The Impact of (Un)Ethical Survival Mode Duality and Choices of the Educational Elite on the African Renaissance

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ABSTRACT: *In postcolonial Africa, education has always been perceived as pivotal for national and continental progress. For many Africans pursuing education abroad, the intent was to contribute to their countries' development upon their return. However, the anticipated positive outcomes have often not materialised. Many faced a dilemma: conform to unethical systems or resist them, leading to either self-imposed exile, pursuing brain-drain channels, or compromising with corrupt systems. Using Edward T. Hall's Cultural Context method, this study analyses novels depicting African realities. It critically explores individual duality and its impact on the African renaissance by emphasising the challenge of reconciling personal ideals and integrity with the harsh realities of political power dynamics. The struggle against corrupt systems hampers postcolonial progress, hindering education's potential for sustainable development. The study confirms that the potential of education cannot materialise as a catalyst for positive change and sustainable development in postcolonial Africa without an ethical transformation.*

KEYWORDS: African literature, African renaissance, behavioural duality, Cultural context, ethical dilemma, survival mode

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of colonial rule, education emerged as a beacon of hope in postcolonial Africa, representing a pivotal path towards national rejuvenation and continental resurgence (Phasha, Mahlo and Dei, 2017). As African elite sought education abroad with aspirations of contributing to their countries' advancement upon their return. They were driven by a profound belief in education's potential to uplift their societies. However, the optimistic aspirations often met with a disheartening reality as the expected positive outcomes remained elusive. This divergence between anticipation and actuality frequently forced these educated Africans into a daunting dilemma: either acquiesce to undemocratic and morally compromised systems or stand in defiance against them. The resultant resistance/conformity dichotomy presented a cascade of intricate decisions, leading to outcomes such as self-imposed exile, brain-drain, exclusion, physical and psychological affliction, or the distressing compromise of aligning with corrupt ruling elites.

This research paper delves into the complex individual duality brought about by these challenging decisions and the subsequent repercussions for the concept of the African renaissance (Okediji, 2020; Klay, 2018; Patterson, & Winston, 2016), a vision intrinsic to the continent's development. Through analytical dimensions inspired by Edward T. Hall's Cultural Context method, this study delves into a curated collection of five novels, meticulously chosen for their nuanced depiction of African social and political realities. Employing this literary vantage point, the research underscores how survival strategies adopted by the central characters often find their roots in a tragic duality, perpetuating the propagation of unethical behaviour. The ethical quandary, consistently encountered by educated Africans, casts a shadow over personal empowerment and impedes both national and continental progress, thereby obstructing the realisation of the envisioned African renaissance.

Central to this study is the intricate challenge of reconciling individual ideals with the harsh realities of power dynamics and political misconduct. The findings highlight how the struggle for survival within the constraints of corrupt power structures and governance systems continues to hinder advancements in postcolonial Africa. They underscore that the transformative potential of education as a catalyst for positive change and sustainable development in Africa cannot be fully harnessed without a fundamental ethical transformation. In the subsequent sections, this research paper will explore the multifaceted dimensions of the behavioural dilemmas faced by educated Africans, critically analyse the impact of their decisions on personal principles, social values societal evolution, and offer insights into the intricate interplay between ethical considerations and the African renaissance. Through an in-depth exploration of culturally contextualised literature, this study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding education, ethical choices, and their implications for Africa's path towards a brighter future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial Africa embarked on a journey of education and foreign study with the hope of achieving rapid development. The concept of education as a salvation for African progress and the return of educated individuals as agents of change was enthusiastically embraced. However, the reality that greeted these returnees often diverged drastically from their expectations. The subsequent disillusionment with the endemic issues of corruption, favouritism, and embezzlement by ruling elites gave birth to a significant literary representation in African narratives. Therefore, the theme of educated African elites not meeting expectations of development due to various factors like self-imposed exile, brain-drain, exclusion, suffering, or compromise with corrupt ruling elites has been explored in literature by several writers. These authors offer diverse perspectives on the struggles and challenges faced by educated African elites, emphasising the clash between personal aspirations and societal realities. The characters' experiences shed light on the broader issues of development vis-à-vis the complexities of post-colonial African societies. These narratives serve as a lens through which readers can understand the broader issues of development, corruption, and the impact of historical and cultural factors on post-colonial African societies.

A surge of optimism as educated Africans returned home to contribute to nation-building can be traced back to the early postcolonial period. Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) captured the initial idealism and aspirations. The protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, an educated African returning from the United Kingdom to Nigeria realises that his education and exposure to Western ideals do not shield him from the pressures of corruption and compromise he faces as a civil servant. He is torn between his own integrity and the societal expectations, eventually leading to his downfall. His experiences in post-independence Nigeria highlight the duality of dissonance between his Western education and the reality of corruption within his society.

