

*Nationalism Through Literature : Ousmane Sembene's Novels,**The Money Order and Xala*

Zahraa Rezga *1

The University of Mostaganem,(Algeria)

Zahraa.rezga@yahoo.fr

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الملخص : توفر الماركسية إطارًا لفهم وانتقاد علاقات القوة غير المتكافئة التي بدأها الاستعمار. ومع مشروع تفضيل النهج الأفريقي في التعامل مع الاستعمار الجديد، تجاوز بعض الكتاب الأفارقة الجانب العنصري. يناقش هذا البحث قصور الاستعمار الجديد في السنغال من خلال رواية سمبين عثمان. كانت القيود المفروضة على البرجوازية الأفريقية الناشئة هي محور روايتي سمبيني: "الأمر المالي" و"زالا". تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على الخطاب المضاد حول أفريقيا من قبل الفئات المهمشة ومن خلال ضميرهم. يكشف تحليل الروايات مدى تعقيد تقاطع الصراعات الطبقية مع أشكال القمع الأخرى في أفريقيا ما بعد الاستعمار. كما يسلط الضوء على الحاجة إلى التحول الاجتماعي والاقتصادي لمعالجة هذه الصراعات بطرق أكثر إنصافًا واستدامة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستعمار الجديد؛ البرجوازية. الخطاب المضاد؛ الصراع الطبقي؛ أفريقيا.

Abstract: Marxism provides a framework for understanding and critiquing the unequal power relations initiated by colonialism. And with the project of privileging an African approach to neocolonialism, some African writers moved beyond the racial aspect. This paper discusses the deficiency of neocolonialism in Senegal through Sembene Ousmane's fiction. The limitations of an emergent African bourgeoisie was the focus of Sembene's two novels: The Money Order and Xala. This study aims at shedding light on a counter-discourse about Africa by the marginalized groups and through their own conscience. The novels' analysis reveals the complexity of class struggles intersection with other forms of oppression in postcolonial Africa. It also highlights the need for socio-economic transformation to address these struggles in more equitable and sustainable ways.

Keywords: neocolonialism; bourgeoisie; counter-discourse; class struggle; Africa.

*Corresponding author

1. INTRODUCTION

History can't move forward without the development of societies. And society evolution is a tale of class conflict in which a ruling class subjugates a lower class in the form of exploitation and dehumanization to which the lower class reacts by either overthrowing the ruling class and reconstituting the social order, or melting altogether and giving rise to new classes. This cycle has always repeated itself because class struggle is an ongoing sociological reality over all epochs of history. In ancient Rome, there were the patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, we had the feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, and serfs. There is also the modern bourgeois society which has grown from the ruins of feudal society. It has established new classes, new conditions of exploitation, new forms of struggle instead of the older ones. It brought two great classes directly facing each other — the Bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the Proletariat (the workers).

2. Class Struggle Theories

These thoughts are rooted in the idea that different classes have competing interests, hence conflict. Marxist theory is one of the most powerful analyses of social conflict. According to Marx, society is divided into two classes : the bourgeoisie or the capitalists who own the means of production, and the proletariat or working classes who must sell their labour to survive. To maximize profits, the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat by paying them wages that are less than the value of their production. Marx argued that this exploitation would inevitably lead to a revolution by the working class, who would overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish a socialist society (Gilbert 521)

Other class struggle theories focus on different aspects of social stratification. For example, Weberian theory focuses on the role of status in creating class conflict. According to Weber,

social status is determined by a combination of factors, including occupation, education and lifestyle. Individuals with high social status have more power and influence in society, and this leads to conflict with those who have lower status (Levine 49)

Intersectionality theory also considers how different forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and homophobia intersect with class to create unique experiences of oppression for different groups of people. It has its roots in Black feminist activism in which the American critical legal race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw noticed the double discrimination of racism and sexism confronted by most black women, so he coined the term 'intersectionality' to which awareness is growing in academic contexts (Crenshaw 149)

Multiple forms of inequality sometimes create obstacles for individuals and communities that go beyond the conventional ways of thinking. These theories help us understand how social inequality had arisen and is perpetuated, and how it can be challenged and transformed.

