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***Commitment and Protest in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) and Yacine Kateb's *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* (1970).***

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# Contents

Acknowledgments .....	i
Dedication .....	ii
Abstract: .....	iii
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Review of Literature. ....	2
Issue and Working Hypothesis. ....	5
Methodological Outline.....	5
Endnotes .....	6
<b>Methods and Materials .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1-Methods.....	7
Sartre’s Theory of Commitment .....	7
The Brechtian Theory of Drama.....	10
2-Materials.....	12
Summary of <i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i> .....	13
Summary of <i>L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc</i> .....	14
Endnotes.....	15
<b>Results and Discussion.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter One: Political and Social Commitment in the Two Plays.....</b>	<b>19</b>

War and Colonialism.....	20
Critique of Capitalism.....	25
Oppression and the Struggle of the Working Class.....	28
Endnotes.....	33
<b>Chapter Two: The Two Plays as Examples of the Brechtian Theatre of Protest.....</b>	<b>36</b>
The two plays as Epic Theatres.....	36
1) The Structure of the Two Plays.....	37
a) Episodic-Structure of <i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i> .....	37
Episodic-Structure of <i>L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc</i> .....	38
b) Direct-Narration in Brecht's <i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i> .....	39
Direct-Narration in Kateb's <i>L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc</i> .....	39
2) The Conception of the Hero in the Two Plays.....	40
3) The Use of Music.....	43
4) The Two Plays' Appeal to the Audience.....	46
Endnotes.....	49
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Works Cited.....	52

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## Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to

*My dear parents,*

*My sisters and my brother,*

*All my friends.*

***Rahima***

*My dear parent,*

*My dear sisters,*

*All my family and friends.*

***Samah***

## Abstract

*This research paper studied Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children (1939) and Kateb Yacine's L'homme aux scandal de caoutchouc (1970). Our major interest in this dissertation was to look for possible convergences between the German playwright, Bertolt Brecht and the Algerian Kateb Yacine as committed writers. Therefore, we have borrowed some notions from Sartre's theory of 'Committed Literature' developed in his book What is Literature? (1948) and we relied on Brecht's theory of 'Epic Theatre'. We have demonstrated that the two authors share the same stand towards the role of literature during the twentieth century, a period that is characterized by great economic and political unrest. We have divided our work into two Chapters. The first one is a thematic analysis in which we attempted to highlight how Bertolt Brecht and Kateb Yacine, as Sartrian authors, denounce war, imperialism and social injustice. The second chapter explores the different techniques of 'Epic Theatre' that the two authors rely on in the two selected plays to make of their respective theatre a means of protest and social change.*

## Introduction

This piece of research is entitled Commitment and Protest in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children* (1939) and Kateb Yacine's *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* (1970). The focus is on the literary strategies used by these two intellectuals to denounce war, imperialism and all what is unacceptable in society.

The twentieth century was a period of great wars such as the First World War, the Second World War and the Cold War. People were living in what T.S. Eliot named "The Waste Land". They were victims of social violence, economic frustration and political unrest. Poverty and social- class struggle were the main problems. During this great tension, two political and economic trends were in struggle: capitalism and communism. Capitalism is a political, social and economic system developed by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith sustains that trade and industry should be controlled by private owners rather than by government. Under such conditions, the working class was harshly exploited by the dominating bourgeois class. As a result, this system led to the emergence of social classes' conflicts, and for this reason Karl Marx says that capitalism is the source of all evils in society and there should be a revolution to achieve social change. Marx yearns for a system that may resolve all the problems of society, to put an end to imperialism and to achieve social justice. Thus, political polarization and the trauma of war have affected human thought and pushed some writers and intellectuals to question the role of literature in society.

In this respect, some writers believe that literature is completely independent of political and social contexts, arguing that a study of any literary work is based on the examination of its beauty and the pleasure it can provide. For instance, Walter Pater advocates 'Art for art's sake', he "manifested little or no interest in social and political questions [...] for him even ideas possess a quasi-aesthetic quality"<sup>1</sup>. Besides him, one can mention Oscar Wilde

and André Briton, among others. This category of writers, indeed, promotes the autonomy of art.

Unlike aesthetic literature, literature of commitment gives more importance to social and political issues. The term commitment is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action”<sup>2</sup>. Literally, this concept means that literature should not be ‘art for art’s sake’, it is rather a literature in which the writer gives himself a mission. He is the spokesperson of the oppressed and alienated people.

As far as theatre of commitment and protest is concerned, one may say that it is generally a product of major influences such as colonialism, imperialism, injustice, and oppression. Thus, this theatre is a kind of literature that bears political, religious, economic and social messages. Therefore, committed writers such as Bertold Brecht and Kateb Yacine engage themselves in their writings to defend, condemn, or support a particular ideology.

### **The Literature Review**

*Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) and *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* (1970) have been the center of interest of many critics. Bertolt Brecht is considered as one of the greatest playwrights of the twentieth century. Therefore, he has been widely studied. His masterpiece *Mother Courage and Her Children* has been the subject of many studies. For instance, Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, elucidate how Brecht replies to Georg Lukacs’s criticism on the dialectic of essence and appearance by claiming that “the great works of literature created a true-to-life surface, but were simultaneously able to reveal the underlying social forces which were not apparent in day to day existence [...]”<sup>3</sup> Thomson and Sacks show how Brecht introduces his drama as an answer by writing *Mother Courage and Her Children*. They say: “Brecht’s second, and more lasting riposte, to Lukacs’s line of argument was to create the play *Mother Courage and Her*

*Children* which may be seen as a further and clinching contribution to the argument”<sup>4</sup>. Brecht completely disagrees with Lukacs’s dialectics and presents “spikier, looser number of components which interact dialectically but never synthesize”<sup>5</sup>. The critics highlight the Brecht-Lukacs debate over the definition of form and content that started during the 1930s and show how *Mother Courage and Her Children* was written as an answer to Lukacs.

Another critic who studied *Mother Courage and Her Children* is K. M Newton. In his book entitled *Modern Literature and the Tragic* analyzed it from the tragic side, he says: “Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Children* [...] is on the surface similar in structure to traditional tragedy”<sup>6</sup>. Newton claims that though Brecht was against tragic drama, this play has a tragic end like classical tragedies.

Another illustrative critic is Eric Bentley. Indeed, the latter is Brecht’s translator, and the one with whom Brecht shared some theatrical works before his death (1956). In *Thinking about the Playwright*, Bentley observes that:

*Mother Courage and Her Children* is coming to be accepted universally as one of the important plays of the past half century. Critics in the East wish it had an optimistic ending, and critics in the West wish it was a traditional tragedy, which is to say that it is a play that both parties worry over, and which neither can get around.<sup>7</sup>

Eric Bentley views that both socialists and capitalists were worried about Brecht’s play. On the one hand, socialists wish it had an optimistic ending. On the other hand, capitalists wish it was a traditional tragedy for the reason that it is based on empathy so that the audience may sympathize with *Mother Courage* without criticizing the capitalist system.

As far as Kateb Yacine is concerned, his works received a considerable bulk of criticism especially his novel *Nedjma* (1956). Concerning *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, it is the first play by Kateb written outside the Algerian context. Agnes Pierron says: “ [ C’est aussi la première fois que Yacine [ Kateb] sort de son cadre d’inspiration

priviligié: l'Algerie".<sup>8</sup> Some critics of this play include: Olivier Neveux, Jacqueline Arnaud, Pamela A. Pears, Agnès Pierron, Boukhelouf Sabiha, Joseph A. Kechichian, Benaouda Leb dai and others.

In *Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam*, Pears sees *L'homme aux sandales de Caoutchouc*, as a good example of a satirical work. She asserts: "One of Kateb's most effective literary techniques is his use of satire [...] since Kateb is creating a play that addresses political oppression and abuse of power on an international stage, he targets various figures with his satire".<sup>9</sup>

Another critic who has studied Kateb's *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* is Sabiha Boukhelouf in her doctoral dissertation entitled *Les instances énonçantes dans l'œuvre écrite de Kateb Yacine*. She devoted a whole chapter 'Le Tièrs-Actant dans *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*' to analyze some concepts of this play, she believes that Kateb Yacine speaks about oppressed people, and she says: "Kateb Yacine dénonce les subterfuges du pouvoir par la parodie et l'ironie".<sup>10</sup>

Another recent critic is Benaouda Leb dai. In his article "Kateb Yacine, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*", he highlights the universality of Kateb's writings. Benaouda asserts that as Kateb fought for his country by writing *Le Cercle des représailles*, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* is not only a play that condemns the Vietnam-War, but also a play that fights all kinds of universal oppression. He claims: "*L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* démontre plus que toute autre pièce, la position idéologique internationale de son auteur qui a toujours lutté contre toute forme d'oppression".<sup>11</sup>

## **Issue and Working hypothesis**

From the review of the literature about Bertolt Brecht and Kateb Yacine, one can notice that many studies have dealt with the two selected plays: *Mother Courage and her Children* and *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* separately. However, to the best of our knowledge, no work has been done so far to study the two writers under discussion together with the perspective of uncovering their commitment and protest. Therefore, our main concern in this dissertation is to uncover Brecht's and Kateb's commitment in one sole comparative study. To achieve our task, we will attempt to analyze the social and political contexts in which Kateb and Brecht have produced their plays, their aims from writing their respective plays, and the different affinities that the latter may disclose.

