

The Master domiciliation laboratory

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our supervisor Dr. Gada Nadia for her guidance, advice and encouragement throughout the fulfillment of this humble work.

We also owe special thanks to all the teachers of the English Department for their support and generosity.

We are profoundly thankful to the members of the panel of examiners for having accepted to take part in the assessment of this dissertation.

Dedications

To my parents

To my sisters and brothers

To my pair Achour

And my friends Ali & Lamia

Samia

To my parents

To my sister and brother

To my pair Samia

And to all my friends

Achour

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Dedications	3
Contents	3
Abstract	3
 I. Introduction	 1
Literature Review	4
Issue and Working Hypothesis	7
Methodological Outline	8
Endnotes	9
 II. Method and Materials	 10
Method	10
 Zuoliang Wang's Theory of Affinity: <i>Studies in comparative literature and translation</i> (1985)	
Materials	11
a. Historical Background of Herman Melville	12
b. Synopsis of <i>Billy Budd</i>	13
c. Historical Background of Tahar Djaout	14
d. Synopsis of <i>Le dernier été de la raison</i>	16
Endnotes	18
 III. Results	 19
IV. Discussion	20
 Chapter One: Structures & Characters in the two novels	
1. Comparison of the Novellas' Settings	22
2. Comparison of Characters	25
a. Billy vs Boualem	25
b. John Claggart vs. Les Frères Vigilants	31
c. Captain Vere and The Dansker vs. Ali Elbouliga	35
d. Representation of Female Characters	38
Endnotes	40
 Chapter Two: Themes	 42
➤ Themes	
a. The Theme of Violence in the two novels	42
b. The Theme of War in the two novels	44
c. The lack of Common Sense in the texts.....	46
d. The Imposed Authority in the two novels	48

Endnotes	52
V. Conclusion	53
VI. Selected Bibliography	54

Abstract

There exist different themes to be studied in Literature. This research paper has examined the presence of parallels between Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* (1924) and Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999). In our dissertation, we have studied the affinities that exist between characters: Billy Budd and Boualem Yekker, Captain Claggart and Les Frères Vigilant, Captain Vere and Ali Elbouliga, the Dansker and a female character in Djaout's novel, Soraya, while its absence in Budd's novella. Concerning themes, we have analyzed violence, war, the abuse of power and the imposed authority in both works, and also parallels in the setting. Finally, we have showed the difference of time, religion, place, language and traditions. In order to achieve our goal, we have relied on Z.Wang's theory of affinity introduced in his *Degrees of affinity: Studies in Comparative Literature and Translation* (1985). We have also analyzed the two works relying on the theory mentioned above; we have reached the conclusion that there was no influence and direct contact between the two works.

Introduction

Comparative Literature needs knowledge in more than one language and more than one culture. It is an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary field of research. One of its main principles is to break the linguistic, geographical, and cultural barriers. Its main objective is to end with essentialism which the doctrine that essence is prior to existence, by permanently opening spaces for the study of possible connections between authors and literary works through the use of various methods. Following one of its perspectives, we will try to establish some similarities and differences between Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* (1924) and Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999).

The two novels, as their date of publication indicates that have been written in very distinct periods of time. Nonetheless, our main concern in this dissertation is basically to focus on finding thematic and possible textual relationships between the selected novels by basing our comparison between the two authors who belong to different geographical areas and different periods of time. Herman Melville is an American; he is from Manhattan, a big city situated in New York, while Tahar Djaout is an Algerian, he is from Oulkhoul, which is a village in the Kabyle seaside region. The latter spent most of his childhood and adult life in Algiers, the capital.

The importance of choosing these two authors and their works is motivated by our interest in comparative literature as a practice and the privilege it offers to read, appreciate, and analyze literary works from different cultures and literary traditions. This opportunity is reinforced by our discovery of these two talented writers whose selected novels have not been already worked on under the same theoretical study. Our aim is then to shed light on some textual parallels between the two selected works *Billy Budd* following *Le dernier été de la raison*. To build our hypothesis, we will try to address the subsequent questions: how can we compare two authors from different literary traditions and distinct cultures? Are

there similarities between the two texts or are they completely different? In addition to this, we will try to show how both authors were influenced by their social and cultural contexts in which they produced their works.

Despite the different historical, social and cultural backgrounds, Melville and Djaout succeeded to shape their characters as mirrors that reflect the complexity as well as the inner ambivalence of the human nature within their respective society's challenges. We intend also to investigate whether there might be an influence in relation to their readings. In doing so, we will try to discover the similarities and differences without taking into consideration whether the literary works are recognized or not. Therefore, our intention is to try to apply one of the important tools suggested by comparative literature theory that is the notion of "Affinity" in comparative studies where we compare the two selected works in terms of their plots, settings, characters, and themes.

The author (Tahar Djaout) seems to envision his works in continuity, as episodes that follow one another. It describes the whole process that leads Algeria to Islamism. A posteriori, *Le dernier été de la raison* is considered the culmination of the police state (an undesirable state of living characterized by the overbearing presence of civil authorities) that it already described in *Les Vigiles* (1991). The reader then passes from "Vigiles" to vigilant brothers. As a posthumous work, the Last Summer of Reason is considered to be Tahar Djaout's ultimate testimony and even as his literary testament.¹ Tahar Djaout is a victim of that terror, and here recounts in a cognitive way the daily persecutions inflicted on the inhabitants, resistant and the use of violence by the torturers whose aim is supposedly to seek the fundamentals of the Islamic religion. It is indeed, through this story by Boualem Yekker, an innocent bookseller and main protagonist of *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999), that the author painfully expresses the state of oppression that his country must undergo.

Concerning Herman Melville, he is considered one of the most brilliant American Renaissance writers. Through his posthumously published novella, *Billy Budd* (1924) which tells the story of an ambitious sailor who was accused of mutiny just four years before the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) which were a series of major conflicts between the French empire and its allies against the United kingdom, the Austrian empire, kingdom of Prussia, and several months after the Great Mutiny at Nore. Melville began focusing on it at the end of 1886, just after the period of romanticism movement which the author belongs to. Some critics have interpreted *Billy Budd* as a historical novel that attempts to evaluate man's relation to the past. In relatively short order, he and several other influential British authors had managed to canonize *Billy Budd*, placing it alongside *Moby-Dick* as one of the great books of Western literature.². At the end; both Tahar Djaout and Herman Melville are like many other writers, who make their literary works reflect their cultures and societies' facts. In addition to this, the principle aim of their works is to present and threat the cultural, social and political current issues under the objective of stopping oppression, injustice and to contribute in making a positive change in the community or the country as a whole.

Review of Literature

From our readings of some literary criticism about Herman Melville's *Billy budd* and Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la raison*, we have noticed that many critics have examined these two works from different perspectives. Concerning *Billy budd*, it is a short novel, which has been published after the death of Herman Melville. The author died in 1891, before finishing it. It is worth to mention that it is not well known in comparison to *Moby-dick* though both stories are derived from Melville's sea journey.

Among the critics who studied Melville's novella, William T. Stafford, in his edited book *Melville's Billy Budd and the critics (1961)*, is an important sum of many analyses by other critics. His remarkable instructive study about Melville's work joins some critics about his last literary works. John Freeman, for instance, compares the novella in many aspects to *Herman Melville's masterpiece, Moby-Dick (1928)*. The following passage illustrates the critic's comparison of the two works:

Like Moby-Dick, this late and pure survival of Melville's genius has a double interest, the interest of story and the interest of psychology. Billy Budd of one whom, like Pierre, is unpracticed in the ways of life and the hates of other men; guilelessness is a kind of genius and the better part of innocence in this handsome young sailor. Exaltation of spirit redeems such a scene (as the hanging scene) from burdens which otherwise might appear too painful to be borne. And beyond this, it is innocence that is vindicated, more conspicuously in death than it could be in life[...] The ultimate opposition is shown clearly [...] in this public vindication of the law, and the superior assertion at the very moment of death of the nobility of pure human spirit.³

From this long quotation dealing with a comparison of the two novels' main characters, we understand that the psychological aspects of Melville's protagonists have a great impact on the sequences of events in the story. The psyche of Billy Budd as well as that of Pierre, their bravery, and many other virtues made the two stories what they are, two great literary works. The second critic, who studied Melville's short novel is Raymond M. Weaver (1928), he examines the two works from a religious and comparative perspective in terms of a competition between good and evil; he wrote:

Just as some theologians have presented the fall of man as evidence of the great glory of God, in similar manner Melville studies the evil in Claggart in vindication of the innocence of Billy Budd. For, primarily, Melville wrote Billy Budd in witness to his intimate faith that evil is defeat and natural goodness invincible in the affections of man. Billy Budd, as Pierre, ends in disaster and death, in each case, inexperience of innocent and seraphic impulse are wrecked against the malign forces of darkness that seem to preside over external human destiny. In Pierre, Melville had hurled himself into a fury of vituperation against the world; with Billy Budd he would justify the ways of God to man. Among the many parallels of contrast between these two books, each is a tragedy (as was Melville's life), but in opposed senses of the term.⁴

According to Weaver, Melville's Billy Budd can be seen as a tragedy because of its ending, though it is not a sad one. The highest level of goodness and kindness with the sad end makes the work a happy tragedy.

As far as *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999), the book is also unfinished; it has been published six years after the author's assassination by Islamic fundamentalists on the 26 of May, 1993. As Melville, Djaout did not put an end to his story. Even the title, it was the publisher who had selected it from the novel. It is worth to mention, similar to Melville's story that Djaout's novel is based on his life experience as a journalist and intellectual in a time of political instability, which led to what is known as the "black decade".

Many newspaper articles, unpublished Master dissertations, Doctoral theses have been devoted to Djaout's novel. Among these academic works, KHOUFACHE Hanane submitted in 2016-2017 at Bejaia University a research work, has been devoted to Djaout's last novel. In her analysis of *La donnée temporelle dans Le dernier été de la raison* de Tahar DJAOUT, KHOUFACHE Hanane examines the novel's main character through his testimony of the past; his denunciation of the present as a scathing period in the history of independent Algeria. The author stresses the way Boualem revalues the past by confronting him with the characteristics of problematic characters of the literature of the absurd (senseless, illogical; contrary to all reason or common sense).

