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Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974) and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's
Petals of Blood (1977) As Novels of The 'Postcolony'

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Abstract

*This dissertation entitle SembeneOusmane's **Xala** (1975) and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's **Petals of Blood** (1977) As Novels of the Post colony , investigates some aspects of neo-colonialism, a new exploitative system that has marked post independent Africa as a whole after the 1960's. More precisely, this research is limited to the settings of **Petals of Blood** (1977) and **Xala** (1974) as Post colonies in the first chapter and the characters' 'Zombification' in the second chapter. The theoretical ground is borrowed from Achille Mbembe's masterpiece **On the Postcolony** (2001). The basic findings of our investigation are: first Senegal and Kenya themselves are Postcolonies. Second, some characters are agents of the postcolonies and some others are zombifieder. 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.*

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Dedication

To my parents, my brothers, my sisters in law Katia, my children, and my family in law. To my beloved husband and two friends Katia Sider and Dahbia Berkí who have encouraged me.

Amel Younsi

To my husband, my beloved children, my mother, my sister and my family in law.

Harrache Lynda

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I. Introduction

In the aftermath of colonialism, the African literary landscape witnessed a surge in works that examined the complexities of postcolonial societies. The Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Senegalese Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* stand as significant contributions to this rich tapestry of postcolonial literature. Set in different African nations, these novels offer profound insights into the experiences, challenges, and transformations of the Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Sembene Ousmane respective societies following the departure of colonial powers.

As postcolonial texts, *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* delve into the multifaceted dimensions of post colonialism, highlighting the lingering effects of colonization on African nations. Both authors intricately weave narratives that explore the sociopolitical landscapes, economic struggles, and cultural upheavals that emerged as these postcolonial nations sought to forge their identities in the wake of independence. Through their compelling storytelling, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane invite readers to critically examine the legacies of colonial rule and the subsequent struggles for autonomy and self-determination.

Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) is a powerful indictment of the neocolonial systems that perpetuated exploitation and corruption in Kenya. Set in the fictional town of Ilmorog, the novel portrays the lives of four characters entangled in a web of social inequality, political disillusionment, and economic disparities. Thiong'o masterfully intertwines their personal journeys with broader themes of class struggle, cultural erasure, and the disillusionment of post-independence dreams. By weaving together these individual narratives, the author exposes the complex ways in which the postcolonial condition continues to shape the lives of ordinary citizens. Similarly, Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974) explores the postcolonial predicament through the lens of Senegal's political landscape and emerges as a satirical

critique of the ruling elite's failure exposed through the character of El Hadji to achieve genuine independence and their continued reliance on neocolonial structures.

The reason that encouraged us to do this research is our curiosity in these kinds of works set in the same historical context of post-independence yet from different colonizers namely France and Britain. It is also worth mentioning the real reasons that led the two writers to produce their great works.

By examining *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* as postcolonial novels, this research paper aims to delve into the profound ways in which these texts expose the complexities of postcolonial societies. Through an analysis of the characters' experiences and historical contexts, we will explore the authors' visions of the postcolonial condition and the unique perspectives they bring to the discourse on decolonization, cultural reclamation, and the struggle for social justice.

Through the discussion of the issue of the 'postcolony' in both works, we will embark on a literary journey that unpacks the layers of meaning within these two novels, shedding light on the postcolonial realities depicted by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane. By engaging with these texts, we can gain a deeper understanding of the legacies of colonialism and the ongoing struggles for self-definition and liberation in postcolonial Africa.

1. Review of the Literature:

Loads of criticism from different perspectives and from various literary reviewers have been issued after the publication of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*. To begin with, Ahmed Saber in his review entitled *Ousmane Sembene's Xala -An anti-bourgeois novel* (1993), argues that the post-independence period was characterized by the rise of 'a new political elite' who exploited the masses. (1993, p.16). He asserts that Sembene Ousmane expresses his sympathy for the exploited masses through the portrayal of the character El Hadji. Through this character, Sembene Ousmane describes the 'new Senegalese Bourgeoisie'. The same critic argues that the latter is described as a rich and

westernized man who spends a lot of money to support his three wives and children and offer them a luxurious life. Moreover, in order to reinforce his reputation and influence the masses, he made his pilgrimage to Mecca. (Saber, 1993, p.18). Saber adds: “*Xala* traces the rise of an illicit petty bourgeoisie whose corruption cultural alienation and economic failure are conveyed through the parable of a temporary sexual impotence” (1993, p.25). This quotation means that Sembene Ousmane represents the downfall of this bourgeois through his impotence “Xala”. El Hadji’s ‘Xala’ caused his downfall starting from the dispersal of his family to his expulsion from The Chamber of Commerce and Industry and finally to his hard punishment by the Beggar.

Another interesting review is *Cultural and Political Alienation in Sembene Ousmane’s Xala* (2013) written by Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun. The author argues that Sembene Ousmane uses the character El Hadji as an Agent of cultural alienation through his use of foreign language (French) and his rejection of his local language. El Hadji uses French not only at work but also in his daily life with his children. He even criticizes Rama -his daughter- for speaking Wolof. Furthermore, the mode of dressing through which Ousmane describes El Hadji, represents him as a traitor who betrays his culture. (Adeyemi, 2013, p.28).

As far as political alienation is concerned, Adeyemi asserts in an article that “Sembene Ousmane reflects the real image of his society after independence. The same critic adds that Sembene Ousmane derives joy in the practice of making fun of human actions with a view to correct the excessiveness or weakness in a given society. This practice is called satire” (Adeyemi, 2013, p.29). This quotation means that Sembene Ousmane uses satire to attack the elite. S.A Ogundokun affirms that the African elite are incapable of ruling their countries in a good and just way; They work only for their own benefits, letting the masses suffer from corruption.(2013, p.30). He adds that Sembene Ousmane uses El Hadji to refer to those African elite and the Beggars to the masses. In addition, El Hadji’s impotence and his punishment by the Beggars represent the punishment of those African elite for their sins. (Adeyemi, 2013, p.30).

In the same way, one of the most interesting criticisms for *Petals of Blood* is that of Stanley Ordu entitled ‘*Symbolic characters and Class Struggles in Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s Petals of Blood, (2022)*, in which he evaluates and analyses Ngugi’s portrayal of neo-colonial Kenya and his attempt to reform that corrupt society, through the employment of characters who reflect these faults, (Ordu, 2022, p. 129). The article also demonstrates how Ngugi uses literature as a means of communication and expression to open people’s minds and help in the liberation of oppressed people. The reviewer seeks to demonstrate how Ngugi writes to condemn colonial rule and neo-colonial exploitation of Kenya (Ordu, 2022, p. 132). In addition, Ordu spots the light on the fact that Ngugi’s work is consistent with the "Holy Bible". As a result, the article points out the injustice and unmodified colonial institutions and policies as the most enduring issue of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s post independent Kenya (Ordu, 2022, p.135).

Petals of Blood has also been studied from a different lens but this time in comparison with another Ngugi’s work, in an article *Ngugi and Post-colonial Africa: History, Politics and morality in Petals of Blood and Matigari* published by Cecilia Addei, Cynthia Osei and Felicia Annin (2013). They assume that Ngugi successfully brings to the fore atrocities and injustices that bedevil post-independence Kenya. In fact, the critic explains how Ngugi suggests to the masses not to succumb to their miserable situation but to rise up and shake off the effect of post-colonialism (Addei. et all, 2013, p. 167). The scholars assert that it is pathetic to note that the decadent societies portrayed by Ngugi exist in real life and those peoples like the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda are typical examples of societies who have lost their human values through the quest for power. As a result, there are a number of power drunk African leaders who do not want wield power but rather want to hang on to power (Addei. et all, 2013, p. 171).

As still another piece of criticism written by Dr. Felix Orina, Dr. Joseph Musungu and Elizabeth Nasipwoni, produced an article entitled '*Subversion of Hegemonic Gender Perspectives as a Means to Post colonial Authenticities in Ngugi's **Petals of Blood** and Ogugi's **The Moon also Sets***'. In this article the critics interrogate Ngugi's subversion of sexism, classism and racism, which are elements of 'Patriarchy'. This latter is considered to be a hegemonic legacy that characterizes post-colonial societies and adversely affect gender relations. (Orina, et. all, 2020, p.147). Therefore the post-colonial authors seek to deconstruct patriarchy which occurs in the form of sexism, racism and classism in a bid to achieve social equity.

The same critics argues that in Ngugi's microcosm, for instance, the education officer; M'zigo, the MP: Nderi Wa Riera, and Reverend Jerrod are all men, they hold key positions whereas females in Ngugi's society are involved in menial tasks such as farming or indulge in prostitution for lack of respectable jobs. They also assume that in the novel no females are found or mentioned in government leadership positions, plus they are dispossessed of their business ideas by male investors which is another indicator of sexism in Ngugi's society. However the author subverts sexism in the post-colonial society of ***Petals of Blood***, the female characters have great influence in the face of capitalist challenges (Orina, et. all, 2020, p. 148). According to the article Ngugi has succeeded in deconstructing sexism giving ingenuity to women during crises such as Wanja who does not succumb to despair after she lost her Theng'eta bar business (Dr. Felix Orina, Dr. Joseph Musungu and Elizabeth Nasipwoni p. 148).

2. Issue and Working Hypothesis:

Our review of some of the literature on Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974) revealed that both novels and novelists have received considerable critical attention. While most scrutinized some aspects of post colonialism or neo-colonialism in both works separately, no previous critic to our best knowledge blended the two novels and Mbembe's theory together in one work. So it remains our task to undertake this piece of research so as to look for possible affinities between both novels and novelists. To do so, we have formulated the following working hypotheses.

First and foremost, given that Kenya is East African and Senegal located in West Africa, what then in their independences pushed Ngugi and Sembene Ousmane to react in the same and to depict them as 'Post colonies'?

Second in spite of the divergence in language of their literature and colonial experience, to what extent does Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* written in English converge thematically with Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* written in French?