## **Methodological Outline**

At the methodological level, our dissertation is composed of four sections. In the 'Introduction' section, we define theatre of commitment and protest and we review some works written on Brecht's play *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Kateb's play *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*. We have then raised the issue and the working hypothesis. In the 'Methods and Materials' section, we summarize Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of 'La littérature engagée' developed in his book *What is Literature? And Other Essays* (1948), and Bertolt Brecht's theatrical theory of 'Epic Theatre' developed in a collection of chapters edited by John Willett entitled *Brecht on Theatre* (1964). The materials section presents the biographies of Bertolt Brecht and Kateb Yacine, with a summary of *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*. The 'Result' section is centered on the findings of our research. Our 'Discussion' section consists of two chapters. The first one uncovers the concept of commitment through a thematic study. In the second chapter, we discuss the

different techniques that the two playwrights follow and which make of their works a theatre of protest in the Brechtian sense.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Fisherman Solomon, *The Interpretation of Art* (California: University of California Press, 1963), 49.

<sup>2</sup> 'Oxford Dictionaries Commitment' Viewed on March 2015  
<<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/commitment>

<sup>3</sup> Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> K. M. Newton, *Modern Literature and the Tragic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2008), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Bentley, *Thinking about the Playwright: Comments from Four Decades* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1987), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Agnès Pierron, *Maréchal* (France : L'Age d'Homme, 1990), 48.

<sup>9</sup> Pamela A. Pears, *Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam: Woman, Words and War* (United States of America: Lexington Books, 2004), 39.

<sup>10</sup> Sabiha Boukhelouf, '*Les instances énonçantes dans l'œuvre écrite de Kateb Yacine*' (PhD diss., Université Paris VIII- Vincennes A Saint Denis : 1997), 494.

<sup>11</sup> Benaouda Lebdaï, 'Kateb Yacine, L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc' last modified 30 octobre 2009, Viewed April 2015 <<http://www.alger-republicain.com/Kateb-Yacine-L-homme-aux-sandaes.html>

## Methods and Materials

### 1-Methods

This part of our dissertation explores Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of commitment developed in his book *What is Literature?* (1948) to discuss Brecht and Kateb as committed writers. We also intend to summarize Brecht's theory of Epic Theatre in order to illustrate some new techniques through which he aims for change.

### Sartre's Theory of Commitment

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) is a French philosopher, essayist, novelist and playwright known for his existentialist philosophy. Sartre's essay *What is Literature?* was written after the Second World War, in 1948, it answers three main questions: what is Writing? Why Write? and For Whom Does One Write?

Beginning with **What is Writing?**, Sartre in this section distinguishes writing from other arts such as music and painting. He says:

There is no such parallelism [between a literary theory and music]. Here as everywhere, it is not only the form which differentiates, but the matter as well. And it is one thing to work with colour and sound, and another to express oneself by means of words<sup>1</sup>.

For Sartre, a writer can guide his reader not like the painter who presents a complicated drawing and lets the spectator see whatever he pleases. Sartre moved on to distinguish between poetry and prose, he claims that the "empire of sign is prose"<sup>2</sup> and considers poetry the same as music and painting because, though a poet uses words, he does not use them in the same way as used by the prose writer. The poet "considers words as things not as signs"<sup>3</sup>, whereas the prose writer is a man who "makes use of words"<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, what matters more is the aim of writing i.e. the ideas and the style is not really important.

Jean Paul Sartre believes that the mission of the prose writer is to speak because to speak is to act and to act is to reveal and when he/she reveals he/she aims to change. Sartre says:

By speaking, I reveal the situation by my very intention of changing it [...] the 'committed' writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change.<sup>5</sup>

In short, a writer must devote his artistic production to denounce some social and political issues.

The second question asked by Sartre is: **Why Write?** As an answer, he gives us the following lines:

It is not true that one writes for oneself. That would be the worst blow. In projecting one's emotions on paper, one barely manages to give them a languid extension. The creative act is only an incomplete and abstract moment in the production of a work. If the author existed alone he would be able to write as much as he liked; the work as *object* would never see the light of day and he would either have to put down his pen or despair. But the operation of writing implies that of reading as its dialectical correlative and these two connected acts necessitate two distinct agents [...] there is no art except for and by others.<sup>6</sup>

Jean-Paul Sartre proclaims that literature should not be 'Art for Art's Sake'. For him, literature is a means of communication between the writer and the reader. So, the relationship between them is complementary. Sartre explains this relationship as: "to write is to make an appeal to the reader [...]’s freedom [in order] to collaborate in the production of his work"<sup>7</sup>

For Jean-Paul Sartre, writing has a specific objective, one writes as a response to oppression and injustice. The writer hopes for a positive change. He desires to feel essential in his society as Sartre points out: "One of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need that we are essential in relationship to the world"<sup>8</sup>. One can conclude that the main idea for Sartre is "freedom", since the author and readers are free men as he declares: "[...] the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject-freedom".<sup>9</sup>

The last question is **For Whom Does One Write?** Sartre gives us a general answer as follows: “[the author] writes for the universal reader, and we have seen, in effect, that the exigency of the writer is, as a rule, addressed to *all men*”<sup>10</sup> meaning that a writer writes for the whole world. However, Sartre adds that the writer must always speak to the people who belong to his time and his culture, since they share the same circumstances and preoccupations as he claims: “[...] the writer is speaking to his contemporaries and brothers of his class and race ...”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the role of art is mediation, and “the writer is, *par excellence*, a mediator and his commitment is to mediation”<sup>12</sup> whose aim is to establish communication between a current event and those people.

As a matter of fact, once a person becomes a writer, he cannot avoid the norms of his surrounding since “the milieu *produces* the writer”<sup>13</sup>. To illustrate this, Sartre gives us the example of Richard Wright, a black American author, who writes on purpose to defend the rights of the blacks, however, through his address to the Blacks, he addresses the whole people, Sartre argues: “It is not that he is not aiming through them at all men but it is *through them* that he is thus aiming”.<sup>14</sup> So far, it is clear that the mission of the author is to change society. Sartre asserts: “[a writer] must write for a public which has the freedom of changing everything”.<sup>15</sup>

Sartre adds another essay in which he analyses the situation of the writer in 1947. He divided it into three generations. The first one concerns authors who started to produce before the war of 1914. The second generation are authors who published their works after the First World War (after 1918). The third generation is what Sartre calls “Our own”<sup>16</sup> i.e. the generation that began to write just after the Second World War. The era of the 1930s was characterized by a great change when man starts to feel the threat of war and death as Sartre says: “From 1930 on, the world depression, the coming of Nazism, and the events in China opened our eyes [...authors have felt themselves] *situated*”.<sup>17</sup> Sartre believes that a writer

cannot consider himself a cosmopolitan since he has a mission related to “a France in danger”<sup>18</sup> (the case of French writers). In this respect, Sartre speaks of a literature of great circumstances that “unites and reconciles the metaphysical absolute and the relativity of the historical fact”<sup>19</sup>. Thus, after the Second World War, there was no need for a literature of consumption, with the aftermath of war, man has learned that writing is a job which requests hard work and a great sense of responsibility that entails danger and sometimes a word “might cost a life”.<sup>20</sup>

Sartre was very much affected by war. Christine Daigle argues that this “war had transformed a rather apolitical, anarchist, pacific Sartre into one who believes in the necessity of commitment”<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, Sartre insists on changing the world. In 1947, with the clash between communists and capitalists, Sartre believes that the writer should write for both the bourgeois and the proletariat. However, he should serve the interests of the oppressed class. This can be achieved through a total literature which should be: “of praxis and exis, negativity and construction, of doing, having, and being”.<sup>22</sup>

Sartre ends up his essay claiming that:

There is no guarantee that literature is immortal, its chance today, its only chance, is the chance of Europe, of socialism, of democracy, and of peace. We must play it [...] the world can very well do without literature. But it can do without man still better”<sup>23</sup>.

To conclude, a committed writer should trace objectives such as democracy and peace etc, and by writing, he should aim for a positive change and a distinct future.

### **The Brechtian Theory of Drama**

Bertolt Brecht as a committed writer and theorist disagreed completely with Aristotle’s theory of drama which gives more importance to the plot, a drama that has no educational value. Indeed, Aristotle believes that drama is more therapeutic i.e. “[...]”

effecting through pity and fear the purification [*katharsis*] of such emotions”<sup>24</sup>. Brecht distinguishes between Dramatic and Epic theatre as follows:

<b>Dramatic Theatre</b>	<b>Epic Theatre</b>
Plot Implicates the spectator in a stage situation Wears down his capacity for action Provides him with sensations Experience The spectator is involved in something Suggestion Instinctive feelings are preserved The spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience The human being is taken for granted  He is unalterable Eyes on the finish One scene makes another Growth Linear development Evolutionary determinism Man as a fixed point Thought determines being Feeling	Narrative Turns the spectator into an observer, but arouses his capacity for action Forces him to take decisions Picture of the world He is made to face something Argument Brought to the point of recognition The spectator stands outside, studies  The human being in the object of the inquiry He is alterable and able to alter Eyes on the course Each scene for itself Montage In curves Jumps Man as a process Social being determines thought Reason

25

It is obvious from the above table that Brecht introduces Epic Theatre as an alternative, that is, an anti-illusive theatre which gives more importance to people and events. It is worthy to note that Brecht’s aspiration for a theatre that brings social change was the leading motto that gave birth to Epic Theatre. This new form of theatre appeals more to the spectator’s reasoning or thinking as Brecht argues: “the essential point of epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to feelings than to the spectator’s reason”<sup>26</sup>.