A decade later, the representation of the African returnees' dilemma became more articulated in fictional narratives. Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1973) delved into the psychological and emotional turmoil of individuals grappling with their dual identities and the stark contradictions in their societies. This marked a shift towards a more introspective exploration of the impact of corruption and compromised morality on the psyche of the educated elite. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) introduced a more critical perspective. Set in postcolonial Kenya, the novel depicted the failure of education to bring about genuine development. The disillusionment felt by the characters was a reflection of the broader disillusionment of many educated Africans who were unable to find a place in their changing societies.

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) tells the story of Nnu Ego, a woman from rural Nigeria who moves to the city with her husband. She sacrifices her own dreams for the sake of her family and children's education. However, her educated children later abandon her for better opportunities abroad, reflecting the theme of brain-drain and the gap between education and development.

Calixthe Beyala's *Tu t'appelleras Tanga* [Your Name Shall Be Tanga] (1988) follows the life of a young African man named Tanga, who becomes involved in political activism. The story highlights Tanga's idealism and eventual disillusionment as he witnesses the corruption and brutality of the political regime he once supported.
Since 1990s, African novelists continued to vividly examine the issues of disillusionment amongst educated elites.

Ouomah Tchidjo Stanislas' *Par décret présidentiel* [By presidential decree] (1993), highlights the dictator's power, using decrees endowed with divine authority to appoint and dismiss. In an unprecedented move, Solam is appointed Director General in a state company by a presidential decree with a critical mandate to rectify faltering governance and management of the industry. However, he swiftly realises that effective administration in his country hinges on the delicate art of interpreting laws in alignment with the intentions and sentiments of the ruling elite. Struggling to conform to this unspoken and unwritten paradigm, Solam finds himself at a crossroads. Balancing his professional obligations with personal values, he musters the courage to step down and challenge the presidential decree, foregoing potential political and economic gains to safeguard his unwavering moral integrity. This decision underscores the intricate dance between principles and power in the complex landscape of leadership.

The narrative structure of Dominique M'Fouillou's *Le Quidam* (1995) is based on real events that occurred in 1993 in Congo - Brazzaville, during 3 days from August 13 to 15. It portrays revolutionary riots initiated by the trade unionists, including the Confédération africaine des travailleurs croyants - CATC [African Confederation of Believing Workers], the Confédération générale africaine du travail [General African Confederation of Labour], and the Confédération africaine des syndicats libres – CASL [African Confederation of Free Trade Unions]. These riots led to the overthrow of the first elected president of the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, Father Fulbert Youlou. Faced with corruption, embezzlements, and misappropriation of public assets, young intellectuals dream of dismantling excesses of the single-party political system to establish multi-party politics, enabling democratic governance that would emerge from free and transparent elections. Their executions by firing squads reflect the ferocity of the dictatorship towards African elites who attempt to resist social injustices and political violence. Alain Mabanckou's novel *Verre Cassé* [Broken Glass] (2005) follows the life of a writer named Alain, who returns to his hometown in Congo-Brazzaville after spending several years abroad. The narrative explores the challenges of reintegrating into a society marked by political turmoil, corruption, and personal disillusionment.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) is a satirical novel that portrays the disillusionment of educated elites in a fictional African country. The protagonist, Kamiti, who has a university education, is caught in a web of political corruption and dictatorship. The narrative highlights how even the educated class can become entangled in a system that perpetuates different forms of inequality.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie work continued to examine the issues of disillusionment and corruption. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Adichie portrayed the Biafran war and its aftermath, revealing how personal relationships were strained by the choices individuals had to make in times of conflict and political upheaval. The portrayal of disillusionment extended beyond individual characters to the collective trauma of the nation.

François Mbiyangandu Tshibila's *Le Destin de Laurent Tshiosha* [The Destiny of Laurent Tshiosha] (2020) vividly illustrates the intricate struggle faced by Africans educated in European institutions, who, when choosing not to align with corrupt elites in their countries, often encounter insurmountable obstacles in their efforts to contribute to their nations' progress. The narrative encapsulates the tension between principled integrity and the prevalent systems of power. Protagonist's experiences serve as a poignant reflection of the dilemmas many educated Africans confront, emphasising the intricate web of challenges woven by political corruption. The story echoes the broader struggle for meaningful change, highlighting how to navigate the treacherous paths of self-fulfilment by accepting the brain-drain fate.

