

Bassey, Gideon Ito



French Unit, Department of Foreign Languages, College of Languages & Communication Arts Education, Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos St

**Betrayal of Independence: Class Struggle and Social Transformation
in Francophone African Novels**

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the themes of class struggle and social transformation in selected Francophone African novels, focusing on the persistence of neo-colonialism and the betrayal of independence. Using Marxist and postcolonial theories, particularly the works of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon, the study analyzes how African leaders perpetuate colonial structures under the guise of independence. Through an exploration of novels such as *L'Anté-Peuple* by Sony Labou Tansi, *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* by Ahmadou Kourouma, *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix* by Alain Mabanckou, and *Les vertiges du trône* by Patrick Ilboudo, this paper highlights literature's critique of post-independence disillusionment, the continued exploitation of African resources, and the role of African elites in sustaining foreign interests. The study further discusses the gendered dimensions of postcolonial oppression, as well as the resistance and power struggles that define contemporary African societies. This paper argues that literature serves as a site of resistance and intellectual contestation against the enduring structures of economic and political domination.

Keywords: Neo-colonialism, Class Struggle, Postcolonialism, Francophone, Transformation, Resistance

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Corresponding Author: BASSEY, G. I. Email: gideonbassey700@gmail.com

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1.1 Introduction

The study of class struggles and social transformation in Francophone African literature is integral to understanding the socio-political realities that define postcolonial Africa. Literature is not only a reflection of society but also a critique and a call to action. Postcolonial African writers often use their works to highlight issues of inequality, exploitation, and the tensions between different social classes. These narratives provide insight into how power structures operate within African societies and how they have evolved from the colonial to the postcolonial era.

The postcolonial African literary landscape is deeply influenced by historical events, including colonialism, the struggles for independence, and the socio-economic challenges of nation-building. As Fanon (1963: 152) argues, "The postcolonial bourgeoisie quickly adopts the exploitative tendencies of the former colonizers, perpetuating class divisions rather than eradicating them." This dynamic is evident in the selected novels, where the ruling elite often mirrors the oppressive tendencies of their colonial predecessors. Similarly, Marx (1845: 64) asserts that "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class," indicating that those in power shape societal structures to maintain their dominance.

African literature has long been a tool of resistance, challenging hegemonic narratives and advocating for transformation. Said (1993: 112) observes that "postcolonial narratives serve as counter-discourses to colonial historiography, reclaiming African identity and agency." In this sense, literature becomes both a political and an ideological tool, reflecting the aspirations of the oppressed and envisioning alternative societal structures. The role of writers in this struggle is critical, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1981: 35) contends: "The African writer has a responsibility to reflect the realities of his people and to participate in the struggle for liberation."

In addition to class struggle, social transformation is a recurring theme in Francophone African literature. Transformation, in this context, encompasses political upheavals, economic restructuring, and cultural shifts that redefine African societies. Class struggle refers to the ongoing conflicts between different social classes, typically between the dominant or wealthy class, referred to as the bourgeoisie and the working or oppressed class, referred to as the proletariat. This struggle arises from economic and social inequalities, as the ruling class seeks to maintain power and resources while the lower class fights for better living conditions, fair wages, and social justice. The concept is central to Marxist theory, which views class struggle as the driving force behind social and political change. On its own part, social transformation refers to significant and lasting changes in the structure, values, norms, and institutions of a society. It involves shifts in social relationships, economic systems, political structures, and cultural practices, often caused by factors such as technological advancements, political movements, economic development, or ideological shifts. As Gramsci (1971: 52) notes, "The history of a society is the history of the struggle of classes: of the hegemony of some social groups over others, of the birth, development and death of States, of struggles for the transformation of social and economic structures." The selected novels illustrate different trajectories of social transformation, from revolutionary uprisings to more subtle ideological shifts that challenge the status quo.