Julija Sukys, a Canadian author of creative nonfiction, examines Tahar Djaout's commitment as an intellectual who refuses violence from both sides of the conflicting political forces. She wrote in her book *Silence is death: The life and work of Tahar Djaout* (2007):

I am tempted to speak here about texts in organic terms since they have lives of their own. They grow by themselves, sometimes bursting out of their authors; sometimes requiring coaxing, causing a writer pain. I would like to suggest that when Djaout's final novel "merely accepted to come to an end," this ending resembled less a death than an entry into a perpetual comatose state. Indeed, the novel as a whole takes place in a kind of a comatose time and space. Even the title

*of the novel, well-chosen by Djaout's editors, speaks to the suspension of time in the novel. "The last summer of reason" marks the beginning of the new temporal order that has come over the city of the text.*⁵

In this quotation from chapter four, page 80, we understand that Julija Sukys wants to describe the difficulties that Djaout went through his writing of the novella, and the atmosphere wasn't peaceful at that period. Also, she informs the reader about the new violent and unquestionable authority which comes to rule over the country from 1990s.

Julija Sukys in the same book asserts:

The book gives the freedom-starved a taste of what used to be, and it gives the imprisoned a sense of connection to the outside world. Boualem Yekker, though not a prisoner in a physical ghetto, inhabits a psychological one. He described his city as having been transformed into a desert without oases and as existing in a bland state to be endured until things return to normal, regains their colours and tastes.

*As for the Vilna ghetto inhabitants, the city's smallest spaces the back room of Boualem Yekker's store, for example connect to bigger ones, to the outside world, beyond the city that imprisons him. They connect not in a concrete manner, but virtually, through the written word.*⁶

According to Sukys in the same chapter, page 83, the atypical character in Djaout's novella, Boualem Yekker, lives in a country which is unsuitable to live! The protagonist feels encaged as a prisoner in his own country, not connected to the outside world as his family, and seems stuck at his library. Boualem suffered from these sad circumstances psychologically.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The review of literature that we have treated above contains some critical studies among many others on Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la raison*. However, to our humble knowledge, no previous studies have been done about the two works. Therefore, our main objective is to carry a new study which consists on finding the parallels and drawing them in such a way to put emphasis on the possibility of establishing some literary links and connection between the two authors. To achieve our

goal, we will read the two novels under the theoretical concept of “Affinity”; in other words differences and similarities, as we cannot prove the existence of any influence or direct contact between the two authors. These affinities will be illustrated as mentioned earlier through our comparison of the two novels’ plots, settings; social and cultural contexts lived by the two authors, characters, and themes.

Methodological outline

At the methodological level, we intend to undertake our piece of research following the auspices of IMRAD method. Our dissertation is composed of four chapters. It contains a general introduction that states our main purpose. It includes a review of some of the critical studies written on both works. Besides, it raises our issue and working hypothesis in methods and materials section, we define briefly the concept of “Affinity” with reference to some scholars who used it in theorizing comparative literature. The concept of “Affinity” is used when there is no direct or indirect contact between two or more than two authors. After that, we present the two novels of Djaout and Melville respectively in a brief way and try to compare the two authors’ lives and examine some biographical similarities and differences if there are any. It is followed by the synopses of both novels. The results section contains the findings of our research. Concerning the discussion section, it will be divided into two parts. The first one is related to what René Wellek calls an “intrinsic analysis” where we compare the form of the literary works, mainly comparing characters of both works by drawing some parallels between them in pairs. The second part deals with convergences in the main themes, plots and structure of the two novels, and the two writers’ style. Our dissertation will end with a general conclusion that sums up the main ideas that we treated in this piece of research. It is followed by a select bibliography, which contains the references.

Endnotes

- 1- Tahar, Djaout. *Le dernier été de la raison*. Available on: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Dernier_%C3%89t%C3%A9_de_la_raison. Accessed on August, 2020.
- 2- H. Bruce, Franklin. *Am. Literature*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (Jun., 1997), pp. 337-359
- 3- John, Freeman. *Herman Melville*. William T, Stafford. *Melville's Billy Budd and The Critics*. Available on: <https://www.worldcat.org/title/melvilles-billy-budd-and-the-critics/oclc/280107>. Accessed on August, 2020
- 4- Raymond M, Weaver. 'Introduction,' *The Shorter Novels of Herman Melville*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp, 1928). William T, Stafford. *Melville's Billy Budd and The Critics*. Available on: <https://www.worldcat.org/title/melvilles-billy-budd-and-the-critics/oclc/280107>. Accessed on August, 2020.
- 5- Julija, Sukys. *Silence Is Death: The Life and Work of Tahar Djaout*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1 Jan. 2007).
- 6- Available on: https://books.google.fr/books?id=u5W_bNbg50EC. Accessed on August, 2020.
- 7- Ibid., 83

Method and Materials

➤ Method

This part of the dissertation aims to put emphasize on our theoretical approach. For the sake of clarity, we intend to rely on throughout our piece of research based on the theoretical guidelines provided by Zuoliang Wang's Theory of Affinity in his book *Degrees of affinity* which can be applied to our case study too. It is a book that explores the affinity between literatures and peoples, with particular attention given to the relationships that exist between Chinese literature and western ones in the 20th century. Our choice of this theory comes from the fact that we intend to look into the resemblances that exist between the two selected works, even though they are not connected by space, time or tradition.

The concept of “Affinity” can be defined as the existence of a relationship between two authors without any direct or indirect contact. The similarities in their works can derive from a variety of causes, for instance, a communality of a context, a similar experience, a similarity in the genre, and writing style. As a category study of comparative literature, Affinity is an analogy through an analysis of possible parallels between two literary works produced by two authors from different backgrounds, cultures and periods of time. The parallels are not caused by the influence of first author on the second one in terms of literary indebtedness, on which the French School of comparative literature excelled. This kind of comparative studies had been promoted by the American school of comparative literature. It is also called “Parallelism Theory” of comparative literature. Zuoliang Wang focuses on what he calls the “*Degrees of affinity*” that he explains as “*Studies in comparative literature and translation*” (1985), a book which combines two collections of essays by Wang that explore the affinity between literatures and peoples. In the section entitled “on affinity between literatures” he affirms that the concept works in all sorts of ways; it is not restricted to one period; it rather cuts across centuries.

The revival of interest in ancient authors shows the concept at work between one generation and another. The author illustrates with Charles Lamb’s *Specimens of English Dramatic poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (1808) revealed a romantic interest in Jacobean Drama, which was to find a modernist sequel in T.S.Eliott’s revolution of Webster and Tourneur in the next century.¹ He adds that translation has greatly contributed to the development of analogy studies around the world:

*Perhaps the most thought-provoking kind of affinity is to be found where people least expect it, between literatures of widely divergent languages and traditions. There has been such affinity between Chinese and European literatures from 1990s onwards. On the face of it, nothing could be wider apart than these two, each with a distinct social and cultural background of its own.*²

From the excerpt, we understand that despite of the difference in language and the distance in time concerning the authors, their common social circumstances can lead to produce convergences in their literary works. Both protagonists live an inside isolation, both are rejected by other characters, both are looking for integration inside their societies. It is important then to use the theorist's idea of the possibility examining the two literary works by taking into consideration, first and foremost, the socio-cultural milieu in which they were produced; the two authors who produced them. The purpose is to select some similarities in the context, which will be reflected in their two texts.

➤ **Materials**

After explaining the concept of “Affinity” as a basic approach to follow in our comparison of the two novels, throughout the present section, we turn to the study the historical context of *Billy budd* and *Le dernier été de la raison*. They are of great importance to our research study. They will help us to build parallels between two societies separated by space, time, and tradition. It will be followed by two short biographies of the two authors who themselves lived very far from each other. Hence there is an impossibility of any kind of influence of Melville on Djaout. The section ends with the synopsis of the two novellas.

Historical Background and Herman Melville's Biography

What follow is a short presentation of the novel's historical context and a short biography of author, which is important as all his literary output cannot be detached from his own sea experiences. Herman Melville is a popular American novelist; he was born on august 1st, 1891 in New York City. He lived first in a comfortable family. After the death of his father, he left with his elder brother the family affairs. In 1839, he worked at a variety of jobs before he went abroad many ships as crew member; most of his literary works are based on his sea travelling adventures; the following summary is an illustration:

*Melville enrolled at Lansingburgh Academy in 1838 and, with ambitions of helping to construct the Erie Canal, studied engineering and surveying. He graduated the next year and worked briefly as a bank clerk and salesman, as a laborer on his Uncle Thomas' farm, clerk in his brother's fur and hat store, and as an elementary school teacher. During this period, he also dabbled in writing and contributed articles to the local newspaper.*³

As a talented writer, his novels had known a great success like *Typee* (1846) and *Umoo* (1847), *Pierre* (1852), *Israel Potter* (1855), *The Piazza Tales* (1856), and *The Confidence Man* (1857). All of them were based on the author's personal experiences and adventures on the sea. In 1924, *Billy Budd* was edited by Raymond M. Weaver, thirty three years after the author's death. The novel was not a success at first; its narrative is based on the author's memories of the abortive mutiny, which took place on the U.S. Ship of war Somers on December, 1842, which he recreates as a story in which a young man named Billy experiences an unusual misadventure as a sailor.

The novella, Mary Ellen Snodgrass suggest that: "Virtually ignored by the literary world of his day, Melville made peace with the creative forces that tormented him by writing his final work, *Billy budd*, which records the ultimate confrontation between evil and innocence".⁴ The author describes Billy, a handsome and intelligent man, who is accused of mutiny and the narrative ends with his death. Melville has dedicated his work to a Professor on the first ship he worked in. The story is about a young sailor named Billy, who is accused of exercising violence despite of his good and pacific attitude. By the end he is hanged as a punishment of an accident crime.

If we come to study about the historical events, on which Melville bases his work, we may cite "The great mutiny of the British navy in 1797". The violent event can be related to the author's real experience of violence during the mutiny, when he was a sailor, working on the Lucy Ann ship. At that time, the British navy needed a lot of sailors to work on because it was the period of political instability and war, as we can find in the story the transfer of Billy from a commercial ship to one of the British navy. Melville also

focuses on that chaotic period when it seemed that the British navy was losing strength, in contrast to the historians or writers who put emphasis on the good times. Melville has shown through the character of Billy, how things were happening aboard the navy, and a cousin of him said that some events described in *Billy Budd* are violent representations of the personal experience of Melville himself.⁵

❖ **Synopsis of *Billy budd* by Herman Melville**

Herman Melville, an American novelist, who started his career as a writer in 1840s until his death. He belonged to the American Renaissance period. Many of his works are popular such as; *Typee* (1846), *Umoo* (1847) and *Moby Dick* (1851). In the beginning of his professional career, he worked as a teacher, a banker, and then a cabin boy. Life didn't offer him an easy financial situation and this is why he changed his status frequently at a young age before he found what he was looking for in writing, even though sometimes his works were just for financial benefits. One of his works *Moby Dick* (1851).