Brecht was inspired by Marx’s ideas on society. Accordingly, Epic Theatre is an anti-capitalist theatre. Brecht himself says: “when I read Marx *Capital* I understand my plays”<sup>27</sup>. Epic theatre is based on dialectical comments on society, a kind of theatre that expects the audience’s engagement by questioning and criticizing what they are watching. In order to

attain this objective, Brecht introduced the technique of Alienation Effect (Verfremdungseffekte in German or the V-effect). This new technique was inspired by classical Chinese theatre, and it aims at reminding the audience that they are just watching a play to keep distance between the audience and the characters on stage. Indeed “[The character] expresses his awareness of being watched [...] and] the audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place”.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the character on stage should “appear strange and even surprising to the audience”<sup>29</sup>. To alienate the audience, Brecht relied on some techniques among which we can mention the use of Episodic-Structure, Direct-Narration, Epic Character, and Music. All these devices serve as a means to alienate the audience and teach them a morality. Brecht says:

[...] such in our time, and the theatre must [...] work out an entirely new sort of art such as will be capable of influencing modern people. The main subject of the drama must be relationships between one man and another as they exist today, and that is what I'm primarily concerned to investigate and find means of expression for”.<sup>30</sup>

He adds: “The theatre became an affair for philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished not just to explain the world but also to change it”.<sup>31</sup>

To conclude, Epic Theatre is a theatre of reason, a theatre that appeals for the audience's objectivity rather than subjectivity, reason rather than empathy. It invites the spectator to watch the play critically rather than living the events. It aims to change the world and specifically to better the life of the proletariat.

## **2-Materials**

Bertolt Brecht (1898- 1956) is a German poet, essayist and playwright who introduced a new form of theatre called the Epic Theatre as a break from the traditional theatrical form (ancient Greek theatre). Brecht has gained fame with *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), which is a musical comedy composed by Kurt Weill. In 1933, with the rise of Nazism, Brecht showed a great interest in political theatre constantly based on Marxist ideology. This playwright fled

Germany and settled in different places: Denmark, Sweden, and United States ...<sup>32</sup>. *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1938) is an anti-war play written when he was living in Sweden. It is an attack on two political systems namely: Nazism (Hitler) and fascism (Mussolini). The story of the play is set during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Europe.

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) happened in Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century; this period extended over a series of wars that started in what is now Germany and involved many other European countries. Its causes are: on the one hand, religious, a conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants, on the other hand, political; the Habsburg Dynasty's (a catholic family) attempt to be more powerful. This war is "one of the most destructive conflicts and shocking wars in European History"<sup>33</sup>.

### **Summary of *Mother Courage and Her Children***

*Mother Courage and Her Children* is a play in twelve scenes produced by the German Playwright Bertolt Brecht in 1939 and performed for the first time in 1941. The play centers on the life of a mother named Anna Fierling and her three children: Eilif, Swiss Cheese and Katrin. It takes place in Europe in the early seventeenth century during the Thirty Years' War.

The play opens in spring 1624. It starts as a religious war between the Catholics and the Protestants. A Recruiter and a Sergeant are complaining about the difficulty in finding soldiers; Mother Courage appears with her mute daughter Katrin and the two sons Eilif and Swiss Cheese pulling her canteen wagon. Her elder son Eilif is taken away to join the Swedish army while his mother is selling goods for the sergeant.

Two years later, Mother Courage is shown besides a Swedish General's tent bargaining with a cook to sell him a capon. The General praises Eilif as being a brave soldier for "[...] cutting down peasants"<sup>34</sup>. Inside the tent Mother Courage meets her son Eilif and blames him for risking his life.

After three years, her son Swiss Cheese who is described as an honest man is killed by the Catholics, and Mother Courage being afraid, refuses to recognize him as her son. Afterward, she goes to the Officer's tent to complain about the soldiers who destroyed her cart.

The war spreads to other countries in Europe and Mother Courage decides to continue selling provisions for the soldiers to take profits, she wishes war to continue and never stop because if it ends, her business will end too. However, as the play advances we come to notice that this war takes her two remaining children Eilif, then Kattrin. The play ends, (in 1636), with the mother attempting to pull the Canteen Wagon by herself.

Concerning Kateb Yacine (1929- 1983), he is an Algerian playwright, poet and novelist who grew up under the difficult circumstances of the French colonialism in Algeria, his visit to Vietnam (1967-1970) and his friendship with Ho Chi Minh urged him to write a play about the Vietnam war entitled *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* (1970). This anti-imperial play reflects realities of the French and American occupation of Vietnam.

The Vietnam War is divided into two major conflicts: the First Indochina War (1946-1954); a war between France and Vietnam "Anti-French Resistance War" led by Ho Chi Minh and Giap. France was defeated in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 7, 1954. The Second Indochina War (1956-1975) was a conflict between the North (Viet Cong, Communists) and South (supported by America and anti- communist allies)<sup>35</sup>.

### **Summary of *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc***

*L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* is a play written in 1970 by the Algerian author Kateb Yacine. It is divided into eight separate chapters. Each chapter is about the Vietnamese's fighting to get independence and liberty. The events of the play extend from the

period of the Chinese occupation to the American involvement in Vietnam. Each period shows the struggle of the oppressed people under the imperialist system.

Kateb opens up his play with the Trung Sisters, two Vietnamese who fight against the Chinese occupation. The playwright shows the difficulties that the peasants face under the feudal system. Afterward, he tells us about the French control of Vietnam till the Vietnamese's victory in Dien Bien Phu. Furthermore, this play illustrates the clash that happened during the Cold War between the communists and capitalists. In this respect, Kateb Yacine asserts:

Ce que je veux monter ce sont quelques images de ces peuples qui, sur plusieurs continents, libèrent leurs pays de la domination colonial et impérialiste, le sujet central de ces diverses pièces est donc cet immense mouvement de libération des peuples qui se réveillent.<sup>36</sup>

The Algerian author includes characters from France, America, Africa and Vietnam with the hero Ho Chi Minh. In fact, this man in rubber sandals is Ho Chi Minh who fought against France and America during the Vietnam War. Some characters in this play are real such as Ho Chi Minh, Giap, Staline, Trung Sisters, Louis XVI...etc. While others, are fictitious like Mohammed and Face de Ramadan.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *“What is Literature?” and Other Essays*, (United States of America: Harvard University Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 183-182.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>21</sup> Christine Daigle, *Jean-Paul Sartre* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2010), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Sartre, "*What is Literature?*" and *Other Essays*, 195.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>24</sup> Malcolm Heath, trans., *Aristotle Poetics* (England: Penguin Books, 1996), xxxvii.

<sup>25</sup> John Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetics* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 37.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,67.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.,72.

<sup>32</sup> *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Universel*. (France: Précis, 1998.)

<sup>33</sup> William Frank Smith, *Catholic Church Milestones: People and Events that Shaped the Institutional Church* (United States of America: Dog Ear Publishing, 2010), 57.

<sup>34</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children: A Chronicle of Thirty Years' War*. (Socialist Stories, 1939),13.

<sup>35</sup> 'Britannica Vietnam War' Viewed 5 March 2015

<<http://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-war/>

<sup>36</sup> Kateb quoted in Agnès Pierron, *Maréchal* (France: L'Age d'Homme, 1990), 49.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

From our reading and analysis of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Kateb Yacine's *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, we have reached the result that the differences concerning the playwrights' social backgrounds do not prevent the existence of many similarities either at the level of the chosen themes or at the level of the techniques used to construct the plays.

In the first chapter of this paper, we have deduced that Brecht's and Kateb's commitment to some social and political issues lies in the denunciation of war, capitalism and social injustice. Our thematic investigation discloses that both writers condemn war and colonialism through depicting the true nature of their agents who seek only for their own interests. Indeed, both consider war as business. As a result, we noticed that the denunciation of capitalism is a leading theme in the two plays. They criticize the harsh and destructing systems which led to an imbalanced society. Therefore, as we can notice in the two plays, the struggle of the working class emerged to be the main concern of the two authors who committed their art to defend the oppressed. In short, the first chapter allowed us to answer the three main questions asked by Jean-Paul Sartre, our answers are: Firstly, Kateb Yacine and Bertolt Brecht consider writing as a means to denounce and comment on some social and political issues. Secondly, their objective by writing is to awaken people's consciousness about what surrounds them in order to bring about change. As far as the writer's target readers is concerned, we have noticed that both write in favor of the oppressed.

In the second chapter, our study of the different techniques that both playwrights use has enforced our discussion to show the affinities between Kateb Yacine and Bertolt Brecht as playwrights who make of theatre a means of protest. Through our analysis of the Brechtian's

technique of Alienation Effect, we have noticed that the two playwrights converge in their use of Episodic-Structure, Direct- Narration, Music and Epic Characters to arouse the audience's reasoning and objective thought to make change.

## **Discussion**

The literary affinities between both writers will be highlighted through two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to study Brecht and Kateb as committed writers. In fact, we will analyze the two committed authors' denunciation at the level of writing, the aim of their writings and the intended readers. In the second chapter, we will attempt to apply some of Brecht's new theatrical techniques through which he aims for protest and social change.

## **Chapter One: Political and Social Commitment in *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc***

This chapter intends to analyze the political, economic and social issues raised in *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*. Therefore, we would do a thematic study of these two mentioned literary texts of both Brecht and Kateb, respectively, in an attempt to answer the three questions asked by Jean-Paul Sartre: What is Writing? Why Write? and For Whom Does One Write?. Indeed, social, economic and political conditions under wartime are among the leading themes that Kateb and Brecht built up their works on.

Sartre says: "we would be hunters of meaning; we would speak the truth about the world and about our own lives"<sup>1</sup>. Following the philosophy of Sartre about commitment, the act of writing is not an art of illusion but rather a tool to shape the real image of the world and to reveal hidden realities about the human conditions. In the following lines, we shall discuss Brecht's and Kateb's commitment to some social and political issues.

## War and Colonialism

Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* is written at the beginning of the Second World War. Its story revolves around a period of war and the impact of its atrocities on the masses. Brecht as an intellectual writes in an allegorical way to question some political issues. Therefore, this play, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, was a reaction against the Nazi regime, and it is worthy to note that Brecht has written it during Hitler's invasion of Poland.