3. Marxism and the Colonial Context

Marxism and colonialism are interconnected in several ways. Marxism is a social, economic and political theory that advocates for the abolition of private property and for a classless society where the means of production are owned and controlled by the workers. Colonialism on the other hand is a system where one country occupies and exploits another country or region for economic gains and political power. Marxism views colonialism as a tool used by capitalist countries to expand their markets and control resources, often at the expense of colonized people. Marxists argue that colonialism creates a global system of exploitation where the bourgeoisie in the colonizing countries benefit at the expense of the proletariat in the colonized countries (Marx & Engels). According to Marxists, colonialism leads to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of few individuals or corporations while the

majority of people in the colonized countries experience poverty, oppression, and exploitation. They also argue that colonialism creates a culture of dependency where the colonized countries are forced to rely on the colonizers for economic support, and are denied the opportunity to develop their own economies and political systems.

Marxism argues for the overthrow of capitalism & colonialism through revolution and the establishment of a socialist system. Marxists believe that the working class, both in the colonizing and colonized countries, has the power to create a classless society where everyone is equal and has access to the means of production.

However some critics argue that marxism has its own limitations when it comes to dealing with issues of colonialism, imperialism and racism because they believe the marxist theory is primarily focused on the economic aspects of colonialism rather than the cultural and social ones which also contribute to the perpetuation of colonialism and imperialism.

One of the most prominent thinkers of the Negritude movement – which sought to reclaim and celebrate the cultural heritage of Black people – Aimé Césaire, a Martinican writer, poet and politician who strongly criticized the European Bourgeoisie and colonialism because he believed they are interrelated systems of domination. He believed that the European bourgeoisie was the driving force behind colonialism, being used as a means to extract resources and labour from colonized peoples for their own profit. He argued that their greed and desire for power led them to dehumanize and exploit colonized peoples, treating them as inferior and justifying their actions through racist ideologies. But he didn't view the proletariat as the central force in the struggle against colonialism. The latter needed a reclaim of dignity and identity not a classless milieu (Césaire 60).

Cesaire also criticized the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism on colonized peoples, arguing that it had a profound impact on their sense of identity and self-worth. He saw colonialism as a process of 'negation' in which colonized peoples were forced to abandon their own cultures and languages in favor of European ones, and he believed that this legacy of oppression can't be overcome without being acknowledged and then faced with hard work for true liberation and equitable world order.

Frantz Fanon – who is both a philosopher and psychiatrist – is best known for his influential works on the psychology and politics of decolonization. Fanon's critical approach to Marxism revealed its inadequacy for understanding the unique challenges and experiences of colonized peoples. In his view, the Marxist theory tended to treat colonialism as a peripheral issue while it was a central aspect of the global capitalist system. Colonialism was not just an extension of capitalism, but it was an oppressive system whose cultural and psychological dimensions required their own analysis. Colonialism was not a simple economic exploitation, but it involved a disruption of cultural identity and a loss of psychic wholeness. Therefore, Fanon believed that it was necessary to study the psychology of the colonized subjects (Drabinski).

Since capitalism couldn't prosper without colonialism, Fanon argued that the European proletariat, as part of this spirit, can't share common grounds with the workers in the colonies. Hence, making a common cause with the colonized is unlikely (Fanon 313). He saw that the colonial system created a new class structure, in which the European colonialists and their local allies were the dominant class, and the native population was relegated to a subaltern status. He also believed in the crucial role that the proletariat played in the anti-colonial struggle because they were the most exploited and oppressed groups.

