



## Abstract

This dissertation entitled ‘Aspects of Neo-Colonialism in NgugiwaThiong’o’s *Petals of Blood* (1977) and SembeneOusmane’s *Xala* (1975)’, investigated aspects of neo-colonialism, a new exploitative system that has marked Africa as a whole after the 1960’s. More precisely, this research is limited to the study of the issues of corruption and religious hypocrisy in the first chapter, the quest for national identity in the second and reverse racism in the third chapter . The theoretical ground is borrowed from Frantz Fanon’s ‘On National Culture’ in his *The Wretched of The Earth*, and HomiBhabha’s concept of ‘Hybridity’. The basic findings of our investigation are: first native governments’ renewal of exploitation and corruption after independence. Second native populations’ struggle to cut their bounds with the ex-colonizer. Third, the commitment of novelists and filmmakers to the denunciation of their post independent states’ plight with neo-colonialism and their quest for their natives’ traditional values.

Key words: neo-colonialism-corruption-novel-film-commitment-native bourgeoisie-native resistance-reverse racism.

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*To*

*My beloved parents*

*My sweet sister Maya*

*My two brothers Yidir and Massinissa*

*To my grandmothers and late grandfathers*

*All my uncles, aunts and cousins*

*To my friends, Torkia and Fayrouz,*

*And all my teachers*

*Hadjila*

*To*

*My beloved parents*

*My sweet sister Anna*

*My two brothers Sam and Samy*

*To my grandmothers and grandfathers*

*All my uncles, aunts and cousins*

*To my beloved Warda*

*And all my teachers*

*Lydia*

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## **I. Introduction**

The 1960's is a decade that witnessed the decolonization of Africa. Most African countries got their independence in that era, as it was the case for Senegal and Kenya. Many thinkers have written about the major issues of that period and have started to publish African literature, mainly in themes glorifying the African past and identity to self-affirmation, as well as themes related to the colonial experiences. However in the 1970's, the post-independence era, filmmakers and writers from the continent started to emerge and depicted the new plight of post-independence Africa namely neo-colonialism. In fact, on the eve of African independences most newly African independent governments and statesmen renewed the colonial repressive practices mainly corruption, racism, domination and plunder.

In this context, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane are considered as the main figures of the intellectual revolution against the neo-colonial phenomenon in Africa. Both are known for their protest against post-colonial African elites, and became more concerned with neo-colonialism and its troubles. Throughout their writings, they explore the features of neo-colonialism.

This paper aims to discuss the neo-colonial aspects in both Sembene Ousmane's film *Xala(1975)* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *Petals of Blood (1977)*. Both works are critical assault on the ills of neo-colonialism, a political issue linked to post independence period. Among those aspects depicted by both writers, we intend to discuss three main issues which are first corruption, then the quest for national identity, and finally reverse racism.

## 1. Review of the Literature

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* are two masterpieces that received considerable criticism from many African and non-African reviewers.

*Petals of Blood* is considered to be an important work that shows the Kenyan post-independence marked by the neo-colonialism. One of the most easily accessible critical overviews of Ngugi's writing is David Maughan Brown who considers that the novel is aesthetically deficient and the use of Gikuyu words in the novel is an act of aggression against the western readers. He contend that the novel was affected by the powerful western aesthetic ideologies. He also comments that "Ngugi's sensitivity to the human motives on both sides of the conflict is one of his greatest strengths as a novelist" <sup>1</sup>.

C.B. Robson in his review entitled '*Ngugi wa Thiong'o*', as quoted by Patrick Williams, asserts that Ngugi has failed aesthetically in the novel, and was disappointed after Ngugi's previous works. As he says: 'he presents fundamental human concerns in a form that gives his work immediacy, artistic unity and a universal dimension'<sup>2</sup> which does not extend to *Petals of Blood*, and adds that Ngugi's novel is less enthusiastic than the previous work entitled *A Grain of Wheat*. He says: "in *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi goes beyond what is acceptable in fiction, he is giving us polemic"<sup>3</sup>.

David Cook and Michel Okenimpke in their book, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of his Writing*<sup>4</sup>, present narrative perspective, and plot techniques, in relation to the novel's ideological framework. At the same time the review offers opinions and evaluations of the author, characters, events and setting then link them to social issues of post independent Kenya.

The reviewers assert that the novel is an ‘exposé’ of the nature of capitalism<sup>5</sup>. They consider the novel as a mark of Ngugi’s progress from his earlier works.

As far as *Xala* is concerned, one of the most interesting criticisms is that of David Murphy in his book *Sembene: Imagining Alternatives in Films and Fiction (2000)*. In the fourth chapter of the book entitled ‘*The Indiscreet Charm of the African Bourgeoisie*’ .Murphy takes *Xala* as a case study. He discusses male sexuality and power as well as consumerism, fetishism and socialism in an African context.<sup>6</sup>This politically engaged film is a metaphor for the inability of “African men to deal with the realities of their society”. This critic asserts that Sembene ‘uses the *Xala* as a popular social resistance to neo-colonialism’. However, Murphy does not rely on any cultural theory about neo-colonialism. He goes on to say that “the *Xala* is a representative of the impotence of African bourgeoisie”<sup>7</sup>, as a social class, which according to Sembene Ousmane’s plays a negative role “it prevents social progress towards its own desire for material wealth”<sup>8</sup>.

Another interesting reviewer’s criticism is that of Justin Hogg who treats *Xala* in his article ‘*Black Man Time: Post Colonialism as Conspiracy in Xala*’ in which he claims that “the movie is a satire of post colonialism as a dominant conspiracy of global capitalism”<sup>9</sup>. The same critic analyses different scenes of the film, linking them to socialism, focusing on the satirical nature of the ‘decolonization’ as presented in the film.He says: “instead of a violent revolutionary imaginary, the film confuses images of extravagant wedding gathering between the African bourgeoisies”<sup>10</sup>. Although the analysis of Hogg is an interesting one, he did not deal with the effects of colonialism on language, tradition and culture value as represented in the film. He rather stressed on analysing the movie from a political and economic perspective leaving apart the cultural side of the movie.

Francoise Pfaffin in her article *'Three Faces of Women in Xala'*<sup>11</sup> describes Sembene Ousmane as being an aspiring Marxist who sees Marxism as the possibility of alleviation to the rottenness of post-independence Africa. Analysing the movie from a feminist view, she assesses closely the female characters connecting each with the different stages in Senegalese history: traditional, transitional, and new Africa. In addition to political issues, Sembene according to Pfaff uses women to condemn polygamy and female oppression. Concerning cinema, Pfaff discusses the engaged nature of Sembene's works.

Marcia Landy in her article *'Political Allegory and Engaged Cinema: Sembene's Xala'*, is concerned with Sembene's committed cinema. She asserts that the film "provides a dense and complex text for understanding what Sembene himself has called 'engaged cinema'"<sup>12</sup>. For her, beyond mere entertainment, Sembene made a skilful use of allegory, montage and satire to portray the political and social concerns of neo-colonialism. Landy's review is based on character and symbolic analysis of the film, according to her "the film seeks to educate the viewer to class, sexual, and racial issues, orchestrating them in symbolic fashion."<sup>13</sup>. The reviewer did not rely on a given theory to emphasize her position. Therefore, the analysis lacks in perspective.

## **2. Issue and Working Hypothesis**

It is apparent that these critics dealt with the two works from different perspectives mainly the ideological and social one. We also believe that neither *Petals of Blood's* reviewers nor those of *Xala* have analysed the works from the cultural neo-colonial perspective, relying on Fanon's concept of 'neo-colonialism' and Bhabha's concept of 'Hybridity', which is explained as the use of economic political, cultural, or other pressures to control or to influence other countries, especially former dependencies<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, it remains

our task to fill in this gap through our investigation of some neo-colonial aspects depicted by both the novel and the film.

The basic hypothesis of our piece of research is based on our assumption that both Ngugi's and Sembene's treatment of such issue comes from their commitment first to the defence of their culture and traditions and most importantly to the denunciation of the neo-colonial regime. We also believe that Ngugi and Sembene are important figures in African literature and African cinema respectively. Therefore we suppose that both novels and films as literary genres are powerful weapons to fight the odds of any society. For this, the novelist and the filmmaker use them to rehabilitate the cultural identity of their nations and to unroot the new corrupt regimes.

Last but not least, our choice of the distinct spots in Africa namely Kenya and Senegal is but to prove that the history of post-independence Africa east and west, north and south reveals the same painful facts in their truest sense.

