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The Impact of the Turkish Culture on Kateb Yacine's *La poudre d'intelligence, The Intelligence Powder* (1959)

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Abstract

Kateb Yacine's theater is a product of the complex interplay between many literary traditions. While previous critical studies have focused on the impact of Berber, Arab, and French cultures, the influence of Ottoman culture in his theater remains totally neglected. This analysis aims to explore the presence of Turkish cultural elements within the play, which fills an important gap in scholarly research. A comprehensive textual analysis of Kateb Yacine's play, *The Intelligence Powder* (1959), uncovers cultural interaction at multiple levels, encompassing the play's characters and themes. While earlier sources do not directly discuss the playwright's fascination with Ottoman culture and drama, this study of the play aims to examine the diverse influences that have contributed to its integration into the narrative. Through an exploration of these factors, the analysis seeks to reveal the importance of this cultural infusion and its possible impact on revitalizing Kateb Yacine's selected dramatic work.

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Kateb Yacine'in *The Intelligence Powder*'ında Türk Kültürünün Etkileri

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Özet

Kateb Yacine'in tiyatrosu, birçok edebi gelenek arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimin bir ürünüdür. Önceki eleştirel çalışmalar Berberi, Arap ve Fransız kültürlerinin etkisine odaklanırken, Osmanlı kültürünün onun tiyatrosu üzerindeki etkisini tamamen ihmal etmiştir. Bu analiz, bilimsel araştırmalarda önemli bir boşluğu dolduran oyundaki Türk kültürel unsurlarının varlığını keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kateb Yacine'in *The Intelligence Powder* (1959) adlı oyununun kapsamlı bir metin analizi, oyunun karakterlerini ve temalarını içeren çok katmanlı kültürel etkileşimi ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Daha önceki kaynaklar oyun yazarının Osmanlı kültürü ve tiyatrosuna olan hayranlığını doğrudan tartışmazken, oyunu ele alan bu çalışma, anlatının oyunla bütünleşmesine katkıda bulunan çeşitli etkileri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu faktörlerin incelenmesi yoluyla yapacağımız analiz, bu kültürel kaynaşmanın önemini ve Kateb Yacine'in seçtiğimiz bu dramatik eserinin yeniden canlandırılması üzerindeki olası etkisini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Intelligence Powder,
Türk etkisi,
sosyal, tarihsel ve siyasal tesir.

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Introduction

The present study explores the presence of Turkish cultural traces within a specific play authored by Algerian playwright Kateb Yacine (1929-1989). The focus is to identify, understand, and interpret these Turkish cultural elements within his work titled *The Intelligence Powder*. This play was produced during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) and put on stage after independence in 1967. Initially published in 1959 as part of a compilation, *Le cercle des représailles* (The Circle of Retaliation), *The Intelligence Powder* holds a unique position in this collection. It functions as a farce, providing an imaginative intermission between two tragedies and a dramatic poem.

In this play, Kateb Yacine uses humor to satirize human absurdity and societal oppressive norms. In contrast to the other plays within the collection, *The Intelligence Powder* steers away from directly exploring the socio-cultural and historical facets of the Algerian war. Consequently, it received less attention from critics and reviewers due to its position as a farce, which may have overshadowed its significance and impact. This relative critical neglect, as noted by Naget Khadda (2020), can be attributed to Kateb's nuanced approach in unveiling his implicit intention of revealing "colonial violence and its psychological repercussions." It is through subtle and veiled ways that the playwright challenges the constraints imposed by colonial censorship, tackling themes of oppression, alienation, cultural identity, and the clash between tradition and modernity (Khadda 91).

Critics of Kateb Yacine's work aimed to uncover the diverse sources that inspired and shaped his plays. Amel Bejaoui (2006) notably highlighted the influence of oral tradition, asserting that Kateb's play draws inspiration from *The Tales of The Arabian Nights*. Kateb Yacine's turning to this pre-colonial cultural inheritance involves a deliberate decontextualization, which unsettles any attempts to firmly fix the play in a specific space or time. This absence of direct reference creates a tapestry of parables that encourage inquiries into power legitimacy and the community's relationship with authoritative figures. Through this strategy, the playwright reinvigorates the legacy of oral tradition, melding it with the national culture by mixing local expressions with those assimilated from the French-imposed language and culture (Bejaoui 25).

It is true that the relationship of Nuage de fumée¹ to the Sultan in Kateb's play resembles that depicted in *The Tales of The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade entertains the tyrant while ridiculing his authority. However, the difference between Scheherazade and Nuage de fumée lies in the former's efforts to gain acceptance from the power, whereas the main character in Kateb's play

¹ "Nuage de fumée" refers to name of the main character, which means a person who smokes hashish. He engages in conflicts with the populace to show their ignorance. He is portrayed as a philosopher/fool who carries the people's culture and wisdom and challenges the intelligence of the highest authorities of his society.

infiltrates the ranks of power explicitly for subversive purposes, but instead of disrupting the established order or seeking to bring about change, Nuage de Fumée becomes a victim of the very system he attempted to disrupt.

Furthermore, Hadj Dahmane (2009) draws a connection between Kateb's work and French folklore. Viewing *The intelligence Powder* as a social satire steeped in political dimensions, Dahmane posits that the play's central axis doesn't solely critique popular customs but calls into question the Sultan, the Mufti, and the Ulemas discourses. This satirical intention becomes vivid through the misadventures of the character Nuage de fumée, a figure bearing a striking resemblance to the French literary and theatrical icon, Figaro. Dahmane stress the impact of the French theatre by drawing parallels between Nuage de fumée and Figaro from Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais's renowned plays "Le Barbier de Séville" (1775) and "Le Mariage de Figaro" (1784). (Dahmane 124).