Last but not least, what in Ngugi's and Sembene's literary carriers have pushed them to write about their independent countries as 'Post colonies' in the archetype of Achille Mbembe's theory?

The answer and the investigation of the issue and the above hypotheses will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of our work.

3. Methodological Outline:

Following the IMRAD system, we divide our dissertation into five sections. The first section is the Introduction that consists of four main parts. It provides a general introduction a review of some of the literature on both Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974) and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977). It also gives the Issue and Working Hypothesis. In the Methods and Materials section, we will define the concepts of the theory we intend to apply in our analysis of the two novels; and we will present the synopsis of the two novels and the biographies of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane. In addition, the historical background of both Senegal and Kenya. The Result section provides the findings of our research. The Discussion section consists of two chapters. In the first chapter, we will try to discuss the concept of the 'Post colony' in the two selected novels through the analysis of the setting as 'Post colonies' and the main characters as agents of the 'Post colony'. In the second chapter, we will examine the concept of 'Zombification' through the analysis of some characters of the two novels. The last section of our work is the conclusion.

II. Methods and Materials: a. Methods:

This part of our research paper explores the Cameroonian post-colonial philosopher Achille Mbembe's theory on the 'Postcolony' as he develops it in his book *On the Postcolony* (2001). We intend to borrow some concepts which are the 'Post colony', 'Agency' and 'Zombification' as they are of great relevance to the discussion of our issue.

Achille Mbembe is a Cameroonian intellectual who specialized in the study of the political, economic, social and psychoanalytic dynamics of post-colonial African countries. Mbembe also explores African post independencies as potential post colonies. Mbembe's most important works include : *Les jeunes et l'ordre politique en Afrique noire* (1985), *Histoire des usages de la raison en colonie* (1996), all of which subscribe in the postcolonial theories.

To begin with, by 'Post colony', Achille Mbembe means the society that arises from what colonialism leaves in the former colonized countries. In this respect, Achille Mbembe defines it as follows:

The notion 'Post colony' identifies specifically a given historical trajectory-that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonization and the violence which the colonial relationship involves [...] The post-colony is characterized by distinctive style of political improvisation by a tendency to excess and lack proposition as well as by distinctive ways identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation. (Mbembe, 2001, p.102).

Mbembe also asserts that globalization profoundly alters the postcolonial landscapes. It involves the domination of western cultural and economic ideologies which implies economic dependences. (Mbembe, 2001, p.9).

In addition, a 'Postcolony' is characterized by cultural hybridity which according to Mbembe means the emergence of new cultural forms that blend elements of traditional African culture with global cultural influences.

Furthermore, Mbembe discusses the way into which post-colonial societies are characterized by social fragmentation and inequality. He gives examples of African societies that have witnessed conflicts and struggles over resources and power. (Mbembe, 2001, p.102).

Moreover, 'Agency' in the post colony is a multifaceted concept that emerges from the interplay between different actors and power structures. Mbembe adds that agency in the post colony is solely a result of resistance against postcolonial domination. To illustrate, Mbembe argues:

Thus, on the basis of dichotomies that hardly exist, everything is considered said once it has been shown that the subjects of action, subjected to power and law-colonized people, women, peasants, workers (in short, the dominated)- have a rich and complex consciousness; that they are capable of challenging their oppression. (2001, p.6)

It is worth mentioning that our borrowing of Mbembe's concepts of the 'Post colony' and 'Agency' is for the mere requirement to discuss the first chapter of our work that concerns the setting of both Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1975) as typical post-colonies, and some characters of the two novels as agents of the Post colony.

The third concept that is relevant and important for our work is the concept of 'Zombification'. According to Mbembe, 'Zombification' is the process by which human beings are reduced to mere bodies or objects that can be controlled and manipulated by others. (Mbembe 2001, p.104).

Mbembe's use of the concept of zombification is a deconstruction or rereading of the concept of the 'grotesque body' by Mikhail Bakhtin, claiming its use to the elite rather than a concern of ordinary people. (Mbembe 2001, pp. 103-104). According to Mbembe, the grotesque body is a site of resistance and subversion as it challenges the dominant norms and ideologies that have shaped the Western conception of the body. Mbembe explains:

we need to uncover the use made of the grotesque and the obscene not just in ordinary people's lives but (1) in the timing and location of those occasions that state power organizes for dramatizing its own magnificence; (2) in the actual materials used in the ceremonial displays through which it makes manifest its majesty; and (3) the specific manner in which it offers these, as spectacles, for its "subjects" (cibles) to watch. (2001, p.104).

The relevance of this concept for our work lies in the discussion of the second chapter of our research paper. This also lies on the discussion of the characters in both Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1975), as they stand for archetypes of the 'Zombification'.

Mbembe also highlights the significance of memory and history in the postcolony, emphasizing how different narratives and interpretations of the past shape the present of those living in the postcolony. 'The weight of the past predetermines individual behaviour and limits the areas of choice' (Mbembe 2001 : p10).

b. Materials:

1. Synopsis of Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*:

Xala is the story of the promotion of a Senegalese man called El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye to the position of president of the country's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The event coincides with his third wedding. His first wife Adja Awa Astou is a religious woman, whereas his second wife Oumi Ndoye is a modern westernized woman.

After the celebration of his third wedding, El Hadji has what is called in Wolof "Xala" which means a state of sexual impotence. El Hadji thinks that one of his wives put a curse on him because of jealousy but he cannot prove it. Thus, his chauffeur advises him to see the most powerful marabouts and traditional healers, yet none of them is able to help him. Obsessed by his search for a curse, El Hadji neglects his work. As a result, he is expelled from The Chamber of Commerce and loses not only his wealth but also his family. By the end, El Hadji discovers that the curse is caused by a beggar whose land was taken by him. In order to

have the remedy, he will have to let the people or the mistreated beggars spit on his naked body.

2. Synopsis of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*:

Petals of Blood is a novel by Kenyan author Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. The novel is set in post-colonial Kenya, shortly after the country has gained its independence.

It tells the story of four people who come together in a small village called Ilmorog. In the wake of a brutal murder of three prominent figures, M'zigo, Chui and Kimeria. The four protagonists are Munira, a teacher who has exiled to Ilmorog, a pastoral village, to work as a teacher. Karega, a former colleague of Munira in Siriana School, who came seeking for a job and for answers; Abdulla, an immigrant to Ilmorog who has been one of the heroes of the Mau Mau Rebellion who owns a small shop and a bar; Wanja, a young woman who is the granddaughter of a respected eldest woman in the village Nyakinyua. Wanja is a refugee from the city seeking for a better future. As the four main character meet and each one fulfills his purpose, they begin to uncover a web of corruption, manipulation, exploitation and violence that extends beyond Ilmorog. Along the way, they confront the legacy of colonialism, the tension between traditions and modernity in addition to the struggle for political and economic freedom.

The story begins with Munira who is called at the police station in "The New Ilmorog" to answer to routine questions but found himself arrested in order to investigate about the murder. Munira starts telling his story when he arrived first in Ilmorog to work as a teacher, he tells about his meeting with Abdulla, his love affair and jealousy toward Wanja and his complicated relation with Karega.

Because of drought, the villagers in Ilmorog fall into a crisis leading Karega to suggest going to Nairobi to see the Member of Parliament, Nderi Wa Riera. Once there the villages

fell into disillusionment realizing that nothing would change. Returning to Ilmorog, they attracted journalists and foreign workers there and it started raining again.

The villagers celebrated the harvest by organizing ceremonies and circumcision including rituals, dances, and poetry reviving ancient customs in addition to a beverage called Theng'eta that Wanja's grandmother made. Wanja and Karega started dating which made Munira burning in jealousy to the extent that he dismissed Karega from his function in Ilmorog's Primary School. The main road brought lots of changes in Ilmorog especially foreigners, trade, new buildings, banks, police station and church.

In the new Ilmorog, farmers were encouraged to get loans from the bank to ensure the possession of their own lands. In fact Wanja bought her grandmother's land and built a brothel for her own. Munira spies Wanja and her guests and set fire to the house leading to the death of three men and hospitalization of the young woman who discovers she is pregnant at last.

2. Biographical background of Sembene Ousmane:

Sembene Ousmane (1923-2007) is a Senegalese writer and film maker. He first resumed life in Senegal as a fisherman; Later on, he moved to Dakar where he worked as a bricklayer and plumber, but soon in 1939, he got engaged into the French army and participated in WWII with the French in Italy and Germany.

Having attended the Islamic and French schools allowed him to master French, Arabic, as well as his local language Wolof. The fact that he had a lot of experience in France helped him develop political awareness and publish plenty of works aiming at developing national consciousness. His works depict corruption and the negative effects of colonialism on the natives as well as the situation of society after independence.

Among his works: *God's Bit of Wood* (1960) and *L'harmattan* (1964). His most known films are: *The Black Girl* in 1966. *Le Mondat* (1968) and *Xala* (1974). Adding to that, many other short stories and novellas.

3. Biographical background of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O:

Ngugi wa Thiong'O (1938-) is a renowned Kenyan writer and academic. His full name is James Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, but he later dropped his Christian name, James, as a form of decolonization and adopted the name Ngugi wa Thiong'O. He is considered one of Africa's most influential and celebrated authors, known for his works in both English and Gikuyu, a Kenyan language. His life and writing career have been deeply committed to African nationalism, social justice, and decolonization. Born in Kamiriithu, near Nairobi, Kenya, Ngugi grew up in a rural setting, which greatly influenced his perspective and understanding of the social and economic disparities within Kenya. He attended mission schools during the colonial era and later studied English at Makerere University College in Uganda. During his university years, he became politically active and joined the Kenya African National Union (KANU), which fought for Kenya's independence.