### **3. Methodological Outline**

This memoire will follow the IMRAD method. The first part of the dissertation is the Introduction; made of four main parts which are a general introduction, a review of some of the previous literature that treated the two works, and the methods and materials that will be used in analysis, last, the historical background of both Senegal and Kenya . The second part is discussion, in which is developed the hypothesis we have set at the beginning of the work. It will be divided into three chapters. The first one will focus on the issue of corruption in both *Xala* and *Petals of Blood* .The second will discuss the problem of the quest for national identity in the two works. The third one will shed light on reverse racism, and link them to the main problematic. The last part of the thesis will be the conclusion.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Ayi Kwei, Armah. *The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*. London. Heinmann, 1968. p:157.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, David Maughan. *NgugiwaThiong'o*. Pietermaritzburg: Nataluniversity. 1992

<sup>3</sup>Williams, Patrick. *Contemporary World Writers: NgugiwaThiong'o*, Manchester University Press. 1999,

<https://books.google.dz/books?id=owRz6pGiRKoC&pg=PP1&lpg=PP1&dq=contemporary+world+writers+patrick+williams&source=bl&ots=hm801jywPf&sig=IYaqQKlkfFWViKX0ZyTzMwCn1dY&hl=fr&sa=X#v=onepage&q=contemporary%20world%20writers%20patrick&f=false>.

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Cook, David, Okenimpke, Michel. *NgugiwaThiong'o: An Exploration of his Writings*. London: Heinmann Educational Books, Ltd., 1983.

<sup>6</sup>ibid.

<sup>7</sup>David Murphy, Sembene: *Imagining alternatives in film and fiction*. Oxford: Africa World Press, 2000. P:98.

<sup>8</sup>ibid, p:100.

<sup>9</sup>ibid, p:99.

<sup>10</sup>Justin Hogg, *Black Man time: Post-colonialism as Conspiracy in Xala* (New York: Blind Field Journal) accessed on september 13rd, 2018,

<https://blindfieldjournal.com/2016/03/22/black-mantime-post-colonialism-as-conspiracy-in-xala>

<sup>11</sup>ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Francoise. Pfaffin, *Three Faces of Africa: Women in Xala*, Jump Cut: a Review of Contemporary Media, no.27 (1982):27-31, <http://ejumpcut.org> .

<sup>13</sup>Marcia, Landy, *political allegory and engaged cinema: Sembene's "Xala"*, Cinema Journal 1984. p:31, accessed on September, 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>14</sup>ibid, p:45.

<sup>15</sup>(Google, 'Google privacy policy', definition of neo-colonialism, accessed on September, 25th2018), <https://www.google.dz/#a=neo-colonialism+definition>).

## **II. Methods and Materials**

This section contains the theoretical framework of our memoire along with the materials needed for our investigation of aspects of neo-colonialism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and in Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*.

### **a. Methods**

This part of our dissertation provides an insight on the theories we will rely on in our study. We intend to borrow some concepts of great relevance to our work from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth* and Homi Bhabha's theory of 'Hybridity'.

#### **1. Frantz Fanon's 'On National Culture'**

In order to analyse both Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* from a neo-colonial perspective, we will rely on Frantz Fanon's ideological study of decolonisation focusing mainly on the fourth chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* untitled 'On National Culture'.

In this chapter, Fanon argues that the native bourgeoisie are those who become most disillusioning, because they are the product of the colonial education. As a result, they become alienated from their own people and culture. Fanon denounces native bourgeoisie of post-independence African states and accuses them of replacing the colonizers and seeking only to enrich themselves through political manoeuvring<sup>15</sup>. However, he considers the

peasants as the real base of the revolution. He says “the peasants have nothing to lose and everything to gain”<sup>16</sup>. He adds on that the native population must beware of the self-interested bourgeois class and greedy dictators taking over the place that the colonizers previously occupied.

In the same chapter, Fanon speaks about national consciousness and explains the inferiority complex that colonized people suffer from. He asserts that the aim of imperialists has always been to make the colonized feel inferior, and that without their help, they will remain savages. In his words: “to hammer into the heads of indigenous population that if the colonizer were to leave they would regress into barbarism, degradation”<sup>17</sup>, he adds that the racist beliefs ingrained by the colonial powers still have an impact on the colonized people.

The presumed inferiority of the African is internalized by the national bourgeoisie who turn their backs on the peasant life and mimic the colonial powers by the acquisition of fancy cars and homes. He also accuses them of a lack of preparation to replace the colonial system. Contrary to the bourgeoisie of the mother land who work for their countries, he says that the native bourgeoisie “served no other purpose than to have their share of independence cake”<sup>18</sup>. Their lack of experience to rule, make them appeal the mother country for help.

## **2. HomiBhabha’s ‘Hybridity’:**

HomiBhabha’s ‘Hybridity’ is one of the most vital concepts in cultural criticism today. The concept refers to the mingling of cultural signs and practices from both colonizing and colonized cultures; Bhabha asserts that this assimilation can be positive enriching dynamic, as well as oppressive. Bhabha states that hybridity is the result of the colonial condition<sup>19</sup> which makes the colonized absorbed about all what the whites taught him to desire<sup>20</sup>, but he soon realizes that he can never be equal to the colonizer. Bhabha generated the concept hybridity of culture because of the impurity of cultures. He claims that all cultures are mixed because of

the effects of colonialism<sup>21</sup>. He adds that the unequal position of power is what makes the colonized more influenced by this contact<sup>22</sup>. The most comprehensive definition of the concept 'Hybridity' in Bhabha's work is the following long excerpt from "Sings Taken for Wonders"<sup>23</sup> in which Bhabha says:

Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects.<sup>25</sup>

Thus Bhabha has developed his concept to describe the construction of new culture and identity within colonial rule, unknown from both parties colonized, colonizer<sup>26</sup>, for him hybridity is the process by which the colonizer essentialize the identity of the colonized and puts it within a singular universal frame work<sup>27</sup>. According to him, this is impossible as he affirms:

The assimilation that at some level all forms of cultural diversity may be understood on the basis of a particular universal concept, whether it be "human being", "class" or "race" can be both very dangerous and very limiting in trying to understand the ways in which cultural practices construct their own systems of meaning and social organization<sup>28</sup>.

## **b. Materials:**

In this part of our dissertation, we will provide some biographical elements on Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane, the historical context of both works and the definition of the concept "neo-colonialism". We will also include a brief summary of the two works *Petals of Blood* and *Xala*.

### **1. Historical Context of Senegal and Kenya of the Post-Independence Period:**

Senegal like many other African countries has a rich history of occupation. It became a French colony by the end of the nineteenth century (1880 and 1990) The French colonial rule was guided by the concept of superiority of the French culture and civilization<sup>29</sup>, Indeed

French language was taught in all the schools of Senegal as first language. Although the natives were considered as French citizens, they were subject to exploitation and slave trade<sup>30</sup>.

Senegal sought independence from France in April 4, 1960, with French Sudan formed the short-lived federation of Mali, on August 20, 1960 split from Mali as a separate country. The first president of independent Senegal was an experienced and distinguished politician within the French system; Leopold Senghor. In 1963, he provided Senegal with a constitution not very different from De Gaulle's. He kept strong political and economic relations with France<sup>31</sup>. Meredith argues that the changes to post-colonial Senegal were largely ceremonial as the country continued to be ran by an elite group separate from the masses<sup>32</sup>.

Even though Senegal has been an example of stability since its independence, many critics lament the fact that the nation's resources and most profitable business are still controlled by foreign powers.

Senegal was ruled by the Socialist Party (PS) of Leopold Senghor the first president since independence on April 4, 1960. People had united behind this party due to the anti-colonial fever that continued to exist a few years after independence and because Senegal has a huge potential for success as an independent country. These existed in both the educational and political infrastructure for a successful democracy.

Just like Senegal, Kenya is another spot of Africa spoilt by the neo-colonial phenomenon. It is considered as a multi-ethnic and multi-racial nation of east Africa. It was colonized by the British from the late 19th century to December 12<sup>th</sup> 1963, when it won its independence with Jomo Kenyatta as the prime minister. During the British colonial rule, Kenyans lost their lands to European settlers, and worked as labourers in tea and coffee plantations. This land issue was a central motif for the rise of the "Mau Mau" guerrilla

movement in the 1950's. Jomo Kenyatta was an active member in the movement. He became the leader of the nation after independence.<sup>33</sup>

Kenyatta's government opted for free enterprise capitalist economy, as against socialism. He also opened up the country to Britain, France and America for military assistance and foreign investment. The result was the domination of the economy by foreign companies. Though it was supposed to be Independent with the policy of 'kenyanisation'<sup>34</sup>, the economy became hugely dependent on foreign capitals. Kenyatta presided like a monarch, he gained too much power because of the one party state structure, which, it was believed, could not advance the course of decolonization, and that the democratization of the system will be the solution to enjoy the real taste of independence not only by the privileged minority but by the masse as well.

However, despite the independence, most of the colonial structures remained behind to be controlled by the new African elitist group on behalf of the colonial powers. Lugard referred to this as 'Indirect Rule'<sup>35</sup>. Kenyatta opted for continuity and not change, he invited the Kenyans to work together in order to build the nation. He argued that there was no "room for those who wait for things to be given for nothing" and that "there was no place for leaders who hope to build the nation on slogans"<sup>36</sup> He encouraged a multi-racial approach to political, economic, educational and land problems.

