

## The development of African Literature: A Dynamic Move from Pre-War Artistic Fiction to Post- War and Post-Independence Intellectual Maturity

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### Abstract

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the growing scope of nationalist movements against colonial rule in Africa triggered a break with the previous literary motivations of the pre-war era. This engendered new themes in African literature, focusing now on proclaiming one's own worthiness and value as a different society, with a different culture and different future aspirations. The present article sets out to underscore this pivotal and dynamic shift in literary concern of the early 1920's and 1930's and show to what extent the new African novel now reflected society during the post-war and immediate post-independence eras. Results reveal that unlike pre-war literature, post-war and post-independence novels matured, and writers realized that only when deeply rooted in their society through denouncing, and consequently reforming, that their literature can have a value, and be viewed as truly reflecting the real concerns of their community.

**Keywords:** African literature- post-war novel- post-independence writers- new literary concerns.

### 1.Introduction:

Though literature can understandably be associated with filling one's free time with pleasure yet, and by far, it is not (and should not be) only this. "Art for Art's sake" without any utilitarian function is pointless. "To write is to act" says Jean-Paul Sartre. Although young, post-World War II African literature appeared rapidly as an instrument of revolt against the prevailing conjuncture of the time. Writers produced literary works for a specific purpose, in a specific historical, intellectual, political, social and economic setting. A new tendency in literature was born. It has thus undergone profound changes not only from one generation of writers to another, but also within the same authors depending on the moment of history when they wrote. Post-war literary issues differed from pre-war and immediate post-independence ones.

Unlike pre-war literature, post-war novels matured and significantly reduced the pre-war gap between authors and the society that served as the material for their fiction. It is of note here that the scope of this article encompasses only the novel as a literary genre, not other literary forms like poetry, short stories, essays and theatre plays. Algeria and Ghana were taken as examples for francophone and anglophone fiction respectively. Literature thus dynamically

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shifted from a rather individual creation of the end of the 19th century to a social fact, an outcome of the political, economic and social experiences that the writers had undergone in a context of an international conflict with far-reaching ideological implications. As the nationalist era moved along towards independence, a striking thematic evolution was recorded, and literature became increasingly influenced by a different social reality that had already started to crystallise. A different degree of consciousness set in, and new concerns arose: literature addressed different issues related now to the problems of the independent African states, "...and since culture is the fruit and determinant of history, whatever tampers with the history of a people tampers with their cultural life and vice-versa" (Olaoluwa,2010). But this is not to deny the existence of a pre-war African literature, whether it be anglophone or francophone, nor is the aim to undervalue its merits. Pre-war writers in Africa had laid the foundations for their successors to develop a literature of their own. However, and as it was born and produced in the crucible of colonialism, it was greatly shaped by imperial domination and addressed issues that did not always depict the social reality to which authors were bound. Incidentally, this question of social link, viewed as a delayed engagement of writers, was highly promoted by their successors, which in itself constituted a new platform for the post-war African novel, more engaged in the nationalist struggle. It was the birth of a utilitarian literature, produced with the aim of condemning and, by implication, reforming an intolerable situation. The theme of the article implied a sociological and linguistic approach as far as methodology is concerned.

## **2. Pre-War African Literature and Cultural Nationalism**

Modern African literature, can be said to have its roots in the end of the nineteenth century. As early as 1888, *Marita: or the Folly of Love*, whose author chose to remain anonymous under the pseudonym of "A native", is a narrative about the profound changes that the Colonial Marriage Ordinance of 1888 in Ghana (formerly known as the colony of the Gold Coast) had on the relationships between men and women (Gocking,1999:85). This theme prevailed in all writings of the time irrespective of their literary genre. It was the predominant source of grievance of Africans against the colonial system. Discontent and criticism were particularly directed at the traditional authoritarian trait of the Christian ideology and the defiant African women that it indoctrinated. Christian marriages were regarded as a major deculturalization instrument of African identity. The author shows how this ordinance which promoted the Christian monogamous marriage turned Ghanaian women from peaceful, docile and resigned females to rebellious individuals who challenged men in their traditional power and position within the couple. Although there had been an early criticism of the Christian missions, colonial law, and a rejection of western cultural traits which did not fit the African social reality, the writers of the time were not involved in any form whatever of literary activism against colonialism as a political system. Newell notes:

Marita is far more than a masculinist tirade against shrewish wives, played out through a rejection of the Christian marriage vows (although it most certainly is that). Through the novel, we gain access to a critique of the entire Christian missionary project in West Africa, as well as a comment on the manner in which the colonial bureaucracy, only a few years old when Marita appeared, propelled into the statute books a host of new ordinances based on English law

without local consultation or African representation on the governing body... Marita: or the Folly of Love is a story told from "the educated native's" perspective, helping us understand the attitudes and values of elite West Africans in the 1880s and the contradictions they experienced in attempting to uphold European alongside African values. It is a treasure trove which sparkles with literate men's aesthetic and interpretative values and assumptions from the early colonial period (Newell, 2011).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Ghana witnessed an era of political and economic transformations that inevitably impacted the writers of the time in their choice of the literary themes they decided to write on. Such imminent writers as S. R. B. Attoh-Ahuma, J Mensah Sarbah, and J. E. Casely Hayford, innovated in writing in English but still addressed the same issue of animosity towards Methodism and the disastrous impact it had on the destructuring of the Ghanaian society. They sought to revive the African past as a basis for a flourishing present. Methodism in Ghana originated in the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1835 as a result of the missionary activities of Reverend Joseph Rhodes Dunwell. Literature denounced the missionary denial of the African culture characterised by a refusal to fit in with local customs and traditions (Korang,2004). Novels also addressed the issue of equality between blacks and whites in the Church as Christianity advocated, and the duty of respecting the African social pattern. Cultural nationalism defended traits of the African culture which the whites regarded as barbarian and retrograde. Colonialism permanently denigrated and repressed indigenous life and culture. It entrusted itself with the duty of re-educating Africans through erasing their past and their knowledge. The continuous attempts at underestimating the local population culminated in the projection of the negative image that the African individual had of himself. The colour of skin was associated with inferiority and backwardness. The African society was a victim of stereotypes and was painted as backward, and hence demanding domination and subjugation. Africans were viewed as uncivilised, incapable of conforming to modern law. This imperial image was meant to assault the African mentality to facilitate the resignation to European supremacy. Césaire notes:

...the very idea that there was a superior race lay at the heart of the matter, ...the "idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention,"... ...the colonial mission to "civilize" the primitive is just a smoke screen. If anything, colonialism results in the massive destruction of whole societies-societies that not only function at a high level of sophistication and complexity, but that might offer the West valuable lessons about how we might live together and remake the modern world" (Césaire,2004).

Colonialism and, later, neo-colonialism were not a matter of physical occupation for economic interests only, they were a planned adventure propelled by ethnocentrism with long-term and large-scale repercussions. Having understood this, African novelists took a stand and claimed that getting to know the other and the mutual tolerance of the difference were considered as a pre-requisite for a peaceful coexistence. If Africans recognised that this coexistence of cultures is a natural phenomenon, and can even be beneficial for humanity, they, nevertheless, warned that it needs to occur under certain conditions as Olaoluwa notes:

...no culture can hope to develop and make tangible intellectual and material contribution in the present global milieu without availing itself of the opportunities of a dynamic borrowing from other culture. This however has to be mutual rather than imposed, and the elements borrowed from other cultures must be consciously adapted rather than forced as we have in the colonial and neo-colonial situations (Olaoluwa, 2010).

Cultural nationalism arose thus in Africa as a powerful vehicle for local opinion to defend African cultural heritage and customary institutions without necessarily rejecting the European missionary project en block. On the importance of culture as a powerful instrument in any uprising against foreign domination, Chrisman and Williams (eds.) note:

The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated.... Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the revolution of relationships between man and his environment... Ignorance of this fact may explain the failure of several attempts at foreign domination—as well as the failure of some national liberation movements (Chrisman and Williams (eds.), 1993).

African grievances of the time were therefore more concerned with mutual tolerance, respect and coexistence than with an overall rejection of all what was colonial, as it was the case with post-war literary activism. Nevertheless, the latter owes much to this early cultural rebellion as “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which- it came into being” (Anderson,2006:12).

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the anglophone African novel, *Ethiopia Unbound*, published in 1911 emerged as a major literary attempt to express overtly African sentiments on colonialism. The Ghanaian writer, Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford, narrates the story of an educated African in London who debates with his English friend about issues like African identity and the struggle for emancipation. Throughout the novel, events take place in both England and his homeland, and the author refers to contemporary as well as ancient African history as a prerequisite for moral independence, the fundamental issue that this early literature addressed. Though fictional, the novel is highly tinged with political speeches and very much concerned with race emancipation. The choice of *Ethiopia* was not haphazard. While at the dawn of the twentieth century all of the African continent was under colonial rule, this country remained free. It was an early call for decolonisation, but more than that, it addressed the issue of racial discrimination. African writers have long drawn on the experiences they underwent in their daily lives to address issues such as race hatred, intolerance, xenophobia, segregation (Apartheid in South Africa), power, democracy, etc...Emancipation from what was often referred to as “mental slavery” was the watchword of this early literature.