Billy budd, the last novel of the American writer Herman Melville was published for the first time in 1924 after his death of its author, by the editor Raymond Weaver. The events took place in 1797 when Britain fought against Napoleon, the period when the sailors were aware of the mutinies, so they judged Billy to be the less dangerous. Billy did not take much time to integrate the ship thanks to his good qualities, kindness, help and simplicity. This will lead captain Claggart, the master at arms on the warship and a malicious man towards his sailors, to become jealous of him and to trap him. An incident occurred in the dining room, when Billy accidentally poured the soup on the floor and stained Claggart's shoe, the latter threw a mockery on what happened, but Billy preferred to avoid the discussion by willing to stay distant. At that moment, Claggart takes the decision to trap Billy to be hanged, so he accused him of mutiny in presence of Captain Vere, who was at first convinced by Billy's innocence. He defends him until Billy gives a fist to captain

Claggart who will make this latter fall and hit his head which will cause his immediate death. Shocked by the crime he witnessed, captain Vere must apply the martial law and hang Billy the angel, who was very calm in front of his judgement and asked everyone to be so. As Billy Budd knows his fate and was hanged under his last ironic expression “God bless captain Vere”.⁶

It is important to add that story of Billy Budd was written between 1886 and 1891 when national and international attention was focused on the climax of a century long battle over capital punishment unfolding in the very place where Melville was living in the city New York State. Billy’s statement is closely to the debate.

Tahar Djaout’s Biography

Tahar Djaout was born on January 11th, 1954 in Oulkhoul, one of the villages of the municipality of Azeffoun, in the province of Tizi Ouzou (Algeria). He spent his childhood in the capital Algiers where he pursued studies in Mathematics and communications; he obtained a Bachelor degree in each field. At the beginning, he wrote poetry with novels like *Solstice Barbelé*, *L’Arche à vau l’eau*. He would like to write in his own language Berber, but circumstances and history were as impediments, so he wrote in French language even he feels as a stranger to write in foreign language. He travelled to Paris (France) for different purposes. After he came back, he started a career as a journalist and columnist for the weekly magazine *Algérie-Actualités* before he founded his own weekly journal, called “*Ruptures*” with other committed intellectuals.

During his career as a journalist, at the end of 1980s, he experienced his country’s changes where democracy has finally been introduced after the 1988 events. As Herman Melville, Djaout loved for literature and reading books. The variety of his philosophical ideas appears clearly in a succession of novels and collection of short stories he published like:

The Expropriate (1981), *The Nets of the Flower* (1984), *The Bone Seekers* (1984), *The Invention of the desert* (1987) and *The Vigils* (1991). Similar to Melville, Djaout had been deeply affected by his society dramatic changes. In the beginning of 1990s, there were the elections of 1991 where the political party FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) won. Their victory was a threat for intellectuals as Tahar Djaout, who was victim of an Islamist attack organized by the FIS on May 26, 1993, near his residence in Algiers. After a week of coma, Tahar Djaout died on June 2, 1993. His last novel *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999) was published posthumously. If Herman Melville witnessed the American civil war (1861-1865), Tahar Djaout, for his part, experienced the Black decade that occurred in Algeria, to which, as many other journalists and intellectuals, did not survive.

We can draw many parallels between the personalities of the two authors. Like their main characters, they are contemplative and skeptical persons. Both had brilliant trajectory in school and had more than one diploma. Melville was an engineer while Djaout was a mathematician. They worked in a variety of jobs before being prolific writers. They share the love for reading books. Melville and Djaout worked as journalists and both were influenced by the French philosophers like Voltaire and Diderot. Melville was also influenced, as it is the case for Billy, by the American revolutionary writer, Thomas Paine, author of *Common Sense* (1776) and the *Rights of Man* (1791), which are the foundations on which the American and French Revolutions are built. For his part, Djaout had a great admiration for revolutionary writers, like Kateb Yacine and Mohamed Iqbal.

Synopsis of *Le dernier été de la raison* by Tahar Djaout

Djaout's last novel has been translated into English as *The last summer of reason*, a posthumously published novel in 1999. It is a story that narrates the story of a bookseller, Boualem Yekker, father of two children. The main character experiences the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in Algeria during the 1990s.

As the narrative progresses, Boualem Yekker the protagonist who is abandoned by his own family and rejected by his society, which saw him as a propagator of bad ideas contained in the books he sells daily. The books are blasphemous; they are in contradiction with the word of God. In spite of his daily hardship and insecurity, he refuses to surrender to all the obscurantism, which surrounds him. He spends his long days in solitude that dominates his life. Most of the time; he escapes from his unbearable way of life by reading books. Instead of his family, they provide him comfort and support while bookstore where he spends his time replaces his home. He finds himself puzzled with what happens to his country after the chaos caused by The Vigilant Brothers. He decides not surrender to them; even if he has to pay with his life! He resists and opposes their oppression until the end. He reads a lot of books of great authors such as Dostoïevski, Marx...And he wonders how those religious extremists will be able to govern the country with only one book (Koran)The vigilant brothers consider the books as weapons to establish a new order, but Boualem face life and get more knowledge without limiting himself to their fallacious discourses. At the end, his bookstore is closed by force, finding him so upset and it is very hard if not impossible to survive amid the chaos.

The author places the increase of violence by reference to historical facts drawn from reality, a strong painful reality, which marked the spirit of the Algerians especially after the victory of the FIS in the 1990s. There is a strong link between the narrative and the author's experience of that violence. Its impact is well illustrated through the turbulent experience of Boualem, the main protagonist, who resembles in many aspects to its creator.

From what precedes, we can deduce that both novels reflect on the two authors' real experiences of violence, which come to sight in their representation of their main characters as well as in the novels' main themes. What is common to both narratives is the fact of being built on a protagonist's adventure in turbulent times. Their virtues, their

skepticism, and their rejection of orthodox religious beliefs are part of the two authors' personalities. Moreover, the "impasse" in which the two characters find themselves trapped in resembles the shock the two authors experienced in their real lives witnessing a five years civil war for Melville and the increase of terror in Algeria during the 1990s. Both authors recreate the complexity of human existence in times of great troubles. Reading the two novellas also reflects the two authors' use of metaphysical elements to express it. The two literary works can be considered, using the words of Mary Ellen Snodgrass, as "allegories of the struggle between good and evil".⁷

Endnotes

- 1- Zuoliang, Wang. Degrees of Affinity: Studies in Comparative Literature and Translation, On Affinity between Literatures.(Heidelberg: 2015), 39.44.Available on: <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783662454749>.Accessed on August, 2020.
- 2- Ibid, p, 13.
- 3- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Melville.
- 4- Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. The Cliffs Notes on Billy Budd, p6.
- 5- Ibid, p, 7.
- 6- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 26, p 128
- 7- Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. The Cliffs Notes on Billy Budd, p, 16

Results

In the course of this part of our dissertation, we will shed light on the results reached throughout our comparative analysis of Herman Melville's *Billy budd* (1924) and Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999).The comparison revealed that there has

been no influence between the two authors. The absence of indebtedness is justified by the language barrier; the two authors wrote in different languages; Djaout writes in French and belongs to francophone writers while Melville uses English in his literary works. In addition, they belong to different periods of time and lived through different traditions.

Our comparison of the historical backgrounds in which the two novels were written indicates that both authors use some historical facts they experienced throughout their lives to shape their novels. Though, Algeria and America passed through different historical periods, the violence that exists in the two narratives is comparable. When Djaout started to analyze the chaotic violence due to religious extremism, which happened in his country, such trouble and shock go with his mind it is then described by his characters. The period is not the same, but America also went out from the Civil war (1861-1865) when Melville began writing his last novel, which made the life of Billy uncomfortable. The connection between fiction and reality is common to both novels.

By comparing the structure of the narratives, we found out that they belong to the same genre; they are told in a linear way by following the lives of the two protagonists, who live at the margin their societies. They do not adhere to the social conventions set by their oppressors. In addition to these similarities, we have also pointed out the divergences and convergences in the novels' main themes. We mainly focused on the theme of violence. These affinities suggest that though there is no direct connection between both authors, there exist some elements, which are similar in their two novellas. The following part will illustrate the point through our comparison of the novels' structures, settings, characters, and themes.

➤ **Discussion**

In this section of our work, we will continue our analysis in terms of affinities, which appear in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la*

raison. In the first section, we will focus on the analogies between the two novels' structures, the settings, and main characters. In the second one, we shall draw parallels between the main themes of the two literary works.

❖ Chapter One: Structures and characters in the two novels: comparison.

The genre of writing used by the two authors, Melville and Djaout, is prose fiction. The type of the two works *Billy budd* (1924) and *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999) is a novella. A novella or a short novel; it is a type of literary work whose length is usually between the short story and the novel. Classically, the novella is a fictional story with few protagonists, in which the author seeks to develop a precise subject whereas in a novel, several narratives can intersect to form the story¹. Herman Melville's novel has the characteristics of a novella. It is based mainly on Billy Budd's adventure and all the few other characters contribute to shape his personality. It is composed of twenty six chapters and all of them deal with the adventure of a young man Billy, who after being removed from the merchant ship "Rights of man against his will", he is placed in the warship H.M.S Bellipotent.

In *Billy Budd*, Melville explores the psychological aspects and describes his virtues and performances. He uses a simple plot and the events follow a chronological order. It is important to notice that Melville's *Billy Budd* for many reasons, as *Moby-Dick*, didn't know the success when compared to the author's previous works. Both contain complex themes and symbolism and critics didn't appreciate them. However, after Melville's death, the situation changed, and the two novels gained a great success mainly after his publisher reprinted many of his books, so the U.S readers appreciated them².

While *Billy Budd* is an unfinished novella and it was an edited one, its style is not well performed like Melville's previous works since it was found as a manuscript ³, Melville has discussed through his novels the different problems that his society faces. Through the themes that we understand from the novel, we may deduce on the one hand the spread of injustice, the power of the rich over the poor, the higher position over the lower, and on the other hand, its misuse politically for personal benefits. It is his way to denounce the restrictions in which the American society was living in at that period.