4. The African Literary Approach to Class Struggle and Colonialism

The continent's responses to colonialism were reflected in a literature that promoted cultural identity and independence. Some of the key approaches to colonialism in African literature include the critique of colonialism, the celebration of the African culture, and the reinterpretation of history. In the first approach, we find works that expose the injustices and violence of colonial rules such as Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart'; in the second one, there is a rejection of the cultural dominance of the west and a celebration of African languages, traditions and beliefs just as we find it in the poetry of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor; and the third approach involved a focus on pre-colonial African history and a rejection of the European view on the inherent inferiority of African cultures as in the works of Wole Soyinka.

Before the colonial era, African literature was primarily oral and told through storytelling, poetry and music – forms that were deeply rooted in African cultural traditions to pass on knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next. During the colonial times, African writers began to use novels and essays in the official languages of the colonial powers to convey their experiences of colonialism. They frequently used allegory and symbolism to critique the oppressive nature of colonialism, and they chronicled the struggles of everyday life to showcase their societies resilience. In the mid-twentieth century when most African countries gained independence, many writers started to shift away from the exotic world of colonial literature towards a more politically engaged and socially relevant literature. Therefore, they began to write in response to the contemporary issues and socio-political realities of their societies

The African writers became aware that they should focus on writing about their own experiences and perspectives rather than continuing to write within the framework of literature that was established during the colonial era. By then, African writers were often encouraged to adopt European literary styles and themes, resulting in a body of literature that was heavily influenced by colonialism and the perspectives of the colonizers. They had to break away from this tradition and instead focus on writing literature that reflects their own cultural heritage, experiences and perspectives. The only way to challenge the dominant narrative of colonialism is to take control of their own narrative and produce literature that reclaims their cultural identity. The Negritude Movement was an important part of the broader cultural and intellectual awakening that took place in Africa during the colonial era. It helped to foster a sense of pride and identity among black people around the world and laid the foundation for the development of postcolonial African literature.

Although the African people's anti-colonial struggle was more than a racial struggle, the focus on the racial aspect persisted in most writers' visions. However, Africa was not displaying blackness for the white colonizers; it was rather feeding capitalism from its onset in slavery, through the colonial phase, and until the current phase of neo-colonialism. The conquest was colonial, political and cultural to make invasion in the economic sphere more permanent. The result was complete devastation of Africa and distortion of African values. In order to call for meaningful African values, the struggle should be against all the classes that were contaminated by this intricate system of the colonizers in which all aspects of control were tied up together. Different writers confronted the challenge differently, and the current paper explores Ousmane Sembene's discourse on the challenges of postcolonial Senegal.

5. Ousmane Sembene's Oeuvre and Mission

The Senegalese filmmaker and writer Ousmane Sembene was born in 1923 in Casamance. Expelled from school in 1936 for slapping his French lecturer who tried to force him to sing

French patriotic songs, he could have no more than the level of middle school formal education (Gellar 93). In spite of that, he developed a love of reading, and discovered cinema in the segregated movie houses of Dakar. He worked as a manual labourer, but attended evenings of storytelling and other traditional cultural events. In 1946, he took membership in the construction workers' trade union which paralysed the French colonial economy through strikes. Experiences of the railworkers strike (October 47- March 48) would lead to the writing of his novella *Bouts de Bois de Dieu* (God's Bits of Wood) in 1960. A year later, he left Dakar for France and lived in Marseille till 1960, which is when Senegal achieved its independence. There, he worked as a docker, but he became involved in politics as well. He joined the French Communist party in which he was inspired to write 'Le Docker Noir' – his first novel. Sembene also participated in the protest movements organized by the French Communist Party against colonial wars in Indochina, Korea, and Algeria. These experiences along with discovering prominent communist artists and writers like Richard Wright, Jean Bruller, Nazim Hikmet and Ernest Hemingway highly influenced his political and professional activism. His career as a filmmaker began in 1963, and most of his film works are adaptations of earlier novels¹. Through cinema, as a last resort amidst widespread illiteracy, he could communicate with the African masses what he couldn't reach through literature. He was called 'father of African cinema', and he became famous in the USA and all around the world for his culturally rich and thought provoking content.