But apart from *Ethiopia Unbound*, the bulk of literature during the 1920's and 1930's, whether it be anglophone or francophone, was massively artistic, in other words, art for the

sake of art, without any further anti-colonial implications or commitment in the sense known in the nationalist era. In francophone Algerian literature for instance, this was materialized essentially in *Zohra la Femme du Mineur* (Haj Hammou Abdelkader 1925), *Khadra Danseuse Ouled Nail* (Etienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim 1926), *Myriem dans les Palmes* (Mohamed Ould Cheikh 1936) etc... This early literature did not question the colonial system, but timidly handled the question of cultural alienation, equality and fraternity in a society primarily characterized at the time by cosmopolitanism. The idea of assimilation to France was, however, overtly rejected. The history of French Algeria at the time was not explicitly addressed, though it was presented as a background featured by oppression. As such, these writers, though not really concerned with anti-colonial issues, were the pioneers of the post-war Algerian nationalist novel to which they laid the foundations.

Colonisation unavoidably and deliberately engendered a kind of 'cultural loss' in the societies under control. These were drawn in a process of deculturalization which divested them of significant indigenous traits. Its impact varied from one colonial power to another, and from one colonial era to another, the longer the latter lasted, the more important cultural deprivation was. History showed that it is not always necessary to use guns and cannons to exercise domination. The latter does not operate through arms only, its action is complete only when consolidated by that of culture. The imperialist project reaches its peak when it manages to dispense with weapons and rely only on culture as an instrument of supremacy (Calargé, 2012).

When the colonial power opened the first schools in Algeria, many of the already existing indigenous ones, though not necessarily with a western shape and structure (Koranic schools or *madrassas* prior to 1830) increasingly lost ground. The French assimilation policy to integrate Algeria into the mainland France heavily relied on linguistic imperialism. The colonial administration prohibited Arabic in these schools and imposed French instead as the official language of instruction. Outlawing the mother tongue accompanied the ban of traditional schools with the main aim of destroying local culture. To deny the population the use of the mother tongue was an effective way to destroy it. Imperialism which Edward Said defined as "...thinking about setting on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived or owned by others" (Said, 1993:7) reached its acme. This culminated, as the colonial era moved along, in a cultural black out to hamper the historical development of the local lifestyle, customs and inheritance. The few who wrote did so to show they could write in a new language, a kind of attraction that had to do more with personal desires than with a deep commitment towards one's social and political concerns. The novel strikingly disclosed the new generation of intellectuals who appropriated the new language as a product of the colonial school.

Similarly, a glimpse of the history of anglophone African literature reveals that, before World War II, literary production was sparse and fragmented. With the exception of the aforementioned *Marita or the Folly of Love* and *Ethiopia Unbound*, there were virtually no recorded novels in the form we know today. Literature was essentially oral, and most stories were transmitted by spoken words through songs, poems and folktales. The novel in its

modern form was thus viewed by the society as a European importation, and the language in which it was written as a tool of deculturalization.

### **3. The Post-War African Novel: A European Importation or a New Patriotic Instrument of Revolt?**

It was not until the end of World War II that a new novel emerged in Africa in the form of a reaction of a disillusioned intelligentsia that decided to take a stand and use the pen to produce writings that find favour with larger audiences, namely to assert African autonomy and identity, and to echo real life experiences. There was an unequivocal refusal to write about artistic themes like love, beauty, etc... designed for entertainment while people were struggling to get independence. As many post-war African writers put it “We cannot afford to fiddle while Rome is burning”. But no matter if the majority did not read, the novel drew its success from the influence of those who read. At a time while other genres like drama and poetry enjoyed a legitimate ‘Africanity’ on account of their indigenous tradition, the novel, because of the language of the coloniser, was regarded as a European importation. Kingandi (2001) notes:

The place of the novel in Africa has been defined by a paradox: novels have always been confined to a very small elite those with a secondary school or university education, yet the genre has had and continues to have an unprecedented institutional authority, one that has not depended on a mass readership but on the unprecedented power and influence of those few who read. Although the readers of novels in Africa have been relatively few, they have been central in shaping the African response to colonialism mapping the narrative decolonization and shaping the vocabulary of social life (Kigandi, 2001).