Unlike Melville's use of simple technique, Tahar Djaout uses a complex narration and lyric style, which combines poetry and fiction. He writes in a fragmentary way; his sentences are without punctuation, and his chapters are short and episodic. The author appeals to contemplative rather than descriptive narration, particularly of nature, as it is the case in his poems. The author goes from a powerful lyricism to a cold and violent reality. The novella is perceived as modernist in its aspect. His use of French is due to the fact that native language Berber was forbidden by the regime led by President Houari Boumédiène just after the independence of Algeria from France in 1962. He could not write with his native language, so he used the language of the ex-colonizer in his literary and journalistic articles. The French language had an influence on Algerian writers because it is able to link them to worldwide and universal literature and philosophy. It is a tool to establish bridges between writers and different cultures. An example of that is *Le Fils De Pauvre* (1950) by Mouloud Feraoun, who was in correspondence with Emmanuel Robbeles (who incited him), helped the author to get his novel published.

The Algerian authors of the postcolonial period consider the French language as a means of exchanging and intellectual, literary, and philosophical ideas. From 1988, with the coming of democracy and the liberalization of the media, many newspapers were born. Tahar Djaout as editorial director in *Ruptures* (An Algerian political and cultural weekly)

founded by him and some of his intellectual friends in 1993, most of them were Francophone. His travels to France gave him the opportunity to get fascinated by the language of Moliere and most of his works including *Le dernier été de la raison* were published in France in order to be more publicized than in his country Algeria because of the circumstances that dominated the 1990s by the Islamic groups.

What appears from the comparison of the novels' structures is that they differ in many aspects. While Melville uses long paragraphs based on realistic decryptions, Djaout uses a complex, fragmentary and lyric style because the latter was, first and foremost a poet. In addition to his mixture of literary genres, Djaout uses many flashbacks, a modernist technique, which presents his main character's remembrances, his state of mind, and his childhood happy memories spent in his native town before moving to Algiers.

If we sum up by comparing the novels structures, we can say that the two narratives are divided into a different number of chapters. The two authors follow a linear plot to narrate the difficulties of their protagonists. Similarly the settings of the two novels are completely different. The story Billy Budd takes place on a ship while Boualem's takes place in Algiers first, then in Kabylia, and finishes in his return to the capital. We also should notice the difference in time. There is a century, which separates the two stories. If we turn to characterization, we notice that there are many convergences, which we will organize in pairs. The first the parallels can be built between the two main characters in both Herman Melville's and Tahar Djaout's last novels.

➤ **Comparison of the Novels' Settings**

In Comparative literature, as mentioned earlier, literary works can be analyzed by taking into consideration both similarities and differences. Therefore, we refer to setting in the two novels from the second perspective. Analyzing it, means to provide information about the time (when the narrative takes place) and the place (where it is set), and how

events occur. The story of Billy Budd took place in 1797 on a ship called H.M. S Bellipotent. That year stands for the end of the French revolution 1789-1799, also with Spithead and Nore mutinies in the British Royal Navy, which refused to do their usual job. The sailors on board asked for better conditions and a salary increase. So in general, the mutiny went through a pacific and organized way and the two sides found a common ground to solve their problems. On May of the same year, things became worst when the sailors requested more free days and other advantages. Nore mutiny fell apart and its leaders with other delegates paid the price and were hanged ⁴. Concerning the place, H.M.S Bellipotent or H.M.S Indomitable as it is called in other edited versions ⁵. The ship started its route from a harbor in England, and then it travelled across the Mediterranean arriving to Gibraltar as the narrative voice asserts: “Abroad the indomitable our merchant sailor was forthwith rated as an able-seaman and assigned to the starboard watch of the fore-to [...] it was the summer of 1797” ⁶. The other place mentioned in the novel is the birth place of our protagonist Billy Budd, Bristol.

Djaout’s novel is set in a different place and time. The narrative is set in two important places; the city of Algiers and the native town of Boualem. The events happen long after the independence of Algeria in 1962. It tells the reader about the increase of violence in the 1990s when the country was governed by military authoritarian regime. It was characterized by its practice of a total control over the population. The regime’s purpose was to control civilians, justifying that such rigid control will assure the continuity of political stability for the nation. In addition, it will protect it from the threats coming from “dangerous ideologies”. For example, the threat of Islamist ideology was often used as a justification. From this unstable situation, the rising of Islamic fundamentalism in 1980s with the emergence of Multiparty after the 1988 events, gave it the will to create a movement by Muslims who seek to return to the fundamentals of the Islamic religion as to

live like their prophet Muhammad and his companions lived. Algeria experienced a true nightmare of terror. The chaos occurred in the whole country.

The conflict started when the Vigilant Brothers declared the war against the sinners, deviants and irreligious men as Boualem Yekker, who generally speaking criticized the obscurantism of the religious groups, which control the whole country and maintain the new order based in political Islam as a religion. We can say that the conflict in that time concerned society between radical theocratic projects led by the Vigilant Brothers in opposition to the enlightened vision of Boualem Yekker. Violence dominated the city of Algiers with repeated slaughtering of people to make them submissive. Also, the beauty has disappeared in the eyes of Boualem, and the way of life changed as women wear only Islamic scarfs and men with gandouras. While the Vigilant Brothers continue their purge, Boualem resist and remains brave, he does not surrender to their threats. He transforms his library into his home and isolates himself from the grim scenes caused by the religious men's massacres: "Cette ville, jadis belle et voluptueuse dans les effluves ambrés du soir, est devenue invivable"⁷. The narrator expresses the horror through the eyes of Boualem: "La mort fait-elle de bruit en s'avançant?" Boualem describes the city before the terror and how it becomes impossible to continue living in it. The narrator's descriptions correspond to the period of time when violence started to increase.

Tahar Djaout probably wrote his novel *Le dernier été de la raison* between 1991 and 1993. This was just at the beginning of the war in Algeria, which took the life of the author in 1993. It describes the period of the 1990s in Algeria when the Islamic group FIS won the elections in 1991 and wanted to rule the country from a rigid Charia perspective. From the above analysis, it is clear that the novels' settings and times are different. But some common points still exist. The events in the two works are set in postcolonial America and Algeria. They happened after independence of the two countries, America in

1776, and Algeria in 1962. Both novels describe and reflect on turbulent times in the history of the two countries. They are based on the two authors' experiences of these violent periods.

a) **Comparison of Characters**

➤ **(Billy – Boualem)**

Billy Budd and Boualem Yekker are the central characters of the novels; they have different occupations and work in different places. Boualem in Djaout's novel is a bookseller, who like the author is an intellectual, who likes reading a variety of books. He is married and father of two children. He lives in Algiers, the city where he grew up that has undergone a complete change. It comes under the total control of the Vigilant Brothers, the name given to radical fundamentalists to whom Boualem resists every day. He refuses to surrender in front of the extremists, who threaten him to death.

Boualem is shaped as a person who speaks rarely except with his close and only friend Ali Elbouliga. The enmity between him and the Vigilant Brothers lies in their opposite vision about the existence. While Boualem believes in his secular ideas, the Vigilant Brothers introduced a new order (political Islam) and force people of the city to listen and apply what they dictate to them. The only person who does not listen to them is Boualem's friend, Ali Elbouliga, who is given such a name because of his love to music. It is important to point out that Boualem is not against religion. He is against its use for political purposes and to gain profit. Boualem is conscious about the hypocrisy of these people to use religious discourse to lure people. If we turn to Billy; the character is a religious man who reads the Bible. He is young and single, and he is someone who is weak personality. He is reticent man who surrenders in front of Claggart, his enemy. He has an adviser and supporter, the Dansker and captain Vere, so he is not alone and gets empathy from them.

The reader knows from the narrator the Billy Budd was found in a silk lined basket on a man's doorstep in Bristol. He grew up in good health and becomes a handsome young man. The first chapter of the novel describes him as a gentle, innocent, and respectful to the whole ship crew. His virtues make him popular on both ships where he worked. This statement illustrates the point: Billy "Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular, but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sourness"⁸. Captain Graveling can't miss an opportunity to speak about Billy's merit; he even compares him to a catholic priest when he first embarked on his ship. Billy, with his real name William Budd, is nicknamed "Baby Budd" by his fellows, and "the handsome Sailor" by Melville. The problem of Billy is that he has difficulties of stuttering, sometimes in serious moments, he can completely become speechless. Billy is fascinated in reading the Bible and many other books where he finds all the time a perfect refuge as the author précised it:

*The mysteriousness here became less mysterious through a matter of fact elicited when Billy, at the capstan, was being formally mustered into the service. Asked by the officer, a small brisk little gentleman, as it chanced, among other questions, his place of birth, he replied 'Please sir, I don't know.'*⁹

The narrator in the above quotation from the second chapter affirms that people tend to judge a person according to his origins. If people know that person came from, they can say that they know him. In the same chapter, Billy is called a barbarian because, according to the English norms, he is not viewed as gentleman and he does not use malice. He is so innocent that he is compared him to Adam before committing the original sin by eating an apple from the tree of knowledge. In the text, an innocent person is considered as a barbarian as this excerpt illustrates:

*By his original constitution aided by the cooperating influences of his lot, Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps on Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane serpent wriggled himself into his company.*¹⁰

Billy's innocence makes it difficult for him to be accepted by Claggart, who is after him as the Dansker already told him. He cannot understand how a person can be so bad with him without any valid reason, as we can see it in chapter twenty, which describes the questions of Billy's oppressor: "To an immature nature, essentially honest and human, forewarning intimations of subtler danger from one's kind come tardily, if at all" ¹¹. When the incident that changed Billy's destiny on the ship occurred, he told Captain Vere and the martial court that he was shocked by Claggart's accusations. Since he became inappropriate in situations like that, the only response he could have was to hit him, as it is mentioned in the following chapter, which Billy voices as follows: "Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him"¹², so he can stop him. The last words that Billy, the angel like has pronounced are mentioned in chapter twenty six, when stating: "God bless Captain Vere" ¹³. Billy's behavior can be interpreted in this way: his statement is meant to avoid any rebellion against captain Vere because the crew is supporting Billy as if he was a religious man; he wants to keep his fellows in harmony. Just before his death, he proved to the crew that loyalty was so important.

Billy shares many aspects with Djaout's atypical character Boualem Yekker, who takes the initiative in a socio-historical reality. His story is an adventure of a bookseller, who like Billy rejects an imposed order. He engages in a conflict with the Vigilant Brothers, who want to force him to live otherwise. Boualem does not believe in their form of religion because he is a passionate of philosophy and a great lover of subversive books which call into question their fallacious discourses. Similar to Billy, he lives in isolation and in contradiction with the new order introduced by the Islamists Vigilant Brothers. His anxiety resembles that of Billy, but it is more acute.

