past (P.83) and internalizes his intense disillusionment and permanent despair. The coup d'état seems to be the logical response to the overwhelming feeling of despair and loss that haunts the man and the Teacher when the man is told: "Don't you know there is a new government?"(P.153), the man and Teacher too, understand that goodness and peace are about to be restored. However shortly afterwards, any hope of believing in any kind of change is aborted because all new men will be like the old, as voiced by the Teacher when he asks: "what will I be demonstrating for?"(P.158). The Teacher is trapped in a vicious circle that he voices in a desperate way: "when you can see the end of things even in their beginnings, there is no more hope, unless you want to pretend, or forget or drunk or something" (P.61). Though wise, educated and politically experienced, his perception of life is limited or non-existent, he never gets married and remains sexually frustrated. He spends his time naked in bed, with the lights on, exposed and defenceless before anyone who cares to look. He calls himself a "ghost" and a "dead man" that not even the ancient libations of living blood can make him live again" (P.61). His only contacts with the outside world are the radio, on which he occasionally hears songs that tell him that he is not alone in his sadness, and books written by sympathetic minds. The Teacher has given up hope of ever finding an audience for his thoughts. Only the man comes to listen to him. His is a living death and is confined to his room on account of an intentioned illness, perhaps a manifestation of his spiritual woes. He

contemplates the chaos of his society, but at least, he has not destroyed his soul by succumbing to the power and attraction of the glitter.

The allegorical figure which resembles Armah's conception of the Teacher is Mimouni's Writer, a silent, voiceless, impotent and sterile intellectual. Like the Teacher, the Writer is locked into himself and walled off from the entire world by an impenetrable boundary and is isolated from the other detainees. He stands for the Algerian intellectual who is free but muzzled. As the Teacher in Armah's novel, the Writer fails to engage in any struggle and believes in nothing other than his self-mutilation and confession of his wastefulness. Mimouni uses the student, Omar, to summarise the state of mind of this character who voices it in this way: "bourbon stérile qui se morfond dans de sombres monologues" (P.182). When forced to reply to the various charges of Omar, the Writer explains in a long monologue what forces him to keep silent. He, for instance, recounts some of his childhood experiences. The events are so appalling that they become unbearable and haunting. The Writer's memories are so distressing that he permanently tries to convince himself that they have not occurred because they could not have occurred since it was after all a nightmare. However, since reality for the Writer is a nightmare, clearly, there is no exit, no escape other than drinking alcohol and smoking drug. During his discussion with Omar, the Writer confesses that:

L'imposture est partout. Il y a longtemps que j'ai démasqué les faux sentiments qui me tenaient lieu de prétextes pour justifier mes fuites et mes lâchetés. J'ai toujours été un pleutre et un lâche. J'ai passé le plus clair de mon enfance à organiser mes dérobades, à justifier mes renoncements, à renouveler mes trahisons (P.185).

[Fraud is everywhere. Long ago, I exposed the false feelings that served as excuses for cowardice. I've always been a funk and a coward. I spent most of my childhood organizing my evasions, in justifying my renunciations, and repeating my betrayals].

The passage brings to the fore the reasons of the Writer's silence. It shows that the Writer's conscience is haunted by more than one sin, particularly when the narrative is interrupted by a long, first person reminiscence by the Writer who provides an impressionistic account of his own

life. He speaks of the anger and frustration of his young manhood and of the violence of his acts. He is torn by remorse about the rape of his adoptive sister and condemns himself and describes his impotence and sterility to Omar. Consequently, he rejects all kinds of emotions and prefers his silence. After confessing the list of all his crimes, he asks Omar how he can answer the call of others since his whole life has been a mere masquerade (P186). Worst of all, the Writer is considered guilty and irresponsible by Omar. Politically, he is found guilty of not changing things for the better in teaching the history of his country because as a writer, he has access to speech, he has a voice, and he can write, he has an audience and therefore is seen as a potential agent that can alter things (P.183). The Writer does not care if he possesses a worldview that automatically has a place in the progressive movement and he fails to believe in a bright future that is deemed too perfect by the official authorities. He also fails to feel within himself any strength or any necessity to participate in nation building for the benefit of future generations. The Writer is simply limited; he locks himself away and condemns himself because his call for commitment and courage has turned against him. Therefore, he becomes an outcast, an exile in his own country, subject to harassment, both potential and imaginary. At the end of his discussion with Omar, the Writer justifies his silence by stating that “le pouvoir des mots couchés sur le papier, la plus terrible des impostures” [The power of words on paper is the worst fraud] (P186). Not surprisingly, few images of peace, beauty and harmony populate his world. Implicit in his behavior are all the conventions of despair. The nightmare world, perversion, the satanic humor he wears his spiritual deficiencies of spirit as scars, as emblems of a world without order, meaning, or sense of continuity. It is precisely the very moment of ambiguity, anxiety, and tension described by Mimouni which becomes central, as it is prolonged and repeated for the Teacher of Armah. It is true that both characters do not possess material benefits but they are overturned by deadly burdens of guilt and by their traumatic experiences of violence which they share with others' character. The next parallel between the two novels rests on certain similarities between the two author's ways of shaping the deformity and monstrosity of some characters.

