

NATIONALISM AND ALGERIAN
LITERATURE OF FRENCH EXPRESSION
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**Nationalism
and
Algerian literature of French expression**

by

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McGill University, Montreal

July 1997

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The French colonial enterprise into Algeria had a profound influence on Algerian culture. The "Mission civilisatrice" practiced by the French authority created native intellectuals able to express themselves through the vehicle of the French language. Some of these intellectuals were instrumental in developing a new literary genre: Algerian literature of French expression. Through this literature the authors gave a voice to the illiterate masses of Algeria in the struggle for liberation from French colonial rule. After Algerian independence the use of the French language produced a polemic as to the authenticity of literature written in French in a nation committed to Arabicization. This thesis will discuss the development and proliferation of Algerian literature of French expression and its role in regard to Algerian nationalism.

RÉSUMÉ

En Algérie l'entreprise coloniale française a influencé profondément la culture algérienne. La "Mission civilisatrice" employée par l'autorité française a créé des intellectuels indigènes capables de s'exprimer par la langue véhiculaire française. Quelques uns de ces intellectuels ont développés un nouveau genre littéraire: la littérature algérienne d'expression française. Par cette littérature, les écrivains ont donné une voix aux masses algériennes illettrées dans leur lutte pour la libération de l'emprise colonial français. Suite à l'indépendance de l'Algérie, l'usage de la langue française a produit une polémique concernant l'authenticité d'une littérature écrite en français dans une nation prônant l'arabisation. Cette thèse étudiera le développement et la prolifération de la littérature algérienne d'expression française ainsi que son rôle au sein du nationalisme algérien.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the assistance provided to me by many people in preparation of the thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank Professor A. Üner Turgay for his comments and suggestions as well as his encouragement and amusing anecdotes. Secondly, I would like to thank Professor Eric Ormsby in assisting with proof reading French passages. I also would like to acknowledge Professor Martine Meyer for introducing me to Maghrebi literature of French expression and for her editorial comments on my original draft. I would further like to thank the staff at the Institute of Islamic studies for their part in facilitating the completion of this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank Mary Ann and Camille for making our family adventure in Montreal an unforgettable experience.

Introduction

Literature and Language in the Maghreb

Language is an integral element of nationalism; it can unite as well as divide people. A national language, whether a common maternal language, or a lingua franca, is needed to help guide a nascent state to identify itself culturally, as well as politically and functionally. The national language is in fact vital to the development and future of a new state, for it is through education via the national language that new citizens will be integrated into a functioning nation. Often, minority languages must be put aside or repressed in order to insure the legitimacy of the new national language.

The colonial legacy has in some cases directly contributed to the shaping of national languages. At times it has unified peoples who had no common language or national identity; at other times it has superimposed itself as the administrative language of a defined territory already possessing the potentiality to have its own national language. The colonial language can impregnate the national identity on a number of levels, from politics to economy to religion and culture.

The colonial languages also became the medium through which the colonized communicated with their colonizer. This communication took variant forms: collaboration, assimilation, negotiation, protest, and rebellion. The colonial language could both work for the colonizer and against him; it could express the thoughts, aspirations, and heartfelt sentiments of the colonized. These expressions could be

pronounced through speech, print media and literature. The literary aspect could be represented in poems, short stories, theater, essays, and novels. All of these are the manifestations of a shared common experience voicing its anguish and right to be heard.

The focus of this study will be the impact of the colonial language on the novel as well as the literary, political, and social discourse which surrounded the novel's development. It will study the emergence of a new literary genre, Maghrebi literature of French expression, and limit itself to the Algerian example. This paper will also survey Maghrebi literature of French expression in order to establish how some authors attempted to establish their own identity and justify their quest for independence and nationhood through the use of the French language. It will also show how this literature acts as an ironic form of resistance to colonialism by using the language of the colonizer as a tool for liberation.

The Maghrebi authors used the French culture that they learned in colonial schools to analyze their own struggle for self-determination through a medium that was both understood and respected by the colonizer. The mastery of the French language gave some of these authors more freedom to criticize their own society while distancing themselves from the holy language of the Qur'an. For others, it was a way of de-sanctifying the Qur'an and attacking their harsh Qur'anic schoolmasters. These authors however, were amongst the privileged few given access to higher education and the opportunity to develop their talent. The majority of the native population was limited to an education that would enable his or her subservient role within the colonial society.

After independence, using the French language became less valid in the new nation where Arabicization was part of the new national identity. The authenticity of works written in French, often by authors living or exiled in France, was challenged not

only by the new administration, but by authors trying to create a new Arabic literature in accordance with the new national identity. A change as to who would or should now write the National literature and how it was to be written was in order. Authors were urged to create an authentic national literature centered on the new social order, or faced censorship due to the universality of their texts reaching beyond the scope of nationalism. During a certain period of transition before Arabic could take its rightful place as the national language, a newly approved literature, still written in French became a commemorative diatribe exalting the heroic virtues of the struggle for independence, and was not only published, but sanctioned by the government. Dissident authors maintained French as their language of protest and freedom of expression. The use of Arabic formerly too profane to express their grievances to the cultivated French was now too sacred to proclaim dissatisfaction with the new regime.

For many of the Maghrebi authors of French expression this created a very difficult situation. The separation between European humanism and colonial practice had been a central conflict of their alienation before independence. After independence they were dispossessed of this contradictory ideology. Whereas Albert Camus, their most successful predecessor, had been revolting against the divine indifference of the universe, they had been revolting against the French colonial system and traditional Arab society with sincere determination and nationhood as the idealized recompense for their struggle. It was this struggle that gave substance and meaning to their work. The political victory over colonial rule made their voices less acute and their continued purpose was questionable at best to the new national identity and culture.

The works to be discussed are not an interior call to the illiterate masses of the Maghreb, but rather an exterior voice aimed directly at the sympathetic intelligensia of the French colonizer and the international community. Through this literature the

Maghrebi authors gave voice to the oppressed and alienated masses, and in doing so, created a national consciousness and identity recognized, perhaps not yet by the oppressed themselves, but by their colonial oppressor. For the Maghrebi authors, showing the pain and alienation of their people was a way of awakening the sensibilities and destroying the colonial aspirations of their oppressors. Their works are an indirect form of subversion to weaken the political and intellectual will of their oppressor's own misguided agenda. The French "Mission Civilisatrice" was being rewritten by its own subjects.

The Moroccan critic Kacem Basfao argues that, "The status of the French language allows us to use it to express what we cannot say in our mother tongue." Within this context, the use of a foreign language becomes an obligatory rite of passage that liberates young Maghrebi writers from inhibiting attachments. "The Maghrebi writer cannot spell out his mother tongue because that signifies, phantasmatically, the violation of the mother, the life-giving and protecting bosom." The French language suggests the idea of infidelity toward the mother, who "permits the creation of a forbidden relationship, one might say an incestuous relationship with an ersatz mother who has all the attributes of a stepmother...The displacement of mother to step-mother, of maternal language to foreign language, permits the return of the repressed and the passage to the scriptural act."¹

In order to protect themselves from the "beautiful but maleficent stranger" who possessed them, they will dismember her, even break her into pieces, as if to say, "See here, I am not French; I am not bound to the norms of French grammar, the wicked

¹ Jean Déjeux, "Francophone Literature in the Maghreb: The Problem and the Possibility," *Research in African Literatures* v. 23 (Summer 1992): p. 10.

stepmother."² "The Maghrebine writer...through the literary act establishes, in spite of himself, a bond of solidarity with his adversary. It is not freedom of speech which is lacking, but rather the freedom to be heard."³

In Algeria this literature had an audience of Pied-Noir authors and other elites of European descent. The authors tried to communicate the sentiments of the indigenous population and bridge the ideological separation between themselves and their Pied-Noir counterparts. This effort remained an interlocutory discourse because most of the Pied-Noir elite were content with the status and methodology of French colonial rule. In France this literature reached those who were sympathetic to the plight of the Algerian masses or those who condemned the colonial enterprise all together. The influence of indigenous Maghrebi literature stretched across the Mediterranean divide, yet it was only of significant interest to a small minority of academics and a few literary elites.

The words of the Maghrebi authors were not necessarily nationalistic. The fact however, that they had found a voice, where none had been before, gave them a first glimpse of national identity. Furthermore, the nationalism associated with their novels came more from different perceptions of their works than from calculated intent within their texts.

These different perceptions fueled the debate over the role of literature and language within the confines of a national culture defined and run by the State. The early ethnographical writings of Maghrebi authors were seen as an affirmation of existence and culture by some while others saw them as condescending depictions of

² Ibid., p. 11.

³ Danielle Marx-Scouras, "Reconciling language and history in Maghrebine literary criticism," *The Maghreb Review* v. 9, n° 3-4 (1984): p. 59.

how the colonial master viewed the indigenous population. French authors had also written ethnographical portraits of indigenous subjects and many Maghrebi critics thought the early works of native authors were emulating the works their colonial mentors.

The expression of alienation and conflict that was contained in the next phase of Maghrebi literature was seen as the struggle between traditional society and modernity as well as proof of the moral and cultural destruction caused by the colonial enterprise. This iconoclast period questioned the validity of traditional values including religion. In the final pre-independence phase more militant and revolutionary works were being produced by Maghrebi authors. Their voices were now in harmony with the political and military leaders fighting to end colonial rule. The unifying objective of independence left cultural considerations aside for future debates. After independence however, the Algerian authors of French expression would find themselves culturally obsolete and counter-revolutionary in an emerging nation determined to establish Arabic as the language of cultural and national necessity.

The first task will be to define what, and who, the term Maghrebi literature of French expression entails. Whether the term itself is suitable to categorize this genre is an ongoing debate and all of its subtleties will have to be put aside for the purpose of this study. The difficulties in defining exactly to whom this literature belongs and its place within literary genres can be seen clearly in the numerous appellations it has received: "littérature maghrébine... d'expression française, de langue française, de langue véhiculaire française, d'expression arabe mais de langue française, d'écriture française, de graphie française." And these configurations don't include divisions such as Moroccan, Algerian, or Tunisian, not to mention ethnic divides such as Arab, Berber, Jewish, Franco-Algerian, etc. Perhaps it would be easier to say what Maghrebi literature

of French expression is not. It is not Arabic literature translated into French; nor is it touristic literature about the Maghreb, such as the works of the "Algerianist" school; nor is it the "École d'Alger" of Pied-Noir authors such as Albert Camus.

Henri Kréa⁴, in defining what is meant exactly by the expression "écrivains algériens", states that, "il signifie dans l'absolu que l'on a choisi la patrie algérienne de quelque origine raciale ou de quelque appartenance religieuse ou philosophique que l'on soit."⁵ This definition is too narrow for the purpose of this study, but it allows an insight into the convictions of participants in the ideological debate surrounding this literature. Algerian author Mouloud Feraoun considered authors born in Algeria whether of European origin or native as "écrivains algériens dans la mesure où ils se sentent eux-mêmes algériens et où leur œuvre concerne l'Algérie."⁶

Literary critic Monique Gadant comments that, "Le fait qu'existe en Algérie des écrivains de langue français se trouvant politiquement des deux côtés de la barricade empêche toute référence à la langue comme critère de définition d'une littérature nationale. Tout recours à la géographie est également interdit: il ne suffit ni d'être né en Algérie ni de la prendre pour sujet pour être écrivain algérien. On est donc conduit à définir une nationalité littéraire par adhésion politique à la communauté et à juger la production littéraire selon le traitement donné à la réalité nationale." The authors excluded from nationality are those who "n'ont pas fait leur la lutte active du peuple

⁴ Pied-Noir author and poet who "chose" Algeria.

⁵ J.E. Bencheikh, "Introduction à une étude de la littérature algérienne d'expression française," *Confluent* v.47-49 (1965): p. 28.

⁶ Jean Déjeux, "Mouloud Ferouan: romancier de la terre kabyle," *Confluent* n° 20 (Apr., 1962): p.320.

algérien. C'est ainsi que Jean Sénac se trouve adopté et Albert Camus refusé."⁷ A more general definition will be pursued here.

Maghrebi literature, and Algerian literature of French expression in particular, will be defined as that of authors who, for the majority of their works, approached the Maghreb as their subject, not as decoration for their prose, regardless of their ideological vision of what Algeria should or should not be, or their commitment to the concept and development of a national literature. They will be engaged in focusing the minds of the colonized to their colonial experience.

First, he will take on an ethnographical view of himself in order his place under colonial rule. Then, in an effort to express the struggle to understand his personal alienation and that of his countrymen he will enter a period of revolt and conflict. Finally he will begin to fight openly for his own liberation and that of his people with increasingly militant literature. These phases in the evolution of Algerian literature will almost parallel the duration of the Algerian War of Independence as the authors convictions become more determined. However, these phases are only suitable for authors producing works before and during the battle for independence; other criteria and ideological determinations become problematic after independence as will be discussed later.

The Algerian authors who will receive particular consideration in this study are: Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine and Malek Haddad. Several authors peripheral to these main authors will also be mentioned. They are the Moroccan Driss Chraïbi, the Tunisian Albert Memmi, and the Algerian Assia Djebar. Together these authors represent the first generation of "offspring" created and

⁷ Monique Gadant, Islam et nationalism en Algérie (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988) p. 52.

abandoned by the colonial enterprise in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Furthermore, the autobiographical nature of their writings gives a literary history of the struggle for independence. A second generation would follow both in the Maghreb and in France, but their contribution to the development of a national literature would be less direct and detached from the colonial experience.

There have now been hundreds of books published under the broad classification of Maghrebi literature of French expression; even more if one includes works by French authors writing within an Algerian context. The genre continued to proliferate after the end of French colonial rule and has attained international status since Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun won the *Prix Goncourt* in 1987. Its natural death by Arabicization predicted by many critics has proved very elusive.

The works considered here are, in general, those that preceded and several which soon after followed the Algerian struggle for independence. The post-independence novels of French expression coming from both Algeria and France, though at times engaged in the struggle over political or cultural literary nationality, are part of a multi-faceted landscape reacting to the complexities of modern society, and are not as immediately or intensely concerned with a single yet complex issue such as the cultural and political ramifications of colonialism. The early writings had a defined focus, which for the most part, united the authors to the same cause. Post-independence novels reflect various viewpoints ranging subtle commentaries and criticisms on neo-colonialism and political corruption to triumphal praises to the revolution, as well as works far removed from social or political concerns. The works of early Maghrebi authors have had time to mature, that is expand their reputations through wide-spread publication beyond Algeria and France. Their works continue to receive a great deal of attention for their socio-political impact often leaving literary aspects aside.

Although textual analysis should be the main consideration of literary studies, pre-independence Maghrebi literature of French expression has been hard pressed to escape its historical landscape as a weapon against French colonialism. Its genesis was too intertwined within the socio-political context of the French-Algerian conflict to be regarded as simple artistic expression. As a linguistic anomaly and a literary departure Maghrebi literature of French expression has also been limited in its consideration as pure literature because its message as a historical testament has always been more significant than its creative forms.

Few critics of Maghrebi literature of French expression have been as prolific as Jean Déjeux who has chronicled the history of Maghrebi literature of French expression from many aspects and authored several general study texts as well as numerous articles. The Moroccan Abdelkebir Khatibi has also written one of the first standard guides, Le roman maghrébin.⁸ Albert Memmi has also contributed to the field with his anthologies on both Maghrebi authors and Pied-Noir authors writing on the Maghreb. Charles Bonn has also published several encompassing guides as well as Ghani Merad.

⁸ Abdelkebir Khatibi, Le roman maghrébin (Rabat: Société Marocaine des Editeurs Réunis, 1979)

Chapter One

The following chapter will demonstrate how the French "Mission civilisatrice" developed in Algeria. It will discuss the intellectual sea change created by the removal of Algerian prodigies from Qur'anic institutions to their placement in French colonial schools. The creation of this "Francofied" elite will be the catalyst for the development of a new literary trend: Algerian literature of French expression. This chapter will further define who and what is considered part of this new literary genre. As a background to these developments, a brief look will be given to French and Pied-Noir authors to demonstrate the evolution of French literature in Algeria.

Colonial Situation

The "pacification" of the Maghreb began with French rule in Algeria in 1830, followed by the Protectorates of Tunisia in 1881 and Morocco in 1912. The difference in approach taken toward Algeria, that it was at once considered an integral part of France, created a more permanent cultural imprint on the indigenous population. The French presence in Morocco and Tunisia remained largely administrative while the colonization of Algeria brought a large French population seeking a new opportunities and adventure in the "new" frontier.