Accordingly, the conjuncture following the war created a political atmosphere predominantly marked by the rise of nationalist movements across the African continent (Gideon, 2018). The rise of political consciousness among the elite in francophone and anglophone Africa alike caused a rift between the early literary motivations and post-war concerns focused now on new issues. Literature was used for revolutionary purposes and concern emphasized one and unique aspect: independence. In Algeria for example, the novel *Nedjma* (1956) by Kateb Yacine is a revolt against the 1945 Sétif massacre that prepared the outbreak of the 1954 revolution in the country (Bonn, 2013). Additionally, the economic conditions in the colony added fuel to the anger of the population, and its writers alike. In the aftermath of the war, poverty reached one of its highest levels, reflected in almost all novels of the time. Another writer to join literary activism with independence as watchword was Mohammed Dib who depicted the hardships faced by *Algerian* farmers and workers under the colonial administration. His three novels “La Grande Maison” (1952), “L’Incendie” (1954), and “Le Métier à tisser” (1957) depict the humiliation of the colonized population, their misery, hunger, and extremely hard living conditions. This vivid description of the reality of the

Algerian society of the time revealed the clear support of the author for the national movement and his commitment to the national liberation cause which started to take shape. This dedication cost him expulsion from his country by the French administration.

Popular claims covered by post-war literature were now related to a political and social contest of the prevailing conjuncture. Politically, the pressure of the nationalist movements culminated in the outbreak of the revolution of 1954 in Algeria. Socio-economically, this was a period of severe slump. To an already precarious economic situation were added the epidemics. This constituted the platform of the novel of the 1950's, a novel clearly inspired from the social reality and "National literature became not merely an expression of the nation's character but also evidence of the nation's merit and even legitimacy" (Habib ed., 2013). Post-war authors were confronted with a great challenge, the colonial falsification of history. They considered it was their duty to re-establish the truth. One classical example was in francophone Africa, where the colonial school used to teach Algerian pupils falsified history. This was one of the main policies that post-literature vehemently denounced. But mastering the colonial language, the only means of writing novels at the time, was a double-edged sword. Despite authors' will to assert African identity and culture, and reject colonial culturalization, it remained a tough affair to distinguish the literary fact from the language used to express it: how can one's own vision be expressed in the same language used to indoctrinate individuals at school for long years? There was a great amount of skepticism and constant questioning as to whether this European importation could act as a patriotic force to change anything whatever. Nevertheless, and as noted earlier, it was the impact of the few who read that definitely redirected the future of colonial societies. Newell notes that "These intellectuals...provided Africans with the means of generating counter-positions to the policies of the colonial state...[they] served as a...weapon in the arsenal of present and future protest" (Newell, 2001).

Thus, the African novel which emerged after the war as a modern literary genre was the product of colonial institutions. Relying heavily on the colonial era for its fiction, it could not probably have come into existence without this "traumatic encounter" between Africa and Europe. In fact, it appears today as the product of a colonial situation against which it later rose up in protest, and which it chose as its main theme. Colonialism involuntarily created a tool that turned later to one of the major arms that led to its own demise (Gikandi and Irele, 2008).

#### **4-Post-Independence Novels: The Quest for Genuine Liberation**

With independence, in the early 1960's for the majority of African countries, a new orientation in literature saw light. Concerns changed, and the counter discourse endeavoured to reverse the socio-economic aftermath of the colonial occupation. The conjuncture determined new motivations and new themes, mainly the destruction of the colonial identity which went jointly with the search for and the assertion of the African one. Novelists sought to articulate their awareness of their own past and culture; nevertheless, the low literacy rate

at the time colonial ties were severed, was a significant obstacle for a successful and widespread impact of the novel. In Algeria for instance, more than 85% of the population remained illiterate at independence (Merrouche, 2007). In West Africa, the situation was not better. Ghana recorded a very low rate of people who could read and write (Quist, 1994). The indigenous societies, by a reflex of defense, remained closed and displayed an instinctive rejection of western cultural traits. The masses, far from considering the intellectuals trained by the European school as a flagship, remained reluctant and wary. It was therefore difficult for the novel to fill in this gap and reach them. This gap between the product of the colonial school and the people slowed down its development. Whatever its merits, the popularity of this literature is questioned not because of its content, but on account of its limited impact on people. A literature is utilitarian only through the repercussions it has on society. It is only then that it produces feedback, changes behaviours and engenders action. The quest for national liberation which characterised the late 1940's and the 1950's as a whole constituted the new thematic of the African novel not only in this era but went on as the colonies gradually obtained independence. This independence which remained for many merely formal displayed the perpetuation of foreign domination under different labels like development aids. This was a means used by the departing administration to keep a firm hand on its ex-poseessions. The internal problems which therefore emerged after the colonial ties had been severed disclosed a great disillusion: the physical departure of the coloniser was not always synonym of real freedom. The novelists of the time took a stand against what was commonly labelled neo-colonialism denouncing the domination still exercised by the departing Europeans. Olaoluwa notes:

The quest for national liberation on the African continent is not only a colonial but a post-colonial necessity. During the colonial period, the quest was focused on national independence and self-government. However, the politico-economic experience of post-independent African states made us realize that formal independence is not synonymous with genuine liberation or the capacity for Africans to freely determine their own destiny and path in history. Formal independence only exchanges the colonial for neo-colonial; this is what gave rise to the postcolonial quest for national liberation (Olaoluwa,2010).

In the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) of Ayi Kwei Armah, the unnamed protagonist, *the man*, as a reference to any ordinary Ghanaian, struggles to cope with the reality of post-independent Ghana by which he is greatly disenchanted. His frustration increases as he is daily witnessing moral decay in his job of railway clerk. Corruption and bribery are widely spread. The novel displays the bitter reality of the country after independence, and the disillusion that the common Ghanaians lived in. Through the combat of the protagonist, the author puts on view the daily hardships that the majority of workers in Ghana underwent to make ends meet at the end of the month. Frustration and despair are the



watch words of the novel as it regards the probability of political change as almost null. Bribery is depicted as a widespread phenomenon from which the protagonist, by sticking to his moral values, tries to escape. The country is drowned in moral decay and materialism, which became striking features of the new Ghana (Akaeke, 1990). The luxury European style of a handful of Ghanaians profiting from connections with the governing class created a remarkable rift with the rest of the society. This situation was not typical of Ghana alone, it was widely spread in all African countries on the eve of independence. Chinua Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* (1960) recorded similar success with its portrayal of the conflict between African culture and Western lifestyle in independent Nigeria in the context of large-scale bribery and other social evils. Neo-colonialism kept the newly liberated states "largely subjugated within a neo-colonial world order...in which the process to liberation would be ongoing long after Africa's formal independence from European colonialism" (Creary, 2012). Neo-colonialism was a major theme that fed the African novel of the time, displaying once more the commitment of literature to mirror the social reality, condemning this foreign domination, immoralities and misconducts, in an attempt to reform what was defective, vicious and deprived.

The process of decolonisation was thus not only linked with a formal political independence but was greatly determined by the capacity of the new liberated states to reverse the repercussions of the colonial occupation. They warned against neo-colonialism which they regarded as "the sum total of the modern attempts to perpetuate colonialism while at the same time talking about freedom" (Olaoluwa2010). Some authors even wrote exclusively in their mother tongue in an attempt to break free from this European influence, as they considered language a main tool of deculturalization. They viewed it as their duty to safeguard the dignity of the African language and culture. In their quest for reviving the glory of the African past and affirming their cultural identity, authors focused on a better representation of the African in their novels to oppose the colonial one which undermined and misrepresented the indigenous communities. Post-war novels offered a corrective view of the African social reality, promoting the pride that Africans should feel to be African. The revival of the past was associated with a definitive liberation from the stranglehold of colonialism which the colonial power was not as Olaoluwa argues:

...simply content to impose its rule upon the present and future of a dominated country... [but also to] ...hold a people in its grip and emptying the natives' brain of all form and content. By a perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. The intention of the European colonialist ...is to make the African natives realize that they had no historicity and could only be part of the historical progress of humanity by accepting and being assimilated into European cultures (Olaoluwa, 2010).

This stranglehold that continued to grip African states after independence and which the novelists of the time continued to condemn had far more reaching consequences. Now that power was in the hands of the natives, new political and economic challenges arose. The new governors were not sufficiently prepared to be at the head of entire states. Colonisation purposefully excluded them from nation building so that it ensured their dependence later on. To run a country politically and to drive its economy required a practical knowledge and capacities that the young leaders did not have. A logical consequence of this was, as the colonial administration predicted, a resort to the assistance of the ancient master and a dangerous dependence on metropolitan politics. Economic reliance unavoidably engendered an indirect political one. Literature thus rose up against this ideology which perpetuated colonisation more profoundly than many African politicians were willing to think. Post-war novels' themes were largely centred around the need for an African revolution similar to that for independence. There was a struggle to reject this new domination and redirect the future of African countries towards economic progress that is proper to their continent with structures and means to ensure they stand independently of metropolitan politics. To build a history of an independent Africa with an African personality and African policies was promoted in literature as the unique way to genuine independence. Africans needed to undertake "ceaseless struggles ...to liberate their economy, politics and cultures...to usher a new era of true communal self-regulation and self-determination" (Thiong'o,1986: 4).