5. Deformity and Monstrosity of Certain Characters

Closely linked to African trickster tradition of resistance to oppression, is the incongruous style and bodily grossness. In its broad sense, the term 'incongruity' refers to the appearance of distortions, abnormality, or just plain ugliness. In his article entitled: "Analysis of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello", J.R.Holt notes that the literature of monstrous is "a beautiful ugliness" because it breaks down our conventional notions of beauty, harmony, order, and meaning, forcing us to find a sense beyond our familiar categories of beauty and knowing. In the process, we come to realize that those familiar categories themselves are artificial, and as such can distort the truth behind the appearance. Grotesque art, then, concludes Holt, employs distortions to correct deformation. The grotesque is characterized by fantastic representations of human and animal forms often combined into formal distortions to the point of absurdity, ugliness and caricature. It emphasizes the typically incongruous by mingling of the fantastic and the ideal, the sordid and the real, the comic and the horrific. It is also linked to suddenness, surprise, and estrangement which imply the juxtapositions of laughter and disgust. It is typically incongruous and can be applied to anything having the qualities of grotesque art: bizarre, incongruous, ugly, and fantastic. Grotesque must arouse three responses: laughter, astonishment, and disgust (Harold Bloom.2009: 76-77).

Of the dissonant and most prominent elements that characterize the grotesque, is grossness of the human body. In his significant analysis of Rabelais, Bakhtin showed that literary treatments of the grotesque body can serve to celebrate animal vitality, to humiliate satiric targets, and to remind the reader of human decay and inevitable death. As Harold Bloom similarly notes: "It reminds us that the body with its smells, wastes, unruly appetites, and deformities call into question human idealisms and human preventions" (Ibid. P. 14).

Bodily grossness appears and is emphasized by Armah's description of particular characters. Such grossness is perceptible in Joseph Koomson's caricature-like figure, his wife, Stella, the timber contractor, and the policeman. The conception of Koomson, for instance, reveals some parodist traits and the grotesque resides in the character's inconsistent speeches and behavior. Joe Koomson is depicted as "a hero of the gleam" who is equipped with all "the kind of

hardness the gleam required” (P.35). He is a rich and a powerful party leader who owns a villa in an upper residential zone, drives a new large car, and associates his dreams with the gleam that stands for evolution and modernity. Yet, Armah presents the party man’s psychological portrait in contradiction to his serious political duties. For instance, in the past, Koomson had been a stupid schoolboy deprived of intelligence before he became a careless and corrupt politician whose ascent in the political hierarchy resembles the abnormal growth of the manchild (P.63). His suit, shining white shirt, and glinting cufflinks turn him into an object trapped by the light of the “gleam of materialism” and a slave of luxury European products. Koomson’s attraction to vulgar material promises such as cars, houses, and property is no more than a tendency and a susceptibility to public burglary and a predisposition to consume more and more and satisfy his plain greed. As an illustration, he lures the main character’s wife, Oyo and her mother who commit themselves blindly by signing the papers for the purchase of a fishing boat. Oyo and her mother associate themselves with Koomson who is supposed to redeem them from poverty. But after contracting out the boat, the politician betrays them and rarely gives them any fish. His treachery is appropriate to crimes and injustices of the lowest denominator norm of satire. Armah relates Koomson’s portrait back to the ancient African chiefs who collaborated with European slave traders and betrayed their people (P.131).

In Armah’s first novel, Koomson symbolizes the drive for materialism and typifies the abominably corrupt African politician of the post independence period that Frantz Fanon referred to as the “Black bourgeois leaders” in their dislike of the very people they are supposed to serve. The applicability of Fanon’s analysis to Koomson and his wife cannot be denied. The government official who is nicknamed by the street merchant as “a white man”, his wife, and even the protagonist’s family are attracted by “the gleam” and artificial foreign goods. In Ghana, the costly foreign imports are confirmation of success while local products are evidence of failures. For instance, Estella complains that the Ghanaian drinks “don’t agree with her constitution” (P.131) as if she were from somewhere else. Before becoming a minister, her husband was a rough dockworker. He is unpleasant, offensive and a hypocrite, but he usually succeeds in appearing cheerful and jovial in public to attract and appeal to a greater number of voters. Koomson who

seems to be honest in the eyes of society is only careless but also uncooperative, ungracious, and insensitive to the needs of others. He offers bribes to all comers and spends the money to spoil his family with all the most visibly flamboyant luxurious products that directly come from Europe. As an illustration, he tricks the man's wife and her mother in a tax-evasion move to acquire a boat, which he uses to flee from the police when the new regime orders his arrest. Both the man and the Teacher had known Joseph Koomson before he joined the corrupt leadership. The man was his classmate and the Teacher knew him on the docks after the war. Neither knows exactly what happened to make the party man change. When he appears briefly early in the novel, he is self-confident, full of self-importance, and patronizing. It is difficult not to see in the portrait of Koomson who stands for corruption, depravity, and lust that is the heir to a social condition for which nothing but the performance of political injustice seems capable of relieving the disgrace. When he becomes a minister, he and his wife, Estella, have grown so accustomed to luxury that they have become neglectful of human suffering. They have forgotten the filth and decay out of which their luxuries come and to which they return. Their home on the hill is a picture of comfort and gadgets. When the coup deprives them of their many trinkets, Koomson is not only exposed as an ordinary human being but, reduced to his opposite, a chaos of putrid matter, a man who is all intestines, making the man's bedroom reek of gas. After the coup and the reversal of the situation, Koomson becomes an immobile whimpereer and his fall reaffirms the man in his sense of moral superiority to the society. The man's gesture in helping Koomson to flee is an act of heroism, virtue in action. He can be regarded as a "beautiful one" because he has exhibited inner courage in refusing to accept the gleam in risking imprisonment by the new authorities in the state while Koomson is a terrified and defeated. As a fugitive, he manages to use his last banknotes to bribe his way to safety.