This paper examines how class struggle and social transformation are represented in Francophone African literature through *Les vertiges du trône* by Patrick G. Ilboudo, *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix* by Alain Mabankou, *L'Anté-Peuple* by Sony Labou Tansi and *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* by Ahmadou Kourouma while focusing on the ways in which authors critique existing power structures and proposing alternative futures. The theoretical framework for this study is rooted in Marxism and postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Frantz Fanon. Their insights provide a foundational lens through which the selected novels can be analyzed, offering a deeper understanding of the complexities of class struggle and the potential for social transformation in African societies.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Class Struggle and Marxism (Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci) & Postcolonial Theory (Frantz Fanon)

The theoretical framework which are used in this paper draws from two significant schools of thought namely Marxist theory, particularly in relation to class struggle, as articulated by

Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci, and the Postcolonial theory, as developed by Frantz Fanon. These frameworks provide a lens through which the selected Francophone African novels can be analyzed in terms of social transformation, class struggle, and the enduring effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

2.1.1 Class Struggle and Marxism

Karl Marx's (1848: 25) theory of class struggle maintains that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." In this view, social change is determined by conflicts between different economic classes, particularly the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx argues that the capitalist system inherently leads to class oppression, as the ruling class (bourgeoisie) exploits the labor of the working class (proletariat).

This concept is vividly depicted in *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix* by Alain Mabanckou (2009), where the protagonist experiences systemic oppression by a ruling elite that has inherited power from colonial administrators. The novel illustrates how African leaders have replaced European colonizers in maintaining structures of economic exploitation. As Marx (1867: 703) asserts, "capital is dead labor, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks." Mabanckou's depiction of post-independence economic disparity reflects this Marxist critique of capital accumulation and labor exploitation.

Antonio Gramsci (1971: 12) elaborates on Marxist theory with his concept of hegemony, arguing that "the ruling class maintains its dominance not just through coercion but through cultural institutions that manufacture consent." This concept is critical in analyzing Sony Labou Tansi's *L'Anté-Peuple* (1983), where the government manipulates ideological state apparatuses such as education, religion, and the media to sustain its rule. The subaltern characters in the novel struggle against these imposed ideologies, echoing Gramsci's (1971: 55) assertion that "the crisis of authority is precisely the crisis of hegemony."

Patrick Ilboudo's *Les vertiges du trône* (1999) further illustrates Marxist class struggle by showcasing the rise of an authoritarian regime that amasses wealth while leaving the working masses in poverty. Ilboudo's narrative underscores Marx's (1848: 64) prediction that "the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." The bourgeoisie in Ilboudo's novel ensures its continued dominance by controlling resources and suppressing dissent.

2.1.2 Postcolonial Theory and Fanon's Contribution

Frantz Fanon (1961: 2) in *The Wretched of the Earth* argues that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon," emphasizing that genuine independence is often obstructed by a national bourgeoisie that serves neocolonial interests rather than the masses. This assertion finds expression in Ahmadou Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998), which portrays African leaders adopting colonial administrative tactics to sustain their rule. Fanon (1961: 148) further states that "the native bourgeoisie who inherit colonial power have neither the means nor the desire to challenge imperialism."

Postcolonial theory also addresses cultural identity and language. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986: 4) in *Decolonising the Mind* contends that "language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture," highlighting how colonial languages perpetuate neocolonial influence. Francophone African literature often critiques the continued dominance of the French language in governance and education, reinforcing economic and cultural dependence. This theme is evident in Kourouma's works, where characters grapple with linguistic alienation and cultural dislocation.

Additionally, Fanon's concept of psychological colonialism is reflected in the works of Tansi and Ilboudo. Fanon (1952: 18) in *Black Skin, White Masks* asserts that "the colonized

individual is constantly in a state of self-alienation, seeing themselves through the gaze of the colonizer." This internalized oppression manifests in the struggles of Tansi's characters, who navigate both political repression and identity crises.

Feminist interpretations of postcolonial theory also highlight the role of gender in class struggle. Amina Mama (1995: 102) notes that "women in post-independence Africa face a double colonization: first by the remnants of colonial structures and second by patriarchal systems." This is particularly relevant in *L'Anté-Peuple*, where female characters resist both state oppression and societal gender norms.

2.2 Class Struggle in Postcolonial African Literature

Class struggle in African literature represents the economic, political, and social tensions that define postcolonial states. Fanon (1963: 152) asserts that "the economic infrastructure inherited from the colonial period continues to reinforce social divisions." Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1981: 35) argues that literature must be "a reflection of the people's struggles against exploitation and oppression." The selected novels highlight various dimensions of class struggle, from the disenfranchisement of the lower classes to the corruption of the ruling elite.