Kateb Yacine's critics focus on French and Arab influences in his works often overshadows the Turkish influence, which is evident in his plays. During my readings and research conducted on *La poudre d'intelligence*, I have not come across any critical analyses that suggest a connection between Kateb's theatrical works and Turkish culture. Additionally, there is a lack of evidence indicating that Kateb Yacine was exposed to Turkish cultural influences during his travels or within his literary pursuit. In response to this academic void, the main objective is to uncover potential imprints of Turkish culture within Kateb Yacine's selected play and illustrate how they enrich the text's meaning and significance.

To achieve a comprehensive and methodical exploration of the traces of Turkish culture in Kateb Yacine's play, several crucial questions must guide this textual analysis. Firstly, what are the contributing factors that might link Kateb Yacine's theater to Turkish culture, and how does this influential inspiration manifest within his play? Additionally, how have historical and ideological interactions between Algerian and Turkish cultures shaped the characters and themes of Kateb Yacine's work? Are there discernible political or social messages in the text influenced by his exposure to Turkish authors, particularly within the context of the Algerian struggle against French colonization? In essence, what specific Turkish literary and artistic influences can be identified within *La poudre d'intelligence*? These guiding inquiries will serve as the framework for this study, aiming to unveil the subtle yet undeniable traces of Turkish culture in Kateb Yacine's *The Intelligence Powder*.

Theoretical Framework

Influence Studies represent an important branch of Comparative Literature, which helps comprehending the interconnectedness of various literary traditions and their historical impact on one another. Influence can manifest directly through interactions among writers, transcending cultural, linguistic, and geographical barriers. Moreover, it can be indirect, when foreign literary works and external factors contribute to inspiring a writer's creative process. This type of study holds substantial importance in analyzing Kateb Yacine's play, *The Intelligence Powder*, as it sheds light on the interplay of Turkish cultural elements shaping it.

In particular, exploring this cultural impact enables a deeper understanding of how historical, religious, and ideological factors have influenced the playwright's thematic choices, character development, and his performance style. The concept of "Influence" aids also in tracing the elements adapted from this cultural source, thus illuminating the interconnectedness between Algerian and Turkish theatrical traditions. As Manas Sinha (2021) aptly suggests, "The harmonious and judicious fusion of originality and influence from diverse models results in creative innovation. Thus, the study of influence on an author, their work, or literature ensures a better understanding of the finished piece" (Sinha 5269). Such an examination also offers insights into how this influence contributed to shaping the playwright's Algerian identity, which includes multiple cultural threads into an artistic expression. Furthermore, delving into the Turkish cultural impact on Kateb's *The Intelligence Powder* not only enhances the appreciation of his theatrical work but also contributes to broader discussions on cultural exchange and the significance of cross-cultural influences in shaping the play's historical context, thematic depth, and artistic innovations.

Historical and Cultural Interactions

Algeria and Turkey share historical contacts due to the Ottoman Empire's presence in the region. It ruled Algeria from the early 16th century until the early 19th century. Under Ottoman rule, Algeria was recognized as a self-governing area within the Empire. Amira Bennison (1998) explains that historically, the capture of Algiers in 1830 is regarded as marking the conclusion of the Ottoman era and the beginning of French colonization. The commonly accepted version of events centers around a diplomatic conflict between Dey Hussein, Algiers' final Ottoman ruler, and the French consul Pierre Laval. It was during a diplomatic encounter, that Dey Hussein purportedly offended the French consul by striking him with a hand fan due to France's unpaid debt to Algeria. Subsequently, this diplomatic altercation was utilized by France as a pretext to initiate its invasion of Algeria (Benison 17).

It is important to point out that, prior to the French colonial period, there was cultural exchange and interaction between Algeria and the Ottoman Empire whose cultural and artistic influences, according to Hadj Dahmane (2011) appear through the practice of the “Karagouz”, which entered Algeria in the 17th century in the hands of the Turks; it was a leisure, especially during the month of Ramadan. Its first appearances were in cities and regions where Turks gathered, and then it spread throughout the country”. Karagouz, adds the author, has Turkish origins and it means the ‘black eye.’ (Dahmane 31). However, the French colonial administration, as Naget Khadda (2020) notices, wary of the critical impact of the performances and the involvement of the spectators, prohibited it in 1843 and it was performed only in private celebrations (Khadda 90).

Moreover, the Ottoman Empire had a significant cultural influence on both Algeria and the broader parts of the Maghreb, which brought Turkish cultural and administrative practices to the region. This period left a lasting impact on Algerian culture as it appears in the play through characters of the Sultan, Mufti, and Cadi. These characters illustrate a shared historical Islamic heritage since in Algeria and Turkey, Islam has played a crucial role in shaping the cultural, social, and religious aspects of both societies.

In *The Intelligence Powder*, the playwright refers to the strength of probably the Ottoman Empire through Nuage de fumée, who wishes: “Nous espérons que ta sainte religion et l’Empire de notre Sultan s’élèveront toujours plus haut...Et resteront bâtis sur le sable. Amin” (Kateb 109).² This quote expresses a shared religious identity, which characterize the characters everyday life, including religious practices, traditions, and values. But the question remains why Kateb Yacine turn to this specific Turkish heritage to create his play?