The Kenyatta government inherited and embraced the entire and colonial economic system. The lands of the natives that were once taken away by the white settlers are now bought by the 'Kikuyu' elites who believe that they deserve the lands because they bought them. They also believe that they were superior to other tribes because they were close to the missionaries, better educated and politically aware.

Since the foundation of the state of Kenya, the political regime did not change<sup>37</sup> Kenyatta and his followers opted for continuity and not change in their policies. The colonial structures remains to be controlled by the new African elitists who believed in their superiority because of their education and political awareness. Each ruler privileged his own ethnic group. Michael Wrong captured this Kenyan political culture in his book *It's Our Turn to Eat* (2009). All post-colonial regimes in Kenya have maintained strong relations with the former colonists, especially on matters of trade and security<sup>38</sup>.

Thus, African elitists groups learnt and inherited the colonial government structures and education and continued to subjugate fellow Africans, and they kept their relationship with the former colonial powers.

## **2. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Biography:**

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's original name is James Thiong'oNgugi. He was born in January 5, 1938 in Limuru Kenya, he is a Kenyan novelist and playwright, he received Bachelor's degrees from Makerere university in Uganda, he served as a lecturer in English at the university college Kenya. Then from 1972 to 1977, he was senior lecturer and chairman of the department of lecture at the University of Nairobi.

Ngugi became sensitized to the effects of colonialism in Africa. He adopted his traditional name and wrote in the Bantu language of Kenya's kikuyu people. He was arrested and detained without charge by the Kenyan government for a year because of his last artistic work *Petals of Blood* (1977). Ngugi's novel aims at awakening the revolutionary spirits and to inspire national consciousness especially among the peasants in the neo colonial Kenyan society; he committed his writing to denounce the corrupt government and its involvement with the colonizer in order to keep going their activities in the Kenyan lands.

## **3. Sembene Ousmane's Biography:**

Sembene Ousmane was often referred to as “the father of the African cinema”. He was an author, film maker, and social critic, known for his historical and political themes. Sembene was born on January 1, 1923, in the village of Ziguinchor Senegal, which was then a French colony. He attended both Islamic and French schools. He used to speak French, Arabic as well as his mother language, Wolof. His formal education ended at the age of 14.

During the next few years, Sembene worked at a series of odd jobs to support himself, he worked as a mechanic, a carpenter and a mason. He participated in WW2, and fought with the French in Italy and Germany. After independence he remained in France where he became a militant trade unionist. These experiences greatly contributed to the shaping of his great literary and filmic oeuvre. His works are characterized by concern with ordinary people, who are oppressed and exploited by repressive governments and bureaucracies. They are also a representation on the on-going literary battle against, corruption, colonialism, neo-colonialism and hypocrisy in all its forms. he committed his art to carry out the people’s struggle and denounce the corruption of those in power , the reason why many of his works were banned in Senegal. His career began with the publication of *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu* (God’s Bits of Wood) in 1960. His most known films are *La Noire De...* (The Black Girl) in 1966, *Le Mandat* (1968), *Xala* (1975) and *Mooladé* (Protection) in 2004. Sembene died after a long illness.

#### **4. Summary of Petals of Blood**

*Petals of Blood* is NgugiwaThiong’o’s last artistic work written in 1977; it is set in Ilmorog, an undeveloped village. The novel is divided into four parts, *Petals of Blood* starts with a knock at the doors of four characters, Munira, Karega, Wanja and Abdulla, who are wanted at the new Ilmorog police station, because they are suspected of murdering three capitalists Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo.

In the first part of the novel, Ngugi establishes the setting and mirrors through it the image of neo-colonial Kenya. The second part is an account of the journey to the city by the Ilmorogians to meet their representative Ndiri wa Riera . The third part illustrates the changes that came to Ilmorog from a rural community to an urban city. Finally, the fourth part reveals the beginning of the exploitation of the peasants of Ilmorog.

## **5. Summary of Xala**

*Xala* is a Senegalese movie adapted from a novel of the same title by one of black Africa's most important directors, Sembene Ousmane. The film follows El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye a politician and Senegalese bureaucrat who takes a third wife. After the wedding celebration, El Hadji is unable to consummate his marriage due to a curse known in Wolof as Xala, which means a state of sexual impotence. Obsessed by his sexual loss El Hadji sees numerous marabouts and traditional healers, but none is able to help him. All along the film, El Hadji seeks to find a cure to his impotence and the person who cursed him. Ignoring his business affairs he loses not only his masculinity but also his wealth; as a result, he is ejected from The Chamber of Commerce. In the end, he discovers that the Xala resulted from a curse set by a beggar whose land was taken by El Hadji and that the only way to recover him is by accepting to be spat upon from the mistreated beggars.

## **6. Definition of Neo-Colonialism:**

Africa is considered to be the most affected continent by European imperialist aggression, it suffered from long years of eventual conquest and colonization. This later fought and resisted all forms of domination and got its independence; however it still suffers from what we call neo-colonialism.

Neo-colonialism is known to be the last stage of imperialism<sup>39</sup> which is the control of less-developed countries by the developed ones without any physical presence of the colonial

forces in the country. Although the country has gained independence but its politic, economic and educational system is directed from outside, usually from the rejected colonialist or from other empowered states.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>16</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press), 47

<sup>17</sup>Ibid,61

<sup>18</sup>Ibid,149

<sup>19</sup>Ibid ,115.

<sup>20</sup>Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge classics 1994), 38.

<sup>21</sup>Ania Loomba ,*Colonialism /Post-colonialism* (routledge 2<sup>nd</sup>.ed 2005),

<sup>22</sup>Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge classics 1994)

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 166.

<sup>24</sup>ibid.

<sup>25</sup>ibid.p:166.

<sup>26</sup>ibid.

<sup>27</sup>ibid.

<sup>28</sup>ibid.p:209.

<sup>29</sup>Roland, Oliver.*A short History of Africa*,1962.

<sup>30</sup>Ross,erics.2008.*Culture and Customs of Senegal*. westpont,et, greenwood press.kindle edition. location :158.

<sup>31</sup>Cantahupa, Charles.*Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Vol. 222.

<sup>32</sup>Meredith,Martin.2005. *The fate of Africa*. New york, ny. publicaffairs.Kindle edition.p:190

<sup>33</sup>Ogot.BA ,Ochieng, WR(ed) “*Decolonizing and Independence in Kenya*”, East African Education Publisher, Nairobi,1995

<sup>34</sup>ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Lugard, F.D, 1965.*The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, fifth edition, London

<sup>36</sup>Orchieng, R.W, 1985.*A History of Kenya*, London and Basing stoke. Macmillan

<sup>37</sup>Wrong,M, 2009, *Its Our Turn To Eat*, London: harper Collins publisher.

<sup>38</sup>ibid .

<sup>39</sup>Kwame Nkrumah, 1965, *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism*: London.

### III. Results

This section of our work aims to show the basic findings of our piece of research. First and foremost, our handling of Kenyan literature through Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Senegalese cinema by Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* has allowed us to come to the conclusion that both novel and film are powerful means of portraying and denouncing the social and political issues of societies in general and those of Kenyan and Senegalese societies in particular; as it is the case of our work.

The second major finding concerns committed literature and cinema. In fact, through the investigation on the works of both Ngugi and Ousmane, we have noticed that both authors have remained committed to the cause of the oppressed; they worked for the emancipation of peasants and working class of their countries even after the independence of their countries. Third, while undertaking the comparative study, we have found that the two authors used the same themes, therefore, the two works show that Kenya and Senegal have live through the same neo-colonial conditions since both were ex-European colonies .Therefore we can say that neo-colonialism is not proper to one particular spot but to post-independent Africa as a whole.

The last but not the least of our findings concerns Kenyan and Senegalese independences. As we have shown through our study of both works, African independences have been corrupted. The main result is that the native bourgeoisie reversed racism and exploited their own populations.

In fact, even after independence, Africa has been shaken by the new and more harmful form of colonialism termed neo-colonialism which has not only handicapped Kenya and Senegal but also made it lose its identity because of the influence of the former colonizers. Our borrowing of Fanon's and Bhabha's theory on the issue has enhanced all of the above mentioned findings.

#### **IV. Discussion:**

This part of our discussion handles both Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and Sembene's *Xala* as post-colonial works. We intend to investigate the ways into which both converge in their depiction and denunciation of neo-colonialism as a new exploitative and repressive system not only in their respective countries Kenya and Senegal but in Africa as a whole. As previously said in the methods section, we intend to discuss the issue above mentioned through the lens of Fanon's and Bhabha's theories.

The discussion section will comprise three main chapters, the first chapter will look into the way the selected authors deal with the issue of corruption. The second chapter discusses the issue of identity in post-independence Kenya and Senegal; and the last chapter deals with the issue of reverse racism in *Xala* and *Petals of Blood*.