Similarly, the Algerian post-independence novels embarked on a scheme of not only portraying a bitter social reality, but also committing itself to reverse the socio-economic imbalances and the cultural impact of colonialism as the

...real power resided not at all in the cannons of the first morning but in what followed the cannons. Therefore behind the cannons was the new school. The new school had the nature of both the cannon and the magnet. From the cannon it took the efficiency of a fighting weapon. But better than the cannon it made the conquest permanent. The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul (Thiong'o,1986: 9).

The novelists of the time, though writing in French, often expressed their malaise which sometimes turned into a feeling of guilt, as it was felt like a betrayal of one's culture and language. Similarly to Anglophone novelists, some Francophone writers, Algerian in particular, wrote in Arabic with a view of establishing a national identity. Malek Haddad and Rachid Boudjedra were among the first ones to advocate the use of the mother tongue and expressed a firm rejection of the French language in fiction. In addition to expressing resentment against colonisation and the strong desire to reaffirm one's identity, personality and culture, these writers claimed that one cannot authentically reflect social reality unless this is done in the mother tongue. As Eme and Mbagwu note: "until these writers and their western midwives accept the fact that true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncertainty, and frustration" (Eme and Mbagwu, 2011). Kateb Yacine went even further when

he described the instruction received in the colonial school as an internal exile, an issue mirrored in his novel "Le Polygone étoilé" (1966). Those who continued to write in French did so out of a linguistic obligation that, they admitted, harmed much national identity and culture but was a necessary harm. It is noteworthy to underline that the domination of the French language was almost an inevitable repercussion in the Algerian case in particular as the colonial era lasted for 130 years. In addition to the assimilation policy strongly exercised by the coloniser, the foreign domination lasted too long to leave whatever chance for the native language to survive as a means of instruction and literary expression. However, some authors like Assia Djebbar continued to write in French and viewed the language as a mere channel through which authors conveyed messages, the essence of which remained unaltered whatever the language used. As the post-colonial era moved along, a panoply of novels saw light. Mohamed Dib wrote "Qui se Souvient de la Mer" (1962,) "Cours sur la Rive Sauvage" (1964), and "Habel" (1977). Assia Djebbar wrote "Les Alouettes Naïves" (1967), Mourad Bourboune "Le Muezzin" » (1968), and Rachid Boudjedra "La Répudiation" (1969) and later "L'escargot Enteté" (1981). These literary works, to name but a few, got increasingly closer to social reality and authors continued to portray, in addition to the war of liberation, the problems of their community, notably those which emerged with independence: the daily experiences of the ordinary citizen with all the problems encountered, bureaucracy in the new independent administration and the failure of the new politicians to live up to their ideals.

### **5. Conclusion:**

African literature, the novel in particular, remains a mirror of the people's political, economic and social life. The development of this literary genre was conditioned by colonization which African countries had endured for long years. If the early beginnings in the twenties and thirties were rather timid and displayed a predilection for artistic literature, the novel soon coped with the reality of the society it depicted, and authors shifted to a more committed fiction as an instrument of denunciation and reform. From cultural nationalism to literary activism, the elite soon realized the importance of the pen in reversing the political, economic and social patterns imposed by colonisation. A clear maturity in novel writing characterised a firm attempt to affirm the African identity and culture, destroyed by "...a political and social system that suppresses the self-determination of a people thereby kills the creative power of that people or what amounts to the same thing, where colonialism has existed, whole people have been deprived of their culture" (Césaire, 1956). Post-war fiction denounced colonisation and defended the universal right of people to liberty. The struggle continued at independence as new problems emerged. Disillusion increasingly took shape when the elite realised that geographical independence was not associated as expected with an economic and a cultural one (Gikandi, 2011). Colonial domination continued under a new form, neo-colonialism. Post-independence literature continued as an arm to combat the new foreign control to display that only when African countries understand that resorting to metropolitan politics is the wrong path to take that their independence will be complete.

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