In sum, Koomson stands for Armah as the embodiment of corruption and opportunism of the African political leaders who are responsible for the failure and the bankruptcy of their countries. Once they are elected and have risen to power, they become no less predisposed than were their colonialist forerunners to make safe their own positions through illegal means or at the expense of the masses they were elected to serve. Because of his parasitic and manipulative

relations with others, Koomson appears as a wicked character whose success bears no positive connotation and his collapse does not involve any sort of pity or sympathy from the reader. On the contrary, at the close of the story, Armah mocks the politician's shining dreams and links them to waste and filth as he escapes from the same latrine which had disgusted him during his first visit to his friend's house. There are many further examples of these disgusting details in the novel which put emphasis on the repulsive physical details of Koomson's transformation. When Koomson loses the exclusiveness of authority, he becomes the subject of the author, who can now have him suffer the whims of his imagination, displacing the tyrant into the narrative space therefore appears as the first potential reversal of power. Through various devices, Armah transforms Koomson into a caricature, visiting upon him the type of ridicule associate with such figures. In the doing, he articulates his opposition to the oppressive power.

The same or more deformity appears in Armah's depiction of the party man's wife, Estella who as a character is shaped as a frivolous, arrogant and hideous as her husband. She stands for the pretension of the "Nouveaux Riches" and sits in the backseat of her Mercedes like a bored, delicate kitten. Ironically, her physical appearance and sophisticated way of dressing that "catch each individual ray of light and aim it straight into the beholding eyes" (148); "her wig, gleaming diamond", "her metallic voice added to her "thin as long wire stabbing into open eyes" (P.34), all indicate that her manners are showy and resemble the arrogance of the white colonials from whom her country has been liberated politically but not yet culturally. Her stiff physical stance matches her equally inflexible egotism with her perfume that clings to the Man's hand. The same polluting tenacity parallels that of her fallen husband's excremental mouth with the stench of rotten menstrual blood (P.163). Both her posture and arrogance makes her seen unattractive, ridiculous, and stupid. Armah reduces this character to the level of a caricature and makes her resemble a cartoon figure. We notice that Estella models her corporal appearance on the western body. She puts on a wig and silk shirts. What she

wears and how she looks are important considerations in her attempt to integrate the world of the White man into her own. Armah uses certain episodes to denounce the inferiority complex of the Africans who vie with and imitate their European masters.

The next deformed figure in the novel is the timber contractor, Amankwa. In describing his appearance, Armah uses mockery as a sign of resentment. The following excerpt is an example: “a belly swathed in kente cloth. The feet beneath the belly dragged themselves and the mass above in little arcs, getting caught in angular ends of heavy cloth”. When he starts speaking, he is said to have a wolf-like mouth, lip flesh and disordered teeth which vainly strain to meet over them (P.27). This is especially true of the flesh of his snout that accomplished a grotesque retreat from the teeth (P.28). This character conveys the image of a shark with its sharp teeth. When the man refuses to take the bribe, Armah adds the last touch to the deformity in describing the character holding his belly as if it were about to burst with the pressure of laughter (P.28). Derek Wright links the consumerist image of this character’s “generations” with the piled-up refuse obliterating the municipal litter bins, with piled excrement in the office latrine and heaped consumer junk littering the shoreline and in one of the novel’s many long-distance retrospections with the antiquity of Africans’ corruption (Wright, 2003: 3).

Next to the timber contractor, stands the bus conductor, the clerk in the railway office, and the policeman. The everyday life of these characters becomes guided by and nourished by corruption. So, all of them become a typical stock type which serve the interests of the corrupt side of the society. From the bus conductor, the taxi driver, the clerk to the police officer who shows his teeth to “eat”, they are elements of subjective social implication in the internal fight of good and evil. Their unscrupulous behaviors and unlawful practices affect deeply, in one way or another, the life of poor and honest citizens.

There are many more of these unsettling passages and many instances of bodily deformity throughout *Le fleuve détourné*. It starts with the coarse names attributed to the characters which can be added to the way the author portrays some of them to display the vices of politicians that are presented under the most ridiculous forms. As an illustration, the absurdity of the

Administrator's discourse is clearly indicated by the voice of the narrator. The monstrous begins with the Administrator's very first sentence which pretends that people's sperms are subversive (P.9). Monstrous also comes out through deformity and deficiencies of the "large bellies and oily men" and their grotesquery involves primarily an excessive or distorted experience of the body. The school director embodies this concept in many ways.