Ngugi's early works, such as his debut novel *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), focused on the impact of colonization and the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. However, it was after the publication of *Petals of Blood* that Ngugi shifted his writing to exclusively using Gikuyu as a form of resistance against cultural and linguistic imperialism. The decision to write in Gikuyu was a deliberate choice by Ngugi to reclaim African languages and promote cultural identity. This period of writing exclusively in Gikuyu lasted for over a decade, during which Ngugi produced notable works like *Devil on the Cross* (1980) and *Matigari* (1986). It was until *Matigari* that Ngugi's works began to be translated back into English.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's biography, marked by his personal experiences of colonialism and his commitment to decolonization, greatly influenced the themes and narratives in *Petals of Blood*. The novel explores the disillusionment and struggles faced by ordinary Kenyans in the wake of independence, as well as the corruption and exploitation perpetuated by those in power. It highlights the need for social and political change and raises questions about the legacy of colonialism and the complexities of post-colonial African societies.

4. Historical context of post independent Senegal:

The setting of *Xala* by Sembene Ousmane is Senegal in the post-colonial era. The novel explores the historical context of post-colonial Senegal, addressing the legacy of colonialism, the challenges of neo-colonialism and the socio-political complexities of a society striving for independence and self-empowerment.

After being a French colony during the 19th century and early 20th C (known as French West Africa), the struggle for independence for Senegal began to gain momentum in the mid of 20th Century. Various political movements and leaders emerged, demanding self-rule and an end to colonial oppression. Senegal achieved independence from France on April 4th, 1960; becoming the first African colony to gain independence from the French, (formal independence was on August 20th).

After independence, African nations faced numerous challenges in their effort to build stable, prosperous societies. Economic difficulties, political instability and the lingering effects of colonialism marked this period. The neo-colonial influence of former colonial powers, along with economic exploitation, continued to shape the development and progress of many African countries.

Literary works like *Xala* serves as social and political depictions involving the contradictions and hypocrisies of post-colonial African bourgeoisie. It highlights the

disconnection and incoherence between the elite class, who often imitated the lifestyles and values of their former colonizers citizens.

Corruption, greed and moral bankruptcy of the ruling class are exposed using humour and satire; shedding light on the struggles faced by Senegal and other African nations in their quest for true independence and progress.

5. Historical context of post independent Kenya:

Petals of Blood is a novel written by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and first published in 1977. The novel is set in Kenya just after independence, and it follows four characters whose lives are intertwined due to the Mau Mau rebellion. The novel largely deals with the scepticism of change after Kenya's independence from colonial rule, questioning to what extent free Kenya merely emulates, and subsequently perpetuates, the oppression found during its time as a colony.

Foreign exploitation of Kenya has a long history. In the 1600s, Omani Arab slavers often kidnapped and sold people indigenous to Kenya; Portuguese people both bought Kenyan people as slaves and colonized parts of Kenya. By the late 1800s, both Germany and England had a colonial presence in Kenya. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's first three novels represent elements of Kenya's colonization by and independence from England. *Petals of Blood* examines, among other things, the betrayal by the postcolonial regime of the ideals of this anticolonial struggle that helped Kenya achieve its independence.

The novel deals with social and economic problems in East Africa after independence, particularly the continued exploitation of peasants and workers by foreign business interests and a greedy indigenous bourgeoisie

III. Results:

This part is concerned with the major findings that we have reached after our study of affinities between Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974). One of the main findings of our work is that the two selected works, despite the geographical distance and the different historical backgrounds of the two authors, are powerful means of representing and denouncing the issues of postcolonial societies in general and those of Kenya and Senegal in particular.

The second major finding of our work concerns Senegal and Kenya themselves as 'Post colonies'. In fact our thematic investigation of both novels reveals that East or West Africa, South or North the whole continent's independencies turned to post colonies. 'Dakar' in *Xala* and 'Ilmorog' in *Petals of Blood* are then 'archetypes' of the whole Africa.

One other interesting finding concerns both authors. In the literary carriers of both novelists their literary production going from *Petals of blood*, *A Grain of Wheat* and others of Ngugi's works, *Xala*, *God's Bits of Wood* and *Camp de Thiaroye* by Sembene reveal their ret most commitment to the denunciation of the odds of post colonialism.

Another important finding is that all the bad conditions that faced the indigenous people during colonialism such as racism, exploitation, violence and so on and so forth, are still facing them. The post independent Kenya and Senegal are governed by the political elite who reversed the same bad living conditions and exploited their own populations.

IV. Discussion:

This section of our work is concerned with the analysis of Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974). It includes two main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the study of the settings and the characters in the two selected works as follows, the settings as 'Post colonies' and the characters as agents of the 'Post colony'. In the second chapter, we will discuss the concept of 'Zombification' as it appears through the main characters of the two stories. We intend to discuss the concept above mentioned through the lens of Achille Mbembe's theory *On the Post colony*.

Chapter One: The settings and characters in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Petals of Blood* and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* as 'Postcolonies':

a. The Setting in *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* as 'Post colonies':

- Ilmorog and Dakar as 'Postcolonies':**

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* is set in Kenya, in Ilmorog precisely, in the years following its independence from British colonial rule. In this novel, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o explores the impact of imperialism on the village spaces, and how they are transformed into 'Post colonies', where the social, cultural as well as the economic norms are dominated by postcolonial aspects.

First and foremost, Ilmorog can be seen as a village that is resistant to modernity, and it tries to preserve its tradition and culture. After Kenya got independence, the villagers were attracted by the presence of the big city which presents the idea of growth and modernity. As a result most young men and women leave Ilmorog and go to the city with hopes of having a better life. This appears in Ngugi's words: "The glittering metal has called them. They go, and the young women only return now and then to deposit the new born with their grand-mothers

already aged with scratching this earth for a morsel of life” (Ngugi, 1977, p.9). When the living conditions in Ilmorog worsen, mainly when drought strikes, there is no sign of life left in the village; the village then becomes just a dry place. As a result, this pushes the villagers to go and ask for help from their MP Nderi Wa Riera-a. The land is inspected before by engineers to construct a road across Africa, a transnational road. Therefore, the project is realized and the transnational road passes through Ilmorog. This in turn, leads to the construction of new shops, banks and companies, which means the arrival of modernity to the village of Ilmorog. Thus, Ilmorog changed completely, from a poor village to new Ilmorog, where all the means of life are available. But, these new modern achievements in the village are in the context of globalization financed by foreign banks, they bring change for Kenyans, but at the same time, they do not benefit economically. Even the native people consume not only the local products; but also consume the imported products. To illustrate, the natives do not drink ‘Theng’eta’, the local wine, but they also drink ‘Tusker’ and ‘Pilsner’ the imported brews as well. Yet, the names of the bars influenced by the Western names, such as ‘Mount Kenya’, ‘New Alaska Bar’, ‘Paradise’.

Another feature of Mbembe’s ‘Post colony’ is cultural hybridity, which can be seen through the transformation of Ilmorog society into a capitalist community. After the departure of the British colonizers, they left their culture which led to the cultural diaspora in Ilmorog and the hybridized cultural practices. Ngugi shows this in his novel through the protagonists’ attempt to imitate the colonizers’ culture and bring change to Ilmorog. Moreover, in this hybrid Ilmorog, people adopt the imperialist culture and forget their own original identity. Even so they perfect the process of imitation to the colonizers’ ways in all aspects of their lives, and became blinded on their traditions and culture.

Moreover, Ilmorog people became influenced by Western culture, they dress, drink and listen to European music and adopt the European culture in all aspects. To illustrate,

Ngugi says: ‘Young men gyrating their bodies in front of the juke-box; young men in tight American jeans and huge belts [...]. We were all strangers...in our land of birth.’ (1977, p.120).

One more clear aspect of the ‘Post colony’ is social fragmentation. This can be seen through Ilmorog people, who are impacted by the British colonizers’ culture. After independence, Ngugi depicts them as fragmented between their old traditions and the new western identity. This turn the human relationships into merely a group of whims as Ngugi describes “It was new Kenya. It was new Ilmorog. Nothing was free.” (1977, p.332). Even Ndemi, the religious Saint of old Ilmorog becomes a Ndemi’s legendary place reserved for tourists. Consequently, these changes affect negatively the lives of Ilmorog people and cause multiple problems, such as social injustices, prostitution, the exploitation of the masses and violence. In *Petals of Blood*, there can be evidenced by Ngugi’s words:

There were several Ilmorogs. One was the residential area of the farm managers, County Council officials, public service officers, the managers of Barclays, standard an African Economic Banks,[...] the prostitutes and small traders in tin and scrap metal.(1977, p.333).

It is clear through our analysis of the concept of the ‘Post colony’ in Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* that independent Kenya results from what the British colonial power left in the country. And that globalization altered Ilmorog’s landscapes, yet the natives’ culture hybridized and their society is fragmented, this is what makes Ilmorog a ‘Post colony’.

As far as Sembene Ousmane’s *Xala* is concerned, the story set in the post independent Senegal precisely in its capital Dakar. Applying Mbembe’s theory on Dakar, we can see several aspects that make it as a ‘Post colony’ such as social inequality, cultural hybridity and political and economic corruption.

To start with, Sembene Ousmane portrays Dakar as a place where the ruling elite, consisting of the political and economic bourgeoisie, maintain their power and wealth through

exploitation and manipulation, which led to social inequality. The case of El Hadji, the protagonist, who takes all the Beggars' land to become a wealthy businessman.

Our story goes back a long way. It was shortly before your marriage to that woman there. Don't you remember? I was you would not. What I am now is your fault. Do you remember selling a large piece of land at Jeko belonging to our clan? After falsifying the clan names with the complicity of people in high places, you took our land from us. In spite of our protests our proof of ownership, we lost our case in the courts. Not satisfied with taking our land you had me thrown into prison. Why? (Sembene, 1974, pp.109-110)

Sembene in this passage shows some strategies that the ruling elite use to maintain power over the exploited masses through the character of El Hadji. He also criticizes the bourgeoisie and the ruling elite who continued to exploit the country's resources while neglecting the needs of the majority of the population.