#### **Chapter One: Corruption and Religious Hypocrisy in *Petals of Blood* and *Xala***

*Petals of Blood* and *Xala* are both post-independence literary works that aim to denounce the post-colonial regimes. As we will deal with in this first chapter, corruption is one of the main important themes in post-colonial writings; the African literary figures depicted the corrupt government that ruled over them after independence, which is still applying the colonial regime. We will also discuss the issue of religious hypocrisy which demonstrates the treachery of the religious men. For this, we are going to rely on Frantz

Fanon's developed theory on neo-colonialism, using his book *The Wretched of the Earth* namely his essay 'On National Culture'.

### a. Corruption

The issue of corruption is illustrated in both *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* Ngugi uses his characters to represent different social groups. In *Petals of Blood*, he represents those in power by four powerful businessmen and capitalist exploiters: Chui, Hawkins Kimeria, Mzigo and Ndiri wa Riera.

Ngugi portrays the irresponsible and corrupt nature of the ruling elite through the character of NdiriwaRiera, Member of Parliament for Ilmorog. He visits the village only to ask for votes during elections. He is also represented as a fraudulent. He collects money from the peasants of Ilmorog to use for a harambee water project, which had never been realized when he sent his men to Ilmorog to invite them for tea the villagers were waiting to hear the news "perhaps Ndiri wa Riera had remembered his old promise to bring piped water to the area"<sup>40</sup>, instead, he uses the money to secure a loan for his selfish gains, Ndiri misuses his privileged position to collect wealth for himself at the expense of the peasants. For instance, he uses their money to buy shares in companies and invests in different business. He owns number of plots and premises in Mombasa, Molinde and Watamu. He has been given shares in several tourist resorts all along the coast.

As Eustace Palmer states in his review on *Petals of Blood*, about Ndiri wa Riera:

The Member of Parliament appears a real life-size character demonstrating his incompetence, corruption and indifference to the people's suffering in a number of telling scenes. He has become one of the country's wealthiest capitalists, a fitting illustration of a common phenomenon in Africa. The use of politics as a setting stone to material, aggrandizement the party in power also

comes in for the most scathing denunciation because of its corruption, thuggery, sectionalism and indifference to the people's plight<sup>41</sup>.

Ndiri wa Riera, Kimeria and Mzigo, come with the (K.C.O) project an organization that aims to bring unity between the rich and the poor and settle cultural harmony in all the regions on the surface. But in reality it is just another method to extort money from the people and to repress them by forcing them to make an oath intended to perpetuate complete dominance of a particular tribe<sup>42</sup>.

Ndiri's words below sum up his fraudulent intentions:

The following day he issued a statement promising to explore the possibilities of opening up the area for tourism; and of securing loans for people in Ilmorog – but only for true Ilmorogians, not outsiders sent there out of the natural disasters to develop their Shambus. He would soon launch a giant financial project .Ilmorog investment and holdings LTD as a quick means of developing the area .Ilmorog would never be the same<sup>43</sup>.

In the above quotation, Ngugi shows the corrupt nature of African politicians, Ndiri here gives false promises to the villagers, since all these projects that he mentions will only enrich him at the expense of ordinary people who do not have anything to do with tourism .This is very similar to what Frantz Fanon claims;

Since the bourgeoisie has not the economic means to insure its domination and to throw a few crumbs to the rest of the country; since, moreover, it is preoccupied with filling its pockets as rapidly as possible but also as prosaically as possible , the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation. And in order to hide this stagnation and to mark this regression, to reassure itself and to give itself something to boast about, the bourgeoisie can find nothing better to do than to erect grandiose buildings in the capital and to lay out money on what are called prestige expenses<sup>44</sup>.

It is natural in a capitalist milieu to eliminate those who defend the cause of the poor<sup>45</sup> NdiriwaRiera is a perfect representation of those who will not hesitate to eliminate any suspected enemy. For him, Munira ,Karega and Abdulla are merely “front man”<sup>46</sup> , his real enemy is the lawyer. We are informed by Ngugi that the lawyer was killed and it is obvious that Ndiri is behind this murder, for Ngugi says:

The lawyer was the brain behind it all. The lawyer was the enemy. He was the enemy of KCO and progress. Even if it took him ten years, Ndiri would surely have the lawyer eliminated. He would ask his henchman to open a ‘file’ for the lawyer in their minds.<sup>47</sup>

The first aspect we notice in *Xala* is corruption. The film starts with the scene that marks the celebration of Senegal’s Independence Day, which coincides with El Hadji, the main character’s third wedding ceremony. The members of the newly reconstructed Chamber of Commerce open the brief cases full of money offered ironically by the same white who were expelled from the chamber in the previous scene. It is through this scene that SembeneOusmene illustrates the corrupt nature of the ruling class.

In another scene, El Hadji demands from a trader to pay the merchandise he asked for before obtaining it. When the merchant refuses, El Hadji replies by saying “You don’t trust me, I even sold you my quota of rice under the table”<sup>48</sup> , then the trader answers:” I paid cash; I hear you took a third wife with the money”<sup>49</sup>. In the following scene, El Hadji goes to see a Bank’s assistant director, as recommended by the president, in order to get a loan. He requests 500.000 Francs, which the assistant hesitates to give.

The latter asks El Hadji about the national food suppliers, he indeed asks him about 100 tons of rice that belongs to a national institution. From this, we understand why El Hadji has sold the rice to the merchant “under table”. From this section of the film, Sembene denounces the

treachery, dishonesty and corruption of the African heads of the country in general and the Senegalese in particular.



El Hadji is so taken by his sexual impotence that he neglects his business and affairs which caused him bankrupt. He fails to revise his business; consequently, he is expelled from The Chamber of Commerce because of making ‘bad checks’. He was accused of embezzlement and corruption, El Hadji responds by saying that he is not the only one who do so, and that all the members do so, he says: “We have all diverted goods destined for the needy”<sup>50</sup>, but he is the only one to be accused. El Hadji adds on that the businessmen and himself are less than “Pathetic messenger boys less than flunkies”<sup>51</sup>, who only “Redistribute left overs” of the former colonizer. He adds,

And here before us these very people, who listen to me, witch doctors who know nothing about business dare shout from the rooftops about an injustice which we all practice<sup>52</sup>.

El Hadji’s Words echo Fanon’s words regarding the corruption of the national bourgeoisie which take advantage of their political status to make fortune by stealing the wealth of the people. For them, politics is just like a business from which they make money; they have no intention to lead their countries forward. All that matters is to serve their own benefits. As Fanon notices in the above quotation,

The national bourgeoisie ... is not engaged in production, or invention, or labour, having claimed the governmental positions left vacant by the former

colonizers, they have foremost succeeded in defending their immediate interests.<sup>53</sup>

It is clear through our analysis of the issue of corruption in both *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* that both Ngugi and Sembene converge in their faithful depiction but also denunciation and attack upon the native bourgeoisie of post-independence Kenya and Senegal. In order to deeply voice the extent of the danger of the neo-colonial plight, both enhance their depiction by the denunciation of the hypocrisy of religious men too as we will discuss it in what follows.

### **b. Religious Hypocrisy**

The issue of religious hypocrisy is pertinently depicted in both *Xala* and *Petals of Blood*. Once in the city and because of Joseph's illness, the Ilmorogians asked for help from the inhabitants of Blue Hills, where they meet one betrayer after another, they first seek help from Reverend Jerrod Brown, a wealthy priest and church leader who is also a close friend to Munira's father, Izekiel Wawero.

Like many of the national bourgeoisie, the reverend estate is well guarded. When Munira recognizes him he feels comforted and tries to introduce himself several times, Munira full of hope was thinking: "Maybe I should tell him who I am"<sup>54</sup> but when he advises them to pray instead of helping the sick child he feels ashamed.

The priest refuses to help the hungry, tired and thirsty villagers from Ilmorog on their way to Nairobi, because he believes that the bible is against begging. Without asking about what brought the villagers to the city, he concludes that they are lazy people, people suffering from 'spiritual illness'. Thus, instead of giving food and water to them, he leads them in prayer then sends them away. He says: "The bible is then clearly against a life of idleness and begging."<sup>55</sup> And he adds:

As for the child who is ill, (and why indeed did you not bring him in?) I have already offered prayers for him. Go ye now in peace and trust in the lord<sup>56</sup>

After the case of the Ilmorogians get attention thanks to the help of the lawyer, Reverend Brown, who was neglectful earlier, proposes the alliance of churches to research the difficulties of Ilmorog.

