

*CLASS CONFLICTS AND THE RISE OF THE 'PROLETARIAN' NOVEL
IN AFRICA*

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Abstract: The post-independence literature of Africa is essentially bleak, dreary and pessimistic in outlook. The reason for this mood inheres in the very nature of the frustration, anguish and disappointment that became evident among the masses of the African people when the immediate gains that followed the attainment of political sovereignty were sequestered by the political class, which took up the reins of government at the exit of the colonial masters. Expectedly, the chasm between the political class and the masses of the African people became widened as a result of the blatant corruption of the members of the ruling class and the virtual exclusion of the masses of the African people from the gains of self rule, which itself was achieved, in some cases, through the efforts of the peasants. In literature, especially the novel genre, this rift or conflict between the ruling class in Africa and the proletariat class wears the toga of a war and it is portrayed by the best of the writers in Africa with all the accoutrements of war. Ideological novelists such as Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Sembene Ousmane, Alex La Guma and Festus Iyayi explore this class conflict from combative perspectives and enunciate radical solutions, bordering on mass revolt in the true socialist sense of attaining the state of a dictatorship of the proletariat class. This paper addresses the above concern as seen principally in some of the novels of Kenya's most popular writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'O and concludes that the tradition of the proletarian novel in Africa is, by and large, accentuated by the unremitting conflicts between the bourgeois and proletariat classes in Africa and the Marxist writer's commitment to creatively entrench through the novel genre the dictatorship of the oppressed class in the true tradition of Marxist-Socialism.

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