The events of this literary work are set during the Thirty Years War. In fact, Brecht's choice of this war is not fortuitous. This war is considered as one of the most destructive wars in the history of humanity. Its origin was a religious one; indeed, it was the result of the clash that happened between the Catholics and the Protestants. Brecht, in this play, reveals the dark and the gloomy side of war. Moreover his drama seems to hold an anti-imperialist discourse that is mainly shown by criticizing the oppressive rules which tend to restrict people's freedom and life by causing their sufferings.

Right at the beginning of the play, Brecht portrays many instances of war and its impacts on the masses. To illustrate this, the first scene of the play gives us a general atmosphere of the life of people including those who support war and the difficult moments they have to face in wartime as the character of the Recruiter complains: "how can you muster a unit in a place like this? I've been thinking of suicide, sergeant."<sup>2</sup>. Through the speech of this character, Brecht shows that the life of these people is so painful that they hate life and hope to die since they see death as the only solution to end their sufferings.

Indeed, when we speak about war, we cannot avoid talking about violence, brutality and cruelty. This fact is found in the play through revealing the sufferings of the oppressed group as the case of a peasant family who is a victim of the Catholics' threat. In this respect, Brecht represents the colonizers as villain and corrupted. Moreover, he denounces the

Imperialist's use of power and position to wield their authority as it is revealed in the play when the Emperor's Troops are looking for ways to get to the town of Halle, a protestant town. This is shown through the character of The Ensign, the leader of the Catholic's army, who says: "I want no noise now. Anyone shouts, shove your pike into him"<sup>3</sup>. This leader mistreats the peasant's family after their refusal to submission and help to get to the protestant town of Halle. The young son of this family who resisted by saying: "I ain't helping Catholics"<sup>4</sup> is obliged to guide them to save his family from starvation since a soldier has asserted: "I know what'll change his mind. *Goes towards the stable*. Two cows and an ox. Listen you: if you're not reasonable I'll chop up your cattle"<sup>5</sup>. He adds: "I knew the ox was what they minded about most, was I right?"<sup>6</sup>. As a matter of fact, this threat is one of the oppressive means used during war to influence innocent people.

Brecht in *Mother Courage and Her Children* also reveals the rigid and the harsh policies that are conducted during war. Therefore, he denounces its brutality that caused the death of many people mainly the poor as the three children of Mother Courage namely: Eilif, Swiss Cheese and Katrin. Indeed, Katrin is the most affected person in this play as she suffered from physical and mental troubles that made her a melancholic person. More explicitly, Katrin lived two harsh experiences during this destructive war: the first attack is performed by a soldier who put something in her mouth and caused her dumbness as Mother Courage confesses: "[...] she is only dumb from war, soldier stuffed something in her mouth when she was little"<sup>7</sup>. The second is what happened to her when she was sent by her selfish mother who supports war to get goods for her trade, Katrin was disfigured. Therefore, one can say that war caused her psychological imbalance and prevented her from living a normal life. Katrin is shown all the time taking refuge in her loneliness as her only solution to escape the meaningless world wherein she is found and to forget the painful life she is facing. Indeed, war has also caused her death after her opposition by warning the villagers from the coming

of the enemy's danger (the Catholics) through her non-stop drum beatings. This is illustrated in the play by the Ensign's order as follows:

Set it up! Set it up! *Calls up while the gun is being erected:* For the very last time: stop drumming! Kattrin, *in tears, drums as loud as she can* .Fire! *The soldiers fire. Kattrin is hit, gives a few more drumbeats and then slowly crumples.*<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, one of the major results of war is the problem of hunger and starvation as Mother Courage sustains: "Just about starving. I saw some, were grubbing up roots from sheer hunger, licking their fingers after they boiled some old leather strap. That's way it is."<sup>9</sup> This leads us to notice that the negative aspects of war can only affect common people. Therefore, Brecht stands against it by revealing its atrocities to make people aware.

Similarly to Brecht, Kateb denounces war and colonialism. In *L'homme aux sandales de Caoutchouc*, he reveals the strategies used by the colonizer to occupy the land of Vietnam. As the European colonialism pretends civilizing missions, Kateb in a dialogue between his characters, managed to uncover the other objectives or realities about the real mission of the colonizer.

The French control of Vietnam started in 1858. Yet their political presence was earlier to that period when they came to claim that the Vietnamese need a civilization and a religion as Le Missionnaire, a French character in *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, says: "Ces brebis égarées/ Contemporaines de Jésus-Christ/ Ignorant tout de l'Évangile"<sup>10</sup> This missionary describes the Trung Sisters as animals, sheep, he adds: "ce troupeau ne veut rien entendre"<sup>11</sup>. The colonizer uses a language that diminishes the value of the colonized and shows them in a lower position so as to legitimate their colonialism. Marius, another character, who came with the missionary, utters: "Nous sommes enfin au pays de Cocagne/ Là où poussent tous les fruits"<sup>12</sup>. This statement contradicts the words of the missionary who tries to convince the audience that they are in Vietnam for a civilizing mission. Cocagne and

fruits, indeed, are symbols of richness. For Europeans, 'Cocagne', is a kind of paradise on earth.

The French did not only want to dispossess the Vietnamese of their land, but also, of their identity. First, to change their religion, then their language as the character Marius states: "On aura plus vite fait/ De leur apprendre le français." <sup>13</sup> in order to make them easily dominated. However, the Vietnamese did not give up; they revolted and the French could not impose their culture on them. Mme Marie, a French character, says :

Un grand malheur est arrivé!  
Mon neveu vient de faire abattre  
La belle église toute neuve  
Que nous avons construite  
Dans l'enceinte du Palais Royal. <sup>14</sup>

This fact of destructing the church built by the colonizer is, indeed, a way to show the Vietnamese resistance to French Colonialism.

Kateb Yacine also denounces the French policies applied during the Second World War on Africans to force them to join the army. This is shown through a conversation between two French characters: L'Officier and Général Decoq. The Officer says:

J'en viens, mon générale  
Ce n'est pas difficile :  
On tend une corde  
A chaque bout de rue,  
Et tous les nègres  
Qui passe par là  
Sont engagés d'office <sup>15</sup>

Then the General answers : "Faites vite, ce sont des troupes/A consommer avant l'hiver" <sup>16</sup>

War turns humans into animals; they oblige them with all means to engage in the army letting behind their families: mothers, wives and children....they are deprived from their liberty and have no right to protest. Surprisingly, the colonizer asks them to defend liberty. Kateb Yacine, as an anti-colonialist, denounces this harsh treatment of human beings and stands against the horrible results that war might cause. The atomic bomb on Hiroshima is a

mere example in this play. Indeed, it caused many disasters in Japan and all over the world. Capitaine Mac says, about this bombing, to colonel Lancedalle : “il y a eu en quelques secondes/ Soixante-dix mille mort”<sup>17</sup>.

After the Second World War, on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese character, declares the independence of Vietnam which marks the end of colonialism as Nguyen Ai Quoc declares:

Aujourd’hui, 2 septembre 1945,  
Nous proclamons l’indépendance,  
Et nous fondons la République  
Démocratique du Viet-nam.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, France does not recognize Vietnam as a democratic republic; as a result, war starts. Kateb Yacine in a dramatic way makes the French, the Americans and the Vietnamese meet on stage in order to elucidate the process of fighting in Vietnam after the Vietnamese’s rise of consciousness and belief that what is taken from them by force can only be restored by force.

In fact, Ho Chi Minh’s engagement to liberate Vietnam serves as a good example for liberating people. The word freedom is repeated several times in *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* and it can be considered the basic aim of this play. For instance Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho) says: “Le prix de l’homme baisse, /Quand il n’est plus en liberté.”<sup>19</sup>

To reinforce this idea, Kateb introduces a new character named Henri Martin, a French anti-colonialist, and illustrates the position he takes against colonialism by showing his courage and fight for liberty. This man who tries to help the colonized is judged by the French as a traitor. For this reason, Henri Martin says:

Celui qui aime la liberté,  
Ne l’aime pas seulement pour lui,  
Mais aussi pour les autres  
La défense nationale  
Doit se faire sur le sol de la France,  
Et non pas contre un peuple  
Qui lutte pour être libre.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, liberty is paramount, and fighting for it is necessary.

Kateb Yacine also reveals that war is nothing but a big business. This situation can be compared to Mother Courage who supports war because she is a business woman. So one can say that war is business, business is money, and money is capitalism. In this respect, M. Keith Booker says: “[...] war for Brecht frequently serves as a metaphor for capitalist competition”<sup>21</sup>. In the following section, we shall discuss the depiction of capitalism by Brecht and Kateb.

### **Critique of Capitalism**

Capitalism is well introduced in *Mother Courage and Her Children* by following the development of the protagonist Mother Courage’s behavior. In reality, though she appears at the surface as being a hard working mother who struggles against the harshness of life to ensure the living conditions for her three children. A deeper analysis of this character may help us to go beyond. As a matter of fact, all along the play Mother Courage is shown with her canteen wagon, her private property, hoping the war to carry on to take profits and to sell her goods, since it is her only source of richness and a market where she can invest to make her business grow and gather a great wealth as she declares: “But what is a war but private trading”<sup>22</sup>. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that this character embodies capitalist features because she gains her wealth upon others’ sufferings.

Even though Mother Courage realizes in advance that war’s continuation will shed much blood and will bring harm only for the poor class including her three children she never minds, since her only concern is to look for further ways to enrich her wealth and keep her trade successful. Therefore, her love for money and gathering wealth is greater in comparison to anything else as to be a humanist. For instance, in scene five when the Chaplin asks her to help a peasant family by providing them some linen, she refuses, arguing that: “I got none.