Capitalism has corrupted the religious faith of its purity and spirituality, to put it in the hands of selfish and greedy leaders who use their authority over the people to exercise power. Ezekiel is the representative of this category of religious leaders. This old man is a “very powerful landowner and churchman”<sup>57</sup>, who was once a collaborator of the whites, which gave him advantage. After the independence, he bought the lands of the individuals who needed money to pay their dues. He considers his son Munira a failure because he has been expelled from ‘Siriana High School’ due to his participation in a strike. He always compares him to his friends who have become powerful political leaders while he Munira is just a simple teacher. Ezekiel says to Munira,

I don’t need to tell you have been a disappointment to me, you are my eldest son and you know what that means. I sent you to Siriana: you got into bad company and you were sent home. If you look at some of the people you were in school with you can see where they are: you go to any ministry, go to any big company, they are there<sup>58</sup>

This shows that Ezekiel is more concerned with wealth and status than spirituality or at least respectful job. Even though Munira is a teacher, which is a respectful job, he considers him a failure. Another instance that shows the corrupt nature of Ezekiel is when Karega’s mother, Mariamu asks him for a job in his farm. He approaches her but she refuses, for fear of being exposed; he gives her a job and a shelter “her weakness and her refusal became a kind of bond between them”<sup>59</sup>. He had become a capitalist and sides with the neo-colonial elites, who are robbing the wealth of the country and sharing the cake of independence between

themselves. Thus, Ezekiel approves the idea of KCO (Kenya Cultural Organization) which aims according to him, to bring harmony among the rich and the poor, and the different tribes as well<sup>60</sup>, Indeed the novel is full with biblical allusions, through which Ngugi satirizes the decadence of moral values of not only politicians but religious men as well. This is to be found in the lawyer's religious metaphor,

...meanwhile let's all pray and the god may notice our honesty and fervour and shall get a few crumbs. Meanwhile the god grows a big and fat and shines even brighter and whets the appetites of his priests. For the monster has, through the priesthood, decreed only one ethical code: Greed and accumulation<sup>61</sup>

Religion and politics are no more in the service of neither humanity nor society, but have become a profession, an institution to acquire wealth and power<sup>62</sup>. The reason behind Ngugi's rejection of religion as well as democracy as means of true liberation of both political and religious sides in post-colonial Kenya. The new rulers add nothing to the new independent country, all they do is filling the positions that were previously occupied by the colonial powers. The portrayal of Muslim and traditional religious beliefs which form the basis of class oppression is obvious in *Xala* through the character of EL Hadji Abou Kader Beye. As his name indicates, El Hadji is a devote Muslim, since this title is attributed to people who has accomplished the pilgrimage to "Mecca", and have returned to his home in a holy state<sup>63</sup> Through this one character, Sembene portrays and attacks a whole society governed by corrupt and exploitative men in the name of religion.

EL Hadji, a greedy and corrupt businessman, claims that his duty as a Muslim compels him to take a third wife. He says: "I take a third wife by duty"<sup>64</sup> while in Qur'an polygamy is not an obligation but allowed only in specific circumstances. Thus, El Hadji distorts how

polygamy is presented in Qur'an in a way that feats his interests.He uses his “Patrimoine religieux”<sup>65</sup>,as he calls it, as a pretext for taking a young beautiful women as a third wife.

When his daughter objects his marriage and says; “Every polygamous man is a liar”<sup>66</sup>, he slaps her and lectures her about how men like him brought independence and about the importance of the preservation of religious and African traditions.



Another instance that stresses the hypocrisy of El Hadji is his turn to traditional marabouts to cure him from his *Xala*. Traditional beliefs such as fetishes, protective amulets, potions, spells and curses are all not accepted if not forbidden in Islam, because they are considered as a sin. Even though, El Hadji is a devoted man, he goes to several witch doctors seeking for his masculinity back and therefore proves once again his use of religion mainly for egoistical purposes.

From our discussion of the issues of corruption and religious hypocrisy, we can say that both *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* are Ngugi's and Ousmane's faithful attack and denunciation of the post-independence corrupt African leaders and hypocrite religious men. They both draw portraits of independent Africa caught under the new exploitation of the natives by other natives.

## Endnotes:

<sup>40</sup>Ngugi,wa.Thiong'o.*Petals of Blood*. (1977).P:101.

- <sup>41</sup>Eustace,Palmer:*African Literature Today*.p:162
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid.162
- <sup>43</sup>Ngugi,wa.Thiong'o.*Petals of Blood*. (1977).P:224
- <sup>44</sup>Frantz, Fanon.*The Wretched of the Earth*,p: 165
- <sup>45</sup>. Addei, Cecilia, Cynthia , Osei and Felicia, Annin. 2013, *Ngugi and post colonial africa:history, politics and morality in Petals of Blood and Matigari* .International journal of scientific and technology research
- <sup>46</sup>Ngugi,wa.Thiong'o.*Petals of Blood*. (1977).P:223.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid,p:187.
- <sup>48</sup>Sembene, Ousmane.*Xala*.1975 (sequence: 1:27:18).
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid (sequence: 01:37:37).
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid(sequence: 01:40:71).
- <sup>53</sup>Frantz, Fanon.*The Wretched of the Earth*.p:159
- <sup>54</sup>Ngugi,wa.Thiong'o. *Petals of Blood*. (1977).p:177.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid.p:178.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid. p: 108.
- <sup>58</sup>Ibid. p: 112.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid. p: 69.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid. p: 114.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid. p: 163.
- <sup>62</sup>Somdev.Banik. *NgugiwaThiong'o .Critique of Christianity*

<sup>63</sup>Messier, Vertan.*Decolonizing National Consciosness*..2011

<sup>64</sup>Sembene, Ousmane.*Xala*.1975 (sequence: 0:07:21).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.(sequence:00:15:03).

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.(sequence:00:14:28).

## **Chapter Two: The Quest for National Identity**

This chapter will try to deal with the main issue in the neo-colonialist phenomenon; which is the question of identity. It shows how independent people want to preserve their identities as Africans that are not affected by colonialism but a handful of corrupt leaders spoil African identities by the blind imitation of the former colonizers' manners and practices. For this, we will rely on Bhabha's concept of 'Hybridity' and Fanon's 'On National Culture'.

### **a. Identity Crisis in *Petals of Blood* and *Xala***

In this part of our dissertation, we will discuss the vast notion of identity and how it is shaped and constructed through the vision of two main writers who are NgugiwaThiong'o and SembeneOusmane. It has been very common that literature deals with this notion of identity since most of these African writers witnessed the process of colonization and decolonization and have been affected by it.

In *Petals of blood*, Ngugi depicts the post-colonial society that adopted a new identity and life style. Bhabha explains,

A discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different, a mutation ,a hybrid<sup>68</sup>.

As represented in the novel, the characters in *Petals of Blood* illustrate the influence of the colonial power on the colonized. As a victim of Hybridization, Wanja, the main female character of the novel, is a mere representation of the modern Kenyan woman, she adopts her own style of living; she moves to Ilmorog to start a successful business, but she is not allowed

to keep it, she becomes a high-paid prostitute desired by all the male characters of the novel. After opening her brothel, her dressing style transforms as described in the following passage;

She had on a miniskirt, which revealed just about everything...on her lips was smudgy red lipstick: her eyebrows were pencilled and painted a luminous blue. On her head was a flaming red wig...he thought of one of many advertisements he had earlier collected: be a platinum blonde: be a whole new you in t per cent imported hand-made human hair. Wanja was a really new her <sup>69</sup>.

This description of Wanja represents the Hybrid woman, who under the influence of modernity sells her body for money. The transformation of Wanja is very symbolic, she stands for the modern African woman which under the influence of European culture loses her identity.

*Xala*'s characters as well wear modern clothing. The intellectuals are the persons depicted as hybrid. An interesting sequence is shown in the film, in which black men wearing traditional clothes, are going to The Chamber of Commerce; chase the white men from The Chamber. In the following scene these same black people are shown dressed with black and white tuxedos. This is an eminent instance of the colonization of those people's minds, and the fact that they are hybridized because of long years of colonization.

The president of the chamber claims that in order to become a successful businessman, El Hadji needs to adopt the character traits of the colonial powers instead of relying on African values. He says: "In business you must have the Englishman's self-control, the American's flair and the Frenchman's politeness"<sup>70</sup>, this shows how the representatives on boards admire the foreign powers while being disconnected from their own country and people. Bhabha says:

‘Hybridity’ is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative<sup>71</sup>.

For Bhabha, even if the hybrid arises from contact, it is ‘Hybridity’ within what was coherent and or unity that he calls up, in this way, his version of ‘Hybridity’ gestures more directly to the unequal position of power within which hybridity is created.

Ngugi portrays the first category with Nyakinyua, Wanja’s grandmother. She is the village’s most respected woman. This old lady puts forward the remaining memories of the village’s former glory against the thriving capitalism. She remains faithful to African values and beliefs. She teaches Wanja how to make Theng’eta a drink that they used to drink before the coming of European colonizers. For her, Theng’eta is sacred and magical, even making it look like a ritual. The drink is served in special occasions, such as “circumcision or marriage or itwika, and after harvest”<sup>72</sup>, Nyakinyua represents the spirit of the past; she is the bridge between past and modernity. Through this character, Ngugi wa Thiong’o renovates tradition and redefine its role in the building of a strong national identity.

