In 1961, Frantz Fanon proclaimed in *Les Damnés de la terre* that it was the responsibility of the author to cultivate “un style heurté” (an assertive style) that would “étonner” (stun) the West (notably European colonizers) into recognizing that the colonized writer had entered a “phase de la conscience” (consciousness phase) that had been liberated from oppression (210). Fanon encouraged the author to do his duty to inform and incite the masses to react and face the violence that characterizes the decolonizing process.

Dissidence has always been a facet of francophone writing from the African diaspora and remains a part of the contemporary voice of Moroccan authors today. These men and women are true examples of the *engagés* (committed authors) Fanon described over forty years ago as necessary and instrumental in sociopolitical change. The engaged Moroccan author confronts issues that represent the collective conscious both in and outside of his/her country. They are critical of themselves as well as how they are perceived by others, notably in the West. Authors such as Rida Lamrini and Touria Oulehri represent an activist voice that goes beyond the literary realm to promote sociopolitical and cultural dialogues that force readers to think about their contemporary environments, while also introspectively reviewing the past. Their credo adheres to what French humanist Jean Bessière stresses is an ideology that must be understood in the sense of behavior...[as] making a decision according to whether it describes a means of existence in and by which the
individual is implicated actively in the development of the world, admits responsibility for what happens, [and/or] opens a future of action... [engagement] designates an act by which the individual links himself with his future being. (13)

The term “engagé” has specific historical significance. Being engagé for the Maghrebian author is almost synonymous with using the French language, as Dominique Combe points out in her study *Poetiques Francophones* (1995). Not only is French the language of Voltaire, Rimbaud, Proust, Artaud, Céline, and Genet, the rebels and “bad boys” of French literary history who incessantly championed the right to freedom of speech, it is also a language that means “freedom in all its forms, collective and individual, political, religious, moral and aesthetic” (80). Combe points out that Maghrebian authors today, as in the past, continue to regard French as a language in which they can express dissention in the name of freedom (80). The word engagé’s true meaning was cultivated during the first half of the twentieth century, during a time in French history when public intellectuals in particular were held responsible for commenting on and contextualizing the sociopolitical and historical events taking place in France. In the Maghreb, the word’s meaning became significant for authors such as Kateb Yacine, Driss Chraïbi, and Mohamed Dib who sought to cultivate a literary voice for revolution and subsequent decolonization. Their engagement in political movements consistently remained an inherent part of their works, influencing themes of literature and poetry. The literary magazine *Souffles*, founded by Abdellatif Laâbi in the 1960s, remains a noteworthy example.

**Engaged Writing**

“Engagement” in English has its roots in the older French term. However, more so than the English equivalent, the word’s connotation in French entreats a certain metaphysical quality that implicates the social as well as the political. David Schalk points out in *The Spectrum of Political Engagement* (1979) that the metaphysical content the word implies dates to Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism. Engagement, in either language, will always invoke the notion that intellectuals, thinkers, writers, and artists are “taking a position” that is more

willed than that of other social categories... we can accept [as meaning] the action of intellectuals, primarily in the political sphere... An