As with Joseph Koomson, the Administrator stands for the political bankruptcy of leaders who are torn between personal financial interests and the seduction of power. He symbolizes ruthless opportunism and epidemic corruption. For instance, he redirects the cement from its intended state project to purchase it to cover the expenses of his own villa. Through the portrayal of the Administrator, Mimouni does not hesitate to openly denounce the despotism of the authoritarian centralism of his country that has forfeited, even betrayed the ideals of the Algerian Revolution. The author also highlights the effects of top-level mismanagements and greed on ordinary citizens, left to their own devices in a chaotic and arbitrary world (P.30). Their daily agendas are regulated by the infrequent flow of water through the city water mains, they are resigned to waiting years and years for an apartment, and to spending hours in line at the government supermarkets only to find that most of the products have been shipped and siphoned off by a kind of "traders parallel" in the direction of the black market (P.109). To make up for their unlawful activities, The Administrator and his Chief make hollow speeches about Algerian independence and engage in nationalistic hand-waving, but their empty gestures are followed by actions that reveal their uncaring and inept bureaucracy, corruption and hypocrisy (P.15). In some of the novel's passages, the Administrator's reaction seems almost sadistic in his morbid indifference to the pain and suffering of others. Not dissimilar from Armah's corrupt party man, Koomson, the Administrator enhances the main character's sense of alienation from his beloved; he is the perfect example of corruption, yet benefits from the admiration of those people who are only too eager to spite clean men and honest citizens. What distinguishes the two characters is the fact that the Administrator is less sinister than Koomson but more dangerous. If the caricature of the latter is biting because he shows off like a peacock full of pride, the former is contemptible, arrogant, and despicable.

6. Cruelty and Sexuality in the Novels

The other device with which I can link the two novels to African trickster folk tradition deals with the choice of the topics incorporated into the two novels. As “intellectual tricksters and taboo-violators”, Armah and Mimouni deal with all social taboos, violations of the generally accepted ordinary course of events, the established norms of behaviours, and scandalous scenes are to be expected in the African folk trickster tales. The objective in incorporating such scenes and topics is to uncover society’s deficiencies by focussing on more marginalised subjects who are considered less socially appropriate. In the novels of Armah and Mimouni such topics reflect the discourse and the position of the two writers with regard to the issue and politics of gender. Random, arbitrary acts of violence and sexual abuses in general are portrayed as characteristics of the world of Armah and Mimouni’s novels.

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, all the women characters are victims of the “gleam”. Oyo, the man’s wife, for instance, is thirsty for luxurious materials and believes that richness will bring a perfect happiness. She has no compassion for her husband’s integrity. She rather scorns him for it. She does not respect her husband’s values because she only sees how the rich enjoy their comfortable life. She considers and interprets her husband’s honesty as cowardice and stupidity. She wants a toilet and other conveniences for her home. She wants a life as clean as Estella’s. Although her husband tells her that: “Some of that kind of cleanness has more rot in it than the slime at the bottom of the garbage dump” (P.44), Oyo seems incapable of imagining anything higher than the material. She has a deep envy of the flourishing of and race for the luxuries that Estella Koomson enjoys. As the narrative unfolds, the man’s progress is measured by his ability to resist the gleam’s appeal and his family’s demands while his wife, Oyo, longs for the comfort that wealth affords and brings considerable guilt to bear on her husband for not putting his family’s material needs before his ethical integrity. She is blinded by the gleam of beautiful new houses, the shine of powerful new Mercedes cars, and the scent of expensive perfumes and the coiffure of a new wig (P.56). Oyo, like her mother, speaks the language of

victims enslaved by the gleam until she witnesses Koomson's decline after Nkrumah is deposed by a coup d'état. The fat party man turns out to be the ultimate victim as he loses everything in the end and is forced to make a dramatic escape through a latrine fleeing those who have orchestrated the coup. It is only after Koomson's sudden change in political fortune that Oyo wakes up and starts to feel real respect for her husband's integrity (P.180). At the end of the narrative, she changes her mind when she sees the punishment for corruption that come when the criminals are arrested. The other female character victim, but of a different kind of figure, is Maanan whose tragedy is narrated by the Teacher who tells how the woman was destroyed by the corrupt world that almost sucked her in. She becomes mad and searches about in the sand and says with all the urgency in her diseased soul, "They have mixed it all together! Everything! They have mixed everything. And how can I find it when they have mixed it all with so many other things?"(P.88). From the above examples, we may say that the women characters in Armah's novel are victims either of their desires for material objects or of the ruling leaders' indifference.

A similar picture appears in Mimouni's novel. However, the feminine representation in *Le fleuve détourné* is more complex than that of Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Mimouni deals with gender bias and reveals the status quo in attitudes to gender and renders his approach to the relationship between gender and sexuality more contradictory and multifaceted than it appears in Armah's novel. Like, Djeha l'espiègle, Mimouni's use of wit against oppression is suggested in the clever and collaborative strategy that he develop in order to protect the defenseless women from the leaders' abuses. He portrays nearly all female characters, including the man's wife, Houria as relegated to secondary and oppressed roles. Sexuality, cruelty, and violence are everywhere in Mimouni's vision and his treatment of the theme is considerably more forceful than that of Armah. Rape and body violation are breaking new boundaries and are presented as in integral component of governmental attempts at achieving docility and submissiveness while simultaneously controlling and eliminating dissent. I propose to elaborate upon some of these issues and focus on Mimouni's analysis of the methods employed in establishing national dominance and the masculinist constructs that accompany this gesture. The body and sexual activities are crucial to the author's thinking on power and suggest the collapse

of the country's political morals. Dysfunctional sexual behavior functions as a parallel to the dilapidated post-colonial sphere itself which is reinforced through the link between violence, and decay to sexuality. Mimouni selects certain disconcerting scenes that are described with special care and coldness, to stress that women's living conditions are unbearable. He selects some hallucinatory narratives which describe scenes where the violence against woman and her enduring suffering are intertwined. Repression, rap, beatings, and social injustice are the flaws and social taboos that the author presents. He, for instance, depicts all the women that populate the novel as fallen, torn, tortured, and raped bodies that are blown to pieces. By such a depiction, Mimouni shows that oppression of women is endemic, asserting that men have always treated women as "second class citizens to be used and dominated". He also holds that violence against woman, particularly rape and other sexual assaults are caused by the woman's faults (P.175).