While Billy escapes from reality by reading the Bible, Boualem does the same thing with different books. Both dream to live in a different space where they can find

peace without being blamed by their oppressors. Boualem's anxiety increases because he is disappointed by his own family, which the narrator expresses through this statement: "Ce dont Boualem souffre le plus, c'est de la solitude"¹⁴. His disillusion makes him completely alienated and he remains waiting for the earthquake to take place: "A quand le tremblement", he wonders. He feels so sad because his Wife turns against him; she keeps their two children away of him as they are faithful worshipers and followers to the new established order. All the society he lives in rejects him too.

Therefore, he limits his life to the short harmonious moments he spends with Ali Elbouliga, his only closest friend, who is also an outcast and an anti-conformist to the imposed religious norms. They spend all the day time in his library where they are blocked between books. They love reading so many books of John Steinbeck, Hesse, Kateb Yacine and Franz Kafka, which help them to increase their disbelief in the vision imposed by the Vigilant Brothers. They practice a kind of terror on children by manipulating them. They force them to throw stones on his car and break the glass of his library. He sees that it's really difficult to raise children in such violent outside world. He feels that he is robbed of his real life full of freedom, justice, knowledge and joy. Boualem Yekker is one of those who decided to resist against the Vigilant Brothers. His experience of oppression and injustice can be compared to that of Billy in Herman Melville's novel.

Their oppressors force both characters to live in fear and imposed silence. As Billy, Boualem is a brave man who believes in his ideas, doesn't care about death. Claggart isolates Billy while The Vigilant Brothers penalize Boualem and the readers of Hesse, Steinbeck and others, making the books inaccessible. Boualem is morally persecuted; he wonders how those religious men who didn't read a book except the sacred text; how can they govern the country if they win the elections! He has no doubt that there will be no improvement under their reign. Their terror and extremism will cost many lives. They had

a negative impact on his life and he remains morally upset in front of these unpredictable beasts who tell people that the only way to get a place in the promised paradise is by redoubling the prayers. People must leave everything and sacrifice themselves for the almighty. He suffers from the way these fanatics blinded people making them follow the sacred text brought by the Vigilant Brothers. Life becomes unbearable as all is prohibited, reading secular books, to smoke cigarettes, to drink alcohol or listening to music. If you want to reach god, you have to avoid all of these pleasures. The only thing left is to worship their God and follow blindly what they preach. If someone refuses, he is severely punished. Boualem escapes to forget their injunctions and their death threat by reading books.

Parallel to Billy, Boualem goes through humiliation and pain; he knows that they will use violence against him, all these makes him very brave and he is unable to defend himself. Excluded for clemency of final judgment, he remains indifferent of the verses that show the way to the paradise. He doesn't want to remember the bad image of his parents, but unfortunately, his wife Soraya makes it happen when she influences their children by religious discourses of the Vigilant Brothers. For Boualem, his wife makes the house unlivable as the country. The narrator claims: "Boualem pense soudain, que si sa fille venait à mourir, il n'accepterait jamais par fidélité à sa mémoire d'avoir un autre enfant"¹⁵. In this quotation from the chapter *L'avenir est une porte close*, p, 88, the author mentions that the only family member Boualem remembers is his daughter kenza. He is shocked seeing his daughter covered with black dress as her mother. He loves his daughter more than his son and wife and wants to teach her philosophy not the dangerous extremist religious discourses that spread more and more in the country.

But, kenza is indoctrinated by their ideology; she is upset and ashamed of having such father, who remains deaf to the words of God. This statement proves the point: "Tu te

réveilles et la maison devient un carnaval’’¹⁶. In this quotation from the chapter *Le message ravalé*, p, 94, illustrates her conflict and bad relation with her father. Unable to communicate with her, Boualem writes a letter to her but does not send it to her. In this letter, he describes painfully how his beloved girl makes him very happy: “Les oiseaux sont la personification même de la liberté’’¹⁷, this quotation from the chapter *La mort fait-elle du bruit en s’avançant?*(p, 139), Boualem compares himself to birds in a cage, which live for freedom, even the birds or their chirping are faded away as to find a better place for them. He wants to escape from the terror of society by refereneing to people, who are forced to immigration in order to find peace: “cette terre chasse ces enfants’’¹⁸. In this quotation from the chapter, *La mort fait-elle du bruit en s’avançant?*(p, 145), Boualem wants to leave the city without regret because of the increasing insecurity and violence. He doesn’t belong to it anymore. He lives painfully when he remembers his peaceful childhood and the harmony of his past in general. He now lives in an environment which is not suitable for him. Therefore, he accepts to die rather than to surrender to the servitude and humiliation of the new established order.

Boualem, as Billy, thinks that he didn’t commit a crime to repent. There is an infirmity in doing what he wants. His books become his companions, which he describes as: « la puissance salvatrice de rêve et d’intelligence assemblés! »¹⁹, in the chapter entitled, *La mort fait-elle du bruit en s’avançant?* (P149). So, what is common between the two characters? Both protagonists live inside their societies in isolation, both are rejected by other characters, but for different reasons, and both try tirelessly to go beyond their conflicts and both fail in the end of the two narratives. At the end of this comparison between the protagonists, we find that they share some parallels as their common passion for reading books, their loneliness which dominates their days, their innocence of not doing any crime to be punished and they are puzzled from what is happening around them.

As a reaction to their oppression, both remain calm and silent. In addition to these similarities, there are some differences between the two main characters, Boualem isn't a religious man; he rather prefers to read books, which are secular. Boualem faces the oppression of Vigilant Brothers, who are ideologically convinced that Boualem is a danger while Billy is religious believer who reads only the Bible. The oppression he suffers from is motivated by an individual jealousy from a crew member, who is Claggart.

What is common for Billy and Boualem is the fact that they are good-hearted and simple peacemakers, who turn to troublemakers and have been executed unjustly by their oppressors as traitors.

(Vigilant Brothers - John Claggart)

The next comparison between the two narratives will be about the Vigilant Brothers in the first and Claggart in the second. The Vigilant brothers are religious extremists, who want to set a new ideology based on political Islam as a religion. They form a powerful community against Boualem to get rid of him because he is an outcast. Their only purpose on earth is to reinforce their authority under the cover of religion. They pretend to be the only messengers of God. The Vigilant Brothers poison and pollute everything around them because that is the only way they know to survive. While Claggart in the ship is described as an evil, an individual who causes troubles for Billy, but the last doesn't repost. Claggart is jealous, and his aim is to be superior to Billy because Billy is recognized by the Dansker and Captain Vere as a good sailor.

The relationship between Boualem and the new established authority represented by the Vigilant Brothers is as between a cat and a mouse. They can't accept each other because of their different ideologies. Their conflict is about existence. Boualem is democratic while the new authority uses the abuse of power to dominate, manipulate and rule the country. Boualem refuses to surrender in front of that new forced authority, which

threats him to death because of his philosophical and secular ideas. Now comparing to the relationship between Billy and the British authority, it is a relation of oppressed and oppressor. Outside, the British were fighting against France in The French Revolutionary wars 1792-1802. So, in order to control the soldiers and the navy in general, they were obliged to avoid any betrayal or mutiny within the navy. The situation and the way of control makes of Billy's accusation more credible, even though he is an example of wisdom. The authority on that ship is practiced abusively on Billy Budd.

Completely opposite to the main character, John Claggart is the antagonist of the novella, and he is thirty five years old and tall and slim man. Claggart is the master-at-arms of the British naval warship H.M.S. Bellipotent. As a person, He is described like the evil completely in opposite to Billy. As a master, he likes to tease and bother the rest of the crew in such a way they commit mistakes, so he can punish them, because he likes troubles. He is nicknamed "Jimmy Legs", and he is feared by everyone, except Billy who makes his best to ignore him. But unfortunately, this puts Claggart in rage against him, and this is what led to his death at the end. Claggart is jealous at Billy, because of his young age, physical appearance and personality. He is a symbol of depravity and inner weakness:

*with no power to annul the elemental evil in him, to readily enough he could hide it, apprehending the good, but powerless to be it, a nature like Claggart's surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and like the scorpion for which the creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted it.*²⁰

In this quotation from chapter thirteen the narrator shows how the evilness of Claggart is innate, and it was his choice to let this bad spirit to come over him. Claggart acts in what can be called a satanic way, by pushing Billy to revolt, so he can finally bring him to the potency. The fierceness of Claggart on Billy started the night when this latter spoiled his soup on Claggart's shoes. This hatred that Claggart has towards Billy is inexplicable, even though it doesn't stop his series of traps against him. He is a person who

can hide his emotional expressions on his face, so the other person can't know what he feels about him. This is what happens to Billy when he is surprised to learn that Claggart doesn't like him. The narrator describes Claggart of being handsome, but Billy much better; this could be the reason of the hatred.

Now to invent something touching the more private career of Claggart, something involving Billy Budd, of which something the latter should be wholly ignorant, some romantic incident implying that Claggart's knowledge of the young bluejacket began at something anterior to catching sight of him on board the seventy four all this, not so difficult to do, might avail in a way more or less interesting to account for whatever of enigma may appear to lurk in the case. But in fact there was nothing of the sort.²¹

The above passage from chapter eleven illustrates how the narrator tells the reader; if he wants learn more about Claggart's life or youth, so he will be able to understand the reason behind his evil character. But, like Billy, this evil character keeps remains an enigmatic.

John Claggart and the Vigilant Brothers share the fact that they terrify the others. They are causing problems and showing their hatred to have ultimate authority over all. They express their hatred for the protagonists. Captain John Claggart is in conflict with Billy Budd for no obvious reasons while that of the Vigilant Brothers is the outcome of their ideology. What is also common to them is the fact that Claggart uses his authority to oppress Billy Budd like the way the Vigilant Brothers oppress Boualem.

We notice that Claggart's hatred is individual and it means that Billy Budd is facing one enemy while Boualem faces the violence of a whole group. We can also compare the insistence to justify the use of oppression by making of Billy a mutineer, which can be compared to the way the Vigilant Brothers justify their violent act in such a way to rule over the country. They set a new order upon the country by forcing people to follow their way. This means that everything the society will do is related to their way of interpreting religion, and this is how they manipulate and get everything controlled. The

Vigilant brothers want to get rid of Boualem Yekker because he does not adhere to their intolerant and extremist ideology.

Their repeated abuse of power is oppressive for Boualem's life. From this, the new radical and violent authority represented by the Vigilant Brothers who chose a kind of Islam as their guiding principle, wanted to burn Boualem's books, which he sells in his library and keep just the Koran as it is the only valuable book. What the Vigilant Brothers do daily against Boualem is an unlawful act, which affects in devaluing the state's authority to control them. It shows the absence of an official in the city to limit the dangerous influence of the Vigilant Brothers. They terrify people with bombs everywhere and a myriad of deaths that make people unable to act or question their oppressive ideology as they are afraid of them.