Jean-Marie Mbailao's *Le Prostitué Politique* [Politically Prostitute] (2021) is a fictionalised story whose protagonist is Bahi, a highly graduated scholar whose attitudes, actions and behaviour do not reflect the values expected of academic elite. Born in Tador, an imaginary country and yet very representative of many African states, Bahi had a very successful school experience in Africa. With an excellence grant to pursue postgraduate studies in France, he

defended brilliantly a doctoral thesis in biology. After this great achievement, he returns to the country with hope and confidence of contributing to its development, mainly after having obtained guarantees from the dictator who leads the country. Once in his country, the president's promises are not kept, and the disappointment does not take long to defy his illusions in associating academic qualifications and professional success. After constant harassments, public humiliation and secret evaluations by less qualified and above all incompetent people, he becomes unable to bear powerlessly the weight of resilience and disenchantment. Pushed against the wall, he betrays his ideals by accepting a ministerial post to taste the splendour that political power provides. He is forced to sacrifice everything, including his honour and educational values, to maintain at all costs this source of political, social and economic power. *Le Prostitué politique* paints a picture of the degradation of young African elites, highly qualified and expected to carry the torch of educational values but swallowed up by politics and frantically seeking positions of power. The story paints a sombre picture of how the allure of influence can distort noble intentions, shedding light on the precarious intersection of ambition and moral compromise in the realm of politics in African societies.

Bernard N'kaloulou's *Le Pousse-Pousse de Makélékélé : Une jeunesse au Congo* [The Makélékélé hand-pulled rickshaw: Being young in Congo]] (2021) is a captivating novel that narrates the stories of young Africans on their quest for opportunities across the continent. Amidst the backdrop of Africa's governance challenges, the novel portrays their yearning for a better future while grappling with a sense of frustration stemming from the absence of solidarity (Munyangeyo, 2023a). Driven by a determination to break free from limitations, these young individuals resort to every available avenue and embrace considerable risks in their pursuit of opportunities, even contemplating seeking refuge in foreign lands outside the continent. The novel poignantly encapsulates the resilience and aspirations of African youth, revealing the risks and determinations of their journey towards empowerment and self-realisation.

One can say that African literature has consistently reflected the evolving dilemma of educated Africans returning to their home countries, only to be confronted by corruption, favouritism, and embezzlement. A diachronic analysis reveals that literary representations of this phenomenon has evolved from a focus on individual disillusionment to a broader examination of its societal, psychological, and generational repercussions. The literary representation captures the complexities of identity (Munyangeyo, 2022), displacement, and moral compromise within the context of African development, demonstrating the enduring relevance of this theme in the continent's literary landscape.

Corpus
The literary landscape vividly portrays the intricate interplay between resistance and moral compromise, an ever-persistent theme within the realm of African development. This recurrent theme attests to its relevance in reflecting on the complexity of ethical dilemmas faced by societies in transition.

Central to this theme is the interplay between (un)ethical survival strategies and the choices of the educated elite, whose decisions hold considerable sway over the trajectory of the African renaissance. A comprehensive analysis will be undertaken through a corpus of five impactful novels, each offering a distinct lens: *Par décret présidentiel* (Décret) by Ouomah Tchidjo Stanislas (1993), *Le Quidam* (Quidam) by Dominique M'Fouillou (1995), *Le Destin de Laurent Tshiosha* (Destin) by François Mbiyangandu Tshibila (2020), *Le Prostitué Politique* (Prostitué) by Jean-Marie Mbailao (2021), and *Le Pousse-Pousse de Makélékélé : Une jeunesse au Congo* (Pousse-pousse) by Bernard N'kaloulou (2021). This rich collection illuminates the profound choices that shape societies and individuals, exploring the African elite experiences in their most vulnerable moments when survival mode duality puts them in situations of ethical dilemmas.

As these narratives converge, a comprehensive understanding emerges, shedding light on the intricate correlation between ethics and ambitions within the context of African development and individual self-fulfilment.

METHODOLOGY

The relationship between fiction and reality is complex. It raises questions about the ways in which fictional narratives reflect and interact with real-world cultural contexts. The conceptualisation of Cultural Context by Edward T. Hall (1976) is rooted in the anthropologist's ground-breaking work on intercultural communication that provides a valuable lens through which to analyse this interplay.

Hall's approach can help with examining how fiction and reality intersect. His theory of cultural context revolves around the notion that culture significantly influences human behaviour, communication, and perception. His framework introduces the concepts of high-context and low-context cultures, emphasising the role of implicit cultural cues and shared understandings in high-context cultures, and explicit communication in low-context cultures. Applying this framework to the analysis of fiction and reality unveils how narrative elements and themes within literature are imbued with cultural nuances, enabling readers to decode deeper layers of meaning.

Hall's cultural context method proves relevant in dissecting the cultural significance of African fictional narratives. His theory remains pertinent in assessing how postcolonial political contexts impact the interpretation of fiction across diverse audiences. It provides a valuable tool to explore how cultural elements traverse linguistic and geographic boundaries in Africa, shaping readers' perceptions and interpretations.

Whilst the interplay between fiction and reality is often marked by a subtle distortion of the latter, blurring the lines between the two realms, Hall's framework illuminates how certain aspects of fiction such as analogies can be understood more profoundly when analysed within their cultural context. It can be used to demonstrate how cultural elements embedded in narratives can serve as vehicles for historical transmission. For instance, a seemingly simple

reference in a novel could carry layers of meaning, accessible only through an awareness of the cultural codes at play.