Another character, Munira is a mere product of westernization and a typical hybrid African. For him all what comes from abroad means civilization, For instance, when the children ask him questions about things he had never thought about, as children still keep their original identity, while as a teacher lost it to western beliefs and education. He says:

Man...law...god...nature: he had never thought deeply about these things, and he swore that he would never again take the children to the fields. Enclosed in the four walls he was the master, aloof, dispensing knowledge to a concentration of faces looking up to him. There he could avoid being drawn in...but out of the fields, outside the walls, he felt insecure<sup>73</sup>.

So the teacher lost his spirituality and the beliefs in divinity and the law of nature. All he believes in is science, as implanted in his head by colonial education. Munira and a lot of

people like him believe strongly in the superiority of colonial language and knowledge. They also believe that embracing Western cultures means civilization.

A similar character to Nyakinyua is presented in Sembene's *Xala*, Adja Awa Astou, El Hadji's first wife. She is completely obedient to her husband. She accepts his second and third marriages without any protest. She is represented as a mere traditional Muslim wife, and African woman. She is dressed traditionally and speaks only in Wolof. We may understand from her role that she is the symbol of African tradition and identity or simply the mother culture and country. Sembene Ousmane uses Adja as El Hadji's first wife to represent the first identity of the Africans before being mixed with European culture. She stays with him even though he takes two other wives and refuses to divorce him. She is also the only one who does not reject him after he loses his business. Just as his native culture, Adja will always remain a part of El Hadji's life. This might be a symbolic way for Sembene to show the necessity of sticking to one's native culture, because no matter how far we get from it, there will always be something to remind us of who we truly are and to where we really belong.

On the other hand, Oumi, the second wife of El Hadji, is another victim of westernization. Through her, Sembene shows the further breakdown of traditional customs and the encroachment of western ideology and consumerism<sup>74</sup>, she reads fashion magazines, wears European clothes, wigs, makeup and dark glasses. Contrary to Adja, Oumi shows her dissatisfaction with his taking a third wife. But just as many of the African New bourgeoisie, she is split between tradition and modernity. She wears modern clothes but she is the second wife of El Hadji which makes of her a combination of two different cultures that are totally different. This left her without identity; she is neither a European woman nor a pure African one. She stands for the Native Bourgeoisie which refuses to go back to their traditions after the independence because of their inferiority complex. They deny their native culture and try

to assimilate themselves to the one of the colonizer, ignoring that they do not belong to it. The film depicts the colonised society that adopted a new identity and life style as Bhabha claims:

‘Hybridity’ is the sign of productivity of colonial power, it’s shifting forces and fixities, it is the name for strategic reversal of progress of domination through disavowal”<sup>75</sup> .



Rama is another instance of hybrid characters. She is Adja’s eldest daughter. She represents the combination of European and African cultures. We see her in both modern clothes as well as traditional clothes ‘boubou’. She rides a motor-bike but refuses to drink ‘Evian’ water. She adopts western values she sees useful such as revolutionary ideas which would direct her society into a better state and rejects others she sees not necessary such as ‘polygamy’.

In fact she opposes her father’s third marriage, and considers polygamy as unacceptable. She is beaten by her father when she calls him a liar. Rama’s position is clear from the very beginning of the film; her conversation with her mother concerning polygamy shows her as the emancipated modern African woman. Her mother considers her shameless because she suggests talking to her father about his sexual impotence. Sembene uses Rama to represent a new African woman, who is educated and aware about the changes that occurs around her. She is modern but she does not leave aside what builds her identity as an African woman.

Sembene stresses the importance of education through Rama. Her consciousness lies in her awareness which starts at university where she gets her political flair. She grows strong thanks to her intense reading. Her room full, of books, shows that she is an active reader. Through Rama, Ngugi insists on the important role of education in the formation of conscious generations that leads to reform. His message is very clear; he wants to incite the new generations to take education as a path that will take them to revolt against the exploitative rotten system.

Thus, Ngugi and Sembene make use of their characters to show the impact of colonization on the people of colonized countries, and how they suffer from the effects of neo-colonialism. Even though the two works are set in different African countries, they illustrate similar images of loss of identity and tradition in Kenya as well as in Senegal. Through these depictions, they transmit a message which is that the most affected category by this hybridization is the intellectuals, because most of them have studied abroad and in the colonizer's country in general. If not, they study the history and the literature of the colonized at schools even after independence. We will support these ideas with this quotation from Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*:

It is from this hybrid location of cultural value –the transnational as translational that the post-colonial intellectual attempts to elaborate a historical and literary project<sup>76</sup>.

**a. Language in *Petals of Blood* and *Xala***

The identity question contains many elements that constitute it, among these aspects language as Ngugi in his book entitled *Something Torn and New* says: “Europhone African literature has stolen the identity of African literature”<sup>77</sup>.

In post independent Africa, the issue of language is a burning dilemma. Language is the mirror of the society and the means by which identity and culture are communicated as Frantz Fanon said in this passage:

Every colonized people in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality finds itself face to face with language of the civilized nation: that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. In the French colonial army and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, the black officers serve first of all as interpreters, they are used to convey the master's order to their fellows, and they too enjoy a certain position of honour<sup>78</sup>.

In this passage Fanon illustrates the importance of the colonizer's language in the colonized countries and how it settled there even after independence. This leads to the neglecting and the abandon of the mother country's culture, because they believe on the superiority of the white culture as the white colonizer engrained in their mind. Consequently, they become proud of using the foreign language which gives them a feeling of superiority while in fact they are just puppets that serve the needs of their master. Even though Fanon is referring to the colonization era in the previous quotation, the analysis can be applied to the post-colonial period as well. In this part of our work, we will analyse this language issue in Kenya and Senegal through its depiction by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Petals of Blood* and Sembene Ousmane in *Xala* during the post-colonial era, showing that this inferiority complex concerning language is present in mostly all African countries that suffered from colonialism, and that it extended for long years after independence.

We will take the example from the Senegalese film *Xala* when El Hadji asks his daughter Rama: "Why do you answer in Wolof when I speak to you in French."<sup>79</sup>, For Rama never uses French when she speaks contrary to El Hadji who uses it everywhere. This shows

how the colonizer's language dominates the Senegalese society even within family and not only the administrations. Another example from the movie is during the meeting, one of the member of The Chamber of Commerce wanted to exclude El Hadji from it, El Hadji asks the president to allow him to speak in Wolof but he refuses by saying: "In French old boy, the official language is French"<sup>80</sup> and the president adds: "Even the insults in the purest francophone tradition"<sup>81</sup> The new ruling class has continued to impose the use of French as a language rather than Wolof, the native language.



The movie starts with traditional dance and songs, and then it is followed by a speech given in French by the President of The Chamber of Commerce which is the ex-colonizer's language. French is considered to be the national and the official language in Senegal and the one that should be spoken. This is because the Senegalese think that it was superior to their native language even that if French colonizer is no longer there. This reinforces Bhabha's concept of the 'Hybridity' of the post-colonial subject.

According to Fanon, the intellectuals believe that they should stay attached to the European culture, Fanon writes about the importance of dropping the colonizer's culture as he says:

This painful and harrowing wrench is, however, a necessity. Otherwise we will be faced with extremely serious psycho-affective mutilations: individuals

without an anchorage, without borders, colourless, stateless, rootless, a body of angels. And it will come as no surprise to hear some colonized intellectuals state: "Speaking as a Senegalese and a Frenchman..."<sup>82</sup>.

In addition to this Ngugi adds in his book entitled *Matigari* that the African writers adopt the colonizer language for the sake of universality as he says:

We express ourselves in French since French has a universal vocation and since our message is also addressed to French people and others. In our languages (i.e. African language) the halo that surrounds the world is by nature merely that of sap and blood: French words send out thousands of rays like diamonds<sup>83</sup>.

Ngugi, like many other African writers used his writing to introduce Africa to the globe and to persuade oppressed people to make revolution against the corrupted rulers and also to criticize the European by passing a message from Africa to the world, as he affirms in this passage:

In literature as in politics it spoke as if its identity or the crisis of its own identity was that of a society as a whole. The literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages<sup>84</sup>.

Ngugi demonstrates it in our case study of *Petals of Blood*, by the female character Wanja who wants to get licence. The officer gives her a piece of paper to read in English, in the colonizer's language as she says: "then gave me a piece of paper to read...my English is not very good...but I could get the general drift of the writing on the wall"<sup>85</sup>, This short quotation indicates that English is the language used in administrations; it shows as well the incapacity of the masses to use it or understand it properly. Through this Ngugi wants to shed light on the limitation of using a foreign language to govern a country because according to him it decreases the ability to produce politically, economically, as well as in the field of education.

This is to be found in Munira and Karega's expulsion from Siriana High School because of their protest against using an English Headmaster in the school; as well as the use of English language in the curriculum. Ngugi also uses 'Shakespeare' several times as a way to stress the fact that English literature is taught at schools. Another instance from the novel is when Wanja and Abdulla are joking about joining Munira's class to learn to "Read...write...speak English through the nose,"<sup>86</sup> says Abdulla. Wanja adds: "And geography and the history of lands far away from here"<sup>87</sup>. This again shows the use of English instead of Gikuyu in Kenyan schools even after independence. This results in the creation of a hybrid culture which leads them to be gone astray between their culture and that of the ex-colonizer who made them believe that they are inferior and that without them they will remain in darkness. For these reasons the intellectuals believe that they should not let that European culture go since it is the symbol of progress.