Scholars such as Mbembe (2001: 98) have pointed out that "the postcolonial state has replicated colonial structures of dominance, leading to continued economic inequality." This analysis aligns with the portrayal of class divisions in Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages*, where the ruling elite manipulates power for personal gain while the lower classes remain marginalized. Similarly, Marx and Engels (1848: 157) argue that "the history of all societies is the history of class struggle," a sentiment echoed in Labou Tansi's *L'Anté-Peuple*, which depicts the brutal suppression of dissent by a corrupt government.

Furthermore, Amuta (1989: 56) highlights the role of literature in "mobilizing the masses towards revolutionary change." This perspective is particularly relevant in Mabanckou's *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix*, where the protagonist's journey reflects a broader critique of economic disparity and the false promises of post-independence leadership.

Additionally, Ilboudo's *Les vertiges du trône* illustrates the cyclical nature of class oppression, where the revolutionary leaders of yesterday become the new oppressors, mirroring the post-independence disillusionment in many African nations. As Gramsci (1971: 235) notes, "Every revolution is followed by a restoration," an idea central to *Les vertiges du trône*'s depiction of power struggles.

By examining and analyzing these texts namely *Les vertiges du trône* by Patrick G. Ilboudo, *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix* by Alain Mabanckou, *L'Anté-Peuple* by Sony Labou Tansi and *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* by Ahmadou Kourouma, this study aims to show how Francophone African literature critiques socio-economic inequalities and envisions alternative structures for justice and equality. The persistence of class struggles in these narratives reflects broader historical and political realities, demonstrating literature's role in shaping and challenging the social order.

2.3 Social Transformation in Francophone African Novels

Social transformation in Francophone African novels often manifests as a response to oppressive political and economic systems. Bourdieu (1991: 74) explains that "social transformation occurs when oppressed groups reclaim agency and challenge dominant ideologies." This perspective is evident in *L'Anté-Peuple*, where Sony Labou Tansi portrays grassroots resistance movements fighting against dictatorship. Similarly, Fanon (1963: 204) states that "true decolonization is a violent phenomenon because it dismantles entrenched power structures," a theme reflected in Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages*, where political change is achieved through radical means.

In *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix*, Mabanckou evaluates the failure of postcolonial leaders to implement meaningful social transformation, arguing that "independence without economic and ideological liberation is an illusion" (Mabanckou 2009: 56). Likewise, Ilboudo's *Les vertiges du trône* highlights the cyclical nature of oppression, where former revolutionaries become the new elite, reinforcing the structures they once opposed (Ilboudo 1994: 112). This paradox is echoed by Gramsci (1971: 235), who asserts that "every revolution is followed by a restoration," implying that without sustained ideological shifts, transformation remains incomplete.

Moreover, Marx and Engels (1848: 89) contend that "social transformation requires both economic restructuring and cultural re-education," a notion that aligns with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's call for linguistic decolonization as a form of empowerment (Ngũgĩ 1986: 23). The selected novels, therefore, not only depict social change but also interrogate the mechanisms through which such transformation can be achieved.

By examining these texts, this paper aims to illustrate how literature serves as both a critique of existing societal structures and a blueprint for envisioning new possibilities for justice and equity.

3.1 The Selected Novels: A Critical Overview

A critical overview of the selected novels namely *L'Anté-Peuple* by Sony Labou Tansi, *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* by Ahmadou Kourouma, *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix* by Alain Mabanckou, and *Les vertiges du trône* by Patrick Ilboudo, provides insights into how class struggle and social transformation are represented in Francophone African literature. Within these texts can be found instances of political oppression, economic disparities, and social resistance as the authors portray characters and movements that embody the larger struggles of postcolonial African societies.

In *L'Anté-Peuple*, Sony Labou Tansi examines the hypocrisy of political elites and the suffering of the common people under oppressive regimes. The novel explores themes of betrayal, resistance, and the complexities of class struggle. As Fanon (1963: 183) states, "The postcolonial elite, rather than dismantling the exploitative structures of colonial rule, often appropriates them for its own benefit," a dynamic vividly illustrated in the novel's portrayal of leadership. The protagonist, Dadou, becomes a symbol of defiance against corruption, exposing the contradictions of postcolonial power by joining forces with other oppressed and marginalized groups of the society called *Maquisard* in order to fight the corrupt leadership.