French authors quickly found new inspiration for their literature in the newly "discovered" and exotic Maghreb. They wrote novels and war journals about the conquest of Algeria which portrayed the native population as primitive and barbaric; novels of the colonizing period depicted him as an inept and sterile being who needed the guidance of the French authority to protect his own well-being and improve his

chances of "evolving" to the standards of European civilization. This view of the indigenous population was shared by the colonial intellectuals and was used to justify the colonial mission and propagate the myth of the primitive native. Until after the First World War he was either ignored or treated as a faithful servant, simply a part of the decorative setting.⁹ Authors such as André Gide, Isabelle Eberhardt and Henri de Montherlant wrote during this era.

The attitude toward the native population was not only displayed by French authors visiting or traveling through Algeria, but was official policy as well. In the *Plan d'Études* of 1889-1890, the French stated their view of assimilating history: "En confondant leurs intérêts avec les nôtres, les indigènes partagent avec nous l'héritage du passé; nos ancêtres deviennent les leurs."¹⁰ This view of the local people expressed the French belief that they had conquered a people who had no history of their own.

To illustrate the plans of the French colonial administration in Algeria, Mostafa Lacherif, a leading critic and commentator on Algerian social developments, recounted an official directive from the director of the École Normale at the end of the last century that clearly defined the objectives of the French "Mission civilisatrice":

"Ce n'est pas par générosité que l'Université veut répandre l'enseignement en Kabylie, mais, disons-le bien haut, dans l'intérêt de la France... Nous donnerons donc à nos élèves, par des leçons appropriées à leur âge et à leur degré de culture, des notions sur la grandeur de la France, sur sa force militaire, sur sa richesse. Notre situation serait bien plus solide si les Indigènes en arrivaient à penser: 'Les Français sont forts et généreux; ce sont les meilleurs maîtres que nous puissions avoir.' L'école indigène n'est pas seulement un instrument de rénovation morale; elle

⁹ Ghani Merad, *La littérature algérienne d'expression française* (Paris: Pierre Jean Oswald, 1976) p 27.

¹⁰ Jean Déjeux, *La littérature maghrébine d'expression française* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992) p.11.

est *surtout* un instrument d'autorité et un moyen d'influence; elle fera de nos sujets des membres très utiles à la colonie et de fidèles serviteurs de la France."¹¹

Lacherif then concludes the following about the French colonial education system in Algeria: "On enseignait hypocritement à des gens que l'on tenait sous le joug et l'oppression, les grands principes des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, les concepts de liberté et de respect de la personne."¹² French colonial rule was attempting to dismantle the indigenous educational system in favor of its own in order to insure colonial legitimacy for future generations.

Mohammed el-Gharbi describes the colonial experience in the following manner, "Telles sont les intentions dans lesquelles l'enseignement des Algériens a été conçu et organisé. Il ne s'agissait pas de développer une culture, de 'civiliser', mais de domestiquer, d'enlever à l'Algérien toute originalité pour en faire un 'fidèle serviteur'. La langue maternelle des populations ayant été déclarée langue étrangère, la voie était largement ouverte à une vaste entreprise de déculturation et de dépersonnalisation de tout un peuple."¹³

Marcel Egretaud says: "L'arrivée des Français jeta une perturbation profonde dans ce monde de penseurs et de lettrés. La plupart des chaires furent abandonnées par les savants qui les occupaient. Les disciples se dispersèrent; au lieu des leçons publiques et communes, ils allèrent demander les secrets de la science aux enseignants isolés et mystérieux d'écoles de deuxième ordre, des zaouïas isolés."¹⁴ The colonial

¹¹ Mostafa Lacherif, "L'avenir de la culture algérienne," *Les temps modernes* n° 209 (1963): p. 729.

¹² Ibid., p. 730.

¹³ Mohammed el-Gharbi, "Indépendance et culture," *La nouvelle critique* n° 103 (Feb. 1959): pp. 134-135.

¹⁴ Marcel Egretaud, *Réalités de la nation algérienne* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1957) p. 131. Cited in G. Merad, p. 15, note 1.

administration understood that these institutions, however sparse, were "véritables foyers de nationalisme et de résistance culturelle et culturelle."¹⁵ Gradually, the Algerian population began to realize that its only means of self-preservation or achieving limited success within the colonial framework was to learn the language of the occupier. This knowledge could give the native not only the opportunity to improve his stature within a repressive system, but give him the tool to understand and communicate with his new administrator and master.

As a consequence successful Maghrebi students left the *koutab* -the Islamic educational institution, for the colonial school where their instruction was given to them in French. The language of the colonizer offered them the opportunity to discover western culture and expand their horizons beyond their Islamic heritage. However, their maternal language, most often Arabic, was reduced to second status; Berber remained an oral remnant and a non-threatening curiosity in the minds of their French masters.

Upon the completion of his degree, the "Francofied" Maghrebi knew very well the history and literature of France, but was quite ignorant of his own history and culture. By following this practice of assimilation, the "Mission civilisatrice" of France was creating a victim of cultural oppression while maintaining their self-proclaimed status as civilizing educators.¹⁶ The young pupils were traumatized in learning that their ancestors had been "Gaulois." The "civilized" instructional texts were not adapted to the needs and culture of the students. Kateb Yacine refers to his father's decision to put him into the "jaws of the wolf," that is to send him to the French school, as the "second

¹⁵ G. Merad, p. 16.

¹⁶ Issac Yetiv, "Un sous-produit de la colonisation française en Afrique du Nord: les 'évolués' -le 'politique' et le 'littéraire'," *L'esprit créateur*, v. XII, n° 4 (1972): p. 264.

cutting of the umbilical cord"; it was his farewell to the "intimate, childhood sphere" of his mother and orality of his maternal tongue.¹⁷

The Maghrebi was taught to admire the culture of the colonizer to the point of rejecting his own; to the point of self-hatred and of rejection of his kind. He tried to assimilate himself to his master until the moment when he realized that he would inevitably face rejection and never be accepted as a true equal. In the end the ideal of assimilation had to be purged by the affirmation of his own identity to the point of revolt and revolution.¹⁸ The Maghrebi intellectual, caught between two civilizations, was trying desperately to find equilibrium between his traditional values and those of modern European thought.

Mostafa Lacherif argues that this cultural negation was a catalyst for artistic and political expression as an outpouring of revolt against the colonial stranglehold. He writes: "Ne disposant ni des moyens, ni des ressources propres à une culture libre et moderne, la culture arabe en Algérie s'est donc cristallisé sous la forme d'un combat politique, par une poésie et une presse militante."¹⁹ However, this struggle for Arabic culture had to be expressed via the French language, the only viable and available means of expression; Arabic expression was confined to tightly restricted and isolated religious circles, unable to convey the needs of its own people.

Mostafa Lacherif writes: "La langue arabe qui est la langue nationale du peuple algérien a toujours été combattue par le colonialisme et considéré comme une langue

¹⁷ Charles Bonn, "Kateb Yacine," *Research in African Literatures* v. 23, n° 2 (Summer 1992): p. 62.

¹⁸ Issac Yetiv, "L'évolution thématique du roman maghrébin d'expression française," *Présence Francophone* v. 1 (1970): p 55.

¹⁹ Lacherif, p.727.

étrangère."²⁰ The representation of their own language and culture as foreign entities by the colonial authorities through the vehicle of the colonial educational system disrupted the natural development of the indigenous culture. It also empowered the colonizer as culturally superior as therefore globally responsible for safeguarding the development of a wayward and stagnant people. Alec Hargreaves writes: "Assimilation assumed that French civilization provided the ideal cultural model to which non-Europeans should aspire; its implementation necessitated French political control. The moral validity of French colonization was thus assumed to be self-evident, and the need to continue French rule was equally beyond question."²¹

France had pursued a policy of assimilation of the elite, leaving the rural masses and the urban worker marginalized. Literature itself is elitist, confining itself to only those who can read. This elitism is weakened by the fight against illiteracy. By educating the native and teaching him to read the colonial language, the colonizer was threatening his own position. In *Le passé simple* by Driss Chraïbi the narrator is told by one of his French schoolmates that the "Mission civilisatrice" was meant to fail: "Nous, Français, sommes en train de vous civiliser, vous, Arabes. Mal, de mauvaise foi et sans plaisir aucun. Car, si par hasard vous parvenez à être nos égaux, je te demande: par rapport à qui et à quoi serons-nous civilisés, *nous*?"²² That is to say, if the colonial mission is successful it will defeat itself. Civilized nations can only legitimize their rule over "primitive" societies if they keep those societies uncivilized.²³

²⁰ Ibid., p.722.

²¹ Alec Hargreaves, "Camus and the Colonial Question in Algeria," *Muslim World* v. 77 (1987): p.169.

²² Driss Chraïbi, *Le passé simple* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951) p.208.

²³ Danielle Marx-Scouras, "A Literature of Departure: The Cross-Cultural Writing of Driss Chraïbi," *Research in African Literatures* v. 23, (Summer 1992): p. 133.

Algerianism and the École d'Alger

The next phase of Maghrebi literary history was to be led by a new school of thought known collectively as the Algerianists. They would produce the first colonial novels which proclaimed their own unique form of Algerianity in opposition to the novels of conquest or travel narratives. They had deeper connections to the Algerian context and were seeing beyond the touristic view of their predecessors. The majority of the Algerianists believed that a new race was developing in North Africa, especially in the province that was French Algeria. This new race would be a coming together of stagnating French culture and the new blood of Frenchmen born and raised in North Africa. This revitalization of French-led latinity would begin in Algeria and be the basis for the re-establishment of a pan-Mediterranean renaissance of Latin culture and values. Furthermore, they believed the superficial imprints left by Arabs, Turks, and Islam would be quickly erased and the restoration of a new Rome would develop from Algiers or another suitably warm capital.

In 1921 one of the founding Algerianists, Louis Bertrand, wrote in the preface to *Les villes d'or*: "L'Afrique française d'aujourd'hui c'est l'Afrique romaine qui continue à vivre, qui n'a jamais cessé de vivre... Nous n'avons fait que récupérer une province perdu de la Latinité." Bertrand believed that the time had come to re-establish the inalienable link between the Maghreb and European historical heritage. He declared: "Héritiers de Rome, nous invoquons des droits antérieurs à l'Islam... Le monument symbolique du pays, ce n'est pas la mosquée, c'est l'arc de triomphe."²⁴ One of his

²⁴ Jean Déjeux, *La littérature algérienne contemporaine* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975) p.20.

followers, Rose Celli wrote in 1935 in À l'envers du tapis that the French, "Effaçant allégrement les siècles arabes et turcs, [ils] retrouvent dans la tradition latine d'Afrique les racines qu'ils avaient coupées en quittant la France. L'Algérie, à leurs yeux, était moins une conquête qu'un héritage."²⁵ By 1935 Bertrand's vision of North Africa concluded that: "La véritable Afrique c'est nous, nous les Latins, nous les civilisés."²⁶

Bertrand believed that the Arabs' only contributions to North African history were "la misère, la guerre endémique et la barbarie." He described the strength of the Latin vestiges in the following terms: "Il a fallu des siècles d'Islam, les dévastations des Arabes et des Nomades pour détruire chez elle l'œuvre des Carthaginois et des Romains. Les vrais fils de la terre, les Berbères indigènes ont résisté de leur mieux à l'envahisseur asiatique et oriental."²⁷ The "hardy and noble" Berbers were the perfect match for the intellectual and civilized Latins in the formation of the new improved race that was to develop in the Maghreb. This view of the Berber population also gained political favor in the French Protectorate of Morocco where the "politique berbère" separated Arabs and Berbers not only for strategic purposes, but for cultural considerations as well.

Another of Bertrand's followers, Robert Randau also envisioned "un jeune peuple franco-berbère". The role of colonization for him was to "convertir à notre mentalité avec tact, mesure et intelligence, des peuples encore à l'état barbare." He labeled his novels concerning Algeria as "des romans de la patrie algérienne." Randau

²⁵ Ibid., p.21.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

also promoted the idea of "Algérianisme" and the separation from the Metropole by proclaiming: "Nous sommes des Algériens et non des Parisiens."²⁸

The following generation of writers was to be comprised of Pied-Noir authors such as Albert Camus, Emmanuel Roblès, Jules Roy and Gabriel Audisio. They formed what is termed as the "École d'Alger". In general their works steered away from the Latin aspect of North Africa and focused more on its physical environment. The sea, the sun, the desert, and the influence of Mediterranean culture are their most recurrent motifs. Associated with them, but harder to label are Jean Sénac and Henri Kréa.

Although the authors of the École d'Alger were more engaged in the political and social realities of the colonial experience in Algeria than their predecessors, and often displayed great sympathy for the sufferings of the Algerian people, they were still outsiders. The alienation they described was caused by being aware of their own incongruous place within the Algerian context. However, their works tried to define this alienation in a universal sense rather than specifically related to Algeria. For their part the Algerian authors knew explicitly what, at least for the present moment, was causing their alienation: French colonial rule.

Jules Roy and Emmanuel Roblès eventually took the initiative to speak out against the colonial system. Roy addressed his Pied-Noir community with the following words: "Votre faute, c'est d'avoir refusé de reconnaître que la communauté musulmane qui pousse à côté de vous vous égale par son intelligence et son courage et va vous déborder par sa mutitude."²⁹ For his part Roblès was more forceful in his words calling for oppressed peoples to rebel. In his first novel L'action he wrote: "Lutter le fusil à la

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 27-30.

²⁹ G. Merad, p.41.

main pour se venger de tant d'humiliations et tant de souffrances! Ils devaient être nombreux à cette heure ceux que soulevaient la même rancœur et la même révolte devant la vie qu'on leur volait. Tous ces taudis, toutes ces caves où grouillaient des êtres déchus, tous ces faubourgs lugubres, toutes ces prisons maudites! Ne pousserait-il pas, vivace dans leur nuit, l'espoir d'une revanche?"³⁰

In some of the novels of the École d'Alger the native population was present, but largely treated as shadows void of the complex characteristics seen in their Pied-Noir counter-parts. Their novels rather reflected in a profound manner the acute alienation of the Pied-Noir from the marginalized native population. Albert Memmi questions whether Meursault, the main character in Camus' *L'Étranger* would have felt the same indifference had he killed a fellow Pied-Noir instead of an "Arab". Donald Holsinger writes in reference to the main character in *L'Étranger* that "Viewing Meursault in his socio-historical context, we see that he was not only a metaphysical outsider in an absurd universe, he was a cultural outsider in the land of his birth."³¹ Ghani Merad wonders if for Camus, "la résistance n'avait de sens que lorsqu'il s'agissait de libérer la France, si le mot liberté ne restait qu'un concept métaphysique, si l'humanisme n'était qu'une vue de l'esprit abstraite et utopique, un humanisme sans l'homme."³²

In 1956 Camus issued an *Appel pour une trêve civile* which illustrated his concern for the escalating violence, however he didn't offer any substantial solutions for

³⁰ Jules Roy, *L'Action* (Paris: Charlot 1946), p.151.

³¹ Donald C. Holsinger, "Exiles in their native land: Algerian novelists of French expression," *The Maghreb Review* v. 11, n° 2-4 (1986): p.73.

³² G. Merad, p.34.

the situation. It must be understood also that although Camus' own success had led him to a new environment in Paris, the Algeria of his past remained for the most part his sole source of inspiration. He did visit Algeria during the conflict offering his beliefs that innocent civilians should be spared, as well as his concerns that the entire Pied-Noir population might be forced to leave Algeria if the military leaders of the revolution succeeded. For Camus an Algeria victory also meant "l'humiliation de millions de Français avec les risques que cette humiliation comporte."³³ In this matter Camus was right. He did believe in the inevitability of an independent Algeria, but only after numerous negotiations and the insurance of the security and future of Europeans in Algeria. It was Camus' lifelong attachment to French Algeria that made it extremely difficult for him to side with the natives.

One of Camus' most poignantly political novellas *L'Hôte* which appeared in *L'Exil et le royaume*, describes the story of a nameless Arab accused of a tribal related crime being handed over by the local authorities to a politically uninvolved French school teacher. His responsibility is to deliver the prisoner to a French garrison where he is to meet his fate. Unable to assume his responsibility as a link in the justice chain, the school teacher leaves the choice to the Arab to deliver himself or go free. The Arab heads toward his fate with the French authorities as if to illustrate that as long as the French rule in Algeria, it is French justice that rules also. It is therefore the responsibility of the French to be just. The school teacher cannot remain apolitical; all, even bystanders, must choose their loyalties. For when the schoolteacher returns to his classroom he finds these menacing words scrawled across the blackboard: "Tu as livré notre frère. Tu paieras."³⁴

³³ Albert Camus, *Actuelles III* (Paris: Gallimard 1958) p.26, cited in G. Merad. p. 35.

³⁴ Albert Camus, *L'hôte* in *L'exil et le royaume*. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard 1957) p.99.