Since literary works often invite readers to explore worlds which are different from their own, necessitating an understanding of cultural nuances to grasp the full depth of the narrative, reading and understanding African novels benefit significantly from Hall's cultural context method. His theory can enable readers to uncover the underlying social and political themes that shape African narratives. Even though some critics argue that Hall's framework can oversimplify the complexities of culture and communication, potentially leading to stereotyping or overlooking individual variations, it can nevertheless enhance the appreciation of both the fictional narrative and the social reality backdrop against which it unfolds. The dynamic changes that occur within African cultures and societies can still allow the use of the framework as analytical tool that can enrich the reader's understanding of the interplay between fiction and reality in African narratives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of findings relates to a collection of five novels, utilising their textual content to provide insight into the breadth of social and political representations. By exploring the different perspectives woven throughout the stories, which mirror the interplay between fiction and reality, readers gain a comprehensive understanding of characters' choices and actions in relation to the ethical or unethical decisions they confront in their quest for self-fulfilment.

Through the lens of narrative perspectives that blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, readers gain valuable insights into the ethical decisions made by characters as they navigate their individual experiences and related challenges. By scrutinising their choices, the reader is invited to contemplate the intricate interconnection of circumstances that influence characters' decisions, whether these choices steer them toward moral or immoral trajectories. The narrative perspectives function as windows into the minds of the characters, illuminating their thoughts, motivations, and actions.

The analysis of the textual material extracted from these five novels using Hall's cultural context method highlights the fiction/reality interplay serving as a conduit for comprehending the motivations that drive the characters. The dichotomy between fiction and reality further accentuates the complexity of these portrayals, underscoring how fictional scenarios can often mirror, critique, or comment on real-world issues or themes.

Perceptions of academic excellence as a catalyst for African salvation
The pursuit of education has long been revered as a pathway to personal and societal advancement. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among Africans who have embarked on studies in the western institutions. For these individuals, achieving academic excellence is not merely a personal triumph, but a beacon of hope for their nations as well. African novelists have adeptly captured this phenomenon in their narratives, depicting academic success as a

significant marker of elitism (Munyangeyo, 2023b) with far-reaching implications for national development.

African narratives often depict characters who excel academically as ascending to a privileged realm of society. This portrayal underscores the belief that education provides a transformative power capable of elevating individuals from modest backgrounds to positions of influence and affluence. Novels frequently highlight the societal reverence accorded to those who have accomplished exceptional academic feats, emphasising the respect and prestige they command within their communities. This veneration of academic excellence establishes a sense of elitism, where individuals are perceived as embodying the aspirations and potential of their entire nation.

In his novel, Mbailao (2021) portrays the relationship between academic achievement, elitism, and the prospects for the progress of their respective countries.

> « Bahi est déclaré docteur avec la mention honorable. Il reçut les félicitations du jury. Sa thèse fut aussi proposée pour la prise d'un brevet d'invention. La salle éclata en ovations qui durèrent presque dix minutes. Il s'en est suivi la séance de félicitations. […] Certains industriels se sont empressés de lui passer leur carte de visite et ont insisté pour avoir un appel de lui. Certains membres du jury ont demandé à le rencontrer le lendemain. La fête qui a suivi a duré tout le reste de l'après-midi et une bonne partie de la nuit » (*Prostitué*, p.47)

[Bahi was awarded a doctoral degree with honours. He is congratulated by the jury. His thesis was also proposed for an Innovation Award. The crowd gave him a standing ovation with applause lasting for nearly ten minutes. This was followed by a congratulatory session. [...] Business owners handed him their business cards in hurry and insisted on getting in touch. Some members of the jury asked to meet him the next day. The celebration went on throughout the rest of the afternoon and a good part of the night].

The connection between academic success and brighter future at personal and societal level is a recurring theme in African literature. Novelists often construct narratives that link the accomplishments of their characters to self-fulfilment and the advancement of their countries. These narratives reinforce the notion that an educated people can spearhead progress in various sectors, including science, politics, and economics. By portraying protagonists who leverage their education to effect positive change, authors emphasise the broader impact of academic success on societal growth. This portrayal aligns with the prevailing belief that investing in education can lead to a more prosperous and equitable nation.

However, while African narratives celebrate academic success as a gateway to elitism and national development, they also shed light on the burdens carried by those who achieve this distinction. Characters who excel academically often find themselves torn between personal aspirations and the expectations of their communities and countries. These expectations can

manifest as pressures to contribute to the upliftment of their nation, thereby placing an additional weight on their shoulders. This challenges the simplistic view of academic excellence as a one-dimensional path to success, revealing the intricate interplay between individual goals and societal responsibilities.

In many African narratives, the depiction of academic success as a conduit for elitism and national development intertwines with the assertion that returning scholars are pivotal agents of progress. However, there is a discourse that encompasses diverse ways in which diaspora engagement can foster development, the return of African scholars remains undoubtedly a valuable focus.