Similarly, *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* by Ahmadou Kourouma satirizes dictatorial rule in Africa, depicting the ways in which power is maintained through coercion and deception. Said (1993: 142) notes that "postcolonial literature frequently employs satire as a means of subverting dominant power structures," a technique Kourouma effectively employs to critique the complicity of the ruling class. The narrative structure, which mimics the oral tradition, serves to both entertain and indict, exposing the mechanisms of political oppression.

Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix by Alain Mabanckou presents a generational critique of the postcolonial African condition. The novel challenges the illusion of progress, arguing that "true liberation must go beyond the symbolic and address the material conditions of the people" (Mabanckou 2009: 64). It underscores the stagnation of postcolonial societies where the dreams of independence have been replaced by the disillusionment of economic and social failures.

Finally, *Les vertiges du trône* by Patrick Ilboudo examines the recurring nature of power and oppression in post-independence Africa. Gramsci (1971: 250) states that "every historical

moment contains the seeds of its own transformation, yet also the risk of regression," a paradox that Ilboudo explores through the rise and fall of political leaders who begin as revolutionaries but become the new oppressors. The novel suggests that without a fundamental shift in societal consciousness, transformation remains elusive.

Each of these novels contributes to the broader discourse on class struggle and social transformation, offering unique perspectives on the failures and possibilities of postcolonial governance. By critically engaging with these texts, this study seeks to uncover the underlying patterns of resistance and adaptation that define the African experience in literature. As Marx and Engels (1848: 77) argue, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," a sentiment that resonates throughout the selected works.

3.1.1 Themes of Power and Resistance in African Literature

The themes of power and resistance are central to African literature, reflecting the continent's long history of colonial oppression, struggle for independence, and postcolonial disillusionment. These themes often manifest through narratives that depict authoritarian rule, class struggle, and the resilience of marginalized groups seeking to assert their rights. African writers have used literature as a tool to challenge dominant power structures and to amplify the voices of those who resist subjugation.

Authority or power, as depicted in African literature, is often synonymous with oppression. Colonial rulers, post-independence elites, and military dictators have been major figures in the perpetuation of power imbalances. According to Fanon (1963: 47), "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments ... this compartmentalized world is inhabited by different species." This division does not disappear with independence; rather, it is often reinforced by new elites who replicate colonial hierarchies. Ahmadou Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* offers a satirical but deeply critical portrayal of despotic African rulers who use violence, propaganda, and manipulation to maintain control. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986: 91) asserts, "A writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, he is involved in a struggle with tyranny."

Resistance, on the other hand, is depicted through characters and movements that challenge the status quo. In *L'Anté-Peuple*, Sony Labou Tansi presents individuals who attempt to defy political corruption, even at great personal cost. The protagonist Dadou embodies this struggle, mirroring real-life activists who have fought for democracy in African states. Said (1993: 115) observes that "resistance in literature is both an act of remembering and an act of defiance," emphasizing how African literature serves as a historical record of struggle and resistance.

Marxist literary criticism provides an important lens through which these themes could be analyzed. Marx and Engels (1848: 77) argue that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," a statement that resonates throughout African literature. In *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix*, Alain Mabanckou critiques the illusion of freedom that followed independence, showing how economic and social inequalities persist. His work highlights the failure of African leaders to redistribute wealth and opportunities to the masses. Similarly, Patrick Ilboudo's *Les vertiges du trône* portrays how revolutionary leaders, once in power, often become the new oppressors, reinforcing the same structures they once fought against.

Women's resistance also plays a significant role in African literature. Female characters are frequently depicted as both victims of oppression and agents of change. In her analysis of African women's resistance, Amina Mama (1995: 38) states, "Women in postcolonial Africa face a double struggle: against patriarchy and against state repression." In *L'Anté-Peuple*, Yavelde resists societal expectations and political oppression, symbolizing the broader fight

for gender equality. Buchi Emecheta (1988: 62) further argues that “women’s resistance is not only about survival but about redefining power itself.”

Postcolonialism provides another theoretical framework for examining power and resistance. Frantz Fanon (1961: 13) emphasizes that “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon,” a reality depicted in many African novels where power is seized through coups, rebellions, and insurrections. Literature becomes a battlefield where ideological and political struggles are contested. Achebe (1975: 42) affirms that “the duty of the African writer is to rehumanize a dehumanized people.” This is evident in the works of Labou Tansi, Kourouma, Mabanckou, and Ilboudo, where literature not only critiques oppression but also imagines pathways to resistance and transformation.