Just like the school teacher in Camus' *L'Hôte*, the members of the École d'Alger, were authentically committed and attached to the Algerian experience. They communed with the Algerian landscape, both culturally and emotionally. But they belonged to a temporary creation of the colonial endeavor. However true their condition was, they would not, and could not belong to the Algerian nation. Their role as French Algerian authors was quickly becoming obsolete. They would all have to face their own conscience, and be forced by history, to not only choose their direction, but commit to it, for the ambiguity and contradiction that allowed them to exist and flourish would need to be resolved. The difference between the École d'Alger and the Maghrebi authors was acutely expressed; Camus wrote in *L'homme révolté*: "Je me révolte, donc nous sommes."³⁵ For the Algerians the inverse was true: "Nous nous révoltons, donc je suis". There couldn't be any individual existence without a national existence.³⁶

Albert Memmi wrote in regard to the differences between Maghrebi authors of French expression and writers of the École d'Alger, that: "si l'un des signes communs dominants des écrivains maghrébins était la *révolte*, celui des écrivains français du Maghreb fut la *séparation*." About characters represented in the novels of the École d'Alger, Memmi states that: "Cette littérature nous montre que si l'indigène est une ombre, le Colonisateur est d'une certaine manière *un homme séparé*."³⁷

The difference in viewpoint expressed by the authors respected their different status of dominator and dominated. This status quo was challenged by the events of

³⁵ Albert Camus, *L'homme révolté* (Paris: Gallimard 1951) p 31.

³⁶ G. Merad, p 63.

³⁷ Memmi, ed., *Anthologie des écrivains maghrébins d'expression française* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1965) p.16.

World War II which questioned the legitimacy of colonial empires. The Second World War had been fought over liberty and human rights. The struggle for cultural recognition and political freedom was furthered in its cause by the end of the war in Europe. Many of the authors of the École d'Alger had participated in the Résistance or had written compelling essays extolling the virtues of Man's universal freedoms. The issues raised during the war gave hope to many colonized nations that they too would soon share in those freedoms. Nevertheless they were disappointed when these sacred western values were not applied to colonized people. Those authors and politicians who believed a compromise in Algeria was possible were finally disillusioned with French colonial promises.

For many Algerians, May 8, 1945 was a decisive event in Franco-Algerian relations. The end of the war in Europe led to spontaneous celebrations in the streets of Algerian cities. These events were seen by the French authorities as dangerous acts of popular expression and were met with brutal repression. Hundreds of people reportedly were killed and many more imprisoned. The massacres of people who had helped liberate France scarred the new generation, brought up in French schools, in an unforgettable manner. The freedom that had been won for people throughout the world apparently didn't apply to subjects of the colonial enterprise which was defining liberation through its "Mission civilatrice." The events were witnessed first hand by several future authors, Djébar, Haddad and Kateb Yacine amongst them; their experiences would be reflected in their own works.³⁸

During the post-war period, the periodicals of the École d'Alger began to include texts by Algerian authors. The Maghrebi authors of French expression had for

³⁸ G. Merad, p 51.

the first time a legitimate outlet for their work that would be presented not only to an Algerian public, but also to literary circles in France. Their artistic offerings quickly developed from the exotic tales, and folklorist landscapes to more serious depictions of what life was like for the indigenous population under colonial rule. This was the beginning of a new literary movement, encouraged and accepted by French and Pied-Noir critics in the struggle as to who would be responsible in creating an authentic voice to define the Maghrebi situation to the outside audience.

The Maghrebi literary critic Danielle Marx-Scouras writes that: "Many French critics saw the development of Maghrebine literature as positive evidence for the successful civilizing mission of colonialism, and thus legitimization for an 'Algérie française'; literary and political annexation go hand in hand."³⁹

The French left had never lacked the ability to show sympathy or support for political liberation movements in Algeria. Their cultural image of the Algerian people however, came from material produced by orientalist who depicted the native as a simplified, austere character born of the desert and far removed from modern thought. It became necessary to demonstrate that "les sociétés colonisées ne sortaient pas du néant, qu'elles étaient dotées de valeurs authentiques et d'une véritable culture."⁴⁰

The Maghribi authors were welcomed by the French left; to fill this cultural void was proof of a pre-existing culture that could flourish on its own. Khatibi writes: "On peut dire que les écrivains maghrébins d'expression française d'après la deuxième guerre ont été pour cette gauche une véritable planche de salut. On comprend l'intérêt qu'ils avaient suscité; leur présence comblait un vide et répondait à une attente. On

³⁹ Marx-Scouras, "Reconciling...", p.59.

⁴⁰ Khatibi, p. 9.

salua cette littérature avec un certain enthousiasme, l'édition s'en empara, à tel point que chaque maison d'édition posséda son 'Arabe de service', selon l'aveu désabusé du poète algérien, Malek Haddad."⁴¹ In retrospect many authors who at first felt gratified to have their works published later felt ashamed for being used by the colonial mission and denounced their own works.⁴² However, authors both in France and Algeria agreed on the importance of this new literature as a reflection of the alienation and depersonalization that the legacy of colonization had left on Algerian society.⁴³

The drama being related by the Maghrebi authors was a larger representation of individual stories meant to draw universal sympathy. These individual struggles against the colonial enemy had not only pan-Maghreb implications, but universal repercussions. "Le principal personnage de cette littérature, omniprésent quoique souvent déguisé, c'est la colonisation française, disons plutôt le colonialisme. Celui-ci est le dénominateur commun."⁴⁴

Mostafa Lacherif makes the following statement about Maghrebi authors of French expression: "Cette littérature, bien *qu'imparfaitement*, va refléter pour la première fois dans les lettres françaises, une réalité algérienne qu'aucun écrivain, même Camus, n'avait eu le courage de traduire."⁴⁵ Lacherif was aware of the limitations of Maghrebi literature, but also that it contributed to promote at least a relatively authentic representation of the Algerian reality. Others believed that this new literary

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁴² Ibid., p. 10.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁴ Yetiv, "Un sous-produit...", p.267.

⁴⁵ Lacherif, p.731.

development was a threat to the French colonial rule. "La domination coloniale n'a été menacée que du jour où sont apparues chez les colonisés des élites formées par le colonisateur."⁴⁶ The "creation" of equals, especially those deliberately educated by high-minded French intellectuals, introduced a situation where the French *colon* could be replaced by a native now of equal civilization, thereby eliminating the purpose of the French colonial mission.

This self-created colonial menace could only lead to the destruction of the justification for the colonial presence in the Maghreb. According to Albert Memmi, "assimilation et colonization sont contradictoires,"⁴⁷ therefore, "[it] is a linguistically and politically subversive act to appropriate the cultural tools of the colonizer, to metamorphose from an absent or stereotyped representation of French literature on North Africa, to writing a subject of Maghrebine literature."⁴⁸ The establishment of one's proper identity eliminates the need for a colonial protector and disinherits the overseer's investiture over the colonized territory.

Frantz Fanon depicts the development of the author working under colonialism in three stages: first, assimilation, in which the author tries to emulate his colonial master; second, nostalgia and the re-working of legend and myth, often involving black humor or a sentiment of anguish and malaise; third, combat. After trying to understand his master, then trying to re-identify his historical culture, the author tries to awaken the spirit of the masses to a new order. This effort is seen in militant, revolutionary, and national literature.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Annuaire de l'Afrique du nord 1962 p. 546.

⁴⁷ Albert Memmi, Portrait du colonisé (Paris: Payot, 1973) p. 155.

⁴⁸ Marx-Scouras, "Reconciling...", p.59.

⁴⁹ Frantz Fanon, Les damnés de la terre (Paris: F. Maspero, 1957) p. 153-154.

To some extent his analysis is comparable to that of literary critics of Maghrebi authors describing the postwar period until after independence. Within the texts of the movement as a whole, Fanon's framework for the decolonizing of colonial literature is for the most part accurate. However, individually, the work of Maghrebi authors is more difficult to categorize; each author had his or her unique experience under the colonial system. Collectively the manifestations of their shared realities often meet Fanon's description, but individually their experiences were much more acute and lose their personal effect when generalized. In reporting or commenting on human suffering, the individual's pain is almost always presented with more pathos than that of a larger faceless mass. One of Maghrebi literature's feats was to personalize the North African trauma for the Francophone public.

The texts of Fanon are a sort of manual for the would-be militant revolutionary. The same holds true for certain Maghrebi authors, like Dib who depicted events similar to those of the Algerian revolution before they took place. Whereas Fanon described the potential forces of Third World revolutions aspiring to ideological utopias, the Maghrebi authors portrayed the underlying malaise that was tearing at the very fabric of daily existence. Fanon was able to understand and analyze the decaying existence of colonialism, but the cultural and emotional strain could only be depicted by the artists struggling to release the pain of suffering of the colonized. They were acutely aware of their own violated and corrupted identity.

The North African was already cognizant of this reality; he didn't need to read about his daily tribulations and internal conflicts whether in French or Arabic. But still, he became aware of the authors representing his struggle. Malek Haddad reports his experience at a book signing where an illiterate Algerian approached him for his

autograph. Astounded and perplexed, he asked the man why he was there. The man simply responded: "Parce qu'on m'a dit que tu es de chez nous et que tu parles de nous."⁵⁰

Malek Haddad recalls a conversation with the author Gabriel Audisio who said to him, "La langue française est ma patrie." He responded in Les zéros tournent en rond: "Je suis en exil dans la langue française. Mais des exils peuvent ne pas être inutiles et je remercie sincèrement cette langue de m'avoir permis de servir ou d'essayer de servir mon pays bien-aimé."⁵¹ For many it appeared ironic, if not absurd, to express one's regrets for using the French language in French. But, in the Maghreb, and Algeria in particular, cultural colonialism ran deeper than either political or economic colonialism.⁵² Jean Déjeux writes that the Maghrebi authors "were defining themselves in opposition to colonialism, the enemy that had provoked them into a sense of national solidarity and national identification".⁵³

Déjeux also describes the cultural oppression of the Maghreb by the French conquest as a *fitna*. The aura of the French colonial identity was omnipresent yet affected each country differently with Algeria incurring the most profound and lasting repercussions. The French language overwhelmed the Algerian cultural sensibility. "Sa puissance, sa modernité, sa langue critique et désacralisante écrasaient."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Malek Haddad, Les zéros tournent en rond (Paris: F. Maspero, 1961) p. 13.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵² G. Merad, p 57

⁵³ Déjeux, "Francophone Literature...", p. 7.

⁵⁴ Déjeux, La littérature maghrébine d'expression française, p. 4.

Khatibi writes: "La lutte anticoloniale a permis aux écrivains maghrébins de s'exprimer et de se faire entendre bien au-delà des frontières de leurs pays. C'est ainsi que, pour atteindre une certaine universalité même auprès du monde socialiste et de la plupart des pays du Tiers Monde, il fallait utiliser le circuit culturel de la métropole."⁵⁵ Frantz Fanon suggests that: "Aussi paradoxal que cela paraisse, c'est la Révolution algérienne, c'est la lutte du peuple algérien qui facilite la diffusion de la langue française dans la Nation."⁵⁶

Khatibi writes: "Les écrivains étaient convaincus de leur mission et de leur message. Ils entendaient exprimer le drame d'une société en crise. Bien plus, ils avaient compris qu'en incarnant une situation donnée, ils pouvaient traduire la profonde mutation apportée par la décolonisation et déboucher de cette manière sur les thèmes toujours actuels, l'aliénation et la dépersonnalisation."⁵⁷

Driss Chraïbi realized that there were two very different sides each fighting for its own cause for a resolution to the Franco-Algerian conflict. Still, he reflected positively on the possibilities that Maghrebi authors could bring to the situation. He wrote: "Bien sûr, nous serons continuellement en butte aux attaques des nationalistes d'ici ou de là-bas, des deux rives de la Méditerranée. Nous en sommes conscients. Mais, s'il y a une élite capable d'être un pont jeté entre ces deux rives, c'est bien celle que nous représentons, nous, les écrivains maghrébins d'expression française."⁵⁸ Chraïbi sincerely believed that a correspondence of ideas was within reach. However, he failed

⁵⁵ Khatibi, p 14

⁵⁶ Fanon, L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne (Paris: Maspéro, 1959) p 80.

⁵⁷ Khatibi, p.11.

⁵⁸ Driss Chraïbi, "Une mauvaise querelle," *Confluent* (Sept.-Oct., 1961): p. 583.

to realize that speaking the former enemy's language would be incongruous within an Arabicizing nation that had suffered one hundred thirty years of French political and cultural domination and eight years of violent conflict.

The Birth of a New Literature

The young nation, overwhelmed by history and geography...

On the eve of the Algerian revolution almost the entire population was illiterate. Algerian literature of Arab expression was in a period of stagnation, too rigidly paralyzed to reveal itself beyond the more traditional paths of classical poetry. From 1945-1962 only seven novels in Arab were produced: two in Morocco, five in Tunisia, and none in Algeria. Berber and Jewish literatures, were also marginalized, or were at least not integral to the development of a national literature. During the same period forty-one novels of French expression were produced, the vast majority of which were by Algerian authors.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

Chapter Two

This chapter will focus on the nascent French literature written by indigenous Algerians. It will examine their role in regard to Algerian nationalism as represented in their works and personal commentaries. This pre-independence period will be divided into three phases: ethnographic, conflict and alienation, and combat. Each phase will demonstrate the convictions Algerian author's as they evolve toward resolute opposition to French colonial rule. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the repercussions of independence on Algerian literature of French expression.

The Birth of a New Literature

"Je vous salue, orphelins de lecteurs authentiques..."⁵⁹

On the eve of the Algerian revolution ninety-five percent of the population was illiterate. Algerian literature of Arab expression, was in a period of occultation; too culturally paralyzed to reveal itself beyond the more familiar paths of classical poetry. From 1945-1962 only seven novels in Arab were produced: two in Morocco, five in Tunisia, and none in Algeria. Berber and Jewish literature, were also marginalized, or were at least not integral to the development of a national literature. During the same period forty-one novels of French expression were produced, the vast majority of which were by Algerian authors.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Haddad, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Khatibi, p. 32

Maghrebi literature of French expression occupied the cultural void left in countries deprived of their indigenous languages. It also coincided with political evolution and nationalist claims; the socio-political environment became integral to its very structure and substantive discourse. After 1956 the literature of Tunisia and of Morocco turned toward a more introspective evolution, no longer having to fight the French colonial rule. The independence that they attained helped accelerate the aspirations and convictions of the Algerian authors. Recurrent themes of the initial offerings included hunger, the oppression of women, mixed marriages, labor migration, and exile. They also focused iconoclast modernism against traditional society, Islamic rigidity, and tribal structures.

With the beginning of the Algerian war a new tendency developed: "une littérature militante faite dans le combat et pour le combat."⁶¹ This new literature appeared in political pamphlets and essays as well as in the novels of Algerian authors. A veritable literary explosion was in the making and French became for the Algerian nationalist the weapon of choice. They hoped not only to reach the sympathetic French citizen, but others struggling for liberty from colonialism. Their goal was to make the voice of Algeria heard, and French gave them the means to appeal to a more comprehensive audience.

Algerian author Malek Haddad was also aware of the cultural and political ramifications that the new Maghrebi literary movement was bringing to the colonial conflict. He wrote: "À travers nous, c'est l'Algérie qui souffre et qui lutte que l'on salue. Nous sommes les tristes bénéficiaires d'une actualité bouleversée et bouleversante."⁶²

⁶¹ Khatibi, p 29

⁶² Haddad, Les zéros tourent en rond, p.11.

As independence became increasingly inevitable, Algerian national interests began to stretch beyond the immediate political concerns and began focusing on the survival of national cultural identity. In April 1959 Frantz Fanon authored the first article devoted to Algerian national culture in *El Moudjahid*, the party paper of the FLN. He wrote, "Si la culture est la manifestation de la conscience nationale, je n'hésiterai à dire dans le cas qui nous occupe que la conscience nationale est la forme la plus élaborée de la culture."⁶³ For Fanon culture and national identity were essential to illustrate the legitimacy of a people aspiring to nationhood. The problem was that this culture was most often expressed via the French language. Even *El Moudjahid* was published both in Arabic and French.