The Consequences of The French Colonial Assimilation Policy

Kateb's *Intelligence Powder*, as mentioned earlier, was produced during the French colonization of Algeria. Confronted with the imposed alteration of his Algerian identity and the erasure of his culture by the French school, Kateb Yacine expresses a definite commitment in his dramatic text towards the restoration of past ancestral values, aiming to counter the stereotypes propagated by the colonial system and reinforced by its imposed education. As the Algerian poet and writer, Jean Mouhoub Amrouche (1928-1999), aptly points out:

La société arabo-berbère et musulmane était, en effet, dans la perspective illusoire de l'assimilation ou de l'intégration, vouée à disparaître par un long et insensible processus

²“Kateb’s quote in translation: “We hope that your holy religion and the Empire of our Sultan will always rise higher... And remain built on sand. Amen”.

d'absorption. Le rêve, l'alibi historique, le parfait achèvement de l'œuvre coloniale c'était cela : la métamorphose, homme après homme, famille après famille, de la société arabo-berbère et musulmane en société européenne et française³. (Amrouche).

The words of the Algerian poet Jean. M. Amrouche succinctly encapsulate the French colonial project of erasing Algerian cultural identity. The French colonizer perceived the local population as uncivilized and barbaric that needed to be enlightened by Europeans through their “Civilizing Mission”, which inflicted Algerians with harsh living conditions; their lands were confiscated, they were treated with brutality and deprived of fundamental human rights (Bennison 1998).

Furthermore, the French assimilation policy implemented, after the military conquest of Algeria, aimed to make the Algerians more like the French by limiting the influence of religion, encouraging the learning of the French language at school, and educating the Algerians about French history and culture. This lasting assimilation policy had a great effect on Algerian authors like Kateb Yacine, who struggled against cultural obliteration. In “La poudre d'intelligence: rupture et délivrance poétique”, Mireille Djaïder (1992) explains Kateb's poetic project of asserting an identity, which goes against that he learned during his colonial education:

L'angoisse de la dépossession, l'illusion théâtrale se déporte à l'autre pôle, de la tragédie à la comédie: au lieu du manque, sur le canevas comique du jeu du voleur/volé et démasqué, dans le rire, le pouvoir et ses représentants, par le “hérald du peuple” qui après avoir détourné par le trait satirique la parole oppressive tente de confisquer à son profit cette arme de libération éprouvée (Djaïder 180)⁴

Therefore, in his *La poudre d'intelligence*, the playwright turns to his Arab and Turkish Muslim heritage as an act of resistance against the colonial project of assimilation as. In so doing, he embeds his dramatic text within a process of redefining his identity. In this context, Ania Loomba

³Jean el-Mouhoub Amrouche (1906-1962) is an Algerian-French poet, essayist, and literary journalist of French expression. The author explains how the Arab-Berber and Muslim society was targeted by the policy of assimilation or integration, destined to disappear through a long and imperceptible process of absorption. The dream, the historical alibi, the perfect achievement of the colonial work was, according to Amrouche, the transformation of this Arab-Berber Muslim society into a European and French one.

⁴The quote by Mireille Djaïder illustrates Kateb's shift from tragedy to comedy as a struggle against French assimilation. This transition stems from a sense of cultural alienation and dispossession. The comical portrayal of the power dynamic, as voiced by Nuage de Fumée, aims to subvert oppressive language and attempts to wield it as a tool of liberation. This shift also reflects Kateb's ongoing poetic efforts of reclaiming his Algerian identity, as a challenge to overcome the impact of French colonial education.

(2005) observes that African literary works strive to dismantle biased representations of their continent, whether written during the colonial period or even later after independence, as self-contained, esoteric, or apolitical as they might be, cannot remain indifferent to colonial rhythms (Loomba 73).

Kateb's Rehabilitation of the Arab and Turkish Moslem Cultural Legacy

The Intelligence Powder explores the theme of colonialism and the resistance against it in a veiled way. The play, set in colonial Algeria, primarily portrays the oppressive rule of a Sultan and the challenges encountered by the people under his control. This struggle reflects connections to the Ottoman Empire, a significant and influential Muslim state that wielded power over Algeria for three centuries. At the top of its political hierarchy was the Sultan, who held political, religious authority, and centrality of power. He is considered the God's representative on earth; he is a kind of Caliph of Sunni Islam and is considered as the ultimate ruler of the state. His authority is considered divine, and his decisions are never called into question.

The Sultan provides the backdrop for Nuage de fumée's experiences and the challenges he faces all along the play, which Kateb Yacine gave the form of Socratic dialogue, in which the hero-ideologist, Nuage de fumée, tests his ideas and challenges the intelligence of his society's authorities. The latter symbolizes the resistance against unjust rulers. His resistance is, first and foremost, displayed through his alienation, which looks like that experienced by the Algerians under colonialism.

By using Nuage de fumée, the playwright illustrates the impact of power dynamics on an individual and societal levels. He explores how power is wielded by oppressive authorities (Sultan, Mufti, and Cadi) and how the protagonist and his wife Atika resist or succumb to that power. In addition, Kateb Yacine, through the main character, comments on numerous events and criticize archaic social and political situations such as domination, corruption, lack of freedom, human progress, and social transformation, which are the potential themes in his play. The central character plays a pivotal role in setting the tone of oppression and delineating power structures between the dominating force of the Sultan and his allies and the oppressed people. By delving into the historical and political background surrounding the play's creation and performance, as well as examining the significant events in Algeria during that period, we can better understand how the playwright's choice of character aimed to circumvent censorship and restrictions imposed by the colonial authorities on his writings. Bennison's (1998) examination delves into the evolution of Algerian society following the arrival of French troops, highlighting the initial responses and the subsequent transformation. She emphasizes that the estrangement experienced by the local

population played a pivotal role in shaping a new ‘Algerian’ identity marked by strong nationalism and a deep attachment to Islamic roots (Bennison 1998).