All my bandages was [sic] sold to regiment. I ain't tearing up my officer's shirts for that lot"<sup>23</sup> and she adds: "I'm giving nowt. They'll never pay, and why, nowt to pay with"<sup>24</sup>. So, Instead of helping her neighbors in such difficult moments, she encourages and provides the soldiers with all the needs (either food or clothes) for the sake of making the war going on though she knows that war will cause starvation and death for many people.

Hence, this business mother seems to be a self-centered and a heartless person whose only worry is to increase her incomes. To illustrate this idea, Brecht introduces a mother who comes to risk even the life of her mute daughter by sending her to the town to bring her goods for sale despite the fact that she has already experienced a harsh treatment from a soldier, noting that she is aware of the possible danger that Katrin might face in her way. In other words, she exploits her as when she says for her: "Don't be silly, war'll go on a bit longer, and we will make a bit more money [...] think of your dowry"<sup>25</sup>.

Therefore, one can say that the fact of describing this protagonist in such a way is to attract the attention of the readers by revealing to them the true identity of the capitalist system which is based only on hypocrisy and selfishness. This idea can be illustrated by the Sergeant's conversation with Mother Courage, he says:

[...]Oh you'd like war to eat the pips but spit out the apple? It's to fatten up your kids, but you won't invest in it .Got to look after itself, eh? And you called Courage, fancy that. Scared of the war that keeps you going?<sup>26</sup>

In so doing, Brecht gives his pessimistic view about capitalism and questions its rigid system and devastating effects since their primary aim is to ensure their position regardless of what surrounds them. In other words, Brecht's witness of war and his resistance to the Nazi racist and violent ideology have raised in him the idea of political and social engagement, a fact that he establishes as the basic nature of his play where he shows the vicious and the brutal actions that are intended to hurt people mainly the common ones. And through which he hopes his readers to progress effectively from thinking to action and protest. This leads us

to think about Jean Paul Sartre's idea about the mission of any literary work when he says: "It is by means of the book that the members of this society would be able to get their bearings, to see themselves and see their situation"<sup>27</sup>.

As far as *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* is concerned, this play highlights the conflict that happened during the Cold War between the capitalists and the communists. As it has been already mentioned, people after the Second World War were living in a hopeless and meaningless world after the war's disasters. One of the crucial aftermaths of this war is the division of the world into two global powers: capitalists and communists. The increased tension between the two sides has led to what is called The Cold War. The latter, is a political, economic and ideological conflict between the Western Bloc led by the United States of America (capitalist) and the Eastern Bloc led by the USSR, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (communist).

Kateb Yacine makes this situation on stage, by introducing two workers the 'Premier Ouvrier' and the 'Second Ouvrier'; they are representatives of the two opposing blocs namely: communism and capitalism. In fact, capitalism is referred as 'serviettes' while communism as "les soviets". One may notice that each system wants to perpetuate its policies and eradicate the opposing other by trying to convince Mohamed, another character, to work for either system. For instance, the Second Worker says to Mohamed: "Viens, défile avec moi /On te paiera/ Mieux que les rouges"<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, he asks him to shout "les soviets au Poteau!"<sup>29</sup> however Mohamed refuses and shouts and repeats "les serviettes au poteau"<sup>30</sup> meaning it is the "serviettes" that must be eliminated. The reason is that "serviettes" in this play symbolizes oppression and poverty. This is shown when the 'Premier Ouvrier' has found in the leather briefcase (serviette de cuir) of the 'Second Ouvrier' only "un maigre casse-croûte"<sup>31</sup>. From this excerpt, we come to know about the struggle of the working class under a capitalist system and their aspiration for a better system.

According to Jean-Paul Sartre: “[during the period after the Second World War, intellectuals] have undertaken to create a literature of extreme situation”<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, some twentieth century intellectuals, all over the world, were reacting to the political events of that period. In *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, Kateb depicts how the Cold War in Vietnam had a great influence on its political structure. In fact, he portrays how communism was introduced to Vietnam as a system after the French defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and also depicts the American interventionism to stop its spread. For this reason, Kateb introduces Ho Chi Minh as the North Vietnamese leader who fights against American capitalism and imperialism.

### **Oppression and the Struggle of the Masses**

Jean-Paul Sartre believes that: “The working class which today, like the bourgeoisie in 1780, might constitute for the writer a revolutionary public [...]”<sup>33</sup>. As we have already mentioned, capitalism has led to social class; a division that separated the world into: the ‘haves’, the Bourgeois class, and the ‘have-nots’, the proletariat. This fact has turned our attention to another important issue that both committed writers treat in their plays. This theme is oppression and the struggle of the working class.

*Mother Courage and Her Children* depicts the difficult conditions under which the lower class is living as the peasant’s house which is covered with “a huge thatched roof, backing on a wall of rock”<sup>34</sup> in comparison to the luxurious one which surrounds the world of the rich. To be more explicit, Brecht’s aim is to raise the awareness of his readers about the complexity of the world. This simple example which portrays a dirty house symbolizes injustice and shows how the lower class is living to make them aware about their own sufferings and then call for an urgent need to revolt.

In short, the gap which exists between the wealthy and the poor gives us a deep insight into the conditions and the struggle of the working class to ensure their existence and to reach the minimum needs of life in a competitive world. For this reason, *Mother Courage and Her Children* can be seen as a depiction of people's realities in an artistic way to reflect the masses' preoccupation and their lives which are only a question of sufferings, pains, grievances and hopes.

This play can also be seen through the lens of injustice played from the members of the upper class through their demeaning and firm treatment of the masses' legal rights. They are squeezing them by imposing heavy taxes and leaving them in miserable conditions as the Young Man declares: "What, and have them sell the roof over our head for taxes?"<sup>35</sup>. Indeed, workers at that time were struggling against certain social injustice and political corruption to gain their position in their environment that exploits them harshly, as the case of the faithful Cook, a common man who works for the benefits of the bourgeois class. In fact, he is a victim of this unfairness practiced by his boss, the General, who mistreats him by shouting all the time on him. The General: "Food, lamb, you foul cook, or I'll have your hide"<sup>36</sup>. So, despite the fact that he worked hard, he is driven away and lost his job, his only source of living, and was even deprived of his wage. He complains: "I am fed up being cook to that lot .I'm s'posed to rustle them up meals out of tree roots and old bootsoles, then they fling the hot soup in my face. Cook these days is a dog's life."<sup>37</sup>

Thus, what remains for them is only the hope of getting another job, which is a difficult thing at such times of war. To stress his arguments the author provides us with another example about this injustice by showing a soldier who is prevented from his reward from his Captain, who has a higher rank than him, and when he went to complain, he gained nothing. To be more explicit, Brecht is criticizing the social institutions which help the rich to become richer and enjoy a happy life and which makes the life and the dreams of the poor

impossible by keeping them poorer. In such a way, Brecht portrays the world of the working class as being surrounded by sufferings and misery and urges people to take actions to reach equality and not accept any exploitation; by this he seems to be a free thinker whose main concern is to question the social order. In short, he takes charge of being the spokesman of the oppressed group especially the proletariat and calls for justice where everyone can enjoy his full rights and live a peaceful life.

Comparatively, in the course of *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc's* story, the author attempts to highlight the way in which the peasants, then the proletariat i.e. the oppressed in Vietnam revolted against their oppressors and foreign rules. In a brief review that concerns our playwright, Kateb Yacine is well-known for his sympathy towards the oppressed people especially the poor. In order to show the Vietnamese's great sense of rebelliousness and refusal of any kind of oppression, he made reference to the Chinese occupation, and French colonialism in Vietnam.

During the Chinese occupation in Vietnam, peasants are doubly exploited, first by the feudal lords who want for themselves everything as the peasant confirms: "seigneur tout t'appartient"<sup>38</sup> and the feudal Lord in his turn says: "je suis l'esclave de l'empereur"<sup>39</sup> meaning the Chinese Emperor. So, the Lord is under the authority of the Chinese Emperor while the peasants are under the authority of the Lord. In fact, peasants are living an extensive and complicated period since they are confronted to oppression, exploitation and colonialism. General Ma Yuan, a French character in *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, says:

Le bas- peuple et la femme,  
Disait Confucius,  
Sont faits pour l'ignorance  
Et l' instinct animal.<sup>40</sup>

The peasants who are represented by the sisters Trung revolted against "les traîtres féodaux"<sup>41</sup>. However, they were defeated, therefore; they committed suicide preferring death

rather than to live exploited and humiliated<sup>42</sup>. After their death, Thieu Thi Trinh, a peasant woman tries to revolt against the enemy; she wants to exterminate the oppressors present in Vietnam and aspires to put an end to slavery as she asserts: “[...] Ah !chasser l’ennemi!/ Sauver le peuple de l’esclavage!”<sup>43</sup>. Thieu Thi Trinh makes an appeal to peasants to revolt against and to refuse bondage. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, the aim of writing is: “to make an appeal”<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, Kateb Yacine, through this character, is himself making an appeal to all oppressed people in the world urging them to refuse submission.

Kateb denounces this harsh system that exploits the peasants by keeping them in a lower position. In view of that, Sabiha Boukhelouf describes this system as totalitarian in which there is no share of wealth and, imbalance leads to war<sup>45</sup>. Centuries later, the feudal society is replaced by another modern bourgeois society wherein the poor are exploited and marginalized in the same way. In this respect, Azouz Ali Ahmed in his doctoral thesis entitled *L’écriture contre l’oubli hétérogénéité et socialité dans l’œuvre de Kateb Yacine* contends :

*L’Homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* recèle comme titre une valeur connotative et une dimension symbolique remarquables, dépassant la renommée de celui qui est devenu président d’un pays occupant une position stratégique dans le Sud-Est Asiatique. Si d’un côté, pour les grandes compagnies qui l’exploitaient, le caoutchouc représentait une manne en raison de son potentiel industriel énorme et de ses nombreux dérivés, par contre, de l’autre flanc, c’est-à-dire celui des travailleurs des pays colonisés, le caoutchouc était et demeure synonyme de pauvreté [...] Seuls les démunis portent des sandales en Caoutchouc.<sup>46</sup>

In the light of the quotation above, we can argue that rubber is the symbol of poverty, so the play illustrates the struggle of the working class against colonialism and imperialism during the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, the Vietnamese have confronted many hardships; they were exploited under different perspectives: working hard for long hours with low wages, taxes were imposed on them and so on, while the foreign imperialists were enjoying their wealth.