What also appears in *Le fleuve détourné* is that women are victims and accusers at the same time. Uncompromising descriptions of sexual violence are intended specifically as criticisms of male attitudes to women, exposing established social ills which he has targeted elsewhere in his writings. Through his analysis, Mimouni focuses upon the degradation of woman that serves to feed male fantasies. He refutes the idea that colonialism is entirely responsible for contemporary social problems since some abuses are perpetuated by local officials to show their virility. The voice of woman is itself exposed as partial, silent, subject of 'indecenty', and deprived of the power to say what is being experienced or happening, starting with the main character's wife Houria, who is beaten and discarded by her male predators. In addition to the violent beating inflicted on her, she often undergoes sexual degradation, rape, humiliation, and pain. Here again, the fate of this character is closely linked to the socio-political context. When the narrative starts, Houria is a happy house wife. She is horrified by the disappearance of her husband during the war while she was waiting for a baby. But gradually, she accepts the circumstances and tries to keep her integrity under the protection of her father-in-law. In time, she needs money and is compelled to leave the village for the town seeking for her husband war pension. Once there, she becomes a prostitute performing officials' favors and experiences with

horror a world of depravity and finally accepts bitterly the brutality around her. In one particular episode, for example, Houria describes bitterly the violence against woman that is presented as a recurring and normalized practice reducing her to a passive object of desire:

Une femme violée est toujours fautive, elle a dû aguicher l'homme, le provoquer, toute femme est une putain en puissance, sa beauté une circonstance aggravante. L'homme qui vous écartèle et vous viole a déjà tout oublié en rajustant son pantalon. Il rentrera chez lui tranquille (P.178).

[A raped woman is always at fault, she had teased the man, she provokes him, any woman is a whore in power, her beauty is an aggravating circumstance. The man who spread your legs and rapes you has already forgotten his act the moment of adjusting his pant. He will quietly return home.

The above excerpt foregrounds the fact that sexuality becomes synonymous with alienation and rejection as the experience of Houria. Therefore, all female characters are used as sharp commentary on the conditions of the Algerian women after independence. Any reader of the novel feels that the woman is a mere object; her sexuality is violated and she becomes a projection of male desire and a sexual object. In addition, the author shows how women suffer male violence and degradation. She internalizes the male gaze that fixes her as female and waits for a suitable occasion to abuse her (P.177). The major feminine characters are alienated from the basic sources of emotional sustenance, from the nature in which they live, but with which they can no longer have an active relationship, and fulfill their needs for creativity. The ugly rot in which they live deprives them of their energies and their instincts cramped by isolation. All the women characters seek the release of a sudden expressive outburst and a way to restore them to the collective social harmony. They are hysterical communicants in search of social value, a way of living and the means to re-establish a flow and exchange of emotion. Mimouni's representation of woman is intimately linked to his political thinking and his engagement with human rights. Women's absence from the political scene, her isolation, her neglect and sequestration by the official authorities is no more than a critical sign of all the Algerian political leaders' wrong doings.

More importantly, Armah and Mimouni's characters reveal that characterization is used almost exclusively for the effect of polarization. Therefore, it is not a random feature that has

been imported from the West but a reflection of what appears in African folktales. Maziri Kunene is right when he writes that classic African literature takes its primary strategy to broaden the base of its characters through mystification and symbolism. Whereas some literatures make the cosmic purpose their goal, African literature begins from the premise that the cosmic setting is the primary basis of all literatures (Kunene cited in Dseagu. 1992: 600).

The above design applies to the novels' two groups of characters. They are the corrupt ruling class and their relations on the one hand and the down-trodden population on the other hand. In the first group, all the characters stand for the upper ruling class while the second includes the ordinary oppressed people. Common to both novels is that the number of active characters is very limited and their names are unknown. The stand point of the man and Teacher is, in fact, similar to the attitude of "the chidodo" when it both persists in struggle and stands against corruption but at the same time never enters into action. We start sympathizing with both but at the end; we unavoidably condemn the cowardly action of helping Koomson to escape. The Teacher, for his part, remains static throughout a startling situation on the verge of explosion. The same holds true for Mimouni's Writer who fails at both the personal and social levels.