Preceding colonization, Algerians managed their affairs internally, adhering to tribal customs and religious traditions. During that period, their identification was more aligned with their respective tribes rather than a cohesive Algerian or Ottoman identity, rooted significantly in their Islamic cultural heritage (Bennison 114). This underscores that the foundation of Algerian identity prior to colonization was founded more upon tribal and religious affiliations than on notions of nationalism. Bennison further writes that the emergence of Algerian nationalism was a consequence of French occupation. She asserts, “As a result of the war, the inhabitants of the central Maghreb became ‘Algerians,’ an identity born from collective experiences under French rule, lacking distinct roots in pre-colonial society aside from broader Islamic or Arab connections” (Bennison 114). Her exploration of the pre-colonial Algerian identity holds significance for my examination of Kateb’s play, as it aids in comprehending the quest for identity, which is expressed by the chorus in what follows:

Les ancêtres nous ont prédit que lorsque sonneront les dernières heures de la tribu, l’aigle noble et puissant devra céder sa place à l’oiseau de la mort et de la défaite. Mais peu importe. Notre totem demeure. C’est un oiseau intraitable [...] Dans toutes les grandes villes, on peut voir des vautours en cage, avec leurs tribus (Kateb 113)⁵.

The chorus stands for the Algerian people as the descendants, who primarily identified themselves through their religious and tribal affiliations during the early stages of colonization.

Moreover, as a trickster figure, Nuage de fumé challenges the societal norms by calling into question Sultan’s, the Mufti’s, and the Cadi’s authorities. His rebellious and subversive actions are meant to critique oppressive systems and highlight the flaws or hypocrisy of those in power. Through his actions and interactions, he provides social commentary by exposing the absurdities or injustices of society, making satirical or critical observations about the Sultan’s behavior and institutions. As is evident in this poetic passage when Nuage de fumée, addresses God by saying:

⁵“The excerpt in translation: “The ancestors predicted that when the last hours of the tribe sound, the noble and powerful eagle will have to yield its place to the bird of death and defeat. But never mind. Our totem is the unbreakable bird [...]. In all the big cities, one can see vultures in a cage, with their tribes”

This passage from Kateb’s selected play explains the playwright’s idea of returning to myth of ancestors as a way to resist colonial assimilation. The quote suggests that even if the tribe is defeated, their totem remains and is unyielding. The reference to the eagle and the vulture subtly symbolizes the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer who seeks to cage and subjugate the Algerians. The quote also highlights the importance of maintaining cultural identity and resisting oppression, even in time of oppression.

“Oh, mon Dieu, trois fois! Écoute-moi, oh mon Dieu, trois fois. Est-ce que tu m’entends? J’ai besoin de cent pièces d’or. Tu veux savoir ce que je vais en faire? Ce n’est pas ton affaire. Envoie-moi cent pièces d’or, si tu es vraiment Dieu. Et ne t’inquiète pas du reste” (103)⁶.

The quote reveals Nuage de Fumée, by addressing God directly, makes a request for material wealth. By this act, he challenges the traditional notion of divine interaction and questions the authority of God. In doing so, he defies the established norms of piety and obedience in religious discourse, presenting a more assertive and confrontational perspective towards the divine challenging the imposed and oppressive authority. It can be understood that, according to Kateb Yacine, the return to traditional culture, which gave birth to a jester amid historical changes cannot stop the process of deculturation imposed on colonized people. The sense of ridicule, as Michael Billig writes in his book, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour* (2005), considers that all cultures use ridicule as a disciplinary means to uphold norms of conduct and conventions of meaning. Humour and laughter serve the purpose of discouraging incongruous behavior” (Billig 78). The use of laughter adds depth and complexity to the dramatic experience, making Kateb’s play more compelling and thought-provoking.

The Use of Oral Tradition and Subversion of Storytelling Conventions

Sticking to tracing the Turkish culture in Kateb’s play is the insertion of elements of traditional Turkish and Arabic storytelling, which are revealing. They stand for what Kateb has inherited from his forefathers, such as the use of Arabic and Turkish cultural and religious traits but also memory and emotions related to the past. Memory and emotions play an influential role in the identity building in the sense that the memory and the nostalgia inherited from the previous generation led the playwright to develop a sense of belonging, even if only in imagination. Characters such as the Sultan suggest that the playwright’s identity construction was influenced by nostalgia and collective memory transmitted through generations. Therefore, Kateb Yacine’s play *The Intelligence Powder* draws inspiration from the rich storytelling traditions of both Turkey and Algeria. The character of Nuage de fumée, or Jeha the “trickster,” is a popular figure in Turkish literature, known for his humorous and wise stories that often convey moral lessons or satirize human behavior. In his journalistic writings (1999), Kateb writes that he adapted this character in many of his journalistic articles, which he titles “J’ha chronicles”, and which he signed with the pseudonym of Zobeir Turki⁷ (Kateb 159).

⁶“The passage from the play can be translated as: “Oh my God, three times! Listen to me, oh my God, three times. Can you hear me? I need a hundred gold coins. Do you want to know what I’m going to do with them? That’s none of your business. Send me a hundred gold coins, if you are truly God. And don’t worry about the rest.”