Scholars' duality of staying or returning
The intersection of academic success, elitism, and national development stands as a central theme within African narratives. Novelists have artfully depicted the triumphs and challenges of African individuals striving for excellence in their educational pursuits in Western countries. Amidst these portrayals, a recurring assertion emerges: for Africans who have undertaken studies abroad, their true potential as agents of progress for their homelands lies in their return following successful academic endeavours.

> « Bahi, habitant du Tador, après avoir brillamment soutenu une thèse de biologie en France, décide de retourner dans son pays natal pour contribuer à son développement après avoir, croit-il, obtenu des garanties du terrible dictateur qui le dirige » (*Prostitué*, p.13).

[Bahi, a Tador citizen, after successfully defending his doctoral thesis in biology, decides to return from France to his homeland to contribute to its development, believing he has obtained assurances from the ruthless dictator who is president]

The portrayal of academic success as a gateway to elitism and a catalyst for national development is deeply embedded in many African narratives. Through characters who overcome adversity to excel in their studies abroad, novelists highlight the transformative power of education. This portrayal reflects a broader societal sentiment: that education equips individuals with the tools to ascend the social hierarchy and contribute to the advancement of their nations. This motif resonates with historical contexts where education was sought to counter colonisation, engender self-determination and defend democratic values:

> « Détruire ce Parti unique. A la place, installer le multipartisme. […] Ce qui est possible avec le système de gestion actuel deviendra impossible quand le pays entier participera à la vie démocratique. Le meilleur gouvernement est celui qui sortira du suffrage universel » (*Quidam*, p.25).

[Destroying this single-party system and replacing it with a multi-party governance. [...] What is possible within the current leadership system will become impossible when the entire country

participates in democratic process. The best government is the one that will emerge from universal suffrage]

Many African narratives argue that to fully serve their countries and amplify the impact of their academic achievements, individuals must return to their homeland. This imperative underscores the belief that knowledge gained abroad must be harnessed to address the specific challenges and needs of one's nation. Returning scholars, armed with both international insights and a deep understanding of local context, are envisioned as invaluable assets for propelling national progress across diverse sectors.

While the call for returning scholars is underpinned by noble intentions, the path back to one's homeland is not devoid of complexities. Characters grapple with the tension between pursuing individual opportunities and fulfilling their perceived responsibilities to their countries. This tension highlights the multifaceted nature of the return journey, where the desire to contribute to national development intersects with the pursuit of personal growth and fulfilment. Using attractive employment contact to convince Bahi to stay in the West, Mr Laporte from University of Guelph in Canada says:

> « Vous avez effectué un travail remarquable et d'un grand niveau scientifique. Nous travaillons aussi en collaboration avec les associations de fermiers et des industriels, justement sur la conservation des céréales. Nous travaillons sur les effets des différents pesticides sur les insectes, à différentes doses ainsi que leurs effets sur l'environnement et la santé. Votre trouvaille me paraît très intéressante car votre peptide a été isolé du pois cassé donc à partir d'un aliment de l'homme. Il n'a, a priori, aucun effet néfaste sur la santé humaine. Nous avons échangé avec mon ami Donard avant la soutenance. Je vous propose un contrat à l'essai de six mois dans mon laboratoire » (*Prostitué*, p.48).

[You have conducted remarkable and highly scientific work. We are also collaborating with farmers' associations and industries, specifically on cereal conservation. We are researching the effects of various pesticides on insects at different doses, as well as their impact on the environment and health. I am interested in your discovery because your peptide has been isolated from split peas, which is a human food source. It appears to have no harmful effects on human health. I have had a conversation with my friend Donard before your viva voce. I am offering you a six-month probational contract in my laboratory.]

This offer of employment contracts shows that although the journey of African scholars pursuing higher education in the West is often a profound experience, marked by academic excellence and personal growth, the culmination of their studies however introduces a complex choice that has far-reaching implications. There are challenging decisions that African scholars face upon completing their studies with distinction, exploring the tension between returning to their home countries and seizing attractive opportunities in the West. The duality of this

decision not only impacts the scholars themselves but also resonates with their colleagues in the West and the authorities back home.

Upon the successful completion of their studies with excellence, African scholars often find themselves presented with lucrative professional opportunities in the West. These opportunities promise career growth, access to cutting-edge research, and the allure of a higher standard of living. This scenario places scholars in a challenging position, as they must weigh their personal aspirations and ambitions against their potential roles in contributing to the development of their home countries.

In Mbailao (2021), the choice facing the protagonist Bahi is far from straightforward. The decision to return to his home country may involve confronting numerous challenges, including political instability and economic constraints. On the other hand, whilst staying in the France and migrating to Canada can lead to successful careers and professional growth, it might nevertheless inadvertently contribute to the brain-drain experienced by many African nations. This dichotomy forces scholars to balance personal and societal interests, a complex equation that extends beyond individual considerations.