Conclusion

The foregoing comparative analysis of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* suggests that the above considerations have brought to the fore the following conclusions: first, taken together, the two novels demonstrate once again the two authors' commitment to narrative dialogism of the "local and "global" in their playing with and probing of the machinations and mechanisms of power. Armah and Mimouni's narratives reflect their authors' ability to use the trickster strategies and other covert tools of resistance in order to justify the liberation of Africans from their oppressive political leaders. Both use folklore constructively in an attempt to demonstrate the humanity of their African countrymen and demand the end of their oppression. The writers' struggle, in the novels, is undertaken under the auspices of African narratives and cultures in which the spirit of individual and collective resistance against tyrannical authority is pervasive. By reference to the influence of African

discursive strategies such as those of the trickster in folktales, I have interpreted the ideologies and actions of characters in relation to both authors' rejection of neo-colonialism and power relations. As effective tools, discursive and rhetoric devices, they foreground the writers' concern with issues of injustice, the struggle for liberation from repression, and the way to grapple with questions of freedom from the despairing legacies of colonialism that Armah and Mimouni confronted in their novels. Each character in the two novels embodies a discourse. The plot is designed to allow each discourse to compete against other discourses, as a means of teasing out the flaws and challenging the ideologies which staked a claim to Ghana, Algeria, Africa, and the world in general. Armah and Mimouni show through emblematic foregrounding in the two novels, the disillusion bred by failure and despair including the burden placed by their corrupt governments on their respective populations. Their narratives tell the reader the bitter truth about the deplorable socio-economic conditions and confront the reader with an image of ugliness, revealing the truth about the extreme danger of the damage done by moral corruption in their societies. Because they are not allowed to have a voice, the two writers use the trickster's covert diplomacy in order to intersperse their feelings about their countries in a language in which they attack neo-colonialism. Their novels become subversive tools addressed to the existing social order and as a counter-force against the prevailing assumptions of the idea of independence. Armah and Mimouni's appeal to allegory and metaphor is due to the fact that both authors wrote their novels in a time when it was dangerous to write straightforwardly about public affairs, or to criticize authority with any freedom. In this context, Armah and Mimouni succeeded in their task and thus proved to be dissident intellectuals. Violence, corruption, cruelty, and other abuses are all aspects of sickness; and it is in bringing to this perception that the achievement of their brave, pained novels really lie. In agreement with Salman Rushdie who reiterates that, for a writer, reality is to be at once creative and political; Mimouni and Armah are at once creative and political. As nonconformist writers, it is not surprising that when they write about literature they find themselves writing about politics, and when they deal with political issues, the quickly perspectives of literature have the habit of creeping in (Rushdie.1991: 28).

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General Conclusion

Today's [African] writer when he writes, defines a space of republican civility in which all the angers, all the demands, all the convulsions of our present and our future must find their dwelling. He builds a true house of sorcery, therefore, a republic of imagination, and this will only be attained if he accepts the principle of this infinite larva, of these fires which shake underneath the asphalt of our streets; in short if he joins himself to the dissident principle of our society.

(Patrice Nganang)

A successful work of art is not the one which resolves contradictions in spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its inner most structure.

(Theodor Adorno)

In the three parts of this thesis, I provided the possibility of drawing together six African authors who belong to politically, socially, and culturally different backgrounds and hold distinct personalities. In comparing their novels, I focussed on dialogic interaction between “local” and “global” aspects that come to sight through the literary strategies of fusion and combination which find their way into their narratives. The idea of “glocality” is conditioned by contacts, interchanges, and confluences that refers to the absolute synthesis rather than an untainted identity and seeks for articulations of the dialectic, but precisely the continual self-creating interchange of opposites. This multi-contextual, multicultural comparison is related to my belief in the need to read Modern African Literature outside the limitations of the national contexts without discarding its local specificities. The same principle prompted me to undertake a comparative study across linguistic, geographical, and cultural boundaries. All the way through my examination of the six selected novels, I have tried to demonstrate that Achebe, Feraoun, Ngugi, Kateb, Armah, and Mimouni's texts can be a focus of study based on the assumption that it is possible to speak of “glocal” literature by centring attention on the description of the intellectual's place as being inside and outside his society. By “glocality”, I mean a new way of reading these novels that both formally and thematically interbreeds with the increasing number of different local and global cultural markers just as they are clearly shaped by and respond to the new social processes of globalization that

criticize dominant forces and perspectives. Though the compared writers are affiliated with the western cultures, and they self-consciously attempt to reconcile discordant and conflicting principles, all of them face the immense burden of articulating a distinctive voice by struggling with acknowledged literary influences on which they draw the form but attempt to depart from. Their re-conceptualization and synthesis of the existing views bring about a resonating and renovating outlook of their novels.

The three case comparative studies provide a model of comparison that takes as its point of departure the commitment all the novelists share to a relational, polyphonic, and contrapuntal rather than merely binary and oppositional understanding of identity, culture and literature. Our analysis of cultural preservation and celebration in Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* examined the way the two novels can be linked with the political, social and cultural realities in a time context. Both novels cross the limitations and destroy the walls imposed by history upon the perspective of the continent whose hopes Feraoun and Achebe have been determined to articulate. They develop, in part, from a history of active resistance to the colonial encounter and their main concern is to preserve and celebrate the culture of their people that colonialism had controlled. Although Achebe and Feraoun adopted their coloniser's language, it is a mere tool to describe their own cultures in all their varieties. The two authors have also in common the fact that they became to varying degrees, "protectors and translators" of their traditional cultures and made an intellectual effort in order to cope with the imposed foreign cultures. At the same time, both analyse the predicament of the postcolonial intellectual, retaining solidarity with their community while being critical of it in revising certain practices in their traditional communities. However, Feraoun and Achebe's use of elements from African traditional lore do not need to be assimilated to any notion of native African heritage alone. It is rather suggestive of a confluence of local and foreign