Ho chi Minh, who represents the poor, believes in the necessity of liberty that is why he struggles to liberate people from oppression. He says:

Si vous ne soutenez pas  
La lute des peuples opprimés,  
Quelle est donc la révolution  
Que vous voulez faire?<sup>47</sup>

The problem of the working class is the most important problem that Nguyen Ai Quoc is committed to solve. Obviously, through the character of Nguyen Ai Quoc who is himself Ho Chi Minh, Kateb Yacine shows his commitment to defend the rights of the oppressed people.

Throughout our play, we have noticed many scenes of oppression that Kateb Yacine denounces especially that engendered by the colonial regime (authority) and also, he reveals the tyranny and cruelty of the soldiers during war, Henri Martin in a monologue says:

Six cents personnes.  
Sont rassemblées dans une cour.  
Les hommes sont torturés.  
Ensuite, on les massacre.  
Les filles sont violées.  
Des femmes enceintes sont frappées.  
Jusqu'à éclatement de l'abdomen.  
Une seule maison est restée intacte.  
On y enferme deux jeunes filles,  
Et on y met le feu.  
Les soldats jouent au ballon avec les bébés.  
Ils se les passent à coups de pied,  
Puis ils tuent la volaille,  
Et se mettent à boire,  
Au milieu des cadavres.<sup>48</sup>

This monologue shows how the Vietnamese are oppressed by the foreign soldiers. Men are massacred, girls are raped, babies are transformed to toy balls etc. This speech is a stand against these inhuman actions that are unacceptable in all societies.

The study of oppression and class struggle in the two selected plays makes us think about Sartre's statement concerning the writer's target reader. Indeed, Sartre considers that any author must not write for the benefits of the "privileged classes"<sup>49</sup>, but rather he has to write for the working class as he states: [...] if [writers] were free, they might have interested

themselves on behalf of the oppressed classes”<sup>50</sup>. In fact, this is what Kateb and Brecht have demonstrated in the plays. They write to defend the oppressed and the alienated people. By this, both of them answer Sartre’s question: For Whom Does One Write?

From our thematic analysis of the two plays under study, respectively *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *L’homme aux sandales de Caoutchouc*, we conclude that Brecht and Kateb consider writing as denouncing through revealing, both stand against war, colonialism, capitalism and social injustice. They write for the universal; both address oppressed people (poor, colonized, alienated...Etc.). Furthermore, their aim by writing is to establish change that is liberty and peace.

The above studied literary works are plays. And given that plays are meant to be performed, we find it interesting to introduce some techniques of relevance to realize the aim of social change. These techniques will be developed in the next chapter.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, “*What is Literature?*” and *Other Essays* (United States of America: Harvard University Press, 1988), 04

<sup>2</sup> Brecht Bertolt, *Mother Courage and her Children: A Chronicle of Thirty Years’ War*. (Socialist Stories,1939),01

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Yacine Kateb, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*. (Paris : Seuil, 2004), 11

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>21</sup> M. Keith Booker, *Ulysses, Capitalism and Colonialism: Reading Joyce after the Cold War* (United States of America: Greenwood Press, 2000), 88.

<sup>22</sup> Brecht, *Mother Courage and her Children*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>27</sup> Sartre, "*What is Literature?*" 139.

<sup>28</sup> Kateb, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>32</sup> Sartre, *“What is Literature?” and Other Essays*, 182.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>34</sup> Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, 75.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*,57.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*,60.

<sup>38</sup> Kateb, *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*,8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*,7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*,9.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Martin Scot Catino, *The Aggressors: Ho Chi Minh, North Vietnam and Communist Bloc*, (United States of America: Dig Ear Publishing, 2010), 141.

<sup>43</sup> Kateb, *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *“What is Literature?” and Other Essays*, 63.

<sup>45</sup> Sabiha Boukhelouf, ‘*Les instances énonçantes dans l’œuvre écrite de Kateb Yacine*’ (PhD diss., Université Paris VIII- Vincennes A Saint Denis : 1997), 489.

<sup>46</sup> Azouz Ali Ahmed, ‘*L’écriture contre l’oubli hétérogénéité et socialité dans l’œuvre de Kateb Yacine*’ ( PhD diss., Queen’s University, 2014), 278.

<sup>47</sup> Kateb, *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>49</sup> Sartre, *“What is Literature?” and Other Essays*, 85.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

## **Chapter Two: Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Kateb's *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* as Examples of the Brechtian Theatre of Protest.**

In this present chapter of our dissertation, we shall study how the two plays belong to theatre of protest. We will try to explain the concept of Epic Theatre and highlight the different techniques that both playwrights rely on in order to protest against some social and political issues. Thus, we shall borrow Brecht's Theory of Epic Theatre developed in a collection of Brecht's writings edited by John Willett entitled *Brecht on Theatre*.

Epic Theatre differs from ancient form of theatre in the sense that it is didactic and dialectic aiming to teach the audience a morality. It is an 'anti-illusory' art that intends to educate the audience and guide them to make a radical change in a society wherein nothing matters well since everything in it is wrong. Thus, the purpose behind the conveyed messages is to teach them lessons about important issues. In the following part, we shall illustrate how some of the Brechtian aspects are used in Bertol Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Kateb Yacine's *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*.

### **The Two Plays as Epic Theatres**

Brecht says: "Art is not a mirror with which to reflect reality but a hammer with which to shape it"<sup>1</sup>. For purpose of relevance, we intend to discuss the construction of both plays under the principles of the Alienation Effect technique. This technique concerns playwrights who aim to put a distance between the audience and the characters on stage in order to remind them that they are just watching a play. Therefore, the playwright should provide some strange actions in order to keep the spectator alienated. For this, Brecht's theory introduces several and various devices. Nevertheless, in our work we will rely only on some elements in order to compare our two playwrights.

## 1) The Structure of the Two Plays

### a) Episodic-Structure

Unlike Dramatic Theatre that gives more importance to the plot which is based on linearity and consists of the involvement of the events through cause and effect process, Epic Theatre rejects the plot and gives more importance to the events. *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *L'Homme aux Sandales de Caoutchouc* are based on "episodic-scenes". Beginning with *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the scenes are separated from each other. i.e. each scene is characterized by a specific subject and can be read independently. The play is "chronicle". Its structure is based on historical events that happened during the Thirty Years War. It is worthy to note that Epic Theatre gives more importance to historical events. The first scene starts in spring 1624 while the second scene tells the events that happened during the years of 1625 and 1626 and the last scenes are set in 1636. Therefore, this makes each scene for itself. Considering the events of the play, we have noticed no linearity. For instance, in the tenth scene, Brecht introduces us a song sung by a new character, the Voice, and presents the two characters, Courage with her daughter Kattrin, pulling the cart whereas in the following scene (Scene Eleven), the playwright shows another issue completely different and independent of the previous events. These events are the attack of the army on the town of Halle and its destructive results which lead to the death of Kattrin. At the end, in the closing scene, Brecht portrays his protagonist cursing the war and deciding to follow her trade though her first experience was very bad. In addition to this, the playwright includes many settings such as Poland, Moravia, Italy and Germany.

Brecht says to Wolf about the aim of his play: "[...] I don't believe that it leaves the audience in a state of objectivity (i.e. dispassionately balancing pros and cons). I believe rather -or let's say I hope -that it makes them critical"<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, he made his play an open-

ended work; the closing scene shows Mother Courage carrying her wagon. After losing all her three children, she utters: "Hope I can pull the cart all right by meself. Be all righ ,nowt much inside it. Got to get back in business again"<sup>3</sup>. This closing scene affects his spectators' thinking and gives them a chance to participate in the whole production.

Like *Mother Courage*, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* is based on an episodic-structure. This play is, in fact, a series of historical events divided into eight separate chapters. Kateb Yacine jumps from one event to another with the use of flashbacks and flachforwards. The first act starts with the Sisters Trung, during 40AD century, in the second act Kateb Yacine takes us to the twentieth century with the introduction of Nguyen Ai Quoc and Mao. So, the historical events do not follow a linear pattern. If we take into consideration the first act, it is divided into several scenes. Each scene stands for itself. The first scene shows the Trung Sisters (two Vietnamese characters), the second scene is set a century after the death of these two sisters, it introduces Thieu Thi Trinh, a young peasant. In the third scene, Louis XIV (a French character) enters the stage. So, one may say that Kateb Yacine plays with history for the aim of letting people to follow some historical events through the lens of criticism.

Accordingly, each scene attempts to show the Vietnamese's rebelliousness and fight to get their liberty. Like *Mother Courage*, this play is also open-ended. Kateb Yacine declares: "I don't consider this play finished" [Translation is ours]<sup>4</sup>

In short, the fact of avoiding the linearity of events and the unity of themes in these two literary works is a new technique to treat many issues as possible through which Kateb Yacine and Bertold Brecht hope to get a positive change.