> « Tu es le second Africain à soutenir une thèse dans ce laboratoire. Waboulou, un Congolais, a aussi soutenu une brillante thèse de doctorat ici, il y a dix ou douze ans. Un brillant garçon Waboulou, il était destiné à une brillante carrière de chercheur pour contribuer au développement de son pays. Waboulou était jovial et très affable comme toi. Une fois rentré, il a commencé à enseigner dans une université de son pays puis malheureusement il a versé dans la politique. Aux dernières nouvelles, il est secrétaire général adjoint du parti au pouvoir. Il semble qu'il n'enseigne même plus. C'est un vrai gâchis. […] Il est, dit-on, devenu le griot de son sanguinaire de président » (*Prostitué*, pp.51-52).

[You are the second African to defend a doctoral thesis in this laboratory. Waboulou, a Congolese, also defended a brilliant doctoral thesis here, ten or twelve years ago. Waboulou was a bright young man, destined for a promising research career to contribute to the development of his country. Waboulou was cheerful and very friendly, just like you. Once he returned, he started teaching at a university in his country, but unfortunately, he got involved in politics. According to the latest news, he is now deputy secretary general of the ruling party. It seems he does not even teach anymore. It is a real waste... He has reportedly become the praise-singer of his bloodthirsty president].

Waboulou's story is one of the recurring concerns revolving around the dilemma of political involvement that scholars from the West might have once they return to Africa. There is a common perception that engagement in politics or civic affairs in African countries could be risky or hinder professional development. Scholars who choose to return often grapple with the need to navigate the political landscape while maintaining their academic integrity and

advancing their careers. This tension underscores the intricate relationship between scholarly pursuits and civic responsibilities.

Interestingly, African authorities recognise the imperative of bringing back the expertise and knowledge that their scholars have gained abroad. Sensitisation campaigns advocating for the return of highly skilled professionals are often launched in hopes of fuelling national development. The rationale is grounded in the belief that the collective brainpower of these scholars can address pressing challenges and accelerate growth within their countries. These campaigns are often coupled with fake promises of a political environment that is conducive to the scholars' reintegration.

> « C'est pour ça, mes frères, que le président Henri Hassal m'a dépêché ici afin de vous sensibiliser pour le retour au pays. Nous vous invitons à venir contribuer à la reconstruction nationale. […] Le président Henri Hassal, par ma voix, vous donne la garantie de tout mettre en œuvre pour que rien de fâcheux ne vous arrive. On ne vit mieux que chez soi. C'est un cri du cœur venant d'un frère à vous. J'espère que vous serez sensibles à cet appel venant de l'un des vôtres. N'oubliez pas vos origines et ceux des vôtres, moins chanceux que vous, qui sont restés sur place. Ceux-là ont besoin de vous. Ils ont besoin de vos connaissances pour continuer à vivre » (*Prostitué*, pp.81-82).

[That is why, my brothers, President Henri Hassal has sent me here to raise awareness among you for the return to the homeland. We invite you to come and contribute to national reconstruction. [...] President Henri Hassal, through my voice, assures you that every effort will be made to ensure that nothing untoward happens to you. There is no place like home. This is a heartfelt plea from a brother to you. I hope you will be receptive to this appeal from one of your own. Do not forget your roots and those of your fellow citizens who are less fortunate and have remained behind. They need you. They need your knowledge to survive].

The choices that African scholars confront upon the successful completion of their studies with excellence is fraught with complexities that transcend individual ambitions. The tension between returning to their home countries and pursuing opportunities in the West reflects a larger narrative of global migration and national development. The scholars' decisions resonate with their colleagues in the West. This intricate web of choices and consequences highlights the multifaceted nature of being an African elite, tasked with contributing to both personal growth and societal advancement. When on the balance of successful probability, individual aspirations weigh more heavily than a commitment to the broader well-being of their nations, African scholars prefer brain-drain to allegiance to political loyalty.

Brain-drain and its impact as an unavoidable alternative
In the vast and diverse continent of Africa, the phenomenon of brain drain has emerged as a stark reality, driven by the compelling circumstances faced by African elites. The textual materials from novels of the corpus shed light on the brain-drain as a survival alternative in

emergency for African elites who grapple with the moral quandary of aligning with corrupt regimes or facing exclusion, suffering, and self-imposed exile.

For many African elites, the path of least resistance often leads to compromise with corrupt ruling elites. However, the dilemma arises from the ethical conflict between aligning with such regimes and adhering to one's moral compass. In a scenario where alignment with corruption is untenable, a painful choice emerges: either endure exclusion, physical and psychological suffering, or opt for self-imposed exile through brain drain. The allure of escaping a precarious existence compels many African intellectuals, professionals, and skilled individuals to seek refuge abroad, where their talents can flourish without the shackles of corruption.