It is clear from our discussion of the issue of 'Hybridity' and language that both Sembene's *Xala* and Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* give a lively example of the difficulty of the post-colonial subject to restore his identity. African identity East and West has been split by the African's changing to the colonizer's manners and style as we have shown it throughout this chapter. The hybrid character of the African makes it difficult for him to rehabilitate his identity and native language though some still struggle to maintain the traditional values of Africa.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>67</sup>Ninkovich, Frank A. *The United States of Imperialism*. Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001

<sup>68</sup>Homi. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge classics 1994), p:159

<sup>69</sup>Ngugi, wa thiong'o. *Petals of Blood*. (1977), p:331

<sup>70</sup>Sembene, Ousmane. *Xala*. 1975

<sup>71</sup>Homi.Bhabha,*The Location of Culture*(Routledge classics 1994)p: 113.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.p:113.

<sup>73</sup>Ngugi,wa thiong'o.*Petals of Blood*. (1977).p244

<sup>74</sup>.Marcia,Landy, *political allegory and engaged cinema: Sembene's "Xala"*, Cinema Journal 23,no 3(1984)p:34,accessed on September,30<sup>th</sup>,2018. .

<sup>75</sup>Homi.Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*(Routledge classics 1994)p:159

<sup>76</sup> ibid,p:173.

<sup>77</sup>Ngugi.waThiong'o, *Something Torn and New:An African Renaissance*.New York. Basic Civitas,2009

<sup>78</sup>Frantz, Fanon.*Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles LarnMarkmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967),P:18,19.

<sup>79</sup>Sembene, Ousmane.*Xala*.1975 (sequence:01:25:06).

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.(sequence:01:38:26)

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.(sequence:01:38:47)

<sup>82</sup>Frantz, Fanon.*The Wretched of the Earth*,p155

<sup>83</sup>Thiong'o.NgugiWa.*Matigari*.Oxford: Heinmann Educational Books,1987. P:19.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid. p:18.

<sup>85</sup>Ngugi,wathiong'o.*Petals of Blood*. (1977).p:347.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p:31.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

### **Chapter Three: Reverse Racism and Native Resistance in *Petals of Blood* and *Xala*:**

Throughout *Petals of Blood* and *Xala*, Ngugi and Sembene expose the neo-colonial disorders such as a reverse racism and native resistance through various characters. The two writers' assault is addressed particularly to the native elites who were engaged in governing the county and kept the same colonial racist system that oppressed the middle and poor social classes.

#### **a. Reverse Racism**

In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi records instances of corruption and capitalist exploitation of the masses by those in authority, who alienated themselves from the people to become just as the former colonizer. Kimeria Hawkins portrays perfectly the Native Bourgeoisie, who considers, themselves superior to their people because of their wealth and education.

Thus, Kimeria who was once a fighter with the Mau Mau, and who betrayed Abdulla and Nding'uri become a wealthy businessman. He takes advantage of Wanja, his friend's daughter while she was a young college girl. On the Ilmorogians's way to the city to see their representative Nderi wa Riera, Joseph falls ill, consequently Wanja, Karega, and Njuguma the old man seek help from a house in Blue Hill. By their surprise, they were taken to a room in the big house and locked up in darkness<sup>89</sup>, without reason. The only way for them to be released is for Wanja to once again sleep with Hawkins Kimeria. She accepts because she fears her refusal would end in Joseph's death and the mission might fail and she would be blamed by all. Indeed these peasants are treated like strangers in their own country.

Another instance of reversed racism, is in Chui's house, a businessman who accumulated his wealth through treachery and exploitation. During the same night of Joseph's illness, while the delegation were desperately looking for help in the city, Munira is full of hope after reading the name of his old classmate "Raymond Chui" at one of the gates he says:

“Oh my friend...you know...you and I have a lot to talk about...we were expelled from Siriana together.”<sup>90</sup> Through the window he sees people partying and singing “native cultural songs”<sup>91</sup>.

“A Red-lipsticked lady with a huge Afro wig and bracelets and bangles all over her neck and hands”<sup>92</sup> opens the door. At the sight of Munira, she screams then faints. Because he looks horrible with his dirty and muddy clothes. Munira runs away and urges the others to move. Short after, they hear a gunshot.

These instances illustrate the alienation of the Native Bourgeoisie from the masses. Instead of working together to build the nation, these elites adopt the western way of life. They drive luxurious cars, live in huge guarded mansions and throw big parties. They have not returned the wealth of the country to its people. They rather continue and adopt the same social injustice and economic inequality that was the feature of colonial oppression<sup>93</sup> Fanon asserts that this racism of blacks toward other black is a form of alienation, due to the colonial era. This alienation is caused by imperialism which places the white about it<sup>94</sup>.

A similar alienation is presented in *Xala*; Sembene skilfully uses a scene to show the hierarchy that emerged in the Senegalese society. A scene in which people from the middle class are pushed by army agents, outside The Chamber of Commerce, El Hadji’s newly-wed house during the ceremony of his third marriage, as well as El Hadji’s office. Although the rulers are now native Senegalese, but they have the same attitude towards the masses. It is obvious that Ousmane Sembene wants to show that even after the independence nothing has changed, the lower class is still repressed.

Another example is the sequence in which El Hadji’s secretary feels disgust toward a women who belong to a lower class while throwing water outside El Hadji’s office. She rushes out with her aerosol to spray the smell away. She says: “My goodness! These women

with their stinking water”<sup>95</sup>. Her reaction shows how superior she considers herself comparing to the poor women. Through her complaining, we understand how Africans have become mean to each other.

In another sequence, we see two black businessmen complaining about the presence of blacks everywhere in the world. One of them says that he cannot go to Spain anymore because there are many black people there; he says: “Everywhere you look there are Negroes”<sup>96</sup>, the other responds by saying: “Negritude really travels, it goes around.”<sup>97</sup>



This conversation depicts an obvious racism of blacks toward other blacks. The man wishes to find only Europeans when he travels abroad. It is as if this New Bourgeoisie forgets about their own origins, just because they wear tuxedos and drink the same drinks as westerners. This scene of the scenario is very symbolic even though it is short. By using the word ‘negro’ Sembene shows the effect of the French cultural influence on the Senegalese’s minds. They are victims of neo-colonialism who become racist toward their compatriots and people with whom they share race tradition and culture. As Fanon states about the New Bourgeoisie:

In its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country<sup>98</sup>

There is another instance in the film, when El Hadji the main character while in his office with the president hears the beggars singing outside the office. El Hadji says furiously

to the president: “For hygiene’s sake can’t we get rid of this human rubbish?”<sup>99</sup>, then the president calls the army and orders them to get rid of them, claiming that “It is bad for tourism”<sup>100</sup>. Through this scene, Sembene illustrates the irresponsibility of those in power. Who instead of working for the people are just there in their offices filling their pockets with the money of the people.

From our discussion of the issue of reversed racism, we can say that both *Petals of Blood* and *Xala*, depicts Ngugi’s and Ousmane’s attack on the native bourgeoisie of their respective countries Kenya and Senegal where nothing has changed after the independence. Both stress the fact that the present rulers are just like the previous ones. Life is different in the form but not in the content, since the natives who were oppressed by the colonizers are now being oppressed by their own people. Ngugi and Sembene in their works paint an African reality of social and economic inequalities that are the natural outcome of corrupt and greedy exploitative rulers.

#### **b. Native Resistance**

Native resistance is certainly one of the basic themes in our research, because it plays an important role in the decolonization of both Kenya and Senegal as shown in Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* and Ousmane’s *Xala*, relying always on Fanon’s theory ‘*On National Culture*’ and Homi Bhabha’s ‘Hybridity’.

African across the continents resisted colonial demands and took up arms against European colonizers; resistance can be achieved by using non-violence resistance or by using force. Ngugi said in one of his famous interviews,

‘Struggle’ is a part of nature and a part of our history and culture, as a central concept in my aesthetic or cultural vision. ‘Struggle’ has been developing, I think starting from my essays on writers and politics, and one can see this

theme become more and more dominant in my cultural theory. ‘Struggle’ is central to nature, to human art and to my history<sup>101</sup>.

Even after independence, Africans still fight against the new political regime adopted by the new corrupted rulers that kept with the same ways of oppression used by the former colonizer. Depicted by both Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Sembene Ousmane in their writings about the neo-colonial era, shown in *Petals of Blood* and *Xala*, the struggling in the African societies in order to resist this injustice and to illuminate the leftovers of the colonizer.