It is important to point out that people's fear reinforce their intolerant acts and make them more powerful and recurrent. The role of the Vigilant Brothers is to hunt the disbelievers and offenders such as intellectuals, journalists, and women by pushing them to follow their laws. People who have knowledge, talent, elegance and beauty are too dangerous to live where they are and should join the flock of submissive and blessed believers. They try to erase Boualem Yekker's memory and his way of thinking, which is subversive to their ideology. The author uses irony when describing their beards, their gathering, and the way they speak with excitement in front of the submitted crowds, which shouts, God is the almighty.

Djaout mocks also their way of dressing as if they are walking in funerals with their: "Tenue de deuil" ²². They walk down the city streets with intolerant slogans like a devastating flood that no force can stop. They are excellent in their inflammatory discourses that convince the terrorized young people, like Boualem's son, to join them blindly without any question. The Vigilant Brothers continue to exert a violent oppression

and abuse on Boualem by exploiting the ignorance and innocence of young son to punish him for his non acceptance of their established order. They throw stones to destroy his shop before burning it completely.

What Claggart share with the Vigilant Brothers is the fact that they are wicked, intolerant, and violent? They have a negative role in their use of violence and oppression on the two protagonists. It is important to suggest that other characters in the two novels can be compared too. The Dansker and Captain Vere share many aspects with Ali Elbouliga.

➤ **(The Dansker, Captain Vere, and Ali Elbouliga)**

The Dansker is described as Billy's father while Captain Vere plays the role as his adviser. They can't face Claggart and tell the truth. Similarly, Ali Elbouliga is an outcast who feels as a prisoner in the library with Boualem with whom he shares same vision of the country's chaotic situation ruled by the Vigilant Brothers, but he is not afraid of them. His passion to music makes him a danger for them because they think that music should be prohibited. So he contents himself with reading books in the library and discussing the disaster caused by the vigilant brothers. His attitude is passive like that of the Dansker and Vere. They remain silent and unable to change their lives or that of their close friends.

In Melville's novel, the Dansker is an old man who served previously on another ship before coming to Bellipotent. He gives advice to Billy when he loses his confidence. He is a man who can predict actions and facts from the future in a mysterious way. He is Billy's confidant, but this doesn't help Billy even if he gives him some signs about the last incident. This sentence is an example:

*And now, Dansker, do tell me what you think of it. The old man, shoving up the front of his tarpaulin, and deliberately rubbing the long slant scare at the point where it entered the thin hair, laconically said: "Baby Bud", Jimmy Legs, meaning the master at-arm is down on you.*²³

We understand from this quotation from chapter nine that the Dansker is the one who puts Billy in the picture that Claggart is the source of his problems. In addition the Dansker, Captain Vere is also a friend of Billy. He is nicknamed as “Starry Vere” because he belongs to the aristocratic lineage. He is also an intellectual who reads a lot like Ali Elbouliga. He is described as a shy and distinct person with his teammates but he is never arrogant as Claggart. As a captain, he remains loyal and he is respected by the sailors because of his loyalty and goodness. The same virtues are given by Djaout to Ali the good and sensitive musician. When the terrible incident happens, Vere suffers from an inner conflict because he considers Billy as his son. He believes that he doesn’t deserve that punishment because he knows that Billy is unable to do something wrong. But in the other side, his status of being captain forces him to apply the martial law. The following passage illustrates his state of mind:

*Says a writer whom few know, forty years after a battle it is easy for a non-combatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought. It is another thing personally and under fire to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it.*²⁴

We understand the excerpt that Melville defends of captain Vere in relation to his decision. He explains that it can be taken due to a set of circumstances that occurred before he comes to that resolution. Without forgetting that he has to stay strict and act in such a way to keep order and discipline on the board of the ship, which means the aims justify the means. The passivity of Vere resembles in many ways to that of Ali Elbouliga, the only closest friend of Boualem Yekker. Ali mostly joins his friend in the library where they spend most of the time and keep themselves away from the oppressors, the Vigilant Brothers. He loves books as Captain Vere, and share same beliefs, same vision and his friend Boualem. His visits become frequently where they spend hours together in criticizing the oppressive Vigilant Brothers. His friends do not like him because he does

not follow the same road with them. He is rejected by them because his favorite hobby is music which is banned by the Vigilant Brother.

This hobby is a contradiction with what his friends do as they worship a religion, which claims that music is forbidden. They both share a bitter feeling of sadness and helplessness. Ali and Boualem both live in loneliness. Boualem finds in him much of what he wants more than in his wife. Ali loves so much music and sits in Tayeb's performance in the street, which influenced him and pushed him to play and make musical instruments with wood. For him, the musical instrument, for instance: "La mandoline, l'âme prisonnière des doigts d'Ali"²⁵. Since the music becomes forbidden by the Vigilant Brothers, Ali knows that his passion is in danger and lives in an extreme anxiety as his friend Boualem. Both become prisoners in a city where no freedom of expression can be expressed by its inhabitants. Ali then remains silent while in his mind many questions remain unanswered: "when will the earthquake happen?" What is going in Vigilant Brother's mind?

Unfortunately, he remains incapable to find out any answer or to get out from his dilemma. What he is aware of, as Boualem, is that what is happening is dramatic and they decide to resist in front of that chaos. He smells a bitter flavor outside the library with no desire to hang out. There is no doubt about his devotion to his passion that is music and also to Boualem. Their common solitude makes them silent and passive without any reaction: "Ils restent côte à côte, sans rien dire, comme si le mutisme était devenu leur nouvelle condition"²⁶. The imposed silence dominates their daily lives and even their nights. They feel so oppressed by the Vigilant Brothers and stay for long time silently without reaction as they do not understand what happens to them. Both characters live on the fringe of their society. Ali and Boualem represent all the intellectuals, who feel

alienated from their hostile and oppressive environment. As an illustration, Ali is a brilliant artist, but he lives as vagabond.

To sum up, the convergences that the supporters of the protagonists share are: silence, oppression and loneliness. While the divergences, Ali Elbouligha who supports his friend Boualem Yekker, both face a violent group represented by the Vigilant Brothers, but the Dansker, Captain Vere and Billy Budd face just the arrogant and wild John Claggart. Also, the conflict that the supporters of the protagonists are different, as Boualem and Ali make their critique of the city refusing to surrender in front of the Vigilant Brothers who represents the radical Islam. But, in Billy Budd, the Dansker, Captain Vere and Billy are just in a fight against John Claggart, who recognizes the title “Best Sailor”, and the conflict happens on the board of a ship in the sea.

➤ **Representation of female characters**

We mentioned earlier that the events of Herman Melville’s novella take place on the board of ship named, H.M.S Bellipotent. It is a military ship, which was used in 1797 by the British navy in the period of French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802). At that period of the history, women couldn’t participate in the war especially on the battle field or work for the navy. During that time woman role was limited within the family. Inside the family, women used to deal with different household tasks, like cooking for the family members, cleaning the house that was quite tiring. The other task for women is educating and taking care of their children. Within the American society, women had few rights; they suffered from oppression because of the patriarchy.

However, women had known a progress in some aspects like clothing, hairstyle and other fashion trends. But, they were not allowed yet to participate in wars especially in

naval forces; they had no place on the ships, and this is what justifies the absence of women characters in Melville's novella. The male characters are on sea for a long time, may be for years, this is one of the reasons why they had no relationships with women²⁷. If women are absent in Herman Melville's novel, they exist in Djaout's novel, but their role is negative. Our analysis of the representation of women indicates that Soraya, for instance and her mother are passive, voiceless, and followers of the extremist ideas of the Vigilant Brothers.

Soraya is the only female character, which plays an important role in *Le dernier été de la raison*. She is Boualem's wife who betrays him and keeps the children away from their father. The Vigilant Brothers terrorize and paralyze her. Then, she accepts their orders and joins them. She becomes an extremist and believes in what they believe in relation to religion. When she hears the muezzin, she orders the children to pray for God.

The Vigilant Brothers' way of thinking influence her greatly that she practices a collective trance. Moreover, concerning of how to dress, she covers all her body with black veil except her eyes and Boualem does not recognize his wife morally and physically. She Dresses as the Vigilant Brothers order. All the time, she engages in continuous conflicts with her husband. She constantly tries to control and manipulate him, but she fails and this led to their disappointment. Therefore, Boualem takes a distance from her and doesn't sleep where she sleeps. She abandons her husband by letting him to handle himself with cooking, washing his clothes and making coffee. She ceases to be the beloved wife for Boualem. She doesn't care of him as he lives in loneliness, anxiety and suffering without a little help.

Soraya is represented as a woman with no feelings towards her husband. She keeps her children, kamel and kenza away from their father. Kamel doesn't care about his father after joining the Vigilant Brothers, and he accepts that the religious group will

punish his father since the last doesn't pray. The son is terrorized by the Vigilant Brothers, while the daughter, kenza is influenced by her mother. Boualem loves his daughter so much, more than the son, and he wants to teach her philosophy. But, she is ashamed of having such a heretic father, who refuses to pray and accept the new established order.

In general, the woman character represented by Soraya doesn't give peace to the family. Since the story is related to the black decade in the Algeria of 1990s, women were marginalized, oppressed and weak to express, as there were no associations to defend the women's rights. Soraya has role in the public sphere. She has no choice except manipulating her husband and children at home.

End Notes

- 1- Definition of the novella. Available on: [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novella_\(genre_litt%C3%A9raire\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novella_(genre_litt%C3%A9raire)). Accessed on August, 2020.
- 2- Wikipedia
- 3- Herman Melville books: At first, '*Moby Dick*' was a total flop. Available on: https://www.csmonitor.com/Technology/Tech-Culture/2012/1018/Herman-Melville-books-At-first-Moby-Dick-was-a-total-flop?fbclid=IwAR0mgBdrXqNx9cs_IdXOq0g9Ud2_HBNfg7fky5tTdUwj-njkPfrYkDaiWoM. Accessed on August, 2020.
- 4- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 03, p 22
- 5- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 01, p 14
- 6- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 03, p 22
- 7- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier été de La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). La mort fait-elle du bruit en s'avancant ?, p 145

- 8- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions).01, p 10-11
- 9- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions).02, p17
- 10- Ibid., 19
- 11- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 20, p90
- 12- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 21, p102
- 13- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 26, p 128
- 14- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). A quand le tremblement, p 23
- 15- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). L'avenir est une porte close, p 88
- 16- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). Le message ravalé, p 94
- 17- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). La mort fait-elle de bruit en s'avancant ?, p 139
- 18- Ibid., 145
- 19- Ibid., 149
- 20- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 13, p 61
- 21- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 11, p 52
- 22- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil).A quand le tremblement, p 25
- 23- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 09, p 48
- 24- Herman Melville, *Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 22, p 114
- 25- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). A quand le tremblement, p 27

26- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Été De La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). A quand le tremblement, p 26

27- *Social and Family Life in the Late 17th & Early 18th Centuries*. Available on: <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/social-and-family-life-in-the-late17th-early-18th-centuries/>. Accessed on August, 2020.