Additionally, to explore the aspect of cultural hybridity in Sembene Ousmane's novel through the lens of Mbembe's theory we need to examine how social relations and cultural expressions evolve in postcolonial Senegal. Dakar portrays the different cultural influences which result from what colonialism left. This can be witnessed through the collision of traditional African customs, Islamic influences, and Western modernity. El Hadji is an example of what is written above.

He was a good, albeit a non-practising Muslim, so on the so on the strength of his growing affluence he took his first wife on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Hence his title of 'El Hadji', and 'Adja' for his wife [...] El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye was what one might call a synthesis of two cultures: Business had drawn him into the European middle class after a feudal African education. Like his peers, he made skillful use of his dual background, for their fusion was not complete. (Sembene, 1974, pp. 3-4).

In the passage above, Sembene Ousmane portrays the cultural hybridity in Dakar through the character of El Hadji as being an archetype of two different cultures, the indigenous and the foreign culture.

Overall, through the aspect cultural hybridity, Sembene criticizes the postcolonial conditions in Dakar and shows how it is considered as a 'Post colony'. The novel also

highlights the facts of cultural exchange, and how the postcolonial elite struggle for self-determination.

b. Characters in *Xala* and *Petals of Blood* as ‘agents of Postcolony’:

Petals of Blood and *Xala*, as postcolonial novels, one significant point, it is the ‘Post colony’. According to Mbembe’s theory of the Post colony, the concept of the ‘agent of the Post colony’ refers to individuals who navigate and operate within the complex dynamics of postcolonial society, and how they are influenced by the Western culture. This influence is mainly displayed through the two main protagonists of the two novels as ‘agents of the Post colony’.

1. El Hadji vs. Munira, Kimeria, Chui and M’Zigo:

To analyze how Munira, the main character and the murdered characters Kimeria, Chui and M’Zigo in Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of Blood* (1977) and El Hadji, the main character of Sembene Ousmane’s *Xala* (1974) as Agents of the ‘Post colony’, we need to consider several aspects.

To begin with, negotiation of power shows how individuals from postcolonial societies are marked by the struggle for power. As far as Sembene Ousmane’s *Xala* is concerned, it begins with the elections of El Hadji, the male protagonist, as president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. From scene one of the film we see El Hadji and a group of African men dressed in flowing garbs going in the direction of the Chamber of Commerce and putting the white men and their statues outside the Chamber of Commerce.



Later on, we see that El Hadji and the other African men who dressed in traditional clothes, wear suits and the white men return to the Chamber of Commerce with suitcases of money and give them to El Hadji and his colleagues. One by one the new members of the Chamber open their gifts, smiling at what is contained inside, and “outside a line of expensive cars were waiting for them” (Sembene, 1974, P. 3).



Through this, *Xala* faithfully gives the image of post independent Senegal as a ‘Post colony’, and shows the conditions under which the post independence elite works. El Hadji is considered as the elite who work for the benefits of the French men.

El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye had once been a primary-school teacher, but he had been dismissed from the service because of his involvement in Trade-union activity during the colonial period. After his dismissal he had acquired business experience in the grocery trade and had then set himself up as a middleman in property transactions. (Sembene, 1974, p.3).

The opening scene also sets the tone in the chamber of commerce as typical of a corrupt post independence institution; one of the Black men made a speech:

For the men gathered on this auspicious day, the road was now open that led to certain wealth. It meant access to the heart of the country’s economy, a foothold in the world of high finance and of course, the right to walk with head held high. (Sembene, 1974, p.1).

This shows the ambition of El Hadji as the elite and how is interested at money and position only, not to help the natives improve their living conditions.

To sum up and according to Achille Mbembe, El Hadji in Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* can be represented as an agent of Post colony. In Achille Mbembe's book 'On the Post colony' he explains how African societies became spaces of post colonies at the end of colonialism. In *Xala*, El Hadji and his daughter Rama symbolizes two conflicting faces of post-independence Senegal: the neocolonial patriarchy that perpetuates existing structures of social and economic inequality. El Hadji himself is also seeking to serve his new portfolio while also seeking to reverse his impotence by visiting a local healer, which shows the contradictions of the post colonial state. Therefore, El Hadji can be seen as an agent of 'Post colony' in *Xala*, representing the neocolonial patriarchy and the contradictions of the postcolonial state.

Just like El Hadji in *Xala*, Munira in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* is a teacher and intellectual who belongs to a rich and successful family. His father is a wealthy landowner who lives in a Western styled house. To illustrate, Ngugi describes the house as follows: "What was called Swahili majengo style, a corner house with a huge sprawling roof of rotting tin. The houses were famous" (1977, p.85). His brothers and sisters received education from different foreign universities.

The one following him had even gone to England and returned to a successful career with the bank. The other had just finished Makerere and was PRO with an oil company. Yet another was in Makerere doing medicine. The first two sisters had successfully completed their high schools: one was in England training as a nurse: the other was at Goddard College, Vermont, USA, taking a BA in Business Administration. (Ngugi, 1977, p.16).

Yet, being a member of a modern family shapes his modernity, to give evidence, he teaches in English what shows that he lived during the colonial period and received education from the white men.

Moreover, Munira, as a teacher and intellectual, engages in a negotiation of power through his education. As a matter of fact, Munira resists the bad living conditions of the village of Ilmorog, his house is described as follows: "... two roomed house in what was once a schoolyard [...]. He crashes into a room full of dead spiders and the wings of flies on cobwebs on all the walls, up to the eaves." (Ngugi, 1977, p.7). His resistance to these conditions helps him to make up for his failure at Siriana, and becomes the Headmaster "You were before only an acting Headmaster. It is now confirmed. "You are the new Headmaster of Ilmorog Full Primary School" (Ngugi, 1977, p.104). Also, Munira's proud of his position can be seen when he presents himself to the MP, Nderi Wa Riera-a "I am the Headmaster of Ilmorog Full Primary school" (Ngugi, 1977, p.212).

In *Petals of Blood*, there are other characters who can be seen as postcolonial agents as indicated in the title, individuals who actively engage with the legacies and consequences of colonialism. These characters embody different responses to the oppressive structures imposed by colonial powers and work towards decolonization and social transformation in another way such as Kimeria.

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *Petals of Blood*, Kimeria can be interpreted as an agent of the commandment, according to Achille Mbembe's ideas in his book *On the Postcolony*. To understand this perspective, let's first look at the concept of the commandment in the postcolony.

Achille Mbembe's 'On the Postcolony' is a critical analysis of postcolonial African societies and the power dynamics that persist after colonialism. Mbembe introduces the notion of the commandment, which refers to a set of rules, regulations, and ideologies imposed by the ruling elite to maintain control and domination.

In *Petals of Blood*, Kimeria is a character who represents the ruling elite and exercises power within the postcolonial Kenyan society. Hawkins Kimeria is a corrupt businessman and politician who manipulate the political and economic systems to his advantage. By aligning Kimeria's character with Mbembe's concept of the commandment, we can identify several reasons why Kimeria can be considered an agent of the commandment.

Firstly, Kimeria exploits the postcolonial economic system to amass wealth and maintain control. He takes advantage of the rural population's labor and resources, particularly through the establishment of the K C O which stands for Kenyan Cultural C as he is one of its founding fathers with Chui and M'Zigo in addition to the Theng'eta Brewery Industries, where workers are subjected to poor working conditions and low wages which explains the strikes which were organized.

He is described in a newspaper article issued after the murder as an 'irreplaceable loss' to Ilmorog and one of those who built and gentrified the village of Ilmorog into a modern industrial town

One newspaper, the Daily Mouthpiece, brought out a special issue with a banner headline: MZIGO, CHUI, KIMERIA MURDERED. A man, believed to be a trade-union agitator, has been held after a leading industrialist and two educationists, well known as the African directors of the internationally famous Theng'eta Breweries and Enterprises Ltd, were last night burnt to death in Ilmorog, only hours after taking a no-nonsense-no-pay-rise decision. It is believed that they were lured into a house where they were set on by hired thugs. The three will be an irreplaceable loss to Ilmorog. They built Ilmorog from a tiny nineteenth-century village reminiscent of the days of Krapf and Rebman into a modern industrial town that even generations born after Gagarin and Armstrong will be proud to visit . . . etc . . . etc . . . Kimeria and Chui were prominent and founding fathers of KCO . . . etc . . . etc . . .(Ngugi, 1977,p. 7)

Kimeria, according to the article above is considered as a hero by governmental forces as he is one of N'Deri Wa Riera-a's friends and his death by arson is seen as a murder of a national hero. Kimeria employs repressive measures to maintain control over the population.

This is evident in his involvement in the repression of striking workers and his suppression of any movements or voices that challenge his authority.

However, Wanja describes him as the one who 'ruined' her life, he has power and connections that he uses and abuses of, to threaten her and make her sleep with him again during the famous journey.

'Stop that, Kimeria,' she said and pushed him away with all her might, at the same time feeling a kind of weakness through her intense hatred. 'Why can't you leave me alone? How can't you – but you were always like that – without feelings – you only cared about your thing. And the power of instant conquest.' Then suddenly she sprung up and grabbed the knife. Then he looked at her, malice on his frowning face. His voice was now gritty, hard, cruel. 'Is that all you can say and do? When I have offered you everything? Listen to me, then. You will not leave this place until I say so. I could lift that telephone and have you all arrested and charged with the offence of trespassing in Blue Hills. You could be remanded in custody for over six months. All we need, for the sake of a semblance of justice, is to keep on making you appear in court for mention. We are law-abiding citizens. No woman ever treated me the way you did. Running and hiding from me. Am I a monster? And you dare lift a knife at me? Now that fate has brought you to my house, I shall not let you go until you have lain, legs spread, on that bed. Remember you are no longer a virgin. Think about it. The choice is yours to make, and freedom is mine to withhold or to give. Go.'(Ngugi, 1977, p.186).