As the conflict over the use of French began to spread some authors began to voice their own opinions. Moroccan author Driss Chraïbi, in defense of the usage of the French language by Maghrebi authors, declared: "Nous n'avons pas choisi la langue française comme moyen d'expression: elle constitue un acquis. Nous nous en servons comme d'un bâton -et c'est pourtant un outil bien perfectionné: qui songerait à nous blâmer? Le fond importe-t-il donc moins que la forme? Nous le croyons: écoutez, c'est notre credo....Écoutez! nous essayons d'exprimer des thèmes universels à partir, et à travers ce que l'on appelle, notre génie local. C'est tout ce que nous pouvons faire, hantés que nous sommes presque tous par ce grand thème: celui de la souffrance et de l'aliénation de l'homme par l'homme."⁶⁴

For Chraïbi and many of the Algerian authors, the only choice was to write in French. It was by far the best means of reaching the widest audience and directly

⁶³ Gadant, p. 49

⁶⁴ Driss Chraïbi, "Littérature nord-africaine d'expression française" *Confluent* (Feb, 1960): p.29.

communicating with their political and cultural opponent. Most authors accepted French a necessary evil and considered criticism for its usage unjust, for if they were to be heard, French was the only language they had the ability to use. They were often more concerned with criticism of the content of their works. This was especially true of the early ethnographical novels by authors like Mouloud Feraoun, Mohammed Dib, and Mouloud Mammeri.

Ethnographic

One of the first Algerian authors to produce an ethnographical work was Mouloud Ferouan. He was born in the region of Grande Kabylia, the son of a Berber peasant. His humble background was often be a major part of his work. He was the first Algerian author of French expression to be acknowledged by French literary critics for his short autobiographical novel Le fils du pauvre. He followed this work with two more well-received books, La terre et le sang and Les chemins qui montent. In Algeria, he was subject to fierce criticism.

Algerian nationalists labeled Feraoun an idealist because he put aside the colonial situation and the conflicts of acculturation to examine Berber culture and village life. His works often concentrated on the extreme poverty which surrounded him in his youth. For this some labeled him a "misérabiliste"⁶⁵ or a regionalist detached from the national cause. Other critics depicted Feraoun as a collaborator for his ethnographic writings, claiming they pandered to the French image of the primitive native. Feraoun described himself as an Algerian, but he would never deny or lessen the

⁶⁵ Yetiv, "L'évolution....," p. 60

importance or attachment he felt for his life and cultural experience in Kabylia. Abdelkebir Khatibi discussing the situation in which Feraoun and other authors found themselves writes: "L'écrivain maghrébin, en pratiquant une distanciation par rapport à l'événement politique risque d'être taxé d'esthète. Par contre, s'il veut servir la cause nationale en employant le roman comme moyen d'information, il risque de rater son œuvre. De toute manière, l'écrivain est condamné à avoir mauvaise conscience."⁶⁶

Throughout his works Feraoun endeavored to chronicle the events which shaped and moved Algeria. He tried to remain unbiased and avoid the political battles which were waged by some of his literary comrades. Feraoun's universal concerns drew little sympathy and he was criticized for lacking focus on the crisis of his time. His public silence hid his ongoing reflection and concern that both sides in the Franco-Algerian conflict were equally at fault for not finding a resolution to their differences. Eventually, Feraoun's novels evolve from a depiction of daily and individual suffering under the colonial regime to an indictment of the entire colonial system, not just that of Algeria. They are a historical testament that often erases the distinction between journalism and fiction.

Feraoun was admittedly greatly distressed by the deterioration of the Franco-Algerian conflict. He wrote: "Je sais combien il est difficile d'être juste, je sais que la grandeur d'âme consiste à accepter l'injustice pour éviter soi-même d'être injuste, je connais enfin les vertus héroïques du silence."⁶⁷ Alluding to certain unnamed acquaintances, Feraoun wrote: "Je pense qu'ils désapprouvent la violence mais qu'ils se taisent de la même manière que j'ai toujours désapprouvé la violence et que je n'ai

⁶⁶ Khatibi, p 51

⁶⁷ Mouloud Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962) p. 326-327. Déjeux. Le "journal"...p.155.

jamais rien pu faire d'autre que me taire."⁶⁸ Feraoun's sentiments help explain his understanding of Camus' silence "comme une marque de sympathie."⁶⁹ In a conflict that had become devoid of rational dialog Feraoun considered silence as the only viable solution to an increasingly complex problem whose issue could not be seen.

Mohammed El-Gharbi had his own thoughts on the non-engagement of certain authors. His opinion could be pointed in the direction of the likes of Camus, Feraoun, and others. He writes: "Le silence est aussi une opinion. Dans le cas qui nous préoccupe, le silence est une approbation. Il est indigne d'un écrivain, d'un poète, en un mot d'un intellectuel véritable, d'hésiter à prendre position sur des problèmes essentiels, de rester indifférent à tout ce qui se construit ou se détruit autour de lui; ce qui équivaut à servir l'erreur et l'injustice."⁷⁰

While Feraoun was silent in public, he was busy expressing his concerns in a private journal that was published after his death. Feraoun's journals are an insightful description of the daily disintegration of Franco-Algerian society as seen by a humanitarian unafraid of criticizing the wrongs on both sides in the conflict, and are an unequalled testament to the complexities surrounding the situation.

Feraoun commenting on the increasing violence in Algeria wrote: "Toute la question est de savoir si le combat que mènent les patriotes est un combat pour une juste cause, car un honnête homme... ne peut rester indifférent devant le drame qui se développe... Si cette cause est juste,... que peut-on attendre d'autre que la participation au combat,... le sacrifice de sa vie pour le bonheur des autres? Un homme de coeur ne

⁶⁸ Déjeux, *Le "journal"...*, *Confluent* (Feb., 1963) p. 155.

⁶⁹ Déjeux, "Mouloud Feraoun: romancier de la Terre kabyle," p.320.

⁷⁰ El-Gharbi, p. 136.

saurait se taire ni se boucher les oreilles. Toute la question est de savoir pourquoi se battent les patriotes, ce qu'ils veulent, ce qu'on leur refuse, ce qui fait que tombent journellement, par dizaines, des Français innocents, des Arabes innocents, des hommes qui n'ont aucune raison de se haïr ou de s'entre-tuer mais qui se haïssent et s'entre-tuent."⁷¹ For Feraoun the decision of participation rested on choosing the side of justice. However, in a situation obscure of clear justice, human decency could only be manifest in speaking out for the innocent caught in the middle of the conflict.

Feraoun had also lost faith in the goodwill preached by the French humanitarians. His humanistic values weren't shaken as much as he was disillusioned by the genuine lack of sincerity of his former mentors. "Ce ne sont plus des maîtres, des modèles ou des égaux, les Français sont des ennemis. Ils l'ont toujours été d'ailleurs, avec tant d'aisance, dans leurs manières, tant d'assurance dans leurs paroles et leurs actes et tant de naturel que nous avons été conquis non par leur haine mais par leur bonté. Les manifestations de leur bonté à notre égard n'étaient que celles de leur haine. Mais leur haine était si intelligente que nous ne la comprenions pas. Nous la prenions pour de la bonté. Ils étaient bons, nous étions mauvais. Ils étaient civilisés, nous étions barbares... Ils étaient supérieurs, nous étions inférieurs. Voilà ce qu'ils ont réussi à nous faire croire."⁷² Feraoun was also deeply concerned that humanitarian values were not absolute.

Mouloud Feraoun was assassinated by the O.A.S.⁷³ in 1962. Only recently has his work been re-integrated into the national literature as that of a humanitarian who

⁷¹ Ferouan. Journal, 131-132. Déjeux. Le "journal"..., p. 156.

⁷² Ferouan. Journal, p.27. Déjeux. Le "journal"...p. 161.

⁷³ Organisation de l'Armée Secrète

described the pain and suffering of oppressed peoples. He is buried in the witness-martyr cemetery to the revolution in his native village.

Mouloud Mammeri was also born in Grande Kabylia like Mouloud Feraoun. And like Feraoun, his early novels focused on village life and his Berber heritage and were quickly criticized. Mammeri's La colline oubliée was attacked openly by Mohammed Chelif Sahli as "La colline du reniement." Sahli wrote: "Lorsque à peine sorti des presses et encore inconnu à Paris, ce roman est répandu aux quatre coins d'Algérie, lorsque les journaux colonialistes habitués à étouffer par le silence les écrits des patriotes lui tressent des couronnes en des long articles dithyrambiques, nous sommes fondé à trouver l'affaire suspecte. Le colonialisme est si peu chevaleresque qu'il flétrit ce qu'il loue. Qu'y a-t-il de si déshonorant dans La colline oubliée pour mériter les éloges de nos pires adversaires?"⁷⁴ For an Algerian nationalist, anything seen to be accepted by the colonial power had to be by association inherently corrupt. There could be only absolutes in the ongoing struggle between good and evil. Sahli further states: "Une œuvre signée d'un Algérien ne peut nous intéresser que d'un seul point de vue: quelle cause sert-elle? Quelle est sa position dans la lutte qui oppose le mouvement national au colonialisme?"⁷⁵ Lacherif also was wary of the way La colline oubliée was received in the French presse; Mammeri was never mentioned as an Algerian author but as a Kabyle or Berber, causing Lacherif to ask: "L'Algérie serait-elle aussi une *patrie oubliée*?"⁷⁶

⁷⁴ M.C. Sahli in *Le jeune musulman*, n°13 (1953): cited in Marx-Scouras, "Reconciling...", p.65.

⁷⁵ Jean Déjeux, "Mouloud Mammeri: un prix littéraire, une polemique politique," *Oeuvres et Critiques*, v. IV, n°2 (1979): p. 69.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.74.

In his own defense, Mammeri expressed his views on the use of the colonial language as follows: "La langue française est pour moi non pas du tout la langue honnie d'un ennemi, mais un incomparable instrument de libération, de communion ensuite avec le reste du monde. Je considère qu'elle nous traduit infiniment plus qu'elle nous trahit."⁷⁷

Mammeri was also criticized for not being engaged sufficiently in the Algerian struggle. Other critics saw the novel as part of the necessary path for Algerian authors; an acute awareness of what steps were required to resolve the conflicts caused by French rule. Anne Roche writes that in La colline oubliée "la tradition est valorisée, comme maintien de l'identité, résistance à l'acculturation: mais résistance passive, dont l'insuffisance apparaîtra peu à peu."⁷⁸ Understanding the shortcomings and ineffectiveness of passive resistance is in itself a call for increased engagement.

Another Algerian author whose first novels were considered ethnographical was Mohammed Dib. His trilogy on Algeria beginning with La grande maison, creates a complex interpretation of Algerian historical events. While staging his novels in the framework of World War II, Dib barely disguises situations that could have been current events in the Franco-Algerian conflict. The reactions of his young protagonist Omar, faced with the injustices of the world, also gives further weight to Dib's works by demonstrating how the Algerian situation was affecting the innocent. The following excerpt from L'incendie describes the child's reaction to the colonial presence:

Souvent Omar avait été sifflé de la manière particulière
dont les Européens usaient pour appeler un indigène: pst!
pst! Il se retournait pour voir ce qu'on lui voulait; c'était

⁷⁷ Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1966. p. 316.

⁷⁸ Anne Roche, "Tradition et subversion dans l'oeuvre de Mouloud Mammeri," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* n° 22 (1976): p.99.

un Français qui lui faisait signe: "Viens porter." L'enfant lui jetait alors un regard de mépris et s'éloignait. Tenant son garçon par la main, l'homme, indécis, examina Omar longuement. Aussitôt celui-ci éprouva une brûlure insupportable. Une honte et une humiliation subites le traversèrent comme une déchirure. Il sentait qu'il rougissait. Omar parlait le français déjà. Il aurait su dire qu'il n'était pas un porteur, ou qu'il n'était pas de son goût de se voir pris pour tel. Mais il ne put articuler aucune parole. Ses connaissances en français l'avaient brusquement abandonné. Il finit par déclarer d'une voix étranglée: "Oui, monsieur."⁷⁹

In La grande maison Dib describes the French attitude toward the native in the following manner: "À moins de mourir de faim, disent les colons, les indigènes ne veulent pas travailler. Quand ils ont gagné de quoi manger un seul jour, leur paresse les pousse à abandonner le travail. En attendant, ce sont les fellahs qui travaillent pour eux. De plus ils les volent. Ils volent les travailleurs. Et cette vie ne peut pas durer."⁸⁰ Though various episodes throughout his novels Dib outlines stereotypes and injustices perpetrated against the native population not only by the French colonial authority, but French *colons* as well.

Jean Sénac, a Pied-Noir author, described La Grande Maison as "la sorte de livre qui précède les révolutions."⁸¹ Tahar Ouetar, an Algerian author writing in Arabic, stated that from the start Dib took "le parti de défendre les misérables, les exploités, et les opprimés."⁸² This constitutes high praise for an author whose works beyond his first two novels remained relatively unknown in Algeria. "Dib participe à

⁷⁹ Mohammed Dib, L'incendie (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1954) p. 167-168.

⁸⁰ Mohammed Dib, La Grande Maison (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952) p. 121.

⁸¹ Jean Déjeux, Mohammed Dib: écrivain algérien (Sherbrooke, Qué.: Éditions Naaman, 1977) p. 14.

⁸² Ibid., p. 16

cet indispensable resserrement du lien de solidarité entre les villes et les campagnes."⁸³

His works also are cries against oppression and an injustice that was "la justice des autres", rendered, according to Dib, "pour les protéger, pour garantir leur pouvoir sur nous, pour nous réduire et nous mater."⁸⁴

One very telling classroom episode in Dib's La grande maison tells the child protagonist Omar's reflexions over the meaning of the words "La Patrie" which the instructor M. Hassan had written on the blackboard. After an awkward silence a fellow classmate answers: "La France est notre mère Patrie." While the other students celebrate finding the answer, Omar considers this revelation: "La France, un dessin en plusieurs couleurs. Comment ce pays si lointain est-il sa mère? Sa mère était à la maison, c'est Aïni; il n'en a pas deux. Aïni n'est pas la France. Rien de commun. Omar venait de surprendre un mensonge. Patrie ou pas patrie, la France n'était pas sa mère. Il apprenait des mensonges pour éviter la fameuse baguette d'olivier. C'était ça, les études." The instructor continues his lecture on the virtues of "la Patrie" stating that: "Quand de l'extérieur viennent des étrangers qui prétendent être les maîtres, la patrie est en danger. Ces étrangers sont des ennemis contre lesquels toute la population doit défendre la patrie menacée. Il est alors question de guerre. Les habitants doivent défendre la patrie au prix de leur existence." While young Omar questions these consequences and who are and who are not patriots among people he knows he suddenly hears the instructor speaking in Arabic: "'Ça n'est pas vrai, fit-il, si on vous dit que la France est votre patrie.' Parbleu! Omar savait bien que c'était encore un mensonge. M. Hassan se ressaisit. Mais pendant quelques minutes il parut agité. Il

⁸³ Ibid., p. 16 citing René Justrabo in *Liberté*, June 3, 1954.

⁸⁴ Yetiv, "L'évolution ...," p. 59.

semblait être sur le point de dire quelque chose encore. Mais quoi? Une force plus grande que lui l'en empêchait-elle? Ainsi, il n'apprit pas aux enfants quelle était leur patrie."⁸⁵

The so-called ethnographic writers were criticized by the nationalists as playing into the stereotypes of the colonialist. They omitted nationalism from their works, or more accurately, weren't ready to include it. However, they may have had a purpose that was not understood at that time. The authors needed to re-examine themselves and their surroundings with meticulous care in order to have a "scientific" knowledge of who they were; before they did so, this "scientific" knowledge had only been produced by the colonizer, making his own interpretation of what composed an Algerian. This fact is curiously supported by the almost complete disappearance of ethnographic writers upon independence.⁸⁶ The early works of Algerian author Assia Djébar may also be considered in this same way. The Algerian woman was re-discovering herself and her role in society. She was also re-examining the relationships between men and women that had been interrupted or displaced by the circumstances of the struggle for independence. In her later works, Djébar focused on re-discovering the lost sexuality of Algeria woman.

Conflict and alienation

After the initial wave of ethnographical novels, Maghrebi authors began expressing their internal conflicts and feelings of alienation. They were Arabs, Berbers,

⁸⁵ Dib, *La grande maison*. pp. 19-23.

⁸⁶ Charles Bonn, *Le roman algérien de langue française* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1985) p. 25.

and Jews who had been selected to be assimilated to French culture. As the drive for Algerian independence gained strength and the outrages of French colonialism continued, they found themselves deeply troubled as to their place in society. Their works continued to be autobiographical as were the ethnographical novels, but they were more personal and introspective. However, their inner malaise was released against the failure Maghrebi society to confront the menace of French colonialism. This phase in Maghrebi literature of French expression was particularly charged by two authors outside of Algeria, Tunisia Albert Memmi and Moroccan Driss Chraïbi.