Through his struggles for revolutionary change with millions at the international level, Sembene became aware of the urgent need for socio-political change in Africa. The need to invest in African nationalism, and in raising self-awareness became his passion. Thus, upon his return home and till his death, his literature and films became devoted to those Africans marginalized in their own societies – 'the Wretched of the Earth' as named by Frantz Fanon.

As a revolutionary artist, he showed an unwavering political commitment and longing for change. His mission was to present a portrait of what he witnesses and realizes to be the realities of African people through literature as a luxury and films as tools. He linked his personal Marxist beliefs to the African tradition of storytelling, and eventually created a 'new griotism'² for modern Africa (Fofana 7, Bouchard 54). 'Europe is not my centre' was Sembene's statement (Barlet) which made him a leading nationalist. In fact, 'God's Bits of Wood' (1960) was a masterpiece – conceived from Marxist ideology – in which he moved away from the canons of the 19th century European Bourgeois novel into the Senegalese working class struggles.

6. The Money Order : Corruption and Senegalese Neo-realism

Sembene's commitment was not to abstract notions of justice and peace, but to the actual struggle of the African peoples – the working class and its peasant class allies – to seize power and hence be able to control all the forces of production and hence lay the only correct basis for peace and equality. He is involved in the particular without losing time or missing out on other valuable issues, and he believes true nationalism is to be with the people; interested mainly in their fate and their eventual triumph. In effect, he wrote 'The Money Order' and directed a film 'Mandabi' based on it in 1968. The novel's language is French which is very accessible to most Africans who know a little of it, but the film is in the novelist's native wolof language, hence cinema for wolof speakers who make the majority of Senegalese who do not understand French.

6.1 Plot Summary and Character Analysis

An unemployed, illiterate and polygamist senegalese man with a taste for physical pleasures called Ibrahima Dieng lives in a village not far from Dakar with his two wives and nine children. One day, he receives from his nephew who lives in Paris, Abdou, a money order

worth 25.000 francs, saved from his job as a street sweeper. The sum was meant to be divided into portions: the bigger part for Abdou, a part for Ibrahima, and another for Abdou's mother. However, Ibrahima struggled in order to cash the money order and faced many difficulties. Ibrahima doesn't have an identity card, and this puts him face to face with Senegalese exaggerated bureaucratic procedures – which are inherited from colonial powers and kept without a single attempt to make it suit Africans' realities. To get an ID, he must have his birth certificate, but he doesn't know when he was born. He starts to spend money that he doesn't really have when the village's shopkeeper flood him with bags of rice with the aim of getting his own share. After the news of the money order became on everyone's lips, Ibrahima is approached for help and loans, which brings him more debt. In the end, he is deceived by Mbaye, a local businessman, who promised to cash the money order for him after he got his signature on the order. Instead, Mbaye sells Ibrahima's house to a french man and steals the money order, lying to Ibrahima that he was pickpocketed.

The story is set in a village, but the action shifts from there to Dakar to portray both Africans of the village and those of the town. All the characters are Africans, selected from different social positions and professions. Dieng is the novel's hero and a social type representing the common uneducated African who is cheated and despised by others ; the polygamist who conserves this tradition although he has to adapt to modern economy by material wealth not by a number of wives. He is also the African, victimized by the privileged elite whose education has become a tool of deceit. Dieng is depicted as an honest Muslim who gives gifts at each time he has a misfortune hoping that his situation changes, and this points at religion as being misused since it has killed the sense of realism among some fanatical African Muslims. The author's distrust in his fellow men made him choose dishonest and greedy characters like the opportunist photographer who took money from Dieng without giving him any photos, the

heartless shopkeeper who flood Dieng and his wives with bags of rice on credit to guarantee a share, and the educated embezzler Mbaye. Credit-fuelled consumerism pops out here as an important theme. The crowd of beggars, the blind, the sick, prostitutes and the eternal unemployed who roam the streets are the embodiments of the state of hunger, misery and disease resulting from social and economic misplanning in post-independent Senegal.