❖ Chapter Two: Themes in the two novels

In this chapter, we will try to find converges and divergences between the two narrative by analyzing the major themes in *Billy Budd* by Herman Melville and *Le dernier été de la raison* by Tahar Djaout. One of the most recurrent themes is violence.

➤ The Use of Violence in the Two Novels

The term “violence” manifests itself several times in Herman Melville’s novella. It starts when Captain Claggart creates problems to Billy Budd. It increases with the reaction of Billy when he murders him accidentally. It reaches the top then when Captain Vere applies the martial law by hanging the protagonist Billy Budd. The author creates suspense by shaping Captain Claggart as mysterious character, so the reader cannot find the reason why he is so demonic in his behavior towards Billy Budd.

Now, when we come to analyse the way of living within the American society in general and on the ship and the house, we may find that Billy Budd and Boualem Yekker suffer from loneliness or isolation but in a different way. Billy Budd has no family and friends outside the navy; it is then the environment, which imposes on him this isolation. However, Boualem Yekker has a family; a wife and children but he is also persecuted by his wife, she keeps him out of their room, he cooks for himself, he doesn't speak with family members. The fact that Claggart speaks to Billy badly, and he is always pushing

him to make mistakes is a moral violence. The way Billy Budd reacts to the pressure Claggart makes, by ignoring him and keeping him calm, made Claggart more furious and aggressive. So, he gets himself to the next level and accuses Billy of mutiny falsely. The reaction of Billy due to those accusations is unexpected in the view of his attitude and the ways he acts daily, he uses physical violence for the first and last time in his life. But his act costs Claggart's life when knocking his head due to the hit.

According to Walter Benjamin, the criminal act of Billy Budd is a kind of "Divine violence", which is considered as an act of justice rather than of revenge because of the moral violence he went through ¹. Another act of violence happens when the captain of H.M.S Bellipotent, Captain Vere, decides to apply the martial law and hangs Billy. He knows that Billy Budd would never kill somebody, but he is obliged to maintain order on his ship despite the fact that it means to kill Billy Budd. Here, we have the abuse of power in a form of violence, since the protagonist Billy is innocent.

Regarding to the theme of Violence in Tahar Djaout's work, it is the most useful tool for the Vigilant Brothers to terrify people. In this novel, most of the horrible kinds of violence remain the massacres of those who are deviant from the new imposed order of the Vigilant Brothers. Moral violence starts with the reception by the protagonist, the threat by unknown messages to repent. Violence becomes concrete when they force him to close his library. The Vigilant Brothers justify their terror by considering the books he was selling as blasphemous for the established ideology. For them reading philosophy is an act that goes against their visions of this life, contrary to their sacred book, (Koran) which tells about worshipping God. For the Vigilant Brothers set a new program based on their Islamist ideology as the only religion, they impose it with oppressive measures and violence; they compel people to be believers without any questioning. Their will to power leads them to

eliminate all those who stand against them. They believe that they are able to rule the country.

This technique is among their ideology and they use religion to impress the weak-minded. They get inspiration from this ideology, which gives them the force to continue their fight. Moreover, the Vigilant Brothers are known from the beginning with their fearful slogan: “pour elle nous vivrons; pour elle nous mourrons”². This slogan is a message of an extreme violence; it shows their purpose for living and to people either to join or to be punished. They want to rule and control everything at all costs, even by the sacrifice of a whole generation. Their will to power, their repeated appeal to violence is unbelievable and incomprehensible for both Boualem as well as his friend Ali.

➤ **The theme of the war in the two novels**

In Melville’s novella, the war had its impact on the life of each character, precisely on the main ones and their behaviors on the ship. Billy Budd is chosen to be the new recruit, because he is qualified person; he is even called “Billy the angel” on the previous ship he worked on. All these positive characteristics do not keep him out of the circle of suspicion, even if it isn’t intentional. Captain John Claggart takes advantage of the war, and its outcome on the person’s mind of fairness and awareness about the possibility of setting up a mutiny. His act with his inexplicable hatred towards Billy Budd is show through him a dangerous person, who will lead them to lose the war.

We can also add that the decision taken by Captain Vere when he pronounces his verdict about Billy’s crime was influenced by the war they were leading against the French and the fear of an interior disobedience. That atmosphere of being always on guard to impose stability among the sailors pushed him to choose applying the martial law against his favorite person among the crew ³. We came to notice that war is of great impact on

psychological psyche of the sailors and the decisions they make in order to assure the discipline and concentrate on winning the war at any price.

In the text of Djaout, the conflict between the Islamists and the government had a great impact on the characters too. The city of Algiers is taken by the Vigilant Brothers. There is a conflict between Boualem Yekker and Vigilant Brothers which turns to chaos. Boualem, a book seller does not accept the imposed order; he refuses to surrender to their powerful ideological influence, which they use in capturing the whole attention of people and make them silent and submissive.

The country is characterized by violence and disorder. The Vigilant Brothers' belief is that nothing to compare to the wonders of their God, and they fight for their God as to have a place in paradise in the afterlife. Boualem is a secular person, who is not connected with religious or spiritual matters, and he endures the regime with determination, keeping himself inside the library with his books as to avoid the outside tyranny. He believes in democracy, secularism that both are not listed in their agenda. Only vandalism, assaults and death warrant which are useful for them.

In the two first chapters, they describe the atmosphere where Boualem lives under an extreme stress. In chapter four, at first, they start by manipulating the weak-minded people and push them to threat the sinners, urge them to repent and join them as in the conversation between Boualem and the passenger taken in his car on the road to Algiers. The passenger criticizes Boualem's lack of faith. He tells the driver with a great certainty that each scientific discovery has its origins in Islam, and Boualem replies: "Vous avez tout de même entendu parler du théoreme de Thalés et du théoreme de Pythagore. Ce sont là des formules établies bien des siècle avant Jésus-Christ"⁴that this theorem existed before Islam and even Jésus-Christ.

In chapter ten, the excess of the Vigilant Brothers' violence makes their community group very powerful when they gather people to make a meeting: Pour elle nous vivrons, pour elle nous mourrons, that if the sinners don't surrender, the Vigilant Brothers slaughter them, and the purge scares the others to submit to the regime. Boualem's family surrenders and their action seems as a betrayal for him. He takes only his library as his home and the books as friends to forget the violent atmosphere surrounding him. He does not want to live the fake life as prison which the Vigilant Brothers want to impose.

The library is used as a refuge for him to get away of the intolerance and obscurantism that dominated the city. Algiers seemed without authority or government to convict those extremists for their excessive use of violence. They control everything, everybody and the whole country. They warn Boualem and urge him to stop reading the subversive books, and focus on religious ones. His refusal to do so led to close his library. Psychologically, Boualem without books is like a person without air. He fought against obscurantism which rejects knowledge. He is ready to die for his ideas rather than living as a slave. When his children were sent by the Vigilant Brothers to throw stones at his library, he gets out defending his favorite place physically.

Finally, Boualem considers leaving the city as the only issue to avoid the chaos. Tahar Djaout demonstrates through Boualem Yekker's life the effects of the violence, which turns the beautiful city of into a battle field. Such violence marked Algeria during the 1990s as a black period where several intellectuals, journalists, women, doctors, policemen, and soldiers were assassinated by the religious radical groups including Tahar Djaout himself.

If we sum up our comparison of the war theme, we deduce that on board of the ship, the atmosphere is hard to support for some members of the crew while it is

comfortable for others. Billy Budd confronts the mistreatment of Claggart by ignoring his attempts to put him in troubles. It is the case even for the other sailors, Claggart misuses his power to oppress the staff for no reason; the violence is at one time psychological and physical when Billy Budd reacts to Claggart's accusations. Captain Vere takes part of his power to apply the martial law. In the other side, the atmosphere of violence in Algiers reflects the mood of Djaout in his narration, describing the city as not quite from disturbance of the Vigilant Brothers, and their incitement to violence. Literally, the atmosphere isn't peaceful.

➤ **The lack of “Common Sense” in the two novels**

In *Billy Budd*'s story, many events occur, due to that the characters went through different experiences. We have noticed the absence of justice as a major theme, as it is manifested when Billy's trial was held after he killed accidentally Captain Claggart. Despite of the fact that Billy's intention was never killing Captain Claggart intentionally, but the martial law is pretty clear, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and he murdered a person on a ship so he is punished in the same way. The fact that our protagonist is admired by almost all the crew, and his pure heart, he gets the punishment. Captain Vere, despite of his admiration to Billy's person, he has no choice unless to apply the martial law.

As a captain of a ship and a master of a great number of sailors, it is in his duty to enforce the respect of laws and their application in order to impose the order. In other words, Captain Vere needs to punish Billy Budd for his crime, so that serves as a lesson to others, and to ensure a continued order on the ship. Here what matters are the law and the action, not the affection and intention? Later on, the case of Billy Budd has served as an example in law studies, as Roger Citron has written about it in his article, he says:” Billy Budd is relevant today because we-lawyers, judges society continue to wrestle with the difficult question whether to follow the literal text of the law when doing so many

sacrifices just in a specific case’’⁵. Since *Billy Budd* has witnessed a case of crime, lawyers and judges still take it as an example to not fall in injustice while applying the law.

Concerning the abuse of power in *Le dernier été de la raison*, it seems that the country has neither authority nor rule. Instead, there is the Vigilant Brothers who make the laws, judgment and the trials. They judge without tolerance, and they find justice in Islam which they apply blindly. They tell people that they are the messengers of God; their duty is to impose their justice on earth. Against such a vision, Boualem believes in true democracy, hopes to live joyful life with his family in a peaceful city where he grew up. Also, the malfeasance in office was happened during the 1991’s elections when the FIS won the elections, but the officials refused the results and the abuse of power was used to manipulate the corruption for their advantages.

The author narrates the aggression, disdain and veiled violence he felt directed at himself and his colleagues in his magazine ‘‘Ruptures’’ through Boualem’s cultural revolution against the Vigilant Brothers in his posthumous novel, *Le dernier été de la raison* (1999). The ideological aggression becomes real for the author. From the beginning to now, there is a coalition between the regime and the Vigilant Brothers. They both use the Abuse of power for their advantages.