Furthermore, the role of indigenous oral traditions in narratives of resistance cannot be ignored. Scholars such as Finnegan (1970: 89) assert that “African oral traditions serve as repositories of resistance, transmitting historical struggles across generations.” Many African novelists incorporate oral storytelling techniques to subvert colonial literary forms, reinforcing cultural resilience and resistance against imposed narratives.

From the above discussion, it could be proved that African literature is a vital medium for exploring the dynamics of power and resistance. Through various narrative strategies—satire, allegory, realism—writers expose the contradictions of postcolonial governance and amplify the voices of the oppressed. As Ngũgĩ (1993: 210) argues, “Literature is a reflection of society, but it is also a tool for its transformation.” By engaging with these themes, African literature continues to challenge dominant power structures and inspire movements for change.

3.1.2 Postcolonialism and Class Theory

Postcolonialism and class theory provide essential frameworks for analyzing African literature, particularly in its exploration of power dynamics, social hierarchies, and economic inequalities. Postcolonial theorists examine how colonial histories shape contemporary socio-political conditions, while Marxist theorists focus on class struggle as a defining feature of history. The intersection of these theories in African literature highlights the complex nature of social transformation and resistance.

Postcolonialism, as articulated by Frantz Fanon (1961: 27), asserts that “colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it.” This colonial manipulation of history created lasting divisions in African societies, which are evident in postcolonial literature. Writers such as Sony Labou Tansi, Ahmadou Kourouma, and Alain Mabanckou depict these distortions and their continued impact on class structures.

Marxist literary theory, on the other hand, provides a critique of capitalism and class oppression. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848: 77) argue that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” This perspective is particularly relevant in African literature, where economic disparities and power imbalances remain prominent themes. Patrick Ilboudo’s *Les vertiges du trône* demonstrates how post-independence African leaders replicate colonial exploitation, thereby reinforcing class oppression rather than dismantling it.

One of the most significant contributions of postcolonial theory is the concept of the “subaltern,” a term popularized by Gayatri Spivak (1988: 90) who argues that “the subaltern cannot speak” within dominant power structures. African literature frequently attempts to challenge this notion by giving voice to the marginalized. For example, in *L’Anté-Peuple*,

Sony Labou Tansi portrays characters who struggle against systemic injustices, yet their resistance is often suppressed by authoritarian rule.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is particularly relevant in analyzing how postcolonial African states maintain class divisions. Gramsci (1971: 181) posits that "the ruling class, through cultural institutions, maintains ideological dominance over the working class." This is evident in *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages*, where Kourouma illustrates how African dictators use cultural narratives and propaganda to sustain their grip on power. Resistance in such contexts is not only economic or political but also ideological.

Neo-colonialism, a concept introduced by Kwame Nkrumah (1965: 23), further complicates postcolonial class struggles. He argues that "neo-colonialism is the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress." African literature frequently critiques this phenomenon, as seen in Mabanckou's *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix*, which exposes how economic dependency on former colonial powers prevents true social transformation.

Additionally, feminist postcolonial theorists highlight the intersection of gender and class oppression. Amina Mama (1995: 65) states that "African women experience a double burden: as victims of both colonial legacies and patriarchal structures." In *L'Anté-Peuple*, Yavelde's character illustrates how women navigate and resist these dual oppressions. Similarly, Buchi Emecheta (1988: 45) asserts that "women's resistance in postcolonial societies is a fight for both political and personal liberation."

Postcolonialism and class theory provide indispensable analytical tools for understanding African literature's depiction of power and resistance. By drawing from both frameworks, scholars can better appreciate how literature critiques historical injustices while imagining pathways for social transformation. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1993: 220) states, "literature is not just a reflection of reality; it is a weapon for change." African literature, therefore, remains a vital site for challenging class oppression and envisioning a more equitable society.