In 1953 Memmi published La statue de sel and in 1954 Chraïbi released Le passé simple. The first was an attack against colonial alienation and a description of the situation of Tunisian Jews; the second a violent attack against the sclerosis of Muslim society and the patriarchal family. Chraïbi was vehemently criticized "d'avoir d'un trait insulté son père et sa mère, craché sur toutes les traditions nationales, y compris la religion,"⁸⁷ as well as for choosing Paris as his residence and seat of revolt. Chraïbi's novel had the further complication of being published as Morocco acceded to independence. It was not a very opportune moment to launch a widespread attack against the most sensitive ills of Moroccan society.

Memmi, on the other hand, was a member of a minority whose only hope was a cosmopolitan state that treated all groups as equals. The humanistic philosophy of French intellectuals must have been particularly appealing to him. He was Jewish with a Berber mother and culturally French. His autobiographical novel describes his assimilation into French culture, and the rejection that followed which must have been extremely bitter for him. Unlike his Arab counterparts, he could not convert his

⁸⁷ Khatibi, p 26.

disillusionment into nationalist aspirations because of his racial heritage. He, and other Jewish authors of French expression had to either adopt the universalism of world literature or remain a marginalized element largely ignored by the new national literature. In the preface to La statue de sel, Albert Camus, in regard to Memmi's circumstances, comments, "Que sera-t-il donc pour finir? On serait tenté de dire un écrivain."⁸⁸ Perhaps, this was the only choice for both of them for choosing French culture over the culture of their homeland.

Memmi describes his insurmountable alienation that left no hope for reconciliation: "Toujours je me retrouvai Mordekhaï, Alexandre, Benillouche, indigène dans un pays de civilisation, Juif dans un milieu anti-sémite, Africain dans un monde où triomphe l'Europe...J'avais cru que par une faveur insigne, on m'ouvrirait les portes du monde, je n'aurais qu'à y entrer pour être accueilli avec joie; je me découvris irréductiblement étranger dans ma ville natale."⁸⁹ Certain groups, French Pieds-Noirs, assimilated Europeans, Jews, and many Berbers would find that they had no place in a new state centered on Arab Islamic reconstruction.

The double critique of the traditional family and religion by Chraïbi in Le passé simple was seen by the nationalists as an attack against Moroccan identity. The character Driss stigmatizes the religious education of the *koutab*. He mocks the *fqih*, the repetition of Qur'anic verses, the primitive classroom, and the severe corporal punishments handed out. It isn't easy to determine whether Driss hates his father because of Islam, or if he hates Islam because of his father.⁹⁰ Or perhaps both are

⁸⁸ Albert Memmi, La statue de sel (Paris: Gallimard, 1966, c. 1953) p. 9.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.109.

⁹⁰ Yetiv, "L'évolution ...," p. 63.

equally balanced. It was Driss' father who sent him to the French school; he didn't realize that he was committing his son to a path of alienation from which there could be no return.

The journal Démocratie labeled the author as "assassin, renégat", and "traître". Chraïbi was attacking every taboo subject with a vengeance so shocking that even he had to renounce his work. He wrote in response to the attacks and expressed his consternation: "Quand la presse d'ici me traite d'anti-colonialiste et que la presse de mon pays me qualifie de vendu, où suis-je? Et qui suis-je?"⁹¹ Chaïbi's recantation illustrates the intense pressure on authors for their work to be "engagé" and the "appartenance 'forcée' de l'intellectuel à son groupe."⁹² Ten years later Chraïbi reflected on his own denunciation of his work confessing, "J'ai eu un moment de faiblesse, je l'avoue, quand j'ai renié Le passé simple. Je ne pouvais pas supporter l'idée qu'on pût prétendre que je faisais le jeu des colonialistes. J'aurais dû tenir bon, avoir plus de courage."⁹³ The lasting impression was so strong that Le passé simple was banned in Morocco until 1977.

While other Maghrebi authors like Memmi and Chraïbi were bringing up sensitive and controversial subjects, Algeria authors like Mouloud Mammeri began rejecting the European values learned under the French "Mission civilisatrice". In Algeria the situation was becoming increasingly violent and Algerian authors faced criticism for not going far enough in proclaiming nationalist cause. Renouncing the colonial presence was no longer an adequate level of engagement.

⁹¹ Kacem Basfao, "Pour un relance de l'affaire du Passé simple," Colloque Jacqueline Arnaud.

⁹² Yetiv, "L'évolution ...," p.61

⁹³ Basfao, p.61.

Mouloud Mammeri's Le sommeil du juste is an example of increased engagement on part of the author which still didn't meet the criteria of a militant nationalist work. In the novel the principal character admits he has forgotten "la langue de ses pères"⁹⁴ in order to master the language of the colonizer, but his translations are imperfect. "C'est que le français du maître est impuissant à traduire le kabyle du père: parce qu'on ne peut passer impunément d'un code culturel à un autre, qu'entre les deux se fait une terrible déperdition, qui bouleverse le discours."⁹⁵

For the Algerian Mouloud Mammeri, the words were French, but the language was Algerian.⁹⁶ In Le sommeil du juste, Mammeri's protagonist, after an arduous search within his own conscience, discovers that there is an unmanageable abyss between the European humanism taught in the French *lycée* and the colonial practice of daily life. "Son crime est d'avoir voulu pénétrer une société qui lui était interdite, d'avoir pris au sérieux ce qu'on lui enseignait."⁹⁷ The protagonist in Mammeri's Le sommeil du juste proclaims: "Vous aurez fait ce qu'on attendait de vous," dit-il au juge; "à la porte du clos où malgré les pancartes et les palissades, je voulais entrer, vous aurez fait bonne garde. Vous pouvez dormir, Monsieur le Juge; il est bon après tout que le sommeil du juste suive le sommeil de la justice."⁹⁸ By the end of Le sommeil du juste, the central character burns the works of the great European humanists in a symbolic act of defiance.

⁹⁴ Mouloud Mammeri, Le sommeil du juste (Paris: Plon, 1955) p. 22.

⁹⁵ Roche, "Tradition ...," p.102.

⁹⁶ G. Merad, p. 146

⁹⁷ Yetiv, "L'évolution ...," p. 64

⁹⁸ Mammeri, p.254.

In an interview with Abdallah Mazouni in November 1965, Mouloud Mammeri made the following observations about his works up until that time: "La colline oubliée, c'est le tableau particulier d'une Algérie livrée au système colonial, dans une situation en apparence sans espoir, et qui fuit, dans le rêve ou dans une misère sans fond, l'horreur de son destin. Le sommeil du juste, c'est l'Algérie à la veille de l'explosion et où, déjà, presque tous les éléments sont prêts pour le sursaut de révolte qui devait, après le premier novembre 1954, s'accomplir en révolution. L'opium et le bâton, ..., c'est un aspect de la révolution algérienne, dans son déroulement quotidien."⁹⁹ It is also interesting to note that after his first book was vehemently criticized, his novels became increasingly "engagé". Whether or not this reflects his natural literary evolution or his reaction to the political and cultural exigencies of the day is difficult to determine.

Combat

The third stage in pre-independence Maghrebi literature of French expression is directly linked to the outbreak of armed conflict in Algeria. Authors begin to focus their works not only on the injustices of colonialism, but also the pain and suffering related to the war for independence.

Mohammad Dib's L'incendie is the sequel to La grande maison, and along with Le métier à tisser comprises his Algerian trilogy set between 1939 and 1942. Although staged earlier in time, these works are directly associated to the Algerian national cause. They portray the slow emergence of nationalist aspirations that originated in resentment

⁹⁹ Merad, p. 119.

against the expropriation of land and, more generally, in the frustrations brought about by colonialism. In fact, *L'incendie* even takes on the appearance of prophecy.¹⁰⁰

Dib's realism is in part a reflection of his work as a reporter for *Alger républicain*, as appears from the following comparison between an article in *Alger républicain* describing a strike by agricultural workers, and a similar scene in his novel *L'incendie*.

In *Alger républicain* on April 26, 1956 Dib reported the following: "Au cours des interrogatoires qu'elle fait subir aux ouvriers arrêtés, la police insiste pour connaître les noms des soi-disant 'meneurs'. 'Le responsable de notre grève c'est la misère' ont répondu les ouvriers unanimes."

In *L'incendie* Dib wrote: "Au cours des interrogatoires, la police insista pour connaître les noms des meneurs. 'Le responsable de notre grève? C'est la misère,' répondirent-ils."¹⁰¹

While most Maghrebi novels expose the contradictions of the French colonial system, and suggest that a change, at least, is needed, *L'incendie*, published several months before November 1, 1954, is a blueprint for organization. It explains where the injustice lies, how to organize, how to have meetings and form resistance groups, and subtly implies what action it is necessary to take. The novel tells the story of a strike by the fellahs against the *colons*, their first conscious grasp of the exploitation of the proletariat. Dib writes: "Un incendie avait été allumé, et jamais plus il ne s'éteindrait. Il continuerait à ramper à l'aveuglette, secret, souterrain: ses flammes sanglantes

¹⁰⁰ François Desplanques, "The Long, Luminous Wake of Mohammed Dib," *Research in African Literatures* v. 23, n° 2 (Summer 1992): p. 73.

¹⁰¹ Déjeux, "À l'origine de 'L'Incendie de Mohammed Dib,'" *Présence Francophone* n° 10 (Spring 1975): p. 7.

n'auraient de cesse qu'elles n'aient jeté sur tout le pays leur sinistre éclat."¹⁰² A literary foreshadowing of what was to come for Algerian society.

Throughout the book Dib describes the colonial experience in Algeria. One of his characters takes on the task of describing how the French expropriated the land from the people:

"Il y a une centaine d'années, peut-être un peu plus, peut-être un peu moins, il n'y avait personne ici... Les anciens du village te diront qu'ils sont venus s'installer un à un. Mais avant, les fellahs ont eu des terres à orge, à figuiers, à maïs, à légumes et à oliviers. Et elles leur furent enlevées. À partir de ce temps-là, il fut reconnu que le fellah est paresseux, qu'il abandonne la terre à l'agave, au jujubier et au palmier nain. Incapable d'en faire quelque chose de propre et de productif!... Ah! comme on a su les dépouiller pour leur bien et pour la civilisation!... C'était la Loi. De quelque côté qu'ils se soient tournés, la Loi les a frappés. Ils seront toujours en faute au regard de la Loi.... La Loi leur conteste la propriété de leurs terres. La Loi a changé, leur dit-on. Il y a une nouvelle Loi. Et les anciens titres deviennent-ils caducs et nuls? Et nul l'héritage des ancêtres? Oui, nuls! On dit aux fellahs: La Loi garantit vos droits, si vous en avez à faire valoir, la nouvelle Loi, établie en toute équité et égale pour tous, vous défendrait s'il en était besoin. Comment, ont répondu ces braves gens, comment pouvons-nous avoir recours à la Loi qui nous dépouille? Le malheur de ceux qui l'ont cependant cru ne connut pas de borne. Ceux-là ont perdu le reste de leurs biens et d'aucuns, leur raison... Et c'est comme ça qu'un pays a changé de main, que le peuple de cette terre, pourchassé, est devenu étranger sur son propre sol.... Mais une redoutable force va devenir la leur. Pour l'instant, ils se louent à ceux qui les ont dépossédés."¹⁰³

¹⁰² Dib, *L'Incendie*, p. 131-132

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 64.

Dib makes it clear that the colonizer has stolen Algeria and that those who have collaborated with him are thieves as well. The child Omar in an awakening of his conscience decides that, "Même la faim ne me pousserait pas à m'appropriier les biens d'autrui."¹⁰⁴ For him the act of theft is directly associated with the acts of the *colon*. To not steal becomes an act of resistance. By not stealing, even in the face of starvation, he resists the stereotype of the native; and in doing so, he becomes morally superior to the *colons* and frees himself of his oppressors' need to oversee the corrupt native.

In Qui se souvient de la mer, Dib resorts to allegory and the fantastic to the point of hallucination. Dib himself said of the novel that he wanted to be as Picasso painting *Guernica*; he wanted to show the horror and the nightmare without the blood and bodies. Here, Dib was already moving beyond the realistic and nationalistic literature toward a universal portrait of humanity that reached beyond the Algerian and French frontiers. In a certain manner, he was distancing himself from the new national literature by being artistically revolutionary.

Another Algerian author who was to receive great acclaim for his innovative writing was Kateb Yacine. Like his Maghrebi counterparts, Kateb had similar feelings with regard to the use of French as his means of communication. Relating how he chose to learn the French language, Kateb makes the following statement: "Mon père est de culture arabe, ma mère aussi. J'ai eu à choisir et j'ai choisi la langue française. Pourquoi? Parce que lorsqu'on m'apprenait l'arabe je m'endormais et lorsqu'on m'apprenait le français, j'étais parmi les deux ou trois premiers élèves algériens. Je savais que les Français me haïssaient, je savais bien que je n'étais pas à ma place, mais j'étais sûr de conquérir une arme..."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁰⁵ Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965, p.224.

Nedjma, the first novel by Kateb Yacine is considered by many to be the most complicated, and still to this day, accomplished work in all of Maghrebi literature. The number of studies devoted to it is remarkable. And although it is a multi-faceted work still being interpreted, its center is still Algeria. An Algeria that exists in the past, the future, and the present. It is a literary portrait of all that is Algerian, with its conflicts and contradictions, and it is a superior literary achievement.

Nedjma also may be the most nationalistic novel written by an Algerian without directly extolling the nationalist cause. It is the myth of the search for a nation's identity, with the search itself being the discovery of that very myth that is a nation. It is the description of the lost generation of 1945 to 1954, that upon finding itself becomes void of purpose. So the search must be eternal as the discovery and re-defining of the Algerian nation. In regard to Kateb's innovations in Nedjma, Abdelkebir Khatibi writes: "Le mérite de Kateb Yacine est d'avoir compris qu'un écrivain révolutionnaire ayant choisi de combattre par la plume doit être révolutionnaire aussi dans son propre domaine, celui de l'écriture."¹⁰⁶

The appellation "Nedjma" itself is rooted in nationalism; finding its inspiration from the Étoile nord-africaine, the first Algerian nationalist movement and embryonic form of the Parti du Peuple, itself the first incarnation of the F.L.N. -the "étoile" was the symbol of the rising nation.¹⁰⁷ However Nedjma is more than just a symbol of Algeria, it is also contingent on the myth that surrounds it. Charles Bonn explains that:

"A people's identity is primarily contingent upon its ability to tell its own story. Everything considered, a collective identity is no more than the accumulation of a

¹⁰⁶ Khatibi, p 15.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Bonn, Kateb Yacine: Nedjma (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990) p. 10.

certain number of narratives that constitute, for example, a national history or a sacred text, that is to say, an assemblage of shared stories by means of which people know who they are. A people without a real or mythic history simply does not exist. However, the colonial school and the imposition of the French language had usurped the right to define itself. Confronted with this foreign domination of discourse about the Maghreb, the two traditional languages of identity -Islam and tribal myth, revealed their impotence because they were incapable of generating the idea of 'nation' in the secular sense of the term, and that was the only basis on which a fruitful dialogue with the colonizer could have taken place. In fact, the major contradiction of Third World nationalism was the fact that it had to be grounded in a concept that was only conceivable in the secular language of the colonizer."¹⁰⁸

Ernest Renan states that in order for nationhood to emerge, it is necessary for all the individuals within it to remake certain things and forget certain things; to remember what brings them together and forget what could tear them apart.¹⁰⁹ Charles Bonn comments further that what is essential in *Nedjma* are the "depicted birth pangs of the narratives, the laborious reconquest of memory, and the necessity to liberate oneself from it in order to invent a national language and a writing style that do not exist yet".¹¹⁰

H. A. Bouraoui writes that the title character Nedjma, "présentée sur le plan réel et mythique,...représente et protège le monde des ancêtres. Prise dans les engrenages du colonialisme, elle atteint le rôle de symbole inaccessible, de mère-patrie à libérer, et

¹⁰⁸ Bonn, "Kateb Yacine," p. 66.

¹⁰⁹ Chris Miller, "Nationalism as Resistance and Resistance to Nationalism in the Literature of Francophone Africa," *Yale French Studies*, v. 60 (1986): p. 62, citing Ernest Renan.