sources. The recuperation of elements from oral tradition, notably symbols, recurrent metaphors, proverbs, and legends are combined to create an interrelated identity. It becomes an understandable urge for self-assertion Feraoun and Achebe have taken it upon themselves to describe their cultures to show the world that such cultures do exist. Their novels are, probably, the most outstanding examples relevant to Bakhtin's theory of organic and intentional hybridity, a process of fusing different discourses. Bakhtin maintains that such a process is at the core of the development in literature of all epochs. As a reaction to the colonizers' control of their native languages and erasure of their culture, Achebe and Feraoun overcome the question of the imposed gap by adopting the method of appropriation and fused their borrowings from foreign texts with their artistic creations holding an intervocal relationship with African traditional performances. Achebe supports subversion rather than a complete rejection of the colonizer's language. For him, to banish the English language from African literature will not be an adequate solution to the language issue especially in multi-lingual societies like Nigeria. He sustains his argument by marking the difference between what he calls a national literature written in English and an ethnic one written in Hausa, Yoruba, Edu, and Igbo. Achebe opts for the first one because any attempt to define African literature in terms which overlook the complexities of the African scene and material of the time is doomed to failure (Morrison.2007: 22).

Correspondingly, the "glocality" of Feraoun and Achebe's novels is remarkably close to that of the dual role of authors who offer a local voice to foreign material just as they make a foreign material more familiar to their local environments. As authors of colonized culture, both learn the language of the colonizer and take it back to their own communities thus making themselves translators who occupy a manufactured, hybrid space between two cultures. Glocality in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* lies in the two authors' use of their local cultural knowledge to which they add foreign rudiments resulting from the global

impact of imperialism to create dialogue between the local and the global. As artifacts produced in the interface and clashing of restraining discursive factors, the cultural significance of the language they use in their novels leads inevitably to a hypothesis that a commitment to blending oral and written discourses on the part of Achebe and Feraoun is a way of articulating a double identity which derives in part from selective appropriation, incorporation, and articulation of European and African discourses to demystify the view of western literary texts of their countries. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feraoun's *La terre et le sang* stand as bridges between the earlier texts and the polyphonic narratives of Kateb Yacine and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O for whom the act of writing is combined with a heroic creation as a process of culture building and cultural refinement.

Kateb's *Nedjma* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*", studiously provides a framework for thinking in terms of a theory of nationalism in the African context, as well as introducing obvious links to the areas of the world in which issues of national identity are of pressing concern. The construction of cultural identities has often been inseparable from the discourse of nationalism. Literature in this case stands at the service of ideology and can be a weapon for the mobilization of people and a call for individual and collective participation in the task of national construction and cultural enhancement. Such refinement is displayed in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Kateb' *Nedjma* which converge in the way their authors use their liberating discourses against oppression, develop strategies that are similar to the African Epic Tradition. From this perspective, Kateb and Ngugi's representation of their characters resonate with the epic stories of African folk heroes. Both writers use the past history and the characters' heroic stories as a tool dismantling the western stereotypes. For instance, Kateb's heroic depiction of the 8 May uprising appears as a motto of *Nedjma*. Similarly, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi celebrates the Mau Mau Rebellion of the 1950s. His interest in the Mau Mau movement is embodied in his glorification and unquestionable support of the revolt, which is evidenced also in his heroic treatment of the Mau Mau freedom fighters. Ngugi and Kateb's works of fiction are affirmations of their beliefs in the revolutionary potential of the dispossessed peasants and workers in Kenya, Algeria, and the

world to overthrow colonial and the neo-colonial rules and to create societies based on liberty, justice, and equality.

Furthermore, the glocality of Kateb's *Nedjma* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* appears in the emphasis placed on the way in which the novelists develop some experimental textual strategies in order to grapple more fully with the complexities of the written expressions of selfhood and with the broader issues of identity in a colonial context. They develop multi-layered and multi-voiced textual strategies in order to work through the process of decolonising the self. Although the two fictions contain some modernist traits, they are not merely modernist novels. Many reasons have been advanced for such an assumption. So, no matter what controversy may surround Kateb and Ngugi's engagement with, indebtedness and affiliation to western literary tradition, it is certain that both writers have a distinctive way of reconstructing new cultural frameworks that fit their own perception of African history and identity. Though both novelists acknowledged influences, they succeeded to depart from them in using their own ingrained ideas. Their novels exemplify a process of hybridization through which both writers produced works of imagination that absorb modernist texts, generic and narrative templates and character types, and transform them into original hybrid textual artefacts that sometimes resist critical efforts to locate their influences, or fix their forms within distinct ideology. In other terms, Ngugi and Kateb found an inspiration and relevant examples in western modernist texts and subsequently developed their ideas along their own quite personal lines and attain a full realization. The two novels are rooted in Kenyan and Algerian legends and popular myths. In spite of the authors' use of a foreign language, both manage to combine African cultural forms with the borrowed ones.