⁷Kateb Yacine’s career as a journalist is not as well-known as his work as a writer and playwright. He worked as a journalist for Alger République newspaper between 1948 and 1951 and his articles were published after his death by his son, Amazigh in a book entitled, *Minuit passé de douze heures, écrits journalistiques, from 1947 to 1989*. “Zobeir Turki” is the

More significantly, the playwright affirms that he has been inspired by the stories of Nasreddin Hodja, which were widely celebrated in Turkish culture, he deliberately decontextualizes the character of J'ha, renamed as Nuage de fumée in *The Intelligence Powder*. By using some of his jokes and anecdotes, which have been passed down through generations and continue to be a source of entertainment and wisdom in Turkish culture, Kateb shapes Nuage de fumée as a nod to this tradition. In doing so, he bridges the gap between traditional storytelling and modern literary and journalistic forms, infusing his works with a sense of multiple cultural heritage.

Nuage de fumée stands as a character archetype that plays a unique and multifaceted role in *La poudre d'intelligence*, often serving several important functions. One of his primary roles is to provide comic relief. His antics, wit, and humorous behavior lightens the mood of the play, offering the audience moments of laughter and levity amidst more serious or dramatic scenes. He, most of the time, introduces an element of chaos and disruption into the story by challenging the status quo, breaking social norms, and upsetting the order of things, creating, thus, conflict and laughter. What follows proves the point: « Misère, misère noire, misère de la philosophie! Il n'y a pas de justice. Ou bien il y en a trop, car me voici bel et bien en train de voler des oignons dans le jardin du mufti!» (101)⁸.

Kateb has retrieved J'ha from oblivion, renaming him Nuage de fumée, who confronts: Mufti, the Ulemas, the wealthy merchant, and the Sultan, representatives of 'the triple alliance: religion-power-and finance'. Through this character, the playwright incites the audience to reflection on questions about ethics and calls to a consciousness that disrupts the status quo, this prayer is an illustration: “Nuage de fumée: Voici le peuple qui rode, ironique, sans parler des espions du mufti. (Il se met à prier) O mon Dieu, excuse-moi si je t'implore dans la rue, mais je ne t'ai pas trouvé dans la mosquée”⁹ (102). The prayer of the main character in the street expresses a sense of irony and frustration, when observing people wandering around and noting the presence of the Mufti's spies. The playwright uses irony and sarcasm through Nuage de Fumée's apology to God for praying in the street instead of a mosque. The statement suggests a disillusionment or

pseudonym which Kateb used to write on politics in the press. With a pseudonym, Kateb could express his opinions without fear of retribution from the colonial French authorities.

The name “Zoubeir Turki” refers to a Tunisian painter and sculptor of Turkish origin, born on November 19, 1924, and passed away on October 23, 2009. He was known for his unique style of painting and sculpture, and he made significant contributions to the art scene in Tunisia.

⁸ English translation: “Misery, black misery, misery of philosophy! There is no justice. Or perhaps there is too much, for here I am stealing onions in the mufti's garden”. We understand from the excerpt that Nuage de Fumée experiences a sense of despair about the lack of justice, highlighting the absurdity of his situation, which led him to steal onions from the Mufti's garden. Ironically, the playwright reflects on the social and economic conditions of the time by showing the contradictions and injustices inherent in the society.

⁹ Translated quote: “Here is the people who ride, ironic, without speaking of the spies of the mufti. (He gets down on his knees) Oh my God, forgive me if I beg you in the street, but I have not found you in the mosque”. This quotation stands as a critique of the hypocrisy and corruption in religious institutions, specifically the mufti, who is a high-ranking Islamic legal expert.

inability to find spiritual fulfillment in the conventional religious setting of the mosque. His disillusionment can be interpreted as a critique of societal norms and religious institutions. It highlights a gap separating religious spaces and the spiritual solace the character looks for.

However, despite Nuage de Fumée's cleverness and resourcefulness, by the end of the play, he falls short as a resolver of problems. While adept at using wit and cunning to navigate challenging circumstances and tricking his adversaries, he fails to undergo personal growth and his transition from a troublemaker to a wiser individual is hindered by his role as the Sultan's son's tutor. He, thus, laments his downfall: "Ainsi va la gloire: elle m'a tout bonnement transformé en nourrice. Désormais, je suis condamné à vivre jour et nuit au chevet du prince"¹⁰ (110).

Therefore, in contrast to typical trickster archetypes that often symbolize human creativity, adaptability, and resilience in adversity, Kateb subverts the storytelling conventions by a role reversal of Nuage de Fumée, who embodies the fragility, resilience, and vulnerability inherent in human nature. What's particularly intriguing is that, unlike a conventional catalyst for change, Nuage de Fumée's actions spur events and provoke conflicts but do not liberate him from poverty and oppression. Mireille Djäider explains how Nuage de Fumée " le perturbateur dans la perturbation " se fait à son tour pivot du système. Et celui qui magiquement par " la poudre d'intelligence " voulait transfigurer le réel se trouve au terme de la pièce asservi et encore plus démuni"¹¹ (Djäider 180).

The other characters, which represent the Turkish culture are: The Sultan, the Mufti, and the Cadi; they serve specific symbolic and thematic roles that reflect deeper social and political commentary. The Sultan, for instance as mentioned before, symbolizes the royal authoritarian ruling power. In the context of Algerian history, this could refer to Turkish domination too. The Sultan embodies the oppressive regime that dominates the lives of the people. He typically enacts his authority, imposing unjust laws, and exploiting the populace. This reflects the real historical injustices faced by Algerians under colonial rule. Therefore, the Sultan becomes a target for resistance and rebellion within the narrative. Nuage de fumé and his wife seek to challenge the Sultan's authority, reflecting the broader struggle for freedom and justice.