¹¹⁰ Bonn, "Kateb Yacine", p. 67

même si elle est tuée à la fin, elle est l'étoile brillante d'une nation nouvellement née."¹¹¹

The role of women in Algerian literature was also reaching revolutionary status. Frantz Fanon writes that "Like Nedjma the woman, who was the offspring of a rape, the Algerian nation was born of the 'rape' of colonization."¹¹² The French in their attempt to "civilize" the Algerian tried to modernize the Algerian woman. Occasionally a woman was "saved" -literally unveiled and symbolically deflowered. Fanon states that:

"After each successful conversion, the authorities were strengthened in their conviction that the Algerian woman (and, therefore, the mother tongue) would support Western penetration into native society...Every Algerian woman unveiled announced to the occupier an Algerian society whose systems of defense were in the process of dislocation, open and breached. Every veil that fell, every body that became liberated from the traditional embrace of the *haïk*, every face that offered itself to the bold and impatient glance of the occupier, was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer. Algerian society with every abandoned veil seemed to express its willingness to attend the master's school to decide to change its habits under the occupier's direction and patronage."¹¹³

The belief that the woman in western dress had succumbed to the colonizer's will would be changed as the war for independence intensified. After women in traditional garb started being searched for concealed weapons, the militant forces started dressing them in western garb so that they wouldn't be searched at French

¹¹¹ H.A. Bouraoui, "La littérature maghrébine du dedans et du dehors du champ critique," *Présence francophone*, n°2 (1975): p.12.

¹¹² Holsinger, p. 76.

¹¹³ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1959) p. 42.

checkpoints. In this manner too the "civilizing" achievements of the colonialist turned back against him.

Les enfants du nouveau monde by Assia Djébar is a collection of vignettes; a jig-saw puzzle of participants that demonstrates how each level of society participated in the Algerian revolution, from sacrificial heroes to collaborators. More than any other work it describes the significant role that women had to play, and the struggles and sacrifices they had to make. It is also a literary parallel to Fanon's discussion of the role of women during the Algerian war.¹¹⁴ Marie-Blanche Tahon writes that Les enfants du nouveau monde "could pass for a novelistic illustration of Fanon's theses on the ways in which war transformed the situation of Algerian women."¹¹⁵

One of Djébar's characters in Les enfants du nouveau monde, "découvrait qu'une patrie, ce n'est pas une terre commune, ni même seulement une misère partagée mais du sang versé ensemble et dans le même jour, les mêmes chants interrompus."¹¹⁶ This is obviously a reference to the events of May 8, 1945, still regarded as a point of departure for armed rebellion.

The disgrace and humiliation felt by the native population confronted by the French colonial authority was also expressed by Malek Haddad. In Je t'offrirai une gazelle, he writes:

-Tes papiers...

Il ne faut pas tutoyer un homme. Parce qu'ensuite ça va très loin, très loin. La torture commence par le tutoiement.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Marie-Blanche Tahon, "Women novelists in the struggle for Algeria's national liberation," *Research in African Literatures* n° 23 (1992): p. 44.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.46.

¹¹⁶ Assia Djébar, Les enfants du nouveau monde (Paris: Julliard, 1962) p. 143.

¹¹⁷ Malek Haddad, Je t'offrirai une gazelle (Paris: Julliard, 1959) p. 103.

Of all the early Maghrebi authors of French expression, Haddad was probably the most distressed by the use of the French language, struggling with his own consciousness to make the right decision in the matter. He approached the subject numerous times in his writings trying to find a viable solution: "Sa muse met le poète au rang des combattants."¹¹⁸

Haddad writes: "Même s'exprimant en français, les écrivains d'origine arabo-berbère *traduisent* une pensée *spécifiquement algérienne*, une pensée qui aurait trouvé la plénitude de son expression *si elle avait été véhiculée par un langage et une écriture arabes*.... Il n'y a qu'une *correspondance approximative* entre notre *pensée d'arabes* et notre *vocabulaire de Français*... *Nous écrivons le français, nous n'écrivons pas en français*."¹¹⁹ Haddad's thinking here could be carried over to the fact that there isn't a direct correspondance between the different Arabic words *qawmiyya* and *waṭaniyya* and the French words *nation* and *nationalisme*.

In futher defense of his use of the French language Haddad wrote: "Car malgré tout je parle et il faut parler. J'utiliserais le chinois si je connaissais le chinois. Le paradoxe éclaté à son paroxysme: la langue du colonisateur est devenue pour le colonisé un moyen efficace de libération."¹²⁰ He believed like many of the authors of French expression, that in this case, the end justified the means. The message was far more important than how the messenger was dressed. In regard to the problem of

¹¹⁸ Jana Cerminova, "L'Algérie en quête de l'indépendance dans l'oeuvre de Malek Haddad," *Présence Francophone* (1971): p. 89.

¹¹⁹ Haddad, *Les zéros tournent en rond*, p. 35.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.18

writing in Arabic Haddad wrote: "Écrirais-je l'arabe, qu'un écran se dresserait quand même entre mes lecteurs et moi: l'analphabétisme."¹²¹

After Algerian independence was attained the justification for the continued use of French had to be defended on various fronts. The position that it was a significant and viable tool of liberation was no longer defensible. Haddad however foresaw the continued usage of the former colonizing language, writing: "La langue française en Algérie fait désormais partie intégrante de notre patrimoine national."¹²² He believed that the impressions left on Algerian society and culture could be used to help propel Algerian interests more quickly toward its goal of re-integrating into the modern world. Others believed that all traces of the colonial experience had to be erased for Algeria to reclaim its own legitimate identity.

Haddad also expressed his concern and commitment for the relationship between author and public. "Car ceux pour qui nous écrivons d'abord ne nous lisent pas et probablement ne nous liront jamais....ces lecteurs qui ne nous lisent pas, qui ne peuvent pas nous lire et qui pourtant sont notre raison d'être, notre raison d'écrire, la cause et le but de la Révolution Algérienne: les Fellahs."¹²³ Malek Haddad speaking of the Maghrebi authors' responsibility toward his audience stated: "Il n'est pas seulement porte-drapeau de la masse, mais la propriété de cette masse."¹²⁴

Haddad's concern for the public audience in Algeria nearly always filled his thoughts when writing in French. The French language remained an unwanted exile in

¹²¹ Ibid., p.9.

¹²² Memmi, *Anthologie...*, p. 152.

¹²³ Haddad, *Les zéros tournent en rond*, p. 11-12

¹²⁴ Yetiv, "L'évolution ...," p. 57.

which his lifework had encased him. He wrote: "L'Algérie aura véritablement recouvré sa personnalité et son indépendance quand chaque Algérien pourra lire sa langue, écrire sa langue."¹²⁵ He followed his discription of the merits of Maghrebi French expression by writing that: "Tous, tant que nous sommes, ne serons pas vraiment les écrivains algériens, tant que le fellah ne nous lira pas. Tant qu'il ne saura pas lire."¹²⁶

Malek Haddad remained wryly indebted to the French language for its profoundly ironic usefulness declaring that: "Il m'est agréable de la saluer. C'est en français que j'ai prononcé pour la première fois le mot *indépendance*."¹²⁷

Haddad continued to approach aspects of the Algerian struggle for independence in two of his other novels of the period. In L'élève et la leçon a doctor's daughter asks him to abort her baby so that she can continue to work for the revolution. Haddad's La dernière impression begins with the sentence: "Il doit sauter" refering to the bridge that symbolically links Algeria and France together.

As independence became inevitable, the Algerian literature of French expression would have to take a new direction. Accounts had to be settled. Mouloud Feraoun saw the end of French colonial rule in the following manner: "La vérité, c'est qu'il n'y a jamais eu mariage. Non. Les Français sont restés à l'écart. Dédaigneusement à l'écart. Les Français ont restés étrangers. Ils croyaient que l'Algérie c'était eux. Maintenant que nous nous estimons assez fort ou que nous les croyons un peu faibles, nous leur disons: 'Non messieurs, l'Algérie, c'est nous. Vous êtes étrangers sur notre terre'".¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 315. Annuaire. 1966. p.315.

¹²⁶ Annuaire de l'afrique du nord 1965, p. 223.

¹²⁷ Annuaire de l'afrique du nord 1966, p.315.

¹²⁸ Ferouan, Journal: 1955-1962, p. 45.

The message of early Maghrebi literature, that is, the native population's suffering under French colonial rule, found audience in France, but was rarely read by those who it directly concerned. The fellahs for whom some claimed they were writing, remained ignorant of their literature. And while the French left consumed it with great interest and sympathy, the local Pieds-Noirs found it unsettling and subversive. The Moroccan author and dissident Abdellatif Laâbi reflected on the purpose of the works of early authors. He wrote that Maghrebi literature of French expression, "était conçue pour le public de la "Métropole" et destinée à la consommation étrangère. C'est ce public-là qu'il fallait apitoyer ou éveiller à une solidarité, c'est à ce public qu'il fallait démontrer que le fellah de Kabylie ou l'ouvrier d'Oran n'étaient pas si différents du paysan breton ou du débardeur de Marseille. On a l'impression que cette littérature fut une espèce d'immense lettre ouverte à l'Occident."¹²⁹ For Laâbi the purpose of the works written by the early authors had been achieved and it was now time to write directly to the Maghrebi audience as authentically as possible. This new phase of Maghrebi literature could be conceived in Arabic or French as long as it was for internal consumption and not an apologetic pandering to French cultural sensibilities.

According to Albert Memmi, in an essay first published in 1957, the ideological conflict that is Maghrebi literature could only have two conclusions: "par tarissement naturel de la littérature colonisée; les prochaines générations, nées dans la liberté, écriront spontanément dans leur langue retrouvée. Sans attendre si loin, une autre possibilité peut tenter l'écrivain: décider d'appartenir totalement à la littérature métropolitaine. Laissons à côté les problèmes éthiques soulevés par une telle attitude," Memmi declares, "c'est alors le suicide de la littérature colonisée." Whichever direction

¹²⁹ Abdellatif Laâbi, "Prologue," *Souffles* v. 1 (1966), cited in Khatibi, p.144.

is chosen, "la littérature colonisée de langue européenne semble condamnée à mourir jeune."¹³⁰

Memmi was correct in predicting the paths that Tunisian literature would take for the most part, but he underestimated French literary influence into Moroccan and Algerian literature in particular. Tunisia had always had a stronger Arabic tradition, and beside Memmi himself, few authors had attained the success enjoyed or thrust upon them as Moroccan and Algerian authors had in France. While there existed in Tunisia a thriving Jewish literature of French expression,¹³¹ it was similar to Berber literature: a minority within the greater conflict which received little attention. The literature in Morocco continued to produce well-received authors like Tahar Ben Jelloun, Mohammed Choukri and Abdelhak Serhane. And although, authors still writing in French received some criticism and inconsistent censorship, they weren't in direct conflict with the public policies of the state.

The situation of the Algerian author was more complex, more deeply rooted, and therefore, more susceptible to fragmentation on many different levels. Furthermore, the Algerian struggle for independence had been a violent one, full of betrayal, violence, and contradiction, leaving many issues to be resolved. The early authors hadn't built a bridge between the two cultures, but had occupied a transitional place between a suppressed culture and an emerging one.

Albert Memmi perhaps more than any other author realized that everyone would be profoundly affected by the colonial experience and the struggles for independence which followed. He wrote: "Personne, en somme, n'a eu de véritable chance en colonie.

¹³⁰ Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé* (Paris: Éditions l'Étincelle, 1972) p. 105.

¹³¹ See Guy Dugas, *La Littérature Judéo-Maghrébine d'Expression Française*

Vaincus ou vainqueurs, tout le monde fut isolé et finalement aliéné, les uns par leurs défaites, les autres par leurs victoires."¹³²

Post-independence authors in Algerian like Rachid Boudjedra, Rachid Mimouni, and Tahar Djaout would find themselves in conflict with the new direction of the national literature. This second generation of writers was removed from the colonial experience and the war for independence. The contradiction of writing in French which obsessed many of the early Francofied authors who were incapable of expressing themselves in their native language, was now taken as an intentional decision. French had proven to be a useful weapon of criticism. The new generation would write of interior conflicts with the new social order, the time to be engaged in the struggle for independence had passed. Their works would often express their disappointment with the new regime and what they considered the subversion of the revolution by corrupt neo-colonialist bureaucrats. Most of these authors were considered anti-national or counter-revolutionary by the government.

For those authors following the national party line of thinking, "La guerre doit être propre, glorieuse, sans problèmes ni contradictions."¹³³ The Algerian victory over French colonial rule had to be a black and white issue; the triumph of good over evil. They are no longer filled with doubts or contradictions as earlier authors. An author still writing in French should be engaged "pour consolider les acquis," not necessarily to take part in national literary reconstruction as such, but to solidify its foundations until Arabic literature could re-establish its rightful place. Any other more pronounced

¹³² Ali Merad, "La Littérature maghrébine d'expression française: perspectives," *Confluent* v.47-49 (1965): p. 61.

¹³³ Monique Gadant, "Vingt ans de la littérature algérienne," *Les temps modernes* n° 432 (July 1982): p. 362.

engagement could lead to possible conflicts with the political ideology and be detrimental to the progress of the revolution. Engagement by the author should confirm what has already been accomplished and thereby serve the nation by creating a cultural climate in sync with the political and social norms.

To complicate his situation further, the Algerian author was the subject of a state controlled literature. While banning books and censorship were not necessarily uncommon in Morocco and Tunisia, it was not an institution and ideological policy as in Algeria. Several authors, like politicians before them, rather than choosing exile in France to freely express their views, choose Morocco as their base. Others ping-ponged across the Maghreb and France, balancing political and artistic freedom according to the mood of the day, their commitment, and their personal security.

After independence, some intellectuals and authors were rewarded by rapid social mobility for their participation in the national struggle. Ironically, their abilities to express themselves succinctly in the French language was an asset in the new state. A certain transitional phase was in the making. However, their engagement in their new roles often excluded them from continuing literary output or they produced works erratically. In general two groups distinguished themselves: those who chose to live in France or who worked as French journalists; and those who integrated into the new social order.

Post-independence production was further complicated by the awarding of prestigious literary awards to Maghrebi authors; this, in a sense, legitimized the practice of writing in French. It also encouraged would-be authors to take their shot at fame and financial success. At times it appeared as a legitimate means of escaping harsh daily realities or dead-end prospects in Algeria. This also could be perceived as an escape from committing to the Algerian struggle for self-discovery. For many the Arab

language was the only means by which the Algerian could re-conquer themselves and contribute to the reshaping of the national personality.¹³⁴

The independence of Algeria significantly challenged the status of the French language in Algeria. The political debate which followed will be examined in the following chapter. This debate will concern various Algerian authors of French expression and intellectuals trying to define the new social order in Algeria. The creation of new publishing houses will also be studied to determine the role in regard to the development of a national literature and the inauguration of an independent author in favor of greater autonomy by the state. The position of traditional literary authors in exile, and Beur literature in France will also be looked at to determine the suitability of the new national literature.

The Post-Independence Period

For many the national literature could only be written in Arabic, language never being a simple vehicle of expression, but a cultural and ideological system. Charles Bonn writes: "Il s'agit bien de définir une culture dans une optique non plus de résistance, mais de construction. Le mouvement arabisant ne sera plus critique d'un discours étranger dominant, mais affirmatif d'une propre parole."¹³⁵

The Algerian poet, Albert Testa, wrote that a culture doesn't die and that the Algerian culture is not interrupted. "Il s'agit de faire l'une plus en harmonie avec l'autre." "La culture nationale est une chose que les proverbes, les chansons, les légendes et toute cette littérature orale que s'est outillée de recueillir la vie et la lutte du peuple."¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Bonn, *La langue et la culture algériennes*, p. 116.

¹³⁶ Khatibi, p. 39. "De la langue officielle et sociale moderne en Algérie", *Cahiers* N° 47 (1983), p. 11.

Chapter Three

The independence of Algeria significantly challenged the status of the French language in Algeria; the intellectual debate which followed will be examined in the following chapter. This debate will center around Algerian authors of French expression and intellectuals trying to define the new social order in Algeria. The creation of state publishing houses will also be studied to determine their role in regard to the development of a national literature and the marginalization of pre-independence authors in favor of authors sanctioned by the state. The problems of Arabicization, censorship, authors in exile, and Beur literature in France will also be looked at to determine the authenticity of the new national literature.

The Post-Independence Period

For many the national literature could only be written in Arabic, language never being a simple vehicle of expression, but a cultural and ideological system. Charles Bonn writes: "Il s'agit bel et bien de définir une identité dans une optique non plus de résistance, mais de construction. La Révolution culturelle ne sera plus critique d'un discours étranger dominant, mais affirmation d'une propre parole."¹³⁵

The Algerian physician Ahmed Taleb states that a culture doesn't die and that the Algerian culture is not mummified: "Il s'agit en fait d'une mise en hibernation." For "la culture nationale s'est maintenue dans les proverbes, les chants folkloriques et toute cette littérature orale qui a continué de refléter la vie et la lutte du peuple."¹³⁶ He

¹³⁵ Bonn, La roman algérien de langue française, p. 116-7.