Our examination of Armah's *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* considered comparatively the way the writers incorporate and fuse deliberately a wide variety of discourses within the body of their texts, creating dynamic

meanings with local and global connotations. To appreciate better the fusions and combinations, I suggested what critics fail to register in the textual strategies akin to the African trickster tradition and the way Armah and Mimouni reprocess them with their artistic and didactic designs. Such transgressive strategies stand for the “glocality” of the two novels. At the local level, the affinity between Armah and Mimouni finds its expression in a shift from revolt against the colonizer to a critique of their post independence rulers. Whereas the early years of national liberation gave much hope, the ways in which the transition took place, with many of the new African leaders becoming puppets of the old colonial regime, led to a growing bitterness because independence brought not the promised solace and succour, but deepened misery and misfortune. In most African countries, internal colonialism merely replaced external colonialism. What made the situation even more galling was the fact that, in most cases, yesterday's freedom fighters had become today's remarkable tyrants. In the words of Armah, Africans “had only exchanged monkeys for baboons”. Not unexpectedly, Armah and Mimouni when faced with dictatorial regimes of autocratic rulers return to questions of politics and power as major sources of inspiration. Their two novels reflect the highly wrought emotional atmosphere of the disillusionment of post independence years, which the two authors convey with special intensity charting the internal conflicts, tensions and terror which are the elements not only of that period, but also characteristics of the global impact of neo-colonialism.

To grapple with the problem and in order to resist the subtle oppression of the officials, Armah and Mimouni needed to appropriate the oratory skills of the African trickster, his implicit meaning, his contradictory mode of saying one thing and meaning another, his flattering and damning in one breath, his use of satire, sarcasm, and irony. All these techniques with which both writers pepper their novels are meant as “weapons

of the weak” to criticize the political corrupt and corrupting leaders. Transgressive strategies, verbal dexterity, and diplomacy as resistance tactics are used because Armah and Mimouni were not allowed to have a voice; they used the trickster’s covert subtlety in order to intersperse their feelings about their countries in a language with which they attack neocolonialism. The trickster strategies come to sight through Armah and Mimouni’s selection of a group of downtrodden members of their respective societies, saturated with groans of misery, gloom, and turmoil. The reader is allowed to plunge into the agony and the ugliest aspect of the human condition. The two authors create generic and functional characters with masked personalities and positions rather than offering normal characters. Both narratives present consciousnesses that are totalising in their despairing views of their society, recognising no hope, no joy and no desire. They are filled with protagonists who are neither complex nor highly individualised. Rather, they are conceived as generic figures, which offer opportunities for some degree of caricature. The characters have no psychological profundity; what is important in the two narratives is the observation of the eccentricities and the scandalous behaviours of some African political leaders that embody controversial ideas. Therefore, the way Armah and Mimouni create their characters resonates in many ways with the characters of African folklore whose private lives are tightly linked to their public function in their society. The two novels’ main protagonists’ quests illustrate the bitter situation and echo the journey motif in the trickster folk tales. As trickster figures, Armah and Mimouni’s protagonists are ineffective; most of them are radically alienated from the social world around them. As a result, despite their ability to represent typical positions within society, they lack the kind of connection to the social totality. The loss of an ability to conceive such a close connection between the public and private realms constitutes a crucial symptom of the loss of historical sense that characterized the post-colonial ruling elite in Ghana and

Algeria. After independence, the petty bourgeoisie ruling elite, in the two countries, firmly established their hegemony, lost their revolutionary energy, and became decadent and corrupt.

More significantly, the convergences of Armah and Mimouni's texts lie on the following grounds. First, in the two novels, it is often difficult to discern a continuous plot line. Characters do not develop: they are deliberately built as flat, eccentric, and contradictory. All the 'unrealistic' effects are replaced by 'realistic' long monologues including gestures addressed directly to the reader. Second, the most important common feature between Armah and Mimouni, is their deployment of transgressive techniques, mainly apparent in the dialogues of the various characters. The techniques echo African popular trickster tradition of "serious laughter", Kristeva's "abjection", and Miller's notion of "disgust" united. Such combination aims to provide fun and laughter as the best means of reflecting social contradictions and allowing the reader to think and react to provoke change in society. All of them are the result of political and social changes, brought about by a confluence of factors such as the two authors' ideological stances and their roles as intellectuals within their societies and towards the outward world as reflected in their works. As dissident writers, the new urgency led them to appeal to satire and irony, to explore social and political problems in a satiric way, to raise consciousness and to encourage people to struggle in order to change the world for the better.

In line with what the thesis has been trying to demonstrate, it is my hope that despite of its insufficiencies, shortcomings, and incompleteness of grasp, has succeeded in constituting a significant attempt to rethink the study of Modern African Literature outside the confinement of peculiar cases of influence and indebtedness to western literary models and culture. Because of the exceptional period in which the selected writers have been positioned on the trajectory of contemporary world history by the

intersection of the global and local events, almost every subject which one ponders gives rise to exciting new ways of conceptualizing the past, the present, and the future. Besides the intercultural influence, which is an unavoidable and mostly a positive accompaniment to the writers, the coexistence of many other cultural markers make it possible, for example, to bypass the boundaries of influence and imitation unless one is willing to ignore the Eurocentric hubris implied by such an approach. The suggestion is that it would be better to study Modern African Literature in the broader framework of the “glocal”, an inclusive context where the underlying interconnections between local traditions and features from western imposed cultures all interplay. The selected writers, in my view, consider themselves as agents who have been given the mission of bringing something specific to their communities that prize the individual’s capacity to do good for the whole society. The selected writers resemble a kind of “organic intellectuals, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, whose role is active participation in political life, as constructors, organizers, ‘permanent persuaders’ and not just simple orators. All of them reflect the problems of the societies with an exceptional honesty and skill, and teach their readers enduring lessons about the dignity of human courage, and when read closely, they can enrich our consciousness considerably because they help create and foster a better change in Africa or elsewhere.

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