Several intertwined factors contribute to the rise of brain drain in Africa. Economic instability and limited opportunities for professional growth often push skilled individuals towards countries with more developed economies. The scarcity of research funding and academic opportunities also drives many scholars to seek greener pastures elsewhere. Moreover, political instability, social unrest, and lack of security further erode the prospects of a fulfilling life within their home countries.

> « Je me rappelle bien ce qu'il écrivait à mon père pour dire sa déception, non pas qu'il ne trouvait pas de poste, mais parce que nombreux étaient les cadres qui n'étaient cadres que de nom. Ils étaient sous-employés et très mal payés. Dès lors, pour gagner vraiment leur vie ou bénéficier des moyens d'un cadre supérieur, ils n'avaient point d'autre choix que de rejoindre le parti unique ou parti dominateur. [...] Il n'était pas devenu directeur de l'hôpital de Ndjamena comme il aurait souhaité, le ministre de la santé ayant un membre de sa tribu à caser. C'est une pratique courante dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui » (*Pousse-pousse*, p.274).

[I remember well what he wrote to my father to express his disappointment, not because he could not find a position, but because many of the executives were only executives in name. They were underemployed and paid very poorly. Therefore, to truly make a living or benefit from the resources of a senior executive, they had no other choice but to join the single party or the dominant party. [...] He did not become the director of the hospital in N'Djamena as he had aspired to, because the Minister of Health had a member of his tribe who needed a job. Nowadays, this practice is common in Africa].

The repercussions of brain-drain on the developmental trajectory of African nations are profound. The loss of skilled professionals hampers critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology, exacerbating the existing disparities. The exodus of medical personnel leaves healthcare systems strained and under-resourced, impeding access to quality healthcare for the population. Educational institutions suffer from a dearth of experienced educators, leading to a decline in the quality of education provided to the youth.

> « Nous n'avons que trop entendu dire ces dernières années que nos pays s'appauvrissaient du fait de la fuite des cerveaux, de tous les diplômés d'université qui émigrent et s'en vont enrichir l'étranger sous prétexte de chercher des conditions de vie et de travail meilleures. Or, qui voyons-nous venir chez nous prendre la place qu'ils laissent vacante ? Des Européens, des Américains ou des Asiatiques, vrais ou faux techniciens, prétendant tout savoir et nous apporter le développement conçu à leur manière et dans leur intérêt ! Soyons sincères. Personne ne nous aidera mieux que nous-mêmes » (*Destin*, p.125).

[We have heard a lot in recent years about our countries becoming poorer due to the brain-drain, with all university graduates emigrating and enriching foreign countries under the pretext of seeking better living and working conditions. Yet, who do we see coming to take the positions they leave vacant? Europeans, Americans, or Asians, genuine or fake technicians, claiming to know everything and bringing us development conceived in their own context and in their interest! Let us be honest. No one will help us better than ourselves].

In the African socio-political landscape, brain drain stands as a poignant testament to the struggle faced by the continent's elites. African narratives portray well how the departure of skilled workers to foreign disrupts the process of knowledge transfer and innovation within domestic industries. African countries struggle to retain and nurture local talent, hindering technological advancements and economic growth. The resulting brain-drain creates a cycle of underdevelopment, as the absence of skilled professionals impedes the ability to address pressing societal challenges.

The representation of individual ideals and integrity, and ethical values as signs of African renaissance
African literature has historically served as a platform for the exploration of multifaceted themes, reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of the continent's societies and communities. In the textual data of this study, the emerging themes reflect a notable shift observed where some novelists delve into a new conception of life that transcends material possessions. Authors emphasise the philosophical significance of existence over material wealth, and this shift is exemplified by the notion that death is preferable to shame and humiliation, asserting the importance of maintaining one's dignity and pride in the face of adversity.

> « Mon fils, dans ce bas monde, il vaut mieux la mort que la honte. Il vaut mieux la mort que l'humiliation. La honte te colle à la peau pendant que tu es encore vivant. Elle te colle à la peau tout le reste de ta vie. Tu es comme mort quand tu penses à cela. Il ne faut jamais être lâche. Tu dois marcher la tête haute » (*Prostitué*, p.36).

[My son, in this world, death is better than shame. Death is better than humiliation. Shame sticks to your skin while you are still alive. It sticks with you for the rest of your life. You are as good as dead when you think about that. You should never be a coward. You must walk with your head held high].

The assertion that death is better than shame encapsulates a profound shift in the value system portrayed in these novels. Authors highlight that enduring shame and humiliation corrodes the soul, leaving an indelible mark on an individual's identity. The profundity of this perspective lies in its depiction of shame as a fate worse than death, emphasising the significance of maintaining one's honour and dignity that foster genuine happiness.

> « Le bonheur de chacun dépend de ce qu'il a dans la tête, du degré d'acceptation ou du refus de sa situation objective. Les biens matériels seuls ne font pas le bonheur ; ils facilitent la vie, j'en conviens, mais ce n'est pas tout de les amasser » (*Décret*, p.213).