For his part, the Mufti represents religious authority within the society. In Islamic tradition, the Mufti is a scholar who issues religious rulings or fatwas. However, in Kateb's dramatic work,

¹⁰ This passage from Kateb's play conveys a sense of resignation and acceptance of a role that is perhaps beneath the main character's expectations. It reflects a recognition of the unpredictable and sometimes ironic nature of human fate.

¹¹ Mireille Djäider provides an explanation of how Nuage de Fumée, initially a disruptor of the established order, becomes the central pivot of the system, which oppresses him. She comments on the role reversal and transformation of Nuage de Fumée within the play. The character, who sought to magically transform reality using "the intelligence powder" finds himself, by the end, more subjugated to the Sultan's authority. Despite his attempts to use intelligence and magic to alter reality, he ends up subjugated and in a more vulnerable position. His transformation underscores themes of power dynamics, irony, and the failure to change the Sultan's well-established and oppressive regime.

the Mufti is portrayed as collaborating with the oppressive regime of the Sultan, highlighting the complicity of religious authorities in maintaining the status quo. This critique may reflect real historical instances where religious leaders aligned themselves with colonial powers. When confronted with moral dilemmas posed by the Mufti's support for the Sultan; Nuage de Fumée reflects subtly the tensions between religion and political resistance in the context of colonial Algeria.

The same negative role is given to the Cadi, who is supposed to represent the legal and judicial authority within the society. The Cadi typically enforces the laws and regulations set by the oppressive ruling power, which could parallel the French colonial legal system in Algeria. Instead of presiding over cases or disputes that highlight the injustices faced by the people, the Cadi aligns himself with the political and religious authorities by reinforcing their power and domination. This can serve as a platform to critique the biased and unfair colonial legal system.

Through the portrayal of three characters, the playwright delves into their vices and consistent behaviors, prompting the audience to ponder their conscience. Nuage de Fumée challenges the unjust rulings of the Cadi, stirring his conscience and questioning the morality behind enforcing unfair laws. This highlights a broader theme of moral and ethical quandaries faced by individuals within oppressive societies. These characters symbolically represent various aspects of the colonial system and the intricate dynamics inherent in any society striving for freedom. They provide Kateb with a canvas to explore themes of authority, resistance, morality, and collaboration, illuminating the intricate layers of the struggle against tyranny and injustice.

The Influence of Turkish Marxist authors on Kateb Yacine

Next to the historical and cultural bounds, which represent “the shared heritage” and the fruit of the common creative and processed effort of countless generations, Kateb Yacine's nomadic lifestyle and experiences abroad greatly influenced his engagement with Marxist authors, whose ideas played a significant role in shaping Kateb's perspective and artistic choices. Throughout his life, Kateb Yacine spent an important part of his life in exile, a consequence of his political activism and convictions, as noted by Gérard Faure in 1974. The playwright lived in self-imposed exile, residing in France and many other European countries. These experiences profoundly shaped his literary works, infusing them with a profound sense of authenticity, a point emphasized by Faure (74).

Meanwhile, this time spent in exile contributed to the development of his internationalist worldview that surpassed national confines, focusing on international struggles against colonialism and imperialism. This perspective significantly informed his views on the Algerian struggle,

positioning it within the broader context of the global revolutionary and anti-colonial movements. As a dedicated Marxist, Kateb shapes his plays as a platform to claim social justice and freedom.

More importantly, it is his ardent commitment to socialist ideals, and his dedication to social justice that makes him admire the Turkish poet, novelist and playwright, Nâzım Hikmet (1902–1963). Kateb Yacine appreciated Hikmet's poetic fervor, his ability to combine poetic beauty with powerful political activism. He appreciates many of his poems he wrote in the 1950s. He himself wrote poems such as “la chanson d'amour pour la fille des prolétaires¹²”, “aux mains durcies au service du capital¹³”, which he dedicated to Nazim Hikmet, he considers as “le poète de l'internationale socialiste¹⁴”. The subsequent poem entitled: “Nazim Hikmet ou le chant des exilés¹⁵” is also addressed to this Turkish author. Kateb Yacine calls him a “Garip...Achik, Achik Garip”. These words hold cultural and literary significance in Turkish literature and cultural history. Addressing Nazim Hikmet, Kateb writes:

Tu as raison

Dulcinée est la plus belle du monde

Bien sûr qu'il fallait crier cela

A la figure des petits marchands de rien du tout.

Bien sûr qu'ils devaient se jeter sur toi

Et te rouer de coups

Mais tu es l'invincible chevalier de la soif... (Kateb 235-236).

The excerpt illustrates Kateb Yacine's agreement with Nazim Hikmet on the fact that “Dulcinea, Don Quixote's mistress in Cervantes' romance, is the most beautiful woman in the world¹⁶” and affirms that it was necessary to proclaim this in the face of insignificant merchants. He also compares Hikmet to “the invincible knight” for his thirst of words for which he has been severely attacked and exiled.

¹² Kateb's poems dedicated to Nazim Hikmet:” The Love Song for the Daughter of the Proletariat. They reflected the two authors' sense of grief over exile and a fervent commitment to Marxist ideology.

¹³ “To the Strong Hands in the Service of Capital”

¹⁴ “the poet of the socialist international”.