## b) Direct- Narration

Direct-Narration is another technique that aims to narrate the actions of characters rather than acting them. Epic Theatre provides the audience with a narration of events. This technique is also called 'breaking the fourth wall'. In fact, both Bertolt Brecht and Kateb Yacine use this technique to make a contact with the public. In *Mother Courage*, we notice this narrative technique at the beginning of each scene. Brecht gives an introductory passage in which he tells the different events that will happen. In this way, he aims to avoid illusion and to establish contact between the audience and the theatre. That is to say, by narrating, the audience is aware that they are in a theatre. For instance, in Scene Ten we notice a short narrative that recounts the different events of this scene instead of being acted: "During the whole of 1635 Mother Courage and her daughter Katrin travel over the high roads of central Germany, in the wake of the increasingly bedraggled armies"<sup>5</sup>. Another illustrative narrative instance is noticed in scene eleven where the new coming events are told before being acted:

January 1636.the Emperor's troops are threatening the protestant town of Halle. The stone begins to speak. Mother Courage loses her daughter and trudges on alone. The war is a long way from being over.<sup>6</sup>

Through narration, Brecht depicts the brutality of war to such an extent, he narrates that "the stone begins to speak"<sup>7</sup> something that cannot be achieved through acting.

Concerning *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, many events are narrated directly to the public. The character, Henri Martin, addresses the spectators narrating for them the harsh treatment of the human beings during a period of war. This narration stresses on how the indigenous people in Vietnam including men, women, girls and babies are subjects to oppression and violence<sup>8</sup>. Many other direct-narrative examples are frequent in this play; the case of the character, Mao, is quite illustrative. In the fourth chapter, he addresses the audience by saying:

Un proverbe chinois qualifie l'action de certains sots en disant qu'ils soulèvent une pierre, pour se la laisser retomber sur les pieds. Les réactionnaires de tous les pays sont justement de ces sots. Les répressions qu'ils exercent contre le peuple en révolution ne peuvent que le pousser à étendre et à intensifier la révolution.<sup>9</sup>

This direct speech to the public comments on a situation in which the two characters Niquesonne and Nikita speak about the death of Staline while trying to raise a tombstone. Indeed, Mao's speech is very symbolic and satirical in the sense that it mocks at the acts of the capitalists, Niquesonne and Nikita, who mean by the death of Staline, the death of communism as Niquesonne declares: "La pierre tombale du communisme! / C'est le plus beau jour de ma vie".<sup>10</sup> Therefore, one may notice that the direct narrative instance uttered by Mao turns the attention of the spectator to think about the harshness of the great imperialist forces or maybe to spur them to fight against it. In fact, Mao describes them as fools because for him oppression exercised on people in war can only push them to intensify the revolution. The proof in our text is when Nikita saw Mao, shouts: "Au secours! C'est Mao! / Un autre Staline!"<sup>11</sup>. Both Staline and Mao are communists who fight against social injustice and imperialism. The situation discussed above may summarize the clash between capitalism and communism during The Cold War.

By studying the direct-narrative technique used by the two playwrights, we perceive that its aim is to let the audience constantly connected with the theatrical performance as a response to Brecht's belief that "A theatre which makes no contact with the public is nonsense"<sup>12</sup>

## **2) The Conception of the Hero in the Two Plays**

Brecht's new artistic creation is also revealed in the way he shapes "the hero" or "the protagonist". He says: "In Aristotelian drama the plot leads the hero into situations where he reveals his innermost being. All the incidents shown have the object of driving the hero into

spiritual conflicts.”<sup>13</sup>. In the following lines, we shall discuss how Kateb and Brecht shape their heroes in the two plays under study. Brecht in this play does not give any significance to the Aristotelian traditions, where gods play a great role in guiding the actions of the main character towards a single end i.e. either to cause the death of the hero to restore order or to save him from death. Therefore, as an alternative, Brecht gives more importance to the events rather than the character itself. In *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the leading role is taken by Anna Fierling, nicknamed ‘Mother Courage’. This protagonist is involved in most of the play's events.

Mother Courage’s changing actions and behaviours are not guided by any divine power or supernatural force but rather, all along the story, she is guided by her selfishness and materialistic greed which obsesses her thoughts and leads her to look only for her own interests as she herself declares while talking with her daughter Katrin: “don’t be silly, war’ll go on a bit longer, and we’ll make a bit more money, and peacetime’ll be all the nicer for it.”<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, Brecht confirms that spirituality has no significance in such situations since his drama “does not make the hero the victim of inevitable fate [...]”<sup>15</sup>. In addition to this, we can add that unlike the Aristotelian tragic hero who belongs to a noble family, Brecht's Mother Courage descends from a lower class. So, a mistake or what Aristotle calls ‘Hamartia’ does not lead to her downfall though she chooses a corrupted way to look for means to realize her dream of possessing great wealth. Her end is not fatal since she is still alive at the end of the play. So, this protagonist is ambiguous and somehow strange to us. Therefore, she makes us think and stick more to her actions.

Concerning Kateb’s conception of “the hero”, in *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, we notice that the whole play speaks about the Vietnamese heroic deeds and braveness against the foreign imperialist’s forces. However, the most important character in this play is Ho Chi Minh nicknamed “Uncle Ho”. This play is considered as a tribute to the

real “Ho Chi Minh”, the president of North Vietnam. So, the hero is a common person who is driven by his will to change the wrongs of the world.

Throughout the play, we notice his heroic acts which are shown right at the beginning. Though becoming a president, Ho Chi Minh is still a humble man who does not care about his own interests but rather fights to stop oppression and establish economic rest. The reporter, a character in *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, describes him as follows:

Le président Ho Chi Minh est célibataire. Son compagnon de tous les jours est le jardinier de sa résidence, et il porte toujours, ayant horreur du protocole, le même costume de toile, les mêmes sandales de Caoutchouc: il a gardé sa vieille tenue de maquisard. Il gagne deux cent quarante dongs par mois, à peu près le prix d’une bicyclette. Ses ministres gagnent de deux cent quatre-vingts à deux cents dongs. Cette modestie est une leçon d’économie politique. C’est grâce à elle que tant de travailleurs ont pu avoir leurs bicyclettes. C’est la première chose qui m’a frappé à Hanoi: beaucoup de cyclistes, des camions, des véhicules militaires, ou d’utilité publique.<sup>16</sup>

This detailed description of Ho Chi Minh sums up his great deeds and will for changing society.

As for the characteristics of an Epic Actor, the German theorist believes that the actor should not identify himself with the role. To start with Brecht’s *Mother Courage*, this character’s actions show an emotionless mother who does not care about her children since her only concern is business, though being a mother she does not behave as a mother. Concerning Kateb Yacine’s *Ho Chi Minh*, despite the fact that this actor takes the role of a president, his actions show him as a common man as it is shown in the play, he even sweeps the street: “l’Oncle Ho quitte la scène, toujours mêlé au chœur, qui balaie avec lui”<sup>17</sup>.

By comparing these two characters, we deduced that *Mother Courage* is completely different from the character of Uncle Ho. The former is a greedy woman who symbolizes materialism and supports war while the latter is a brave man who fights against capitalism and war. However, both playwrights, through drawing such epic characters, share a common aim which is changing the wrongs of society. We mean: the spectator or reader of *Mother*

*Courage and Her Children* should criticize the protagonist's deeds and try to avoid her wrong path. While the spectator or reader of *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* should praise the protagonist's deeds by following his path.

### 3) The Use of Music (Choruses and Songs)

“The A-Effect was achieved in the German epic theatre not only by the actor, but also by the music (choruses, songs) [...]”<sup>18</sup>. Both Brecht and Kateb rely on the use of music to distantiate the audience and make comments on social and political issues. In *Mother Courage and Her Children*, each scene is accompanied by a song except scene two and scene eleven. To explain the aim or the message behind the use of music, we have selected two songs. The last song of the play might serve as a good example for argument. Brecht says: “[...] a musician or two could occasionally go backstage for trumpet calls or when music occurred as part of the action”<sup>19</sup>. The song sung offstage while Mother Courage is pulling her cart after losing her three children at the end of the war reveals some existing facts that most people try to ignore. They sing:

With all its luck and all its danger  
The war is dragging on a bit  
Another hundred years or longer  
The common man won't benefit.  
Filthy his food, no soap to shave him  
The regiment steals half his pay.<sup>20</sup>

From this first half of the complete song, one can say that through the heard Voice, the playwright attempts to communicate his view and message through which he intends to teach his spectators that war is a fact that should be avoided since they are the only losers and it nourishes only its leaders. In this regard, Harold Bloom in his analysis of *Mother Courage and Her Children* says: “War is organized by the class in charge. That the dominated class is doomed to suffer the consequences [...] that is destined to turn human virtue into something fatal”<sup>21</sup>. Brecht makes this song didactic. He plans to create a new sense in the public to lead

them to absorb and realize the deep meaning and the real image of war and its impacts on the dominated class.

The second half of this song may serve as an advice for the audience. Brecht tries to guide people to enjoy a happy life and involve them in his protest by making them collaborate through taking positive actions.

But still a miracle may save him:  
Tomorrow is another day!  
The new year's come .The watchmen shout.  
The thaw sets in .The dead remain.  
Wherever life has not died out  
It staggers to its feet again. <sup>22</sup>

Using these sentences, Brecht advises his audience to keep hope and not leave war to defeat them by causing their disappointments.

Another illustrative chosen song is the one sung by 'the Voice' in scene ten:

The Voice:

The roses in our arbour  
Delight us with their show:  
They have such lovely flowers  
Repaying all our labour  
After the summer showers.  
Happy are those with gardens now:  
They have such lovely flowers.