[Each person's happiness depends on what they have in their mind, on the level of acceptance or rejection of their objective situation. Material possessions alone do not bring happiness; they do make life easier, I agree, but it is not just about accumulating them].

The traditional narrative of acquiring material goods as a measure of success is being challenged by African postcolonial writers who seek to reorient their readers' perspectives. These novelists recognise that a life lived solely in pursuit of material wealth can be hollow and unfulfilling. Instead, they advocate for a deeper exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of existence, urging readers to consider the intrinsic value of life beyond its material trappings.

In these novels, the protagonists are often depicted as individuals who refuse to succumb to cowardice in the face of adversity. In Stanislas (1993), the main protagonist Solam argues that

> « Ici ou ailleurs, je serai au service de mon pays et de mes compatriotes ; ce qui m'importe le plus, ce n'est pas d'avoir un poste, mais d'être utile, de me réaliser et ça, on peut le faire sans être Ministre ou Directeur Général ; il n'est même pas sûr qu'un Roi ou Président de la République soit plus utile à son pays qu'un honnête citoyen qui crée par son travail » (*Décret*, p.208).

[Here or elsewhere, I will serve my country and my fellow citizens; what matters most to me is not to hold a particular position, but to be useful, to achieve my goals, and that can be done without being a Minister or a Director General; no one can even be sure whether a King or a President of the Republic is more useful to their country than an honest citizen who contributes through their work].

Advocating for the preservation of one's self-respect and self-worth is a notion that underscores the importance of confronting challenges with courage and maintaining a sense of pride, even in the face of hardship. The protagonists become symbols of resilience and defiance against societal pressures that might compel them to compromise their integrity.

In the evolving landscape of African literature, a significant transformation is unfolding as novelists shift their focus from materialism to existentialism. The exploration of themes cantered around the philosophical meaning of existence challenges the conventional narrative of pursuing material wealth as the ultimate goal. The emergence of this new conception of life in African novels has broader societal implications. It prompts readers to reflect on values and priorities, encouraging them to consider what truly matters in life beyond the pursuit of material wealth. The emphasis on existential themes challenges readers to question societal norms and redefine their notions of success and fulfilment. This shift in literary representation contributes to a larger discourse on personal identity, dignity, and the pursuit of a meaningful existence within cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION

This study has revealed that in postcolonial Africa, the role of education has always been held in high regard as a potential avenue for both national and continental progress. The aspiration of African scholars studying abroad to contribute significantly to their home countries' advancement upon their return was, and still is, a noble objective. However, the anticipated positive outcomes have often remained elusive, revealing a complex dichotomy that has cast a shadow over the continent's pursuit of development. The prevailing predicament faced by educated Africans abroad, where they must choose between aligning with undemocratic and unethical systems or resisting them, has led to a web of unenviable choices with far-reaching consequences.

The intrinsic conflict between personal ideals and the harsh realities of power dynamics and political misconduct is poignantly portrayed. The protagonists of these narratives, navigating the treacherous landscape of ethical compromise versus principled resistance, find themselves trapped in a tragic duality that perpetuates unethical conduct.

This study, conducted through the lens of Edward T. Hall's Cultural Context method and drawing insights from a carefully curated selection of five novels, unearths the intricate layers of African realities. These literary narratives serve as a mirror reflecting the multifaceted challenges faced by educated Africans who seek to contribute positively to their nations. The findings reveal that this ethical dilemma, recurrently confronted by those who possess the intellectual tools for change, undermines individual empowerment and obstructs the realisation of the African renaissance, a pivotal concept for the continent's revitalisation.

The concept of the African renaissance, embodying a vision of comprehensive transformation, is indeed hampered by the entrenched struggle for survival within corrupt systems. The protagonists' decisions, while often driven by the dire circumstances they face, become emblematic of a wider crisis that impedes progress.

The research underscores the poignant tension between individual aspirations and the broader socio-political context, emphasising the profound challenges of reconciling personal values with the harsh realities of governance. The presented narratives portray how these struggles continue to be an insurmountable hurdle for postcolonial Africa's progress, echoing a plea for change that resonates deeply with the continent's collective conscience.

To overcome this quagmire, Africa must foster an environment where personal integrity, ethical conduct, and governance reform are intrinsic to the continent's aspirations and developmental strategies. Only through a concerted effort to redefine societal norms, eradicate corruption, and empower individuals with the tools to make principled choices can Africa unleash its full potential. The trajectory towards the African renaissance demands not only a robust investment in education but also a fundamental transformation of the prevailing ethical framework.

In conclusion, this study illuminates the challenging journey of educated Africans who find themselves at the crossroads of compromise and resistance. Their struggles, depicted poignantly in literature, serve as cautionary tales for the broader continent. The African renaissance can only be achieved when individuals, empowered by education and bolstered by ethical values, contribute to the dismantling of corrupt systems and the establishment of a foundation built on principled governance and sustainable development.

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