¹⁵ “Nazim Hikmet or the song of the exiled”

¹⁶ It is possible that the fictional character “Dulcinea” in Miguel de Cervantes' novel “Don Quixote” may have influenced Kateb Yacine in shaping “Nedjma,” the heroine of his novel (1956), which shares the same name. Both characters are idealized and symbolize the authors' affection, as well as the embodiment of beauty and virtue. The parallels between these characters suggest a potential intertextual influence, reflecting the enduring literary themes of idealized love and the representation of complex female characters.

Furthermore, Kateb Yacine (1999) refers to Nazim Hikmet's posthumous autobiographical novel, which depicts the life of a man imprisoned for being a Communist, his friends, and the women he loved. Hikmet's last novel provides insights into his life and experiences in Florence, Paris, and Mosco. Kateb quotes a long passage from this book, which illustrates that Hikmet's political stance was not in line with the official policies of Mustapha Atatürk's regime (Kateb 238).

Furthermore, the Algerian playwright draws several parallels between Nazim Hikmet's tumultuous life and that of several renowned poets such as Nesimi, Kadi Bourhanedine, Ahmed Pacha, Djafer Celibi, Sultan Djem, Fouzouli, and Nefi, among many others, who opposed the veneration of religious icons. Like Nazim Hikmet, all of them have in common a fervent commitment to revolutionary ideals and rejection of established ideologies. They tragically experienced relentless political persecution for their activism. Their unwavering dedication to their beliefs led them down a path of exile and displacement, as the oppressive political regimes compelled them to seek refuge in other countries. They all endured the hardships of displacement because of their iconoclastic stances, and for their noble pursuit for change. Kateb praises their rebellious and revolutionary perspectives, which aim to break down conventional views or structures. (239).

Nâzım Hikmet's ideological influence on Kateb Yacine can be seen in their shared commitment to social justice, political engagement, the use of poetry as a catalyst for change, internationalism, language experimentation. While their specific contexts and struggles differed, their dedication to using literature as a vehicle for addressing pressing social and political issues forged a strong ideological connection between these two prominent authors. Such an influence is also displayed through description of the relationship between the artist and the group to which he never addresses and vehemently criticizes as voiced by Nuage de fumée: "Misère, misère noire, misère de la philosophie! Le pouvoir n'a que faire des esprits subversifs, et le peuple, pourtant sensible à la parole, ne peut m'entendre, assourdi qu'il est par la rumeur énorme du pouvoir"¹⁷ (99). This excerpt reflects the main character's frustration of trying to communicate ideas of dissent or change in a society where the powerful are disinterested and the general populace is unable to grasp the message amid the dominance of authority. He insists that political authorities are indifferent to philosophers who hold subversive or challenging ideas.

In addition to his interactions with Nâzım Hikmet's Marxist ideology, Kateb also shares with this Turkish author his love for poetry, which he uses as an artistic tool to express his revolutionary ideas. It is important to point out that he started his literary career with poetry, the

¹⁷The passage translated: Misery, black misery, philosophy's misery! The power only has the ability to create subversive spirits, and the people, despite being sensitive to speech, cannot understand me, crushed as they are by the immense rumor of power".

following excerpt illustrates the playwright's use of poetry and the revolutionary role of the poet as Omar Chaalal (2004) states:

[The poet] fait sa révolution à l'intérieur de la révolution politique; il est, au sein de la perturbation, l'éternel perturbateur. Son drame s'est d'être mis au service d'une lutte révolutionnaire, lui qui ne peut ni ne doit composer avec les apparences d'un jour. Le poète, c'est la révolution à l'état nu, le mouvement même de la vie dans une incessante explosion¹⁸ (Kateb, cited in Chaalal 39).

It can be understood from the above quote the playwright subtly combines politics and poetry for artistic and revolutionary purposes. Even though they are fundamentally opposed, the poetic and the political can come together in a fusion that supports the author's ideological point of view as Naget Khadda confirms his commitment in what follows:

Poète engagé, Kateb refuse d'être embrigadé. Le vrai poète, a-t-il affirmé, même dans un courant progressiste, doit manifester des désaccords "C'est donc, la liberté absolue de penser et de s'exprimer qu'il mettra au service de la Révolution permanente pour l'émancipation des hommes"¹⁹ (Khadda 99).

The quote reveals that Kateb Yacine was convinced that the essence of true poetic expression lay in the poet's ability to go against prevailing norms and structures. According to him, a genuine poet is not merely an artist but also a voice of resistance, challenging the status quo. Central to Yacine's Marxist conviction is that freedom of thought stands as a cornerstone in the pursuit of revolution, a revolution not just for political change but for the liberation of humanity as a whole. In his view, poetry held the power to provoke critical thinking and ignite the flames of transformation, fostering a collective awakening necessary for emancipation and societal progress.

¹⁸ The translated passage: "The poet makes his revolution within the political revolution; he is, in the midst of the disturbance, the eternal troublemaker. His drama is to be at the service of a revolutionary struggle, he who cannot and must not compromise with the appearances of a day. The poet is the revolution in its naked state, the very movement of life in an incessant explosion". Kateb Yacine considers the poet as someone who exists within the heart of revolutionary movements. His role is to disrupt oppressive norms and to destabilize established orders. The poet, adds the playwright, should transcend merely reflecting the political revolution; he is himself an embodiment of revolution, expressing it through an artistic work.