This is portrayed in *Petals of Blood* through the character of Karega a bright and idealistic young teacher; and the son of a peasant named Mariamu, is shown as the force behind resistance of Ilmorog. Karega shows rebellion since an early age. Starting at Siriana high school where he twice organized strikes. The first strike is against the rigid rule of the headmaster Fraudsham. The second is against the curriculum and studying in English instead of Gikuyu. Karega and his mates expect a new beginning with the arrival of Chui. Soon they realize that Chui is just like Fraudsham, and that nothing will change, they will keep cultivating an alien culture at school. He also “Tried to organize the settlers of sheep-skins and fruits, in Ilmorog, you suggested and organized the journey to the city and saved us from famine”<sup>102</sup>, as Wanja says. She adds: “You must have the blood of rebels in your family”<sup>103</sup>.

Like his name indicates ‘the one who resists’, Karega refuses to be exploited by the ‘Nouveau Riche’ of his society. He opposes the oppressive regime and the profiteering capitalist class by joining the trade union and supports the rights of the proletariats. After working with the lawyer, he becomes politically aware. As a result, he ends by mobilizing the workers of Ilmorog in a strike to ask for their legitimate rights. The young girl that comes to visit him in detention tells him:

The movement of Ilmorog worker... not just the union of workers at the breweries. All workers in Ilmorog and the unemployed will join us. And the small farmers... and even some small traders...<sup>104</sup>.

This news gives Karega a new hope. He asserts:

Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants is leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying bloodthirsty gods and gnomonic angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh<sup>105</sup>.

It is through this short passage that Ngugi stresses the importance of revolution and resistance to achieve full independence and that struggle and violence are the only ways to put an end to oppression. The novel aims to create a representation of the neo-colonial Kenyan condition through characters and events that mirror the state of post-independence in Kenya. The author undoubtedly seeks to provoke the masses in Kenya to see themselves in the characters and their struggle as well as their triumph to realize their power to rise against the tyranny of their oppressors.

A similar resistance is portrayed in *Xala*; Ousmane Sembene skilfully uses disabled people in several scenes. These disabled symbolize the marginalized as well as the lower classes that are not given the right to decide anything about their country. As a way to show the ability of these categories to take stage and be part of the society, Sembene attributes the Xala to a blind man that El Hadji robbed. To get his revenge, he puts a curse on him and makes him lose his masculinity. He tells him: "Now I will get my revenge"<sup>106</sup> "I arranged your Xala The seer told you"<sup>107</sup>, The beggars who cause and cure the Xala represents the masses. Xala is their weapon, through which they ruined the life of El Hadji as he lost not only his business but also his wives N'gone and Oumi<sup>108</sup>.

The spitting scene at the end of the film is very significant. It illustrates the triumph of the masses over the Bourgeois Class. The crippled broke into El Hadji home and tell him that the only way for him to be cured of his Xala, is for them to spit on his naked body. He tells him: “If you want to be a man, undress, nude in front of everyone. We will spit on you”.<sup>109</sup>



In This scene, the beggar want to humiliate El Hadji for all what he did to him as revenge for taking his lands, which was the only living soul for peasants. El Hadji expropriates his cousin’s land and puts him in prison. He explains: “what I became is your fault, you appropriated our inherence, you falsified our name and our property was seized.”<sup>110</sup>. El Hadji cheats the poor man of the Beye family of his share of inheritance probably to finance his early business, and also sends his cousin to prison as the victim says: “I was sent to prison”<sup>111</sup>.

The spitting scene conveys the real pain of the peasants that are oppressed and exploited by El Hadji and his likes. As Murphy notes, “When the beggars spit on El Hadji’s naked body...they are spitting out the anger of all those who are socially excluded from Senegalese society”<sup>112</sup>.It expresses the wrath of the oppressed against the corrupt leaders. Their hardships and bitterness is the origin of their awareness which result in their revolt. They transform themselves from passive watchers to active revolters.

According to Sembene, the power of the beggars lies in their incorrupt nature. Contrary to the greedy marabouts who ask El Hadji huge amounts of money in exchange of a cure; all what the beggars ask for is justice. They remain morally incorruptible, for this reason they are the only class capable of resisting the oppressors. Ordinary people have the power to make change in their societies and seize what rightly belong to them. Fanon sees them, as the only revolutionary class by excellence because “It has nothing to lose and everything to gain”<sup>113</sup>.

El Hadji is not fully cured, until he accepts to be purified by the same people he once calls ‘human rubbish’. The spitting of the beggars would bring purification to his corrupt character. For Teshome argues: “Just as there is a cure for El Hadji’s xala, therefore; so too there is a cure for Africa”<sup>114</sup>. From this emerges Sembene’s ideology about the power of the oppressed to act as agents of change.

Through *Petals of Blood* and *Xala*, Ngugi and Sembene project resistance as an element of social growth, and a way to transform the chaotic state of Africa at large. They invite their peoples to revolt in order to put an end to post-independence troubles. the most deprived are the real force of any state as Fanon considers them the revolutionary class par excellence.

## **Endnotes:**

<sup>88</sup> AyiKwei, Armah. *The Beautiful Ones Are No yet Born*. p:80

<sup>89</sup> Ngugi, wathiong’o. *Petals of Blood*. (1977).p:179.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.p:181

<sup>93</sup>bookeregs.com/studyguide-petals of blood

<sup>94</sup>Frantz, Fanon.*Black skin, white masks*, trans.charleslarn.Markmann(NY:grovepress,1967).

<sup>95</sup>Sembene, Ousmane. Xala.1975 (sequence: 00:47:03).

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ngugi.wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New*.2009

<sup>99</sup>Sembene, Ousmane. Xala.1975 (sequence: 00:52:33).

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ngugi wa.Thiong'o. interview with Charles cantahupa (222).

<sup>102</sup>Ngugi,wathiong'o.*Petals of Blood*. (1977).p:271

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.p:272.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.p:408.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.p:409.

<sup>106</sup>Sembene, Ousmane. Xala.1975 (sequence: 01:58:35).

<sup>107</sup>Ibid, (sequence: 01:58:37).

<sup>108</sup>Ibid, (sequence: 01:53:33).

<sup>109</sup>Ibid, (sequence: 01:58:55).

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

<sup>112</sup>David.Murphy. *The Indiscreet Charm of African Bourgeoisie*: p123.

<sup>113</sup>Frantz, Fanon.*The Wretched of the Earth*, p: 23.

<sup>114</sup>Teshome H. Gabriel: "*Xala*": *a cinema of Wax and Gold, presence africaine*, NouvelleSerie, no.116(1980) p:209, francophone tradition"<sup>81</sup>The new ruling class has continued to impose the use of French as a language rather than Wolof, the native language.

## **V .Conclusion:**

This piece of research has given us the opportunity to study Kenyan literature through our discussion of the leading novelist and essayist Ngugi wathiong'o's *Petals of Blood*(1977) and analysing one of the major works of the Father of Senegalese cinema, Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*(1975). Ngugi and Ousmane depicted aspects of neo-colonialism, Africa's new plight after independence. In this piece of research we have limited ourselves to only some aspects of neo-colonialism; namely the corrupt nature of Native Bourgeoisie, the quest for national identity and language in post-independent countries, as well as reverse racism and the ways by which to resist the curse from which Africa suffers from.

Through our research, we have found that in almost all cases, intellectuals are responsible for their country's incomplete independence. Our arguments are supported mainly with Fanon's chapter 'On National Culture' from his book *The Wretched of the Earth* and Homi Bhabha's concept 'Hybridity', as well as other thinker's ideas on the discussed issue. Intellectuals are blamed for their corrupt ways of ruling the government and also for taking advantage of their positions for personal gains, while they were supposed to serve their people. We have supported this with Fanon's exposure of this issue. We concluded that native rulers are indeed not prepared to rule. The two authors were aware of this problem, and have illustrated it in both of their works.

As far as the identity issue is concerned, we have come to the conclusion that native intellectuals are the responsible for the loss of identity as well, because they are mostly linked to the European colonizer as it is the case with Kenya and Senegal. Since they are the rulers of their nations, they impose the foreign culture to their people in a way or another. In other words, they continue the mission of the classic colonization to become the actors of neo-colonialism. To put evidence to our findings we relied on Bhabha's concept of 'Hybridity'.

Concerning resistance, we have deduced that both others stressed the importance of resistance in order to obtain real independence since it has been betrayed by its own people. Beyond classifying the ills of the political and social system in neo-colonial Africa, Ngugi and Sembene points to resistance as a means that will bring change. We noticed that at the end of both works corruption and exploitation are reversed and end with the triumph of the oppressed over the oppressor. For Ngugi and Ousmane's resistance will be the only way to get a decent life.

We conclude that both Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane have made of their works a kind of satire on their society's independence, mixing it with drama have made of their pieces a success. We also deduce from our analysis that African countries in general suffered from neo-colonialism, a plague that handicapped Africa's culture, economy, and society till nowadays.

The scope of our memoire did not allow us to deal with more issues, though both Xala and Petals of Blood are still rich grounds for new perspective research. Other students can for example deal with the representation of women in both works; others can discuss the issue of tradition and modernity in Petals of Blood and Xala.

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