*To be a journalist or writer in 1970s Algeria, when Djaout began his career, was not a path open to any talented Algerian wordsmith. Accreditation needed to be acquired, the journalists and writers were required to belong to the Writers’ Union to comply with state-sanctioned editors, and they require submitting to a police investigation, called “a qualifying investigation” to receive a press card issued dually by the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. As a result of this close scrutiny by the state two categories of writers quickly developed: those who embraced the privileges offered by the regime, accepted its constraints, and participated in the process of censorship; and those who rejected the regime’s conditions. The latter were condemned to silence or exile. Many of Algeria’s best writers moved abroad, or were forced to publish their works overseas or underground.*⁶

In this quotation from chapter entitled: ‘‘Poetry, Prose, and the Politics of Writing in Algeria’’, Julija Sukys explains in her book *Silence is death: The life and work of Tahar*

Djaout, the difficulties that journalists face during the 1970s, and the abuse of power that the author himself experienced. Tahar Djaout's career as a prominent writer and the publication of his great literary works in France not in his country, proves the abuse of power by the regime.

➤ **The Imposed Authority in the Two Novels**

As we have read Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, we come to the point that religion is present on H.M.S Bellipotent. Billy Budd is a faithful religious believer and he reads books, which take a lot of his time and that of Captain Vere. Billy lives alone since his birth when he was abandoned. His solitude can be compared to Boualem's lonesome and isolated life, but the raisons are different.

Religion often guides Billy especially on board of the ship, and it allows him to remain calm and to face his problems rationally, despite their difficulties as we had seen him in the case with Captain Claggart who did everything to make him fall into his trap. When the murder is committed and the judgment is pronounced, Billy Budd remains relaxed without any sign of resistance or manifestation. His faith played a great role in keeping his soul as quite as it is, and when the chaplain wanted to do his job and prepare him to his final moments, Billy seemed to be prepared, as we can find in chapter 25, page 125:

If in vain the good Chaplain sought to impress the young barbarian with ideas of death akin to those conveyed in the skull, dial, and cross-bones on old tombstones; equally futile to all appearance were his efforts to bring home to him the thought of salvation and a Saviour. Billy listened, but less out of awe or reverence perhaps than from a certain natural politeness; doubtless at bottom regarding all that in much the same way that most mariners of his class take any discourse abstract or out of the common tone of the work-a-day world.⁷

It appears from the above passage that religion is also a part of Captain Vere's life. However, the decision he has to hang Billy Budd as a punishment for the murder, which came from the martial law indicate that he has no pity for him. The religion couldn't save Billy's life, and the mind wins by taking the leadership in this case. Billy Budd is

symbolized as Jesus the Christ, when he was crucified, despite all the faith in his heart, he was punished and the human mind won. This sentence is an illustration: «Struck dead by an Angel of God! Yet the Angel must hang!"⁸. It shows the struggle between feelings and reason inside Vere's consciousness. Finally, Captain Vere makes his choice and uses his mind and hangs the "Angel". It is important to point out that religion is at the heart of Melville's novella; it describes individual faith and the competition between good and evil.

Religion is also central to Tahar Djaout's *Le dernier été de la raison*. It is the principal cause of the conflict between Boualem Yekker and the Vigilant Brothers. The imposed terror, which the Vigilant Brothers represent in controlling every aspect of life, is very important. They ban all pleasures such as listening to music, drinking alcohol, and reading books, which Boualem loves so much. The society that Djaout describes, in which the freedom of expression doesn't exist, and the thoughts are monitored as to ensure that all is under control. The Vigilant Brothers impose their rigorist way of thinking. Since Boualem is not a religious man, they view him as a sinner who deserves punishment. But still, he strives against them by reading and selling secular books despite the consequences. He resists daily without fear wondering how this violent group with one book can control the whole country. In the subsequent dialogue, Boualem's skepticism is clear:

Vous vous sentez donc concerné par le comportement de chacun?
 –□*Notre Prophète – le Salut et la Prière de Dieu soient sur Lui – n'a-t-il pas dit : « Chacun de vous est un berger, et chaque berger rendra compte de son troupeau » ?*
 –□*Et le troupeau que vous gardez, c'est l'immense troupeau de l'humanité! N'est-ce pas un peu trop pour vous ?*
 –□*L'humanité est en effet un troupeau qui patauge dans le purin du stupre et dans les ténèbres de l'agnosticisme. Nos efforts ne seront pas inutiles pour lui faire retrouver la lumière. Pourquoi avez-vous l'air si sceptique sur les chances du Bien à triompher? Vous êtes donc habité par le doute?*⁹

To escape the chaotic present, Boualem remembers when his family lived in happiness before it submitting to the new imposed authority. He goes back to his childhood as an orphan and the misery of that time seems better than his present situation. Now, he is deprived of all that he likes, his passion for reading and books and listening to music,

which his friend Ali Elbouliga performs. The Vigilant Brothers reduce life to prayers in this city by terrifying people and making them trust in their religious ideology. For Boualem, there should be democracy to give people the right to choose, freedom of expression and the secularism, which can make religion separated from the government. But the reality is just the opposite; his ironic tone in the following excerpt illustrates his deep “malaise”:

Il pense aux derniers jours de la République, juste avant les élections législatives, lorsque les différentes formations politiques en lice s'affrontaient sur l'écran de télévision. Interrogé sur ses lectures, l'homme qui, aujourd'hui, occupe les fonctions de Vizir de la Réflexion, répondit qu'il s'interdisait de lire autre chose que le Texte Sacré; que les romans, essais et autres divagations perverses ne sont que fatuités qu'il dédaignait et auxquelles il réglerait leur compte le jour où le Très-Haut, qui détient le secret des hiérarchies, lui en offrirait l'occasion.¹⁰

There is no indulgence in that city if they are caught you doing something far from religion. For example, if you listen to music, you will be punished. Boualem criticizes the way the Vigilant Brothers pervert people from the real and beautiful and free life full of joy and beauty. He feels as an arrow pierces his heart. He is upset when his family submitted to their terror while he remains too weak to change things. They keep warning him to surrender and follow the way they dictate for his salvation. The Vigilant Brothers wouldn't stop their actions until they accomplish their mission by getting all the people submitted to their ideology. Therefore, Boualem lives in an open prison in his country where he grew up. He lives in permanent disarray, which he forgets only by remembering the past, which provides him pleasure. His determination not to surrender, his free spirit and the courage to speak freely, not keeping silent are among the characteristics of Boualem, which are described in Melville for Billy Budd. Both characters fight something bigger and both do not succeed to put an end to their oppression.

Melville and Tahar Djaout shape their main characters as idealists, who have no place in a rotten environment. The two authors place their atypical character, Billy and Boualem to describe their fight against the imposed authority.

End Notes

- 1- Walter, Benjamin. Justice and ‘Divine violence’ in *Melville’s Billy Budd*, Tran, Louis Lo (National Taipei University of Technology) 2015. Viewed on June 2020. Available on <https://pdfs.Semanticscholars.org>.
- 2- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier été de La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). Pour elle nous vivrons, pour elle nous mourrons, p95
- 3- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 22, p 100-105
- 4- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier été de La Raison* (1999), (Editions du Seuil). Le pèlerin des temps nouveaux, p 45
- 5- Roger, Citron. Herman Melville’s Billy Budd: Why This Classic Law and Literature Novel are Still Relevant Today, Philosophy and Ethics. Viewed on June 2020. Available on <https://verdict.Justia.com>
- 6- Julija, Sukys. *Silence Is Death: The Life and Work of Tahar Djaout* (2007). Poetry, prose, and the politics of writing in Algeria, pp, 59-60.
- 7- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 25, p 125
- 8- Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (1924), (Flites Editions). 20, p 94
- 9- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Eté De La Raison* (1999), (Flites Editions). Le pèlerin des temps nouveaux, p 45-46
- 10- Tahar Djaout, *Le Dernier Eté De La Raison* (1999), (Flites Editions). Le pèlerin des temps nouveaux, p 42

❖ Conclusion

Throughout our comparative study of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and Tahar Djaout's *Last Summer of Reason*, we have attempted to build a bridge between American and Algerian literatures. It is true that the two authors did not meet; they did not belong to the same geographical space, time or tradition, but we have found some common points when comparing their novels. To do so, we have divided our analysis of the two novellas into two main parts. In the course of the first one, we established some parallels between the novels' historical contexts, which were characterised by political instability and violence. It is followed by brief biographies of the two authors that helped us to understand their literary works as they contain fragments from their real lives. Including them contributed to a clear understanding of their texts respectively. We have also found some similarities in the two narratives, which we have shortly summarized. In the second part, we compared the two novels structures, settings, characters, and themes.

We come to a conclusion that the two literary works converge in many aspects and diverge in others. In the course of our study, we put on the study of affinities because we do not know if Tahar Djaout had read or had been influenced by his predecessor, Herman Melville. We then limited our analysis to finding parallels between two literary works with the absence of a possible influence. That is said, our study of the two novellas is in no way exhaustive or complete because many other research can be conducted on the issues we did not have the opportunity to work on. Many interesting themes concerning Herman Melville and Tahar Djaout can be added such as the metaphysical (their vision of life) or philosophical aspects of the two texts. Therefore, we invite other students to study these works from different and other perspectives.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Djaout, Tahar. *Le dernier été de la raison*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1999.
- Melville, Herman. *Billy Budd* Flites Editions, 1924.

Secondary Sources

- Benjamin, Walter. *Justice and "Divine Violence"* in Melville's *Billy Budd*. (Michigan State University Press, 2014).
- Citron, Roger. *Herman Melville's Billy Budd: Why this Classical Law and Literature Novel Endures and is Still Relevant Today, Philosophy and Ethics*. 36 Touro L. Rev. 17 (2020)
- khoufache, Hanane. *La donnée temporelle*. (Bejaia University, 2016-2017).
- Julija, Sukys. *Silence Is Death: The Life and Work of Tahar Djaout*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1 Jan. 2007).
- Schiffman, Joseph. *Melville's Final Stage, Irony: A Re-Examination of Billy Budd Criticism*. (Duke University Press, 1950).
- Snodgrass, Mary Ellen, *Cliffs Notes on Billy Budd*. New York: John Wiley, 1991.
- Wang, Zuoliang. *Degrees of Affinity: "Studies in Comparative Literature and Translation"* kindle Edition, 2015.
- Wikipedia