¹³⁶ Jean Déjeux, "Décolonisation culturelle et monde moderne en Algérie", *Confluent* N° 47 (1965): p.11.

continues by repeating the idea that, "en empruntant la langue du colonisateur, nous empruntons aussi, et de façon inconsciente, sa démarche intellectuelle, voire son échelle de valeurs. Et seul un retour à la culture nationale peut faire disparaître des séquelles."¹³⁷

Malek Haddad also believed that Arabic and Algerian culture had not been destroyed during the collective colonial experience. However diligently the French tried to impose their values and language while at the same time destroying and demeaning local culture, the indigenous infrastructure survived. Haddad wrote that: "Pendant plus de cent vingt ans la tradition orale avait pris le relais de la chose écrite, et selon la merveilleuse formule de Mohammed Dib, *la mémoire du peuple était devenue la Bibliothèque Nationale de l'Algérie*."¹³⁸

However, cultural survival would be an ongoing fight to liberate the new nation from the colonial legacy. Malek Haddad, concluded that, "[Il] montrera à tout jamais aux générations futures ce qu'il en coûte pour un peuple de perdre son indépendance et d'être livré à la merci d'idéologies qui ne sont pas les siennes, qui ne peuvent pas être les siennes. Les intérêts impérialistes ont mis en péril de mort un pays arrêté dans son chemin et dérouté de la voie traditionnelle de sa vocation historique. C'est en regardant en lui-même, d'abord chez lui, chez lui en Algérie, que l'écrivain algérien, libre de se consacrer à son métier, vivant sur le sol national, retrouvera ces mots impérissables qui, s'ajoutant à la symphonie universelle, contribueront aux progrès de toute démarche humaine."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 12

¹³⁸ Haddad, cited in Memmi, *Anthologie*..., p. 152.

¹³⁹ Haddad, p. 45-46

An Algerian psychiatrist, Khaled Benmiloud declared that, "Il faut un enseignement décolonisé par des enseignants décolonisés pour des hommes neufs. La décolonisation culturelle sera l'œuvre de l'Education nationale; elle ne sera pas l'œuvre de l'intellectuel, c'est lui qui est à sa merci."¹⁴⁰ This sentiment was to evolve into the national strategy for the restructuring of not only the national identity but the intellectuals responsible for directing Algerian thought.

The Programme du Front de Libération Nationale adopted in Tripoli in June of 1962 by the Conseil National de la Révolution Algérienne declared:

"La culture algérienne sera nationale, révolutionnaire et scientifique. Son rôle consistera, en premier lieu, à rendre la langue, expression même des valeurs culturelles de notre pays, sa dignité et son efficacité en tant que langue de civilisation. Pour cela, elle s'appliquera à reconstituer, à revaloriser et à faire connaître le patrimoine national et son double humanisme classique et moderne et afin de les réintroduire dans la vie intellectuelle et l'éducation de la sensibilité populaire. Elle combattra ainsi le cosmopolisme culturel et l'imprégnation occidentale qui ont contribué à inculquer à beaucoup d'Algériens le mépris de leur langue et de leurs valeurs nationales."¹⁴¹

The program also reduced liberty of expression "advising" authors to develop their work as described within the cultural charter to further the development and installation of an authentic national culture. Such an state-directed vision naturally excluded the aspirations of regional and ethnic sub-cultures.

The weekly of the F.L.N, *El-Moudjahid* formulating certain considerations concerning Algerian culture made the five following points: "1) La culture ne sera plus

¹⁴⁰ Khaled Benmiloud, "La décolonisation culturelle," *Révolution africaine* n° 124 (1965): p. 20-21, cited in G. Merad p.125.

¹⁴¹ *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 1962, p. 696.

l'apanage de quelques privilégiés, elle doit être populaire. 2) L'arabisation est une nécessité, mais le bilinguisme n'est pas un mal. 3) Art et littérature doivent être de leur temps, donc parler de l'édification du socialisme, qui est le plus grand événement de notre temps. 4) Liberté pour l'artiste ne doit signifier anarchie ou idées retrogrades. 5) La langue et la culture françaises ont 'aliéné' certains d'entre nous et les ont rendus 'étrangers' à eux-même, ce qui est tout à fait explicable. Mais nul ne saurait contester que l'ensemble des Algériens et des Algériennes sont restés profondément attachés à la langue et la culture arabo-islamique et cela malgré tous les efforts de dépersonnalisation entrepris par l'occupant."¹⁴²

Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella said at the opening of the Université d'Alger in December 1962, "Adopter le langage d'autrui c'est adopter sa structure mentale." For others it meant depersonalization. *El Moudjadid* also declared that, "absorbant la culture étrangère, l'Algérien devient peu à peu étranger aux siens, étranger à lui-même, à se voir son peuple à travers le regard des autres...."¹⁴³ Ben Bella goes even further by stating again in *El Moudjadid*:

"...Il s'agit actuellement, en premier lieu, d'algérianiser l'enseignement. Au plus long terme, il s'agira de l'arabiser. Il y a eu, il y aura encore pour une période un hiatus: on sent en arabe, et on se 'cultive' en français. Cela n'est pas normal. Le risque est fréquent qu'un déséquilibre s'installe et obère la personnalité de façon plus ou moins irréversible. L'individu sera aliéné à des valeurs qui n'auront jamais été siennes. Chacun de nous - tout homme, est le produit d'un milieu. Nous, Algériens - en tant qu'Algériens, sommes dotés d'une sensibilité, d'un comportement qui nous sont propres. La culture à

¹⁴² *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 1965, p. 224.

¹⁴³ Déjeux, p. 8.

laquelle nous aspirons est une culture qui nous soit propre."¹⁴⁴

In 1962, President Ben Bella also stated that, "Arabicization is not Islamisation", in an effort to re-assure the modernists who understood the economic potential of the French link to the outside world. But, the religious-minded always balanced this sentiment by defining Arabicization as the means toward Islamisation. Both sides were seeking the re-defining of the national culture, but the politicians were not ready to relinquish the strategic opportunities that years of French dominance had given them. Nor, for that matter, were Algerian authors who had achieved world-wide renown, ready to be limited to an Algerian, or Arabophone audience with rare ability to read their work, let alone the resources to afford them.

The destruction of French as the language of national intercourse and its replacement with Arabic was a challenge for the new ruling party in Algeria. Gilbert Grandguillaume writes that: "En tant qu'instauration d'une langue nationale, la politique d'arabisation comportait deux versants. La langue nationale devait opérer une double substitution; elle devait se substituer au français, pour prendre la place de la langue de l'aliénation culturelle et restaurer la personnalité nationale. Elle devait aussi se substituer aux dialectes, pour remplacer la multiplicité dialectale par une langue unique, à même d'assurer l'unité des citoyens autour de l'État."¹⁴⁵

Arabicization was unanimously promoted in the press and official proclamations. There were of course many who believed that bilingualism was necessary for the continued development of Algeria as a modern industrialized state.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ Gilbert Grandguillaume, "Arabisation et langues maternelles dans le contexte national au Maghreb," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* n. 87 (1990): p. 50.

However, this argument remained mostly silent. That is to say, that if a person speaking publicly on the subject of culture didn't mention Arabicization, he generally was considered in support of bilingualism, or at least didn't exclude Francophones or Berber speakers from his agenda. Malek Haddad said of this debate: "Le fait même que ce débat se soit ouvert en langue française devrait nous donner une grande leçon d'humilité et redonner au problème ses justes dimensions." An unsigned article in *Révolution africaine* responded that the fact of the debate taking place in French was "significatif, mais uniquement de notre aliénation dont il nous faut prendre conscience si nous voulons nous libérer... Le domaine français existe; mais il n'existe qu'en tant que domaine de la culture algérienne aliénée par le colonialisme."¹⁴⁶

Mostafa Lacherif commenting on bilingualism wrote: "Quoi qu'on dise, dans le cas de l'Algérie, le bilinguisme bien conçu, fidèle à des principes vraiment révolutionnaires, pourrait devenir une chance de progrès accéléré et d'efficience, car, par un nécessaire phénomène d'osmose, de communication et d'échanges, il répond aux normes les plus éprouvées de la culture à vocation universelle."¹⁴⁷

Algerian sociologist Nadji Safir reflected on this literature and concluded that, although bilingualism is possible for individuals, it cannot be sustained by an entire society. He argues that, "A national production only makes sense if it expresses the world view, the aspirations, and the interrogations of groups which are numerically significant and-or which, by their role in social renewal, are socially perceived as such." He concludes that expression in French will become "more and more eccentric with respect to the national cultural production," it can only be articulated "as a peripheral

¹⁴⁶ *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 1963, p. 553.

¹⁴⁷ G. Merad. p. 128.

cell of the mother literature, of French literature, which is the only system capable of providing it with objective conditions for its aesthetic and formal regulation, as well as its content."¹⁴⁸

Author Mourad Bourboune believed that a language that was obtained through colonization was not necessarily a language which futhered the cause of colonialism. "une langue appartient à qui sait la manier, la briser, et la plier aux exigences de la création, la forcer à exprimer son moi profond... Dans cette langue, par et parfois contre cette langue, les écrivains algériens ont réussi à capter leurs racines, -entre une phrase de Gide et une phrase de Kateb, il y a l'espace qui sépare deux civilisations." He believed that Arabicization would make the language debate obsolete; the two languages would come together across their cultural divide to enrich each other. Acculturation could be a positive exchange free of pejorative coloring. Algeria should be "une Andalousie du XXIème siècle."¹⁴⁹ Kateb Yacine agreed that the presence of both French and Arabic added to the national identity. He writes: "En Algérie, nous avons deux cultures qui sont non seulement en coexistence, mais en conflit constant et qui créent quelque chose."¹⁵⁰

For certain critics the novel should be integrated into the current effort of cultural reconstruction. The author's work "doit exprimer les réalités profondes d'un peuple. C'est à cette seule condition que l'écrivain pourra contribuer efficacement à une œuvre nationale et de rénovation... Pour être révolutionnaire, notre culture doit être

¹⁴⁸ Déjeux, "Francophone Literature ...," p. 17.

¹⁴⁹ Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965. p. 223-224.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1965, p. 225.

nationale."¹⁵¹ For others it is necessary to go beyond the confines of cultural nationalism and participate in the universality of new creative forms. For both however, the aim is to "promouvoir une culture authentiquement nationale et qui ne se coupe pas de la civilisation moderne."¹⁵²

In January of 1966 the main French publisher and distributor of French works, Les Messageries Hachette d'Algérie was closed by the government. The creation of a state run syndicate which would control all aspects of publishing, distribution and importation was also announced.

Jean Déjeux writes: "Le pouvoir entendait recycler, 'recentrer' les mentalités atteintes et 'contaminées' par les idéologies étrangères, sur l'arabo-islamisme et sur les valeurs profondes du peuple algérien. Il s'agissait donc de se débarrasser des séquelles de la colonisation: ne plus importer de livres insultant l'Algérie."¹⁵³

For some the state publishing houses, first E.N.A., then S.N.E.D., and again re-organized as E.N.A.L.¹⁵⁴, were "le symbole du conformisme, de l'autocensure, du manque de rigueur critique, de la grisaille textuelle, sinon de la médiocrité et de la mauvaise présentation."¹⁵⁵ For others it was seen as official sanction of their contributions to the national culture. Furthermore, novels published by S.N.E.D. had to face the criticism that they were not of substantial enough quality to be published by a French publisher. French cultural penetration was so deep, that the doubt that they

¹⁵¹ Znibar, Muhammad, "L'Expérience culturelle du Maroc," *Libération* (July 1965), cited in Khatibi, p.18.

¹⁵² Khatibi, p 18

¹⁵³ Jean Déjeux, "L'Entreprise nationale du livre en Algérie," *Présence Francophone* n°28 (1986): p.21.

¹⁵⁴ Éditions National d'Algérie. Syndicat National d'Éditions et Diffusion, Éditions National Algériens.

¹⁵⁵ Déjeux, "L'Entreprise Nationale du Livre en Algérie," p. 20.

weren't good enough to be accepted by the former "superior culture" would always linger in the back of some critics' minds.

Critic Eric Sellin writes: "From its inception S.N.E.D.'s publications reflected the ideology and patriotic stance of the F.L.N. Those directly or indirectly responsible for S.N.E.D. were of the opinion that any diminution of patriotic zeal was seditious and were therefore suspicious of the last and most persistent bastion of colonialism: cultural dependency. Most works accepted for publication sang the praise of the revolution, reminisced about the glories of the A.L.N., the *maquisards*, and the martyrs of the revolution."¹⁵⁶

Contrary to the national agenda, it wasn't until the end of the 1970's that S.N.E.D. produced more books in Arabic than in French. Although these included various genres, it can still be regarded as a watershed in the Arabicization of Algeria. "What's more, as a public organism in the service of the cultural revolution, S.N.E.D. never ceased to be the object of polemics in the cultural pages of the national press. It also appeared that the literary texts published by S.N.E.D. were for the most part those which could not find a publisher in France."¹⁵⁷ It must be noted that this situation is ever changing since successive re-inventions of E.N.A., S.N.E.D., E.N.A.L.

According to J.E. Bencheikh, "Le nationalisme est un concept d'un usage dangereux en littérature parce qu'exclusif. Mais il devient indispensable d'y avoir recours dès lors qu'il s'agit de lui assigner un rôle historique et de le restreindre à une phase d'évolution."¹⁵⁸ That is to say, literature, pure literature is beyond the realm of

¹⁵⁶ Eric Sellin, "Literary Expression and the State: The Case of Algeria," *World Literature Today*, v. 60 (1986): p. 429.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Bonn, "L'édition littéraire au Maghreb," *Présence Francophone* n° 28 (1986): p. 11-13.

¹⁵⁸ Bencheikh, p. 27.

nationalism. Only in extenuating circumstances, such as the Algerian experience, does literature enter into this realm. And when it does enter, it must have a purpose and a function. Its continuation beyond its historical and evolutionary needs is not authentic and enters into superfluous myth and propaganda. It is no longer art but political rhetoric disguised in prose.

Monique Gadant comments that: "Avec l'Indépendance, le nationalisme qui n'avait voulu voir qu'un peuple unanime face au colonialisme, sans différenciations sociales ni confrontations idéologiques, tend à apparaître comme un mythe conservateur à la recherche d'images mobilisatrices: il impose la censure -et l'auto-censure, au nom de l'authenticité et de la sauvagerie de l'unité nationale."¹⁵⁹

In the words of Mourad Bourboune: "la littérature est aux mains des avorteurs".¹⁶⁰ The majority of texts published by S.N.E.D. constituted a positive affirmation of the success of the war of liberation. Lacherif denounced them as "l'exploitation abusive de l'héroïsme guerrier."¹⁶¹ Lacherif further denounces this trend in Maghrebi literature as "un nationalisme anachronique: on détourne les gens des réalités nouvelles et du combat nécessaire en vue de transformer la société sur des bases concrètes et en dehors des mythes inhibiteurs et des 'épopées sans lendemain'"¹⁶²

Many of these culturally-minded intellectuals would find themselves in exile or "reformed" within the confines of the new society. Criticism of the new order was not

¹⁵⁹ Gadant, "Vingt ans ...," p. 355.

¹⁶⁰ Bonn, Charles, La littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lecteurs (Ottawa: Éditions Naaman, 1974) p. 213.

¹⁶¹ Charles Bonn, "La littérature algérienne de langue française," *Europe* (July-Aug., 1976): p.49.

¹⁶² Déjeux. "Romans algériens et guerre de libération," *L'esprit créateur* v. XXVI, n° 1 (Spring 1986): p.78.

accepted as sympathetically by the new régime as anti-colonialism had been by its "humanistic" precursors. The degree of "rightness" was no longer as acute as it had been. The ideological battle was now internal and the colonial oppressor could only be responsible for past wrongs, although his image could be summoned whenever a scape-goat was needed. However, certain authors refused to participate in the creation of a "literature of slogans"; they each had to choose their own path toward personal and artistic integrity. Tahar Djaout speaking of post-independence publications states: "Des cœurs patriotes ont exhalé quelques soupirs journalistiques qu'on s'est hâté de baptiser roman ou poème."¹⁶³

In 1963 Mohammed Dib wrote in *Combat* that: "Un écrivain qui persévèrait exclusivement dans la littérature révolutionnaire ferait désormais preuve de paresse d'esprit, de mauvaise foi et tout simplement de pauvreté créatrice."¹⁶⁴ For Dib, the Maghrebi authors should now be engaged in refining their art and expanding their artistic horizons. Pandering to official desires to create a national literature was neither spontaneously creative nor an authentic representation of Algerian society.