Kimeria represents the oppressive power structures of the 'postcolony'. His position as a member of the ruling elite allows him to exercise authority and enforce the commandment through both economic and political means.

Kimeria has also used his power to betray Abdulla and kill Karega's brother N'Ding'Uri who is a symbol of Mau Mau Rebellion during colonialism era.

The man who came to the office was the one who betrayed me and Nding'uri. He had, as I later gathered, a contract with the company to transport the company's goods all over. The clerks were saying after he had gone inside: Uhuru has really come. Before independence no African was allowed to touch the company's goods except as a labourer. Now Mr Kimeria handles millions! 'I remained rooted to the ground. So Kimeria wa Kamianja was eating the fruits of Uhuru! (Ngugi,1977, p.263).

This means that the real heroes who fought for the independence of the country do not benefit from its freedom nor justice or wealth meant above by the fruit of Uhuru.

By embodying the characteristics of economic exploitation, political manipulation, repressive measures, and symbolic power, Kimeria can be seen as an agent of the commandment within the postcolony. His actions and motivations align with Mbembe's analysis of the power dynamics that persist in postcolonial African societies, where ruling elites maintain control and perpetuate oppression which is in *Petals of Blood* represented along with Kimeria, Chui and M'Zigo as well .

Chui, is in the beginning of the story introduced by Munira as a symbol of boldness, charisma and a reference concerning fashion and style who everybody follows and admire including Munira himself.

In sports I had not the limbs – I had not the will. My ambition and vision, unlike that of Chui, never would carry me beyond what the Lord had vouchsafed to me. Ambition, the same Chui used to say, quoting from an English writer called William Shakespeare, ambition should be made of sterner stuff. He himself was made of a different stuff from most of us. He was a tall youth with prominent cheekbones, a slightly hardened face, and black hair matted but always carefully parted in the middle. He was neat with a style all his own in doing things: from quoting bits from Shakespeare to wearing clothes. Even the drab school uniform of grey trousers, a white starched shirt, a blue jacket and a tie carrying the school motto, For God and Empire, looked as if it was specially tailored to fit him. It was Chui who first introduced the tie-pin to school: it became the fashion. He was the first to wear sports-shorts with the bottoms turned up: it became the fashion. P 43

This shows another aspect of heroism in school, being appreciated by everybody and a model that students in Siriana would follow, he is ambitious and a star who is called 'Shakespeare' because of his mastery of English language and is also compared to another national sports player because of his performance in football. He was also liked by Rev. Ironmonger and his wife, who used to take him for long rides in the country in their choking Bedford and to musical concerts and puppet shows in the city. 'He was probably the son they had never had'. Then Chui was made the school captain. Which is the beginning of the process to have access to power. This transformation of Chui from a popular hero into a tyrant

who thought that his power came from God is an evidence of the characteristic of an agent of commandment described in Achille Mbembe's 'postcolony'.

Chui who once used to lead strikes against the new headmaster Fraudsham in Siriana and was expelled with Munira and five others from school turned into Chui, who replaced Fraudsham in Siriana later and described as a 'well-known nationalist fighters for political, educational, and above all, economic freedom for Africans'. All these facts are confirmations and evidence of his close relation and connection with governmental forces; he is a representative of colonial power in an independent Kenya as Ngugi states through Karega 'There are many Kimerias and Chuis in the country. They are the products of a system, just as workers are products of a system. It's the system that needs to be changed . . . and only the workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that.' (Ngugi, 1977, p.313).

As far as agents of the postcolony are concerned, M'Zigo also falls into the frame of the agent described by Achille Mbembe in the postcolony.

In fact, M'zigo is the Education Officer at Ruwa-ini, he is considered as an important person similar to Kimeria and Chui. He also has been killed the same night, the same place as his friends. He did not like visiting Ilmorog before, but the changes that occurred in the New Ilmorog brought him there more often.

But Mzigo did visit the school once or twice, he would quickly wet his throat at Abdulla's place and then would curse the road and disappear. But some of the improvements, especially in equipment and buildings, were a direct result of those visits. He had brought him one other teacher so that they were five altogether (Ngugi, 1977, p.255)

This shows his interest in the New Ilmorog and the benefits he has in visiting Ilmorog. His greed of wealth made him come regularly, in part to inspect the school but largely to look after his shop in the New Ilmorog. M'zigo is not different from Nderi Wa Riera or Rev. Jerrod, they all had shop buildings in Ilmorog and the business premises he got from Wanja,

had now grown into a huge factory employing six hundred workers with a number of research scientists and chemical engineers. He as his peers Kimeria and Chui also visits Wanja in her brothel, and goes to bars and likes staying on after inspecting the workings of the factory. Plus he owns Abdulla's shop and he likes talking about cars in a pejorative manner.

Chui liked to be listened to as he talked of South Africa, England and America. He also liked casually dropping names of other big men. 'The other day, talking to so and so . . .' or 'the other day, having goat meat at so and so's . . . I tell you, if a bomb had been dropped all the Kenya élite would have gone.' He liked it most when one showed constant amazement at the places he had been to, and if one showed a little jealousy at all the English girls he had slept with. Mzigo liked talking about cars in a deprecating manner as if the car, and especially a Mercedes, was the greatest evil in the world. He liked it best when one praised cars in proportion to his running them down. Kimeria liked to be made a little jealous and then he would try to woo her back by promising gifts. He also occasionally talked about parties with other big men: and at all his parties, people bought only rounds of whole bottles of champagne or whisky. 'You know, the big ones that cost nearly a hundred shillings each', as if it was the size of bottles bought and the cost that made the parties worthwhile. (Ngugi, 1977, p. 333)

As explained above each of Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo has his own preferences and interest in wealth and pleasures including food and girls. However all of them do not meet the needs of the peasants in Ilmorog. Thus the murder of the three wealthy Kenyans is a significant event in *Petals of Blood* that sets the stage for the novel's plot and themes. The three businessmen, M'zigo, Kimeria, and Chui, are killed in a fire. The murder is a symbol of the failure of the ruling Kenyan elite to meet the needs of the people, and the novel portrays the elite as government officials and businessmen who violate the villagers of Ilmorog in both passive and aggressive ways. The murder is also a catalyst for the novel's exploration of the competing socio-economic interests that too often advance capitalist interests such as money and power. The murder of the three wealthy Kenyans is a metaphor for the corruption of the Kenyan government and the failure of the postcolonial state to address the needs of the people. The murder also serves as a plot device, as Munira is charged with the murder, and Wanja discovers she is pregnant the murder of the three wealthy Kenyans is a significant

event in the novel that highlights the themes of corruption, neo-colonialism, and the failure of the ruling elite.

Another aspect of Mbembe's 'agent of the Post colony' is that postcolonial subjects experience hybridity and navigate through multiple identities and cultural influences. In Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* El Hadji embodies this hybridity through his struggle to hold his families. El Hadji has two wives, and he is on the way to take the third one. His first wife, Adja Awa Astou, with whom he made the pilgrimage to Mecca, gives him six children. And his second wife, Oumi N'Doye, a Westernized woman, gives him five children. As he is a wealthy man "each of his families has its own villa" (Sembene, 1974, p.4). He also "provides a mini-bus for their domestic use and to take the children to their various schools" (1974, p.4). Furthermore, El Hadji as a Senegalese business man embodies the image of a postcolonial agent. He tries to project an image of power and success by adopting western life style and values. To give evidences, El Hadji prefers foreign amenities to local good, as he wears European suits and expensive accessories, as Sembene Ousmane mentions: "looking at his gold wrist-watch" (1974, p.2). Yet, he owns a German car 'black Mercedes'.

In addition, El Hadji uses French language not only at work, but also with his children especially with his second wife. The latter speaks only French and wears European clothes and she too drinks imported water. (p.16). El Hadji even criticizes his daughter Rama as she speaks in Wolof and refuses to drink the imported water. He even rejects all what has a relation with superstitions. The night of his third wedding with N'gone, Yay Beneta, N'gone's aunt, orders El Hadji to change his clothes and makes some 'Gri-gris' between his legs. But he refuses "Yay Beneta, you don't really believe in all that! I have two wives already and I did not make a fool of myself with this hocus-pocus on their account '(Sembene, 1974, p.19). His untrusting on superstitions is clear in Sembene's words: 'Being ordered about by a

woman was not in the least to EL Hadji's liking and he was sufficiently westernized not to have any faith in all this superstition' (1974, p.19).

However, despite his rejection of his indigenous culture, his inability to keep away the curse pushes him to go to marabouts to remedy his 'impotence'.

Similarly, Munira in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* embodies hybridity through his interactions with different characters from diverse backgrounds. From the very beginning of the novel Ngugi presents his differences from Ilmorog people in a way that he is more westernized than the people from Ilmorog. To illustrate: 'A thin dust cloud trailing him first rode a metal horse' (Ngugi, 1977, p.7). So, the fact that he uses a bicycle in a village where its inhabitants are absolutely far from the modern world, gives him a sense of modernity. Yet, Munira doesn't believe in supernatural forces unlike Ilmorog people. He even "started holding classes under the acacia bush near the place rumored to be the grave of the legendary Ndemi" (Ngugi, 1977, p.8). The people of Ilmorog consider this place as a sacred one, so for them Munira does not respect their beliefs 'He is mocking Ndemi, said Mwathi Wa Mugo' (1977, p.8).

In addition, Munira believes in science more than the law of nature. When the children ask him questions about things that have no relation with logic, he decides to enclose them and never let them in the open. 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. (Ngugi, 1977, p.27).

In this quotation Ngugi means that Munira's westernization does not mean that he is against the people of Ilmorog. This appears mainly in his quest for liberation. Munira participates in the postcolonial struggle for liberation from the oppressive systems. This sheds

light on his participation in Ilmorogans' journey to the city to meet their elected MP, Nderi Wa Riera-a. He even joins the delegation to resist the oppressive postcolonial state.