¹⁹ Naget Khadda's point of view in translation "As a committed poet, Kateb refuses to be indoctrinated. The true poet should affirm and show, even in a progressive current, his disagreements. The poet should be put in the service of the permanent revolution for the emancipation of humanity by imposing absolute freedom of thought and expression."

The Marxist leanings, which provides another valuable link to explain Kateb Yacine's influence by Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, appear in *The Intelligence Powder* through Nuage de Fumée's struggle and mockery and what it implies as a critique of power. As a whole, the play portrays the logical position of the master-slave relationship. Yet, his struggle remains ineffective as it is not collective but individual, which limits his actions to effect a change in society. The initiatives he takes have a limited impact on the overall conflict because they are the work of a single individual who opposes the power and criticizes the group rather than an effective class struggle. The other Marxist feature comes to sight with the appearance of Ali, the nationalist hero, son of Lakhdar and Nedjma, by the end of the play, as well as the Chorus as a 'collective character' allows the struggle to be plural, to have a greater scope and thus be effective. The Chorus speak on behalf of the oppressed, undifferentiated 'we' that unites women and men to lead a class struggle to end oppression.

Kateb introduces Ali, a rebellious figure, "with predatorily red eyes" to replace Nuage de fumée, the people's hero, anchored in the collective imagination that is preparing to take his revenge. The mischievous hero from the popular traditions of the Maghreb and Turkey yields his place to Ali, the revolutionary activist, son of Lakhdar and Nedjma. By reimagining the revolutionary figure of Lakhdar, the main character in *Le cadavre encerclé*, (The Encircled Corpse) through his son, Ali, Kateb makes the transcendence of ridicule in the world of the Sultan, the Muftis, and charlatans, with a world where the genius of the people is captive to power. He, thus, highlights the resistance and creativity of the people, despite the hardships they face during the war. Though implicitly, in the mind of the playwright, the struggle and commitment to a social revolution is a matter of action rather than mere words. Ali is driven by a dream to push to his limits the newly freed slave and to make of him a new man, which suggests a way out for Kateb to breaking out the system of representation sanctioned by the power structures of colonialism. Ali is a "new man" liberated from the old order. In this case, he is portrayed as a half-human and half creature, endowed with a capacity for rational discourse and action. Kateb thus, restores Ali as the privileged agent of history because "Liberation" from oppression involves both to make the unconscious aware of this oppression so that he could act towards changing social structures. Ali stands as an agent of action in his own freedom and a useful alternative to the dominant order.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of Kateb Yacine's play reveals clearly the impact of Turkish culture, which stem from the commonality of historical legacy through the Ottoman rule, as well as the exchange of cultural elements, storytelling traditions, and themes of resistance. The investigation into historical and ideological exchanges between Algerian and Turkish cultures uncovers

significant character developments and thematic elements within Kateb Yacine's work. Alongside the historical ties and the portrayal of Turkish culture in Kateb's play, we can also consider the influence of Kateb Yacine's personal background and ideology. His exposure to Turkish authors, amidst the backdrop of the Algerian fight against French colonization and the Liberation movements of the late 1960s and 1970s have undeniably influenced the political and social messages embedded in the text. Specifically, this study identifies discernible Turkish literary and artistic influences within *The intelligence Powder*, illuminating the subtle yet unmistakable traces of Turkish culture interwoven within Kateb Yacine's play. These findings underscore the profound impact of cross-cultural interactions on the narrative depth and contextual nuances present in Yacine's dramatic work.

Beyond the historical and ideological impacts, Kateb intricately weaves characters that echo the essence of Turkish culture. Nuage de Fumée, for instance, embodies the multilayered persona reminiscent of Moula Nasreddin in Turkish folklore, melding humor, social critique, and resistance. Employing similar wit and cunning, Nuage de Fumée, known as Jeha, confronts established norms, lays bare societal injustices, and encourages audiences to challenge authority, fostering resilience and resistance against oppression. His witty remarks, clever wordplay, and humorous tricks provide lighter moments amid serious themes and social chaos. This allows the audience to engage with the play on multiple levels, enjoying the comic aspects while also reflecting on the deeper messages conveyed.

However, Nuage de fumée, as represented by Kateb Yacine, is marginalized and withdrawn into his personal experiences. He stands as marginal figure resistant to the subordinate status imposed upon him. Though he rebels against the domination of his oppressors (Sultan, Mufti, and Cadi) and discovers for himself that the established order is founded on violence and injustice, he fails to find the appropriate ways to make his revolt effective and meaningful. Through his journey, Nuage de fumée undergoes personal growth and becomes aware of the unjust power structures surrounding him but does not resist but succumbs to the Sultan's offer of a high position. It through Ali that the playwright expresses his groundbreaking ideas related to revolution, social change, and the possibility of overthrowing the oppressive social order by emphasizing the importance of solidarity and collective action among the oppressed individuals to bring about change. These Marxist features are clearly displayed, in various ways, within the selected play. They are meant to capture the audience's attention by keeping them engaged in the real revolution.

To conclude, it can be said that, while Algerian theatre has developed its own theatrical traditions, there are historical, cultural, and social ties that have contributed to a shared theatrical heritage. Throughout history, cultural exchange between the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb

region, including Algeria, was not uncommon. This exchange included artistic forms, including theatre and Kateb Yacine was inspired by Turkish authors and playwrights during these interactions. Even in contemporary times, the exchange of ideas and artistic collaborations between Turkish and Algerian theatre artists continues to foster cultural connections. Modern theatre festivals, international collaborations, and shared experiences in the global theatre community have furthered the influence and exchange of ideas between the two countries.

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