When winter winds are freezing  
As through the woods they blow  
Our home is warm and pleasing.  
We fixed the thatch above it  
With straw and moss we wove it.  
Happy are those with shelter now  
When winter winds are freezing.<sup>23</sup>

This song then is very symbolic; it represents the sufferings and the misery of the lower class in a rotten world which favors the bourgeois. Therefore, this protest excerpt of music portrays two different worlds: the high class, who enjoys a high social rank, possesses luxury houses,

have all what they need and live in happiness, and that of the lower class, the minority who live in poverty, homelessness and are frightened most of the time by the harsh weather since they have no shelter. As a matter of fact, Brecht does not only criticize those who hold everything but rather aims to teach his public the way things are conducted and inculcates in them the importance of reforming society to end the problem of classes. In short, these songs serve to comment on the bourgeois system.

Likewise, Kateb Yacine uses songs in *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*. The sixth chapter opens with a song. Alabama, a young black American character, sits on a sidewalk and sings for passengers in Harlem. He sings:

On m'avait dit que dans la baie  
De San Francisco  
Je trouverais de quoi vivre  
Et maintenant je suis assis  
Par terre dans la rue  
Je regarde Harlem  
Le temps passe  
Rien ne change pour moi  
Toujours la même misère<sup>24</sup>

The above song may symbolize the struggle of the working class to find a good job to support their lives. Indeed, it also reveals the segregation of black people.

Kateb Yacine uses more 'The Chorus', which is present all along the play, to comment on the political and social problems. It also serves to advise people to stop war as the chorus says: "Arrêtez la sale guerre!"<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, they sing to attract the attention of the audience to fight against the foreign imperialists. They sing:

Au loin nous allons combattre  
Bravant souffrances et privations  
Sous la charge nos épaules ploient  
Nos corps ruissellent de sueur  
Mais dans nos yeux  
Brille l'éclat de la haine  
Notre vie n'a qu'un but  
Guerre à l'ennemi, partout où il se trouve !<sup>26</sup>

The Vietnamese suffer from humiliation and exploitation. As a result, they find themselves in a situation in which they have to fight strongly in order to oppose the foreigners' policies. Thus, the above song is an urgent call to revolt and not to accept any kind of exploitation. Kateb wants to say for the oppressed that it is high time for them to be self-reliant and trust their capacities to defend their ignored rights by themselves. The Chorus continues singing and says:

[...] la haine monte avec le sang  
Que l'ordre vienne  
Et nous vaincrons  
Notre vie n'a qu'un but  
Guerre à l'ennemi, partout où il se trouve !<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the chorus believes that war against the enemy is the only seed that may give birth to their liberty. So, this song challenges the public and makes them react to fight and to get rid of their sufferings. The Chorus closes the play *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* by praising the hero Ho Chi Minh who embodies all the features of a strong fighter against oppression and colonialism. In both plays, *Mother Courage and Her Children* and in *l'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, the two playwrights rely on music, either songs or the Chorus, in order to put a distance between the characters on stage and the public who are intended to leave the theatre with a lesson.

#### **4) The Two Plays' Appeal to the Audience**

The audience has to be a good psychologist to make its own sense of the material I put before it. All I can guarantee is the absolute correctness and authenticity of what happens in my plays; I'm prepared to bank on my knowledge of human beings. But I have the maximum freedom of interpretation. The sense of my plays is imminent. You have to fish it out for yourself.<sup>28</sup>

Brecht does not see his audience as empty vessels waiting to be filled by giving them everything in advance; he wants them to be active participants who may take part.

The German theorist explains that the aim of Epic Theatre is to appeal more to the spectator's reasoning. Therefore, a theatrical work should render the spectators critical and respond to its different events. For this reason, Brecht criticizes the traditional theatre that

aims to a therapeutic effect and keeps the audience passive and emotionally involved. Brecht explains the difference between dramatic theatre's spectator and epic theatre's spectator as follows:

The dramatic theatre's spectator says:

Yes, I have felt like that too- just like me – it's only natural- it'll never change-the sufferings of this man appal me, because they are inescapable – that's great art - it all seems the most obvious thing in the world- I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.<sup>29</sup>

While the epic theatre spectator says:

I'd never have thought it- that's not the way- that's extraordinary, hardly believable-it's got to stop- The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are unnecessary-that's great art: nothing obvious in it- I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, Brecht wants the spectator to be active participants who may take part by building their own criticism and understanding of the meaning of each event and the importance of each action. More clearly, the unexpected end which is neither a happy nor a sad ending makes the theatergoers alienated, hence, more critical by asking questions about the acts of each character, as to ask some questions about the unsolved state by which Brecht ends his play: Why he ends his play in such a way and not in another? Why Mother Courage is still firm in her decision of getting back in trade though she lived a harsh experience which caused the death of her three children when she practiced this job? In other words, he invites them not to give much importance to the plot but rather they have to focus more on the events and their perception and interpretation. In this respect, Brecht declares:"But even if Courage learns nothing else at least the audience can, in my view, learn something by observing her"<sup>31</sup>.

*L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* is also a revolutionary play that addresses the colonized and oppressed people. The play arouses the audience's reasoning to ask many questions. For instance, they may question the presence of the foreign imperialists in Vietnam that symbolizes, in this play, any country that suffers from colonialism. To reach this aim

Kateb Yacine provides us with some strange actions such as the case of the policeman who hits Nguyen Ai Quoc and breaks his tooth. Then “le policier lui lie les mains derrière le dos, Il le tire par la corde”<sup>32</sup>, while another policeman enters with a pig on his back. Nguyen Ai Quoc is astonished, he protests: “On porte le cochon/ L’homme, on le tient en laisse”<sup>33</sup>. This horrible and strange act shows how man is exploited by man. The response is: “tu vau moins qu’un cochon”<sup>34</sup>. So, this act makes the spectator astonished just as the character Nguyen Ai Quoc is.

Furthermore, Kateb Yacine wants to make his audience think about the Vietnamese rebelliousness and fight for freedom. Kateb in an interview says:

L’Homme n’est rien tant qu’il n’ose pas à être un homme or les vietnamiens ont osé, les premiers à être des hommes, pour nous qui étions des hommes asservis pour lesquels il n’y avait aucun espoir, qui depuis un siècle, étions aux genoux des autres, voir les vietnamiens se lever, ça a été important.<sup>35</sup>

In the above statement, Kateb asserts that the Vietnamese are a good example of people who liberated themselves from oppression and colonialism. Thus, the spectators, especially the oppressed ones should do like these brave people. Accordingly, Pamela Pears argues:

[...] It is Kateb’s hope that oppressed people throughout the world will recognize themselves in this play [*L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*] and use this recognition to “se parler, se comprendre et agir ensemble” [as Kateb declares, Pears translates it] “speak to one another, understand each other, and act together.”<sup>36</sup>

This means that the spectators after watching a play should grasp the message then act and protest in order to reach a positive change.

From our analysis of the different techniques used by Brecht in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, and by Kateb in *L’homme aux sandales de Caoutchouc*, we come to know that there is a striking similarity between both writers. Indeed, both of them have relied on the different techniques mentioned above in order to alienate the audience from the characters on stage. Their use of: “Episodic-Structure”, “Direct-Narration”, “Music”, “Epic Characters”

among other techniques helped them to make of their theatre a means for protest and a call for change.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The National Theatre, South Bank, London website, 'An Introduction to Brechtian Theatre' Viewed May, 2015 <<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/backstage/brecht>. >.

<sup>2</sup> John Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetics* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), 226.

<sup>3</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children: A Chronicle of Thirty Years' War*. (Socialist Stories, 1939), 82.

<sup>4</sup> Yacine Kateb, 'Kateb Yacine- écrivain public', interview by Charles Haroche and Isidoro Romero. France, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, 74.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Yacine Kateb, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*. (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 71.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>12</sup> Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>14</sup> Brecht, *Mother Courage and her Children*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre*, 78.

<sup>16</sup> Kateb, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, 217-218.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>18</sup> Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 217

<sup>20</sup> Brecht, *Mother Courage and her Children*, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Harold Bloom, ed., *Comprehensive Research and Study Guide: Berthold Brecht* (California: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 31.

<sup>22</sup> Brecht, *Mother Courage and her Children*, 82.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>24</sup> Kateb, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, 185.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

<sup>28</sup> Willet, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>32</sup> Kateb, *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, 45.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Yacine Kateb, 'Kateb Yacine- écrivain public', interview by Charles Haroche and Isidoro Romero. France, 1975.

<sup>36</sup> Pamela A. Pears, *Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam: Woman, Words and War* (United States of America: Lexington Books, 2004), 37

## Conclusion

The twentieth century was a complicated period; the world was confronted to several political and ideological transformations. In fact, the era after the two World Wars witnessed great damages and devastations as this period was characterized by change at the political, social and economic levels. Therefore, the literature of that time was characterized by great tensions and conflicts. Then, many writers committed themselves to reveal the dark realistic side of their contemporary life. They wanted to make people change and to get rid of the sorrowful world wherein they live into another one where people may find peace and restore their liberty.

Bertolt Brecht and Kateb Yacine were among those who devoted their art to defend the rights of people especially the oppressed. This fact makes them two important figures of the twentieth century literature. *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* are among the best examples that reflect the ideology of Brecht and Kateb as intellectuals. Indeed, the harsh experiences that both playwrights lived, Nazism for Brecht and French colonialism for Kateb, raised in them the sense of commitment.

In fact, by depicting the negative aspects of war, capitalism, and the colonizer's oppressive strategies, Bertolt Brecht and Kateb Yacine tended to show their anger towards social injustice and political corruption. As modern authors, these two playwrights were aware that without protest there is no theatre since protest is a fundamental ingredient in theatre itself. Therefore, their eagerness for change remains their ultimate hope.

The scope of our research, however, does not allow us to deal with all the issues that bind Brecht and Kateb. We hope we have succeeded at least to clarify some affinities between them. As still many things that can be said about, we invite other students to analyze the two plays from other perspectives.

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