It is clear through the analysis of the characters of El Hadji in Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* and Munira in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*, that they are considered as 'agents of the Postcolony'. As mentioned above, both Munira and El Hadji lose their indigenous culture to adopt the new culture which is the culture of the colonizer. With reference to Mbembe's theory, El Hadji and Munira perpetuate the colonial presence through their practices both at the individual and national levels. El Hadji in *Xala* embodies the persistence of colonial power, the ambivalence and contradictions of postcolonial subjects. As for Munira, he represents the contradictions, challenges and aspirations of individuals, navigating the complexities of a postcolonial society.

2. Wanja vs. Oumi N'doye

Wanja is the female protagonist in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and Oumi N'Doye is a female character in Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*. Both are considered agents of the 'Post colony'. To discuss this, we need to draw from Achille Mbembe's theory of the 'Post colony' the concept of 'agency'. The latter means that individuals are both subjected to and participate in the influence or power that emerge after colonialism.

To begin with, Wanja is the female protagonist in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*; she is the granddaughter of an old woman from the village of Ilmorog. Before going to Ilmorog, Wanja challenges poverty, violence and sexual exploitation, as she belongs to a poor family. She is not allowed to speak with boys. She is even beaten by her parents because she goes with a boy who is poorer than her.

They locked me in my room and they both beat me, my father with his belt and my mother with a cowhide strap we used for tying and carrying things. This will teach you to come home holding hands with boy! This will teach you to be talking like equals to your mother. (Ngugi, 1977, P.45).

This quotation highlights the conditions under which Wanja grows. She is even raped by her teacher who is same time her father's friend. «I refused and he confronted me with his knowledge. Either I let him, or I would face my angry parents» (Ngugi, 1977, P.47).

All these events pushed her to leave her parents and work as a barmaid under bad conditions and experience the harsh sides of the disgusting system of a postcolonial society. «I have tried my hands at various jobs, but work in bars seems to be the one reality available to us girls» (Ngugi, 1977, P.48).

Ngugi points out the factors which force Wanja to prostitution, so from this Ngugi shows the conditions of all exploited women in Africa, especially in Kenya. Also Wanja becomes a symbol of resistance against oppression and exploitation. This is clear through her words “I am a hard woman and I know I can carry things inside my heart for a long time” (Ngugi, 1977, P.46).

Furthermore, when Wanja goes to Ilmorog, her life intertwined with the lives of the other main characters such as Munira, Abdulla and Karega. Once there, Wanja challenges the traditional gender role and works as a barmaid in Abdulla's shop. This shows her hybrid identity, because as woman, working as a barmaid in a traditional village seems to be unusual. She even engages in acts of resistance with the villagers, seeking their rights within the corrupt government.

Moreover, by the transformation of the village of Ilmorog into a developed New Ilmorog, many villagers lose their lands, but Wanja succeeds to save her grandmother's land and becomes a successful businesswomen. “Wanja presided over all this: She had money and she was powerful and men and women feared her” (Ngugi, 1977, P.320). Through this, Ngugi highlights her resilience and ability to adapt within a post colony.

In summary, wanja can be considered an agent of the 'Post colony' according to Mbembe's theory because she embodies agency and the ability to challenge the oppressive system of the post-colonial society.

As far as Oumi N'Doye is concerned, she is a female character in Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*. She is the second wife of the protagonist "El Hadji". Oumi N'Doye, too like Wanja can be seen as an agent of the 'Post colony' according to Mbembe's theory, Oumi N'Doye represents the modern neo-colonial way of life in the novel. As Sembene Ousmane describes her villa: "He entered the sitting room, full of expensive French furniture and artificial flowers" (1974, P.14).

Ousmane describes her daughter's clothing as follows: "She was fifteen years old, big for her age, and wore a mini-skirt". (1974, P.15).

Oumi N'Doye also spends more of her days reading international magazines, and wearing expensive European clothes and speaking French.

Oumi N'Doye sat on a chair, crossed her legs and opened the woman's magazine [...] Oumi N'Doye was a great expert on overseas women's fashion, those of grands couturiers the film stars. Photo-novelettes were her daily reading. She devoured them, and dreamed of passionate love affairs she would have liked to experience. (Sembene, 1974, P.37).

In this short passage, Sembene Ousmane shows Oumi N'Doye's ambition to reach the European ways of life. It is also apparent in Sembene's words: «Oumi N'Doye turned on the radio. She only listened to the international service, because the broadcast were exclusively in French» (1974, P.39).

In addition, her relation with El Hadji seems to be financial, and her children always demand money and resources from their father. To illustrate Sembene writes "Father can you give me some money?" (1974, P.15).

Their children also want to become equal to their brothers and sisters from El Hadji's first wife. Claiming that their father should buy them a car like the others (Sembene, 1974: P3). Moreover, Oumi N'Doye's agency is evident in her pursuit of financial independence by challenging her husband's failure.

without warning her husband Oumi N'Doye, the second wife, took her children and went to live with her parents in a poor district of the town [...] Being a prudent women, under cover of darkness and with the help of brothers, sisters, and cousins, she too had emptied her villa, going so far as to remove even the curtains, the fridge, and the carpets. (Sembene, 1974, P.101).

From this quotation we notice that Oumi N'Doye leaves her husband as he fails, but she does not want to leave her standard of life. She wants to take with her all the modern fixtures she already has in her villa.

Furthermore, Oumi N'Doye's agency is apparent through her actions which demonstrate her desire for self-determination, highlighting the complexities and possibilities for agency within the postcolonial African context. To give evidence, Sembene argues:

Now that she had fallen from her former position of economic superiority, Oumi N'Doye tried to show she was a modern woman by going from office to office, firm to firm, in search of work. Through her change of fortune too, she came to meet men who liked the easy life, men who could provide pleasure while they had money. So Oumi N'Doye often went out in the evening. (1974, P.102).

In the passage above, Sembene Ousmane shows the resistance and the desires of many African women in the postcolonial era, through Oumi N'Doye who challenges the patriarchal norms and the traditions of the African society.

Chapter Two: Zombified Characters in *Xala* and *Petals of Blood*:

a. El Hadji vs. Munira

El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye is the main protagonist in Sembene Ousmane's novel *Xala*. He can be interpreted as a zombified character in the context of post-colonial Senegal.

The concept of zombification as used by Achille Mbembe refers to the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on the colonized individuals and societies. In *Xala*, El Hadji represents the African bourgeoisie, who has acquired wealth and power after independence:

Then came independence. By now he had capital and connections, so he was able to set up on his own [...] He was well known and had a certain standing in the business community, overseas investors paid him to act as a front. He was also on the boards of two or three local companies. He played his various roles well, but although the law was fooled, everyone knew what was really happening. (Sembene, 1974,P.03).

In addition, El Hadji's pursuit of material, wealth and social status reflects the legacy of colonialism, where economic exploitation and corruption are prevalent. In this sense El Hadji can be seen as a representation of the post-colonial African elite, who have inherited power and wealth but are disconnected from the needs and struggles of their population.

However, despite his new found status, his third marriage "I have now married my third wife, so I'm a captain, as we Africans say" (Sembene, 1974, P.02). El Hadji remains trapped in a state of psychological and spiritual paralysis. This is symbolized by his sudden impotence 'Xala' on his wedding night, which renders him incapable of consuming his marriage. He finds himself powerless and reduces to a mere body.

El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye was aghast. He could not believe what had happened to him [...]. This morning he was completely shattered. He felt numbed. He could barely realize what had happened. All night he had stayed awake, his body separated from his desire, his nerves disconnected from his nervous centre. (Sembene, 1974, P.28)

El Hadji's curse with the 'Xala' is symbolic of his loss of power and agency as a man. He becomes socially unimportant, unable to perform sexually and consequently unable to

fulfil societal expectations of masculinity. 'Xala' made El Hadji ashamed in his dignity as a man (Sembene, 1974, p.68). All this can be interpreted as a metaphor (allusion) for the effects of colonialism and post-colonial power on African men in general.

El Hadji suffered greatly from his impotence, he had inferiority complex in the company of his peers, "he imagined himself the object of their looks" (Sembene, 1974, p.43).

Mbembe's theory highlights how colonialism and its legacies have created conditions of subjugation, alienation and stagnation for post-colonial societies. Thus El Hadji's zombification in the novel can be understood as a manifestation of those conditions where he is trapped in a state of economic wealth but lacks true autonomy and meaningful connections to his own culture and people, and the decline of his societal ability too. El Hadji's business was feeling the effects of his state" (Sembene, 1974: p.60).

El Hadji, according to Achille Mbembe's theory is dehumanized and turned into a hollow shell of a man. He is obsessed with European culture, he is an agent of the postcolony, he demonstrates and attempts to mimic the colonizer's lifestyle which further alienates him from his own culture and identity, and he is a zombie.

"Zombification means that each has robbed the other of vitality and left both impotent" (Mbembe, 2001, p.104)

In this sense and in the same way Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* explores the concept of 'Zombification' through the experiences of several characters in the story who are trapped in a cycle of poverty and exploitation that make them unable to escape the new oppressive systems that have been imposed upon them.

Munira is the main protagonist in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* he is the story teller, a teacher who is arrested in the very beginning of the story. He is arrested by the new coming

police authorities in *The New Ilmorog* he is presented as a character who is trapped in a cycle of poverty and powerlessness though Ilmorog is independent.

As a school teacher in Ilmorog Primary School, he is unable to escape the oppressive economic and social conditions of the community in Ilmorog depicted by Ngugi as a typical postcolony, "he did not care, for a month they had made a fool of him" (Ngugi, 1977, p.14). His attempts to challenge the status quo are met with violence and repression, leaving him feeling powerless and isolated. This sense of helplessness is a key aspect of zombification process which strips individuals of their ability to act and think for themselves.