Rachid Boudjedra succeeded in changing and distorting the elements of his writing in order to differentiate his usage of French language and insert an Algerian quality to his text in order to incite "la révolution *dans* le français." Bachir Hadj Ali states that: "Après avoir assimilé, en même temps que la langue française, l'histoire même de cette langue et son contenu vivant, les Algériens l'ont transformée au point que les œuvres produites se différencient non seulement par le contenu, mais par la forme de la littérature française et qu'elles constituent un apport à notre patrimoine

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁶⁴ Jean Déjeux, "Romans algériens sur la guerre," *Confluent* n° 37 (Jan. 1964): p. 43.

culturel."¹⁶⁵ In order to help legitimize the use of the French language its original form and meaning had to be destroyed and reshaped within the Algerian context in order for it to be revolutionary and integrated into the Algerian cultural and political mind-set. For the French language to have any authentic substance it was necessary for it to be "Algerianized."

For some critics "Algerianized" French texts were not the work of an authentic Algerian. They were the reflection of the cultural damage left by French colonial rule. According to El-Gharbi the authors were "souvent de petits-bourgeois ayant reçu une éducation spécifiquement française, antipopulaire, antinationale et qui fait d'eux des hommes partagés entre la fidélité à une culture et la fidélité à une Patrie martyre. Ils ont pour la plupart choisi la première solution qui ne comporte aucun risque."¹⁶⁶

A schism became apparent between party line authors and authors who felt the need to pursue their artistic calling, wherever it may lead. Kateb Yacine entered the debate and stated in an interview that:

"Il y a chez nous des poètes qui, avec le pouvoir socialiste, se conduisent en courtisans; ils flattent le peuple, font de la démagogie et ils ont besoin de ça parce que le climat moral l'exige. Je pense qu'un écrivain qui sort de son algérianité, pas pour fuir, pas pour dire 'moi, je m'en lave les mains', mais parce qu'il est vraiment un universaliste, celui-là est un représentant authentique de son pays: il ouvre les fenêtres, il aide à la libre circulation des idées. Pour ce faire, il faut qu'il garde son indépendance... Il faut que l'écrivain reste indépendant parce que d'abord il ne doit pas être mêlé au pouvoir, il ne faut pas qu'il subisse les pressions du pouvoir, il a une mission qui consiste à dire ce qu'il sent que ça plaise ou non... Je n'aime pas beaucoup le nationalisme. Un

¹⁶⁵ Gadant, "Vingt ans ...," p.373.

¹⁶⁶ El-Gharbi, p 135.

écrivain ne peut pas aimer le nationalisme parce que c'est très dangereux. Le nationalisme c'est l'étroitesse personifiée, c'est utile politiquement, mais enfin pour l'écrivain c'est toujours restrictif."¹⁶⁷

Kateb who appeared satisfied not producing a second *Nedjma* himself spoke of a "refus de se domestiquer" and finished by stating that, "Nous ne sommes pas encore libres."¹⁶⁸ Kateb resisted cultural decrees by the government by writing in dialectal Arabic a language he considered more authentically representative of the Algerian people. Authors like Racid Boudjedra circumvented convention by producing novels in both Arabic and French.

El Moudjadid, the principal cultural voice of the ruling party declared in 1963 : "La culture pour la culture, la culture apolitique est soit une mystification, soit une utopie et dans les deux cas un slogan contre-révolutionnaire."¹⁶⁹ Art for art's sake belied the necessary responsibility of belonging to and working for the development of an emerging revolutionary state. Art, especially its literary wing, had to be an expression of the whole. Indifference or creative meandering were party to derisiveness and capable of misguiding the course of national identity.

Two authors who received post-independence acclaim for their nationalist works were Abdehamid Benhadouga and Tahar Ouetar. They led a sort of Arab literature renaissance as the first wave of authors writing in Arabic. However, their works did not sell widely until they were translated into French. Tahar Ouetar continued to apply the idea of the author's responsibility toward open engagement. He wrote in the preface to his novel *El As*, "Je veux peindre un tableau de mon pays

¹⁶⁷ Gadant, *Islam...*, p. 53, note 13.

¹⁶⁸ Déjeux, "Décolonisation ...," p. 25.

¹⁶⁹ Gadant, "Vingt ans ...," p. 353.

révolutionnaire, le pays de l'autogestion et de la Révolution agraire, le pays qui a nationalisé toutes ses ressources naturelles, maîtrisé son commerce extérieur, le pays qui s'industrialise, se cultive et se tient debout aux côtés de tous les peuples en lutte dans le monde..."¹⁷⁰ His ideals reflected the growing divergence between the authors of reconstruction and those who sought to establish an authentic Maghrebi literature in French unique unto itself.

The theme of these novels is agrarian reform and constitutes a return to the peasant as subject. The rural subject is treated as poor and backwards waiting for political salvation. During the same period it is curious to note that Mohammed Dib was also returning to the same subject. With Dib the ideals of the revolution are not brought to the peasantry, but rather the peasantry is sought after for their values and their purity in order to rediscover human values lost in the struggle for the new social and political doctrine. The perspectives of the old francified humanistic elite remains in opposition to the new Arabicized doctrine.¹⁷¹

Mohammed Dib who understood the significance and responsibility toward engagement from the very inception of Maghrebi literature of French expression, stated in 1958: "Nous sommes acteurs dans cette tragédie...Il nous semble qu'un contrat nous lie à notre peuple. Nous pourrions nous intituler ses *écrivains publics*." By 1964 he was able to conclude that the objectives of his early works had been attained. He wrote: "Pour plusieurs raisons, en tant qu'écrivain, mon souci, lors de mes premiers romans, était de fondre ma voix dans la voix collective. Cette grande voix aujourd'hui s'est tue... il fallait témoigner pour un pays nouveau et des réalités nouvelles. Dans la mesure où

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 372.

ces réalités se sont concrétisées, j'ai repris mon attitude d'écrivain qui s'intéresse à des problèmes d'ordre psychologique, romanesque ou de style... Le temps de l'engagement est terminé."¹⁷² For Dib art for art's sake was again a legitimate vehicle for expressing the concerns and aspirations of a people liberated of the burden of colonialism. The artist was now "free" of political, social, or cultural repercussions concerning his own particular choice of expression; the battle had been won.

The appearance of Albert Memmi's Anthologie des écrivains maghrébins d'expression française in 1964 created the first major polemic concerning who was and who was not a Maghrebi author. For he divided the authors on the criteria of the colonized and those belonging to the colonial regime, the Pieds-Noirs; a sort of literary nationality which divided further already polarizing sides. In the preface to the second volume which focused on Pied-Noir authors, Memmi defended his division of authors in the following manner: "Le tome I pourrait ainsi réunir les éléments d'une espèce de moi collectif de ce que l'on appelait naguère les *Indigènes*, leurs misères, leurs aspirations et leurs révoltes. Le tome II ,..., grouperait, en un autre portrait-synthèse, les habitants européens, ou d'origine européenne, des ex-colonies."¹⁷³ Beyond the facts of their particular heritage, Memmi states that the Maghrebi authors of French expression, "ont exprimé deux communautés humaines différentes, finalement *séparées*, par des destins trop historiquement différents, bien que complémentaires, pour que les différences ne l'emportent pas sur les ressemblances. Et ce qui me paraît peut-être le plus important et le plus passionnant, c'est la manière dont les uns et les autres ont traduit cette complémentarité contradictoire."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 355.

¹⁷³ Memmi, Anthologie ..., p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

Memmi further outlined his definition of the criteria required to be considered a post-independence Algerian author stating that: "Pour être un écrivain algérien, il suffit maintenant, il est vrai, d'être de nationalité algérienne, même si l'on écrit en une autre langue que l'arabe, même si l'on ne fait qu'admirer les fleurs et suggérer le chant des oiseaux et non plus nécessairement décrire la misère du fellah on prôner la lutte anticoloniale."

His classification of authors also raised the outstanding question as to whether or not Maghrebi literature of French expression was a new literature separate from French literature or simply a sub-division of French literature as a whole. Furthermore his anthology by its very publication legitimized the existence of at least a literary movement strong and healthy enough to have its own forum of discussion and debate.

Malek Haddad in response to Memmi's classification of Maghrebi authors recognized that there indeed existed a separation between indigenous authors and Pied-Noir authors. He wrote: "La vérité est que dans leur ensemble, les écrivains non arabo-berbères, s'ils n'étaient pas des colonisateurs, n'en étaient pas pour autant des colonisés."¹⁷⁵ This difference distinguished the two separate realities faced by authors and profoundly influenced their impressions of historical developments.

French colonial penetration into the Maghreb left a legacy of disfigured national identity and culture; siring in turn a bastard literature of French expression. But its influence would not end there, it would also leave its mark on French soil, the delinquent offspring of Beur literature. This is a fresh and critically acclaimed literature, written by Algerian immigrants and children of *harkis*¹⁷⁶ experiencing

¹⁷⁵ Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965, p. 223.

¹⁷⁶ Algerians who served in a supplementary force to French army from 1954-1962

cultural and political alienation in France. These authors are facing a cultural identity crisis that is inspiring their own unique genre; a post-postpartum repercussion of the colonial endeavor into Algeria. These Franco-Algerian Beur authors who combine the use of French with Arabic urban slang are an acculturated remnant of the French colonial period demonstrating that its impact was felt on both sides of the Mediterranean.

The main character of Beur author Mehdi Charef's novel Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed has similar feelings to characters described by his Maghrebi authors. Charef writes: "Il n'est ni arab ni français depuis bien longtemps. Il est fils d'immigrés, paumé entre deux cultures, deux histoires, deux langues, deux couleurs de peau, ni blanc ni noir, à s'inventer ses propres racines, ses attaches, se les fabriquer.." ¹⁷⁷ The urban decay of Paris housing projects becomes the setting for a new generation of Algerians displaced by the effects of the French colonial enterprise into Algeria. Works by Beur authors that deal with Franco-Algerians alienated by French society threaten certain attitudes of French nationalism and question French responsibility toward the residual effects of French colonialism in Algeria.

The post-independence period has been a difficult transition for Maghrebi authors of French expression. Every author who chooses to write in French is questioned for his authenticity and his loyalty to the Algerian cause. Their own people considered them as French authors writing for a French public and a handful of Francophone elite in Algeria. Only authors who conform to governmental decrees as to what is national literature and culture can escape this criticism. However authors who choose this path lack the necessary literary credibility to be regarded as the voice of the

¹⁷⁷ Mehdi Charef, Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed (Paris: Mercure de France, 1983) p.17.

people. In a recent article about authors still using the colonial language Albert Memmi states: "Se résigner à écrire dans une autre langue que celle de la majorité de la nation, c'est perpétuer le fossé entre lui et la rue, entre le menu peuple et les privilégiés de l'argent ou de la culture."¹⁷⁸ Yet, the situation continues to perpetuate itself. Many authors realize that writing in Arabic, for both economic and cultural reasons, will leave their works in relative obscurity and deprive them of an otherwise viable vocation.

¹⁷⁸ Albert Memmi, "La patrie littéraire du colonisé," *Le monde diplomatique* (Sept., 1996): p.12.

Conclusion

The aim of French colonialism was to expand the interests and influence of France over developing nations both politically and culturally. By its proximity to France, the Maghreb received the most concerted efforts of the French colonial enterprise. Algeria, considered to be an integral part of French territory, was subjected to the most extensive penetration of French ideological systems. These ideologies as well as the French language were promoted through the French "Mission civilisatrice." The French sought to create loyal subjects to propagate French culture and serve French interests. They instead created intellectuals able to challenge the legitimacy of French rule by using the colonial language as a tool to fight colonialism. Many of these intellectuals used the language skills they had learned in French schools to author literary works that gave voice to the silent masses of Algeria. This new voice expressed nationalist concerns and found sympathetic ears within French ranks allowing the Algerian struggle for independence to reach a wider audience.

The link between political events and literary development became so intertwined in Algeria that it was often difficult to say which preceded the other, or for that matter, which was inspiring the other. While the political debate negotiated for a resolution for the Algerian crisis, the battle was already being fought in armed revolt as well as by poets and writers. Each was trying to define an independent Algeria that even the French were beginning to see as inevitable.

While the political and militant forces envisioned and sought camaraderie within a Socialist Third World framework, the Maghrebi authors, saw beyond the defeat of colonialism. They had lived under the repression of French colonial doctrine,

but they had been "created" within the framework of French humanism. They saw the struggle for independence as a necessary, and if need be, bloody fight for liberation. However, many of them believed in a reconciliation; an evolutionary phase in Franc-Algerian relations, and a fusion of tradition and modernity within the bilingual culturalism of a new Algeria.

The Maghrebi author was torn between the West and East, two languages, two cultures and two separate ways of thinking. The most talented Maghrebi authors were also progressing toward a universal membership in global literature, a move which would exclude them from a national culture defined by the state. Their worldly success would be seen as betrayal to the Algerian revolution. Critical and financial success often meant that their works were banned in their own country and they were either exiled or chose to live in France where they were more artistically free.

The disillusion with their experiences under French colonialism had been the catalyst for their production, their voice had won the sympathies of the colonizer, however their liberation from French colonial rule left them restricted to a language and culture that was not their own. The literature intended to replace their antiquated efforts was an artificial creation ordained by the state in the name of national culture, but it was not revolutionary in form or content, for that would conflict with the ideology of the state. Furthermore, it was only intended to be a temporary anomaly until complete Arabicization is realized.

Algerian literature of French expression now produced by the original nationalistic authors is considered neither part of the Algerian national culture nor authentic literature of Algeria by the state and other members of society who promote a strictly Arab-Islamic Algeria. They denounce authors who continue to write in French and whose works integrate into universal literature and do not promote the virtues of

the revolution. They consider them misguidedly nostalgic for an Algeria they either no longer comprehend nor are considered part of. In reality their works are often denounced for simply being critical of the new regime.

If there is an authentic national literature being written in Algeria it is either censored or written in Arabic, and thereby confined within the state; unable to reach the universal audience available to authors who write in French. The new authentic national literature becomes a silent literature that cannot express itself beyond its own context. The colonial umbilical cord may have been severed in 1962, but the Algerian link to the rest of the world, beyond its Islamic neighbors, remains France, and the French language is still the most efficient means of communicating dissident opinions.

Although French is still widely used in Algeria since independence, the intensity of the former mentor-pupil-subject relationship has deteriorated affecting the quality of the usurped language. More Algerians now speak or write French, but their mastery of the language is at a lower level. The popular language, dialectal Arabic, has been infused with French expressions, much in the same way that Arabic slang has penetrated urban French in France. And while French remains the international language for Algeria beyond the Arab world for its politics and academics, it is still far from being the language of the people.

The continuation of Maghrebi literature of French expression remains an elitist proposition; and often one seeking monetary recompense. At the same time, Standard and Classical Arabic now free to be taught and learned, is in itself somewhat elitist in the eyes of the common Algerian. The dialectal mix of Arabic spattered with French idioms is the authentic voice of the people. And while some authors have tried to write or perform theater in this common language, it is still frowned upon by purists as being unclean and corrupt.

Maghrebi literature of French expression occupies an untenable space as a remnant of the French colonial legacy in the Maghreb. Further, it disregards the borders and systems for labeling literatures, remaining on the periphery of both French and Maghrebi literary systems. Marx-Scouras calls it a "cross-cultural writing which belongs neither to France nor the Maghreb and which threatens the sacrosanct idea of literary nationality."¹⁷⁹

Marx-Scouras argues further that: "By its nature, Maghrebi literature of French expression runs counter to the idea of national literatures". While being rejected as authentic Maghrebi literature, it is still Francophone literature, but it does not belong to French literature. It too has been orphaned by the colonial experience. "The former colonies will always be *colonies*, and the writers who come from them will always be 'Francophone' rather than 'French.'"¹⁸⁰

Algerian literature is still searching within itself for a national literature. The nationality that it found during the war of liberation was contingent on the exterior force of colonialism. Since 1962, a new defining criteria has been sought, and that defining criteria has been legislated by government decrees and political aspirations. However a national literature cannot be artificially created to replace the colonial language. It must come from the sensibility of new and insightful voices able to accurately and authentically define the character of the nation without prejudice.

Algerian authors of renown have established themselves as leaders of modern French literature, while others use still use French as a vehicle of protest to criticize the current rule in Algeria. Is the survival and proliferation of Algerian literature of French

¹⁷⁹ Marx-Scouras, "The poetics of Magherebine illegitimacy," *L'esprit créateur* v. XXVI, n° 1 (Spring, 1986): p.3.

¹⁸⁰ Marx-Scouras, "The Cross-Cultural Writings ...," p. 136.

expression the final victory for the French colonial experience in Algeria? Perhaps the "Mission civilisatrice" of the French, however deceitful its true intent, in the end, created a core of Algerians appreciative of European values. These values, learned under the duress of colonial oppression, taught these Algerians the culture of another civilization and that these same values if not honestly practiced could be as cultural oppressive as forced cultural repression.

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