3.1.3 Neo-Colonialism and the Betrayal of Independence in Francophone African Literature

The concept of neo-colonialism remains central to discussions on post-independence African governance, economic structures, and social transformation. Coined by Kwame Nkrumah (1965: 23), neo-colonialism refers to the continued economic and political dependence of African nations on their former colonial rulers, despite formal independence. He asserts that "neo-colonialism is the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress." This betrayal of independence is a recurring theme in Francophone African literature, where writers critique how African leaders, instead of dismantling colonial power structures, perpetuate them to maintain their own dominance.

Sony Labou Tansi's *L'Anté-Peuple* (1983) serves as a powerful critique of post-independence African regimes that adopt the repressive tactics of their colonial predecessors. The novel portrays a government that suppresses dissent, exploits the masses, and mirrors the authoritarian tendencies of colonial rule. The protagonist, often caught between hope and despair, symbolizes the disillusionment of post-independence African citizens. Tansi's depiction aligns with Fanon's (1961: 152) assertion that "the national bourgeoisie takes over power and turns itself into an intermediary between the nation and imperialist interests, consolidating foreign control rather than eradicating it."

Similarly, Ahmadou Kourouma's *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* (1998) exposes the failures of African leadership in the wake of independence. The novel follows the rise of a dictatorial regime that thrives on propaganda, coercion, and foreign alliances. Kourouma illustrates how African leaders, rather than pursuing genuine liberation, continue to serve foreign economic and political interests. He echoes Walter Rodney's (1972: 235) critique that "independence in name without economic self-determination is merely a continuation of colonial domination." Kourouma's narrative highlights how neo-colonial structures allow for the continued plundering of Africa's resources, with leaders acting as mere puppets of their former colonial masters.

Alain Mabanckou's *Les petits-fils nègres de Vercingétorix* (2009) further interrogates the nature of independence in Francophone Africa, exploring the disillusionment of youth who realize that colonial exploitation has merely been rebranded under African elites. Mabanckou's work aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's (1964: 29) contention that "the anti-colonial revolution is often aborted when the new leaders betray the ideals of independence by forming alliances with their former oppressors." The youth in Mabanckou's novel grapple with a loss of identity and a bleak future, emphasizing how neo-colonialism stifles genuine national progress.

Patrick Ilboudo's *Les vertiges du trône* (1999) also critiques the betrayal of independence, depicting leaders who amass wealth while the majority of the population remains in poverty. This mirrors Nkrumah's (1965: 58) assertion that "neo-colonialism ensures that the wealth of the nation flows not to the people but into the hands of a privileged few who serve foreign interests." Ilboudo's narrative exposes the illusion of sovereignty, showing how financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank impose economic policies that continue to impoverish African nations.

The theme of neo-colonialism is further explored through the lens of culture and language. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986: 4) argues in *Decolonising the Mind* that "the most effective tool of neo-colonialism is cultural imperialism, which erases indigenous languages and identities while maintaining colonial dominance." Francophone African literature often critiques the continued imposition of French as the dominant language of governance, education, and commerce, reinforcing economic and cultural dependency.

Feminist critiques also highlight the gendered dimensions of neo-colonial oppression. Amina Mama (1995: 102) observes that "women in post-independence Africa face a double colonization: first by the remnants of colonial structures and second by patriarchal systems that were reinforced under colonial rule." This is evident in works such as *L'Anté-Peuple*, where female characters navigate both state oppression and societal gender norms. The betrayal of independence is thus not only a political and economic issue but also a deeply gendered one.

4.1 Conclusion

Francophone African literature serves as a crucial medium for critiquing neo-colonialism and the betrayal of independence. Through narratives that expose corrupt leadership, economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and gendered oppression, these literary works engage in a broader discourse on Africa's postcolonial realities. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1993: 220) states, "literature is not just a reflection of reality; it is a weapon for change." By examining these texts, this paper emphasizes on the necessity of continued resistance against neo-colonial structures and the importance of literature in advocating for true social transformation as a watch dog of the society.

From the above, it could be observed that Marxist and postcolonial theories provide a solid framework for analyzing the selected Francophone African novels. These works critique the

persistence of colonial economic structures, the betrayal of independence by African elites, and the ideological mechanisms used to sustain class oppression. As Fanon (1961: 220) asserts, “each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.” The study of class struggles and social transformation in African literature remains essential for understanding contemporary political and economic realities. It is worthy to note that the continued analysis of these themes in literature remains essential for understanding and challenging the structures that sustain neo-colonialism in Africa while looking forward to the dividends of full independence.

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