Furthermore, Munira's experiences throughout the story are characterized by a sense of numbness and detachment. As an example, despite his passion for education and social justice, he becomes increasingly disillusioned and apathetic as he witnesses the corruption of those in power like "M'Zigo" the educationalist who turned into a businessman in New Ilmorog. M'Zigo has promoted Munira to a position of Headmaster and gave him an invitation to a tea party organized by the KCO which stands for Kiama Kamuene Cultural Organization, but it proved to be a trick to gather money and humiliate Munira and all teachers like him.

The sudden reversal of fortune was the most painful Munira had experienced since the Siriana incident. They were taken past Gatundu, through some banana plantations where they found yet another crowd of people solemnly waiting for something. A funeral tea? Munira wondered, numbed to silence by the eerie sombreness of everything. He looked around: the government official had vanished. They were now ordered into lines – one for men, the other for women. A teacher asked loudly: is this the tea we came to have? He was hit with the flat of a panga by a man who emerged from nowhere and as suddenly disappeared into nowhere. How did M'Zigo and the government official come into all this? (Ngugi, 1977, p.110)

Munira's expectations have been put down, causing emotional death which disabled him from acting against this betrayal. This emotional death is another aspect of zombification which reduces individuals to mere shells of their former selves.

As Munira battles for a connection with his fellow man and society one thinks of the precarious role of the intellectual in a neocolonial society. It becomes evident that

Munira embodies the traits of the middle classes: their vacillation when it comes to commitment to big issues, their entrapment between the ruling class and the peasants, their chauvinisms, their mental terror of progressive class politics. They would rather hide behind high-sounding words and wait for the perfect time to choose. The time never comes. Poor piggies, they are often left with religion as their only anchor. Munira, true to his roots, ends up splashing and gagging in that morass. (Ngugi,1977,p.13)

In this passage above from the introduction of Penguin 1st version of *Petals of Blood* , written by Moses Isegawa, we can understand how Munira as a representative of intellectuals in post independent Kenya find himself lacking of agency and totally deprived from humanity which coincides with Mbembe's concept of zombification.

To conclude this discussion about Munira we can say also that his fate at the end of the story can be seen as an ultimate illustration and manifestation of zombification. In fact after being brutally disillusioned by the government forces, he tries and seeks to oppose them but cannot do anything, and that transformation highlights the extent to which he has been reduces to a symbolic object, rather than a fully realized human being with his own thoughts, agency and desires.

Thus, both novels through the main protagonists El Hadji and Munira respectively in *Xala* and *Petals of Blood* can be seen as a reflection and representation of the zombification process of people in post independent African countries.

b. Adja Awa Astou vs Abdulla

Adja Awa Astou is El Hadji's first wife in the novel she represents the traditional norms and expectations. She is depicted as being controlled and dominated by her husband and his polygamous marriage system. Her desires and ambitions are suppressed, reducing her to a passive and obedient character.

Mbembe's theory emphasizes the impact of colonialism on subjectivity and identity, in fact, we may suggest that Adja Awa is a zombified figure since she is deprived from her

individuality and autonomy; she is reduced to fulfilling societal expectation only. "My co-wife and I should attend the ceremony. It's your father's wish, so..." (Sembene, 1974, P.12).

Adja Awa doesn't act as she wants to, she acts because she's afraid of what people will say. She has no personal ambitions.

Her ambition was to be a wife according to the teaching of Islam by observing the five daily prayers and showing her husband complete obedience, her religion and her education of her life, the few friends she still kept and her husband's friends all spoke of her as an exemplary wife. (Sembene, 1974, P.24)

Adja Awa has gradually stopped seeing her family and has completely broken with them when her mother passed away. She has also dropped her real name "Renée" for an Arabic muslim name. Awa which means the first woman on the earth.

Furthermore, she had never complained, never demanded what was her right (Sembene, 1974, P.37). She has no friends to confide or to talk to about her worries. She is isolated and lacks of agency "What should I do" (sembene, 1974, P.46). This loss of agency can be seen as a result of the historical and ongoing power dynamics of colonialism which often stripped colonised individuals of their autonomy.

Adja Awa being the first wife symbolises the traditional values and customs of her community. However, she becomes alienated from her own culture due to the introduction of western ideals and practices. This cultural alienation contributes to her zombified state, as she is disconnected from her roots, her name and unable to fully participate in her own society, plus, she is abandoned by her husband, she is marginalized but fully dependent on his financial situation.

In sum, Adja Awa's character in *Xala* can be interpreted as a zombified character according to Achille Mbembe's post-colonial theory. Her loss of agency, her cultural and social alienation, her lack of ambitions and individual interest as a woman are all a reflection of her 'zombification' and dehumanizing effects of colonialism on African societies broadly.

Abdulla in *Petals of Blood* is a shopkeeper and a businessman who has become completely detached from his roots and culture (Indian). He is focused solely on making more money and increasing his power. His obsession with material wealth and status leads him to abandon his own identity and culture, he is willing to do whatever it takes to maintain his position, his shop, his bar, and his donkey, even if it means exploiting and oppressing the others such as Joseph his young brother. “Joseph- you lazy bones – have you ever met a little nigger that was so lazy?” (Ngugi, 1977, p.24).

In this way Abdulla embodies the ‘Zombification’ which implies the fact he has become a passive receiver, a slave of the dominant capitalist culture with no regard for his fellow human being although the story focuses on four main characters—Munira, Abdulla, Wanja, and Karega—who come from different backgrounds and have distinct memories and experiences of the past. Through their interconnected stories, *Petals of Blood* explores the ways in which the characters’ personal histories intersect with the broader historical narrative of postcolonial Kenya.

Similarly Abdulla in *Petals of Blood* struggles to reconcile his individual memories and traumas with the collective memory and history of the nation he fought for. He confronts the injustices and inequalities that persist even after independence, which are rooted in the historical exploitation and violence of the colonial era. Abdulla seeks to understand and make sense of his past, and his memories shape his motivations and actions in the story.

For Abdulla it was the idea of a blood that was shed because the question had always troubled him, looking at the lands in Tigoni and other places: is it right that that which had been bought by the collective blood of a people should go to a few hands just because they had money and bank loans? Was it banks and money that had fought for it? But he had never found an answer because it was true that black hands were owning it. And he would have liked to own one of those farms himself. (Ngugi, 1977, P.199).

Abdulla's past as a hero and freedom fighter doesn't coincide with his present that's why he feels himself lost and drinks thenge'ta to forget. He is described in an introduction of *Petals of Blood* first version by Moses Isegawa as follows

Another migrant who says little but sits on a ton of secrets is Abdulla, the one-legged shopkeeper who owns the donkey and knew Karega's brother back in the days of the Mau Mau. He is gnawed by his failure to avenge a fallen comrade's death. He is the representation of the 'positive contribution Kenyan workers of Asian origins made to the struggle for independence and the deliberate attempt by the ruling class and some intellectuals to downplay it'. He is a war hero, who participated fully in the post-independence struggle to liberate the downtrodden. He confirms Ngugi's multi-ethnic approach to politics as the way forward for Kenya. (Ngugi, 1977, P.14).

In addition, Abdulla may illustrate the corruption influence of colonialism in Kenya and on African societies. The character's actions and beliefs are heavily influenced by his exposure to western, modern culture and capitalist ideologies. He encouraged his customers to drink beer all the time. "Abdulla shouted at Joseph to bring in more beer" (Ngugi, 1977, p.30). He liked the change that occurred in Ilmorog and he offered Wanja to work as a barmaid in his shop who also in her turn brought changes in his bar, so we can say that he prioritizes individual gain over community well-being.

Over all, the character of Abdulla in *Petals of Blood* can be seen as a representation of the zombification process as well as damaging effects of colonialism and capitalism in the aftermath of the independence of African societies.

c. N'Gone vs. Wanja

In Sembene Ousmane Xala, N'Gone is the third wife of El Hadji, she is his daughter Rama's age 19 years old, her marriage to El Hadji has been the complete conspiracy and manipulation of the Yay Bineta called the Badyen her aunt fatherly.

According to Achille Mbembe's postcolonial theory the concept of zombification extends beyond its traditional meaning. Through the postcolonial lens, it refers to a state of

social death and dehumanization imposed on individuals by colonial and neo-colonial power structures consequently; N’Gone can be seen as a zombified character since she aligns with Mbembe’s concept of zombification in different ways.

First and foremost, N’Gone undergoes within the patriarchal system and polygamous system. She is reduced to a mere object, lacking autonomy and agency, it is her aunt the Badyen who arranged her marriage to El Hadji, and it has not been her choice.

Then N’Gone’s position as a wife becomes a means of exploitation by El Hadji. The badyen introduces her as an object "take a good look at her [...] could she not be a kind of measure [...] she is gentle [...] A pleasant harbour for the eyes." (Sembene, 1974, P.07). As if the Badyen is selling N’Gone’s body.

N’Gone is objectified and her desires and needs are disregarded. She doesn’t react, she doesn’t speak her words. She remains silent all the time "N’Gone, the child of national flags and hymns, understood nothing of what they were saying"(Sembene, 1974, P.07).

N’Gone’s mother Mam Fatou wanted her to marry because she has failed her elementary certificate and because they couldn’t afford paying for schooling, plus the mother was afraid that her daughter brings "bastard children". The mother insists on the fact that N’Gone will have to get married "We must find her a husband. She is at the right age" (P.05).

N’Gone’s character is rendered powerless and dependent on El Hadji for her survival. She is unable to challenge or escape her situation due to societal norms and limited options available to her. This powerlessness reflects the structural violence inherent in postcolonial societies, where individuals are trapped within systems that deny their agency or their dehumanization and exclusion.

As a conclusion, we may say that Mbembe’s postcolonial theory helps us understand the metaphorical zombification of N’Gone as a representation of the dehumanizing effects of

colonization and patriarchy, highlighting the ongoing struggle for agency and liberation within such system.

In the same way, the character of Wanja in *Petals of Blood* embodies many aspects of zombification. She is a woman who is forced into prostitution by circumstances beyond her control. She is treated like a commodity which can be bought and sold and abused by men who use her for their own pleasure, in fact she has little agency or control over her own life.

Wanja is sexually exploited by powerful men in the government such as Kimeria and she becomes involved with Karega and becomes a symbol of the oppression and violence experienced by women in post-colonial Kenya.

Wanja's situation is a reflection of the larger social and political structures in the *Petals of Blood*, which are designed to exploit and control the people of Kenya. We are girls in search of work and men (Ngugi, 1977:p.142). Wanja has no choice but to work as a barmaid, it is all that was offered to her as for other girls like her in post independent Kenya but not only that because Ngugi depicts prostitution through a different lens by Karega.

But we do not have to heap insults on others. We are all prostitutes, for in a world of grab and take, in a world built on a structure of inequality and injustice, in a world where some can eat while others can only toil, some can send their children to schools and others cannot, in a world where a prince, a monarch, a businessman can sit on billions while people starve or hit their heads against church walls for divine deliverance from hunger, yes, in a world where a man who has never set foot on this land can sit in a New York or London office and determine what I shall eat, read, think, do, only because he sits on a heap of billions taken from the world's poor, in such a world, we are all prostituted. (Ngugi, 1977, p. 286).

Wanja exemplifies the zombified state described in Mbembe's theory. She is trapped in a cycle of exploitation, objectification, and violence, forced to live a life devoid of personal autonomy. Wanja's experiences in *Petals of Blood* reflect the broader social and political structures that perpetuate post independent Kenya, reducing individuals to mere instruments of labor and pleasure. This echoes Mbembe's description of post independent countries as "Postcolonies"

The barmaid demonstrates also the psychological toll of zombification. She is consumed by feelings of shame and self-hatred, and she struggles to see herself as anything other than a prostitute.

Wanja had made a pact with herself. She would have a completely new beginning in Ilmorog. Since she left Ilmorog she had had two humiliating and shameful experiences. She would now break with that past and make something of herself in Ilmorog. As an evidence of her cleansed spirit, she resolved that she would not again obey the power of her body over men; that any involvement was out until she had defeated the past through a new flowering of self. (Ngugi, 1977, p.128).

Wanja as Munira are trapped in a cycle of poverty and exploitation unable to break free from the forces that are controlling her life she tries her best to achieve something but remains controlled. Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* uses Wanja to showcase the plight of women, their contribution to the struggle and their deserved status as equal partners in the share of glory.

Thus and for those reasons, Wanja can be seen as a powerful example of the ways in which 'Zombification' operates in post-colonial societies. Her story highlights the dehumanizing effects of colonialism and the ongoing struggle for liberation and self-determination in the wake of these historical injustices during post colonial Kenya.

As far as the notion of the past and the present in *Xala* and *Petals of Blood* is concerned, we intend to explore how the characters engage with memory and history, how they remember or forget, and how the past influences their actions and motivations.

In both *Xala* by Ousmane Sembene and *Petals of Blood* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the characters' engagement with memory and history plays a crucial role in shaping their actions and motivations within the postcolony. These novels highlight the significance of remembering or forgetting certain aspects of the past and how different narratives and interpretations of history can shape the present.

In "Xala," the main character El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye represents the emerging African bourgeoisie after independence. As a successful businessman, he strives to maintain an image of prosperity and power, but he is haunted by the memory of his impoverished past represented by the beggar who cursed him with the 'xala'.

Our story goes back a long way. It was shortly before your marriage to that woman there. Don't you remember? I was sure you would not. What I am now is your fault. Do you remember selling a large piece of land at Jeko belonging to our clan? After falsifying the clan names with the complicity of people in high places. (Sembene, 1974,p.109)

In this passage the beggar insists on reminding El Hadji with his past as a betrayer and falsifier of laws for his own benefit.

However, rather than confronting and acknowledging this history, El Hadji tries to forget it and adopt the trappings of European colonial culture. He embodies a collective amnesia that pervades the postcolonial society, where the elite class seeks to distance itself from the traumatic memories of colonization and the struggles of the past.

El Hadji's engagement with memory and history is further explored through the motif of his impotence, which serves as a metaphor for his inability to confront the past. The physical and metaphorical impotence he experiences on his wedding night represents the emasculating effects of colonial domination and the loss of agency. This impotence can be seen as a form of collective forgetfulness, where the postcolonial society is unable to assert its power and agency due to its historical subjugation.

Similarly, in "Petals of Blood," the characters grapple with the legacy of colonialism and the complex relationship between memory and history. The novel focuses on four main characters—Munira, Abdulla, Wanja, and Karega—who come from different backgrounds

and have distinct memories and experiences of the past and by the past we mean the colonial experience of Abdulla and the precolonial, traditional and cultural heritage.

Through their interconnected stories, Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* explores the ways in which the characters' personal histories intersect with the broader historical narrative of postcolonial Kenya.

The characters struggle to reconcile their individual memories and sufferings with the collective memory and history of their nation as they stand as 'archetypes'. They confront the injustices and inequalities that persist even after independence, which are rooted in the historical exploitation and violence of the colonial era. Each character seeks to understand and make sense of their past, and their memories shape their motivations and actions in the present.

Karega, for instance, is a teacher who represents the intellectual class and the struggle for national consciousness. He grapples with his role as a witness to history and is burdened by the weight of remembering and preserving the collective memory of the nation. His engagement with memory and history drives him to challenge the oppressive structures of power and advocate for social justice.

'Why? Why?' he moaned inside. 'I have failed,' and he felt another teardrop fall to the cement floor. Then suddenly he hit the cell wall in a futile gesture of protest. What of all the Mariamus of Kenya, of neo-colonial Africa? What of all the women and men and children still weighed down by imperialism? And for two days he would not eat anything. (Ngugi, 1977, p,347)

In this passage Karega remembers his mother as a freedom fighter for justice in Kenya and questions about the future of the generations after independence still confronting manipulation and injustice from a neo colonial power.

Another migrant who says little but sits on a ton of secrets is Abdulla, the one-legged shopkeeper who owns the donkey and knew Karega's brother back in the days of the Mau Mau. He is gnawed by his failure to avenge a fallen comrade's death. He is the representation of the 'positive contribution Kenyan workers of Asian origins made to

the struggle for independence and the deliberate attempt by the ruling class and some intellectuals to downplay it'. He is a war hero, who participated fully in the post-independence struggle to liberate the downtrodden. He confirms Ngugi's multi-ethnic approach to politics as the way forward for Kenya. (Ngugi, 1977, p. 13)

Abdulla in the passage above from the introduction written by Moses Isegawa questions all the time throughout the novel his achievements as a freedom fighter and tries to reconcile his glorious past as a hero during the Mau Mau rebellion with his present struggle for equality among people of Kenya. He also remembers the precolonial traditional Kenya with Nyakinyua who is Wanja's grandmother with the different rites of passage at different moments in the story to show the transition from a state to another. And this is an evidence of Abdulla's memories.

Wanja also questions at different levels in the novel her past and her present by expressing the fight she undergoes to achieve her goal.

They passed several houses not knowing which they should choose to enter. Most had Asian and European names, for this was one of the most fashionable farming and residential districts around the city. For Wanja the whole area brought back unpleasant memories of that experience in the city, and she did not want to venture into any. (Ngugi, 1977,p.161)

Wanja's past as a prostitute dominates her present actions and choices. She tries to reconcile her past with her present choices to bear a child and achieve something in her life.

In both novels, memory and history serve as powerful forces that shape the characters' identities, choices, and struggles. The characters' engagement with memory and history reflects the broader postcolonial condition, where the narratives and interpretations of the past have a profound impact on the present. These novels illuminate the complexities of memory, forgetting, and the negotiation of historical narratives in the postcolony, ultimately highlighting the importance of confronting the past in order to build a more just and equitable futures

V. Conclusion:

This piece of research has given us the opportunity to explore Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974) which serve as powerful representations of postcolonial societies grappling with the aftermath of colonial rule. Through their compelling narratives, both authors shed light on the social, political, and cultural complexities that emerged in the wake of independence. By delving into the legacies of colonialism and the struggles for autonomy, these novels invite readers to critically engage with the postcolonial condition.

Petals of Blood exposes the deep-rooted inequalities and corruption that plagued Kenya, showcasing the continued exploitation of the masses by neocolonial systems. Through the intertwined lives of its characters, Ngugi wa Thiong'o highlights the struggles faced by ordinary citizens as they navigate a postcolonial society prevalent with economic disparities and cultural erasure. The novel challenges readers to question the promises of independence and confront the enduring effects of colonialism on the social fabric of nations.

Similarly, *Xala* offers a satirical critique of postcolonial Senegal, presenting the consequences of political hypocrisy and the entanglement of tradition and modernity. Sembene Ousmane skillfully portrays the downfall of El Hadji, an emblematic figure representing the ruling elite's failure to achieve true independence. The novel underscores the importance of self-reflection and the necessity of breaking free from neocolonial structures to forge a more just and inclusive society.

By exploring these novels as postcolonial texts, this research paper has delved into the profound ways in which they expose the complexities of postcolonial societies. Through the analysis of narrative techniques, thematic explorations, and historical contexts, we have gained insight into the authors' visions of the postcolonial condition and the struggles for

decolonization, cultural reclamation, and social justice. *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* challenge readers to critically examine the ongoing legacy of colonialism and the complexities of postcolonial societies. They serve as reminders that the journey towards true liberation and self-definition is a continuous one, requiring constant vigilance and engagement. By engaging with these texts, we deepen our understanding of the multifaceted nature of postcolonial realities and become catalysts for change in addressing the persisting challenges faced by postcolonial nations.

In conclusion, the novels *Petals of Blood* and *Xala* offer powerful literary contributions to the exploration of postcolonial societies. They ignite conversations about the legacies of colonialism, the struggles for independence, and the complexities of forging new national identities. Through their compelling narratives, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane urge us to question and challenge the existing power structures, ultimately paving the way for a more inclusive, equitable, and just postcolonial future.

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