Ousmane left us with Dieng and his two wives as the only righteous people in the story. This is to give the novel its necessary tragic tone – which is already evident through poverty and unemployment, the deplorable conditions of Dieng's residential quarters, and the indifference of the authorities towards all of that. Ousmane is a satirist who could depict the hopelessness of Dieng's family earlier through realistic statements pronounced by one of his wives (Mety) when the postman brought the money order: "Paris? Who does Ibrahima know in Paris? Are you sure it is for him? Bah, don't kill us with hope » (Sembène 78). Everyone is hopeless, including Dieng, who understood from his sad experience that "honesty is a crime nowadays" (136) and promised to become devilish. Yet, the state of despair is defeated through the postman's conviction that "tomorrow we will change all that" (136).

6.2 Money in the Novel

All the characters are defined in terms of money. It has a magnetic attraction that everyone in the novel runs to get it and fights for it. It refers to the European presence in Africa, and stands as the only symbol for that. Yet, it is testing nearly all characters' moralities and building the novel's conflict. In this tragi-comic work, Sembene mirrors the hardships of his people's lives ever since their traditional values – that were once preserved by rural economy and the systems of trade by barter – gave way for the white man's money. This came in the words of a woman in the novel, "A curse on the man who invented money" (126)

Dieng lived a poor but honourable life in his native village. However, his gift of a money order leads ironically to increased debt, dependency and indignity. Lincoln stated that "The

promise of riches effectively destroys Ibrahima Dieng long before the promise is fulfilled" (343) This is an allegory for the author's own newly postcolonial nation, which had received its first World Bank loan in 1966. Thus, it is about the challenges confronting a new nation emerging into capitalist modernity. An economy based on credit is one that is essentially unproductive, and promoting consumption over work. Dieng's wives, particularly Aram, relishes her new role as a consumer (a delivery of water, and an inappropriate piece of underwear). There is also Dieng's hospitality at his expense ; for example, when he gives twenty francs, which he himself has had to borrow, to a woman begging on the street, and when he shares his baguette with the guests. These commodities as wasteful luxuries penetrate the home and body and undermine the investment wealth of African economies. They should recognize that a culture of dependency is springing up around the money order and threatening their dignity ; so to protect their social worth, they should impose a limit on their indebtedness. In fact, the ideal of liberation is total control of one's economic and cultural riches. An excess of credit or indebtedness would threaten sovereign autonomy ; however, failure of credit would be worse than that because it threatens national dignity altogether.

The money order is a fictional capital elaborated into the structure of identity itself in a modern, monetary economy. The money is not a gift for Dieng, but has been transferred to him in trust. It represents a mandate that transfers Abdou's authority over his funds to his uncle. Therefore, Dieng is not master of this money, but he is its servant. His recognizability, are not enough to guarantee exchange and other social transactions, Dieng needs a representation: a photo attached to the official identity card. The granting of documents made him recognize Senegal's new native bourgeoisie, their corruption, strange ritual procedures of credit economy he is unused to, and a number of thieves and liars. Upon learning about designs on his home, Dieng's outrage is voiced as: "To be poor, I can accept", he cries, "To be homeless,

never!" (131) The pride of homeownership go hand in hand with a man's dignity and capacity to rule over himself and his wives and his property. Being a homeowner is being independent. Sembène makes here an allegorical point about the political indignity of African dependency and its implications for national sovereignty. Having facilitated the circulation of speculative wealth, Dieng must be set free from the limitations of landed property. This implies that loss of home may be Dieng's last deceit, and this reflects the author's assessment of postcolonial leaders and their decisions.

The point of origin for the money is Abdou who sacrificed his enjoyment for future security (buy a home and marry). There is only Abdou in the novel who represents the sweat of migrant labour and its self-reliance, and who rejects the pervasive culture of dependency. He is, thus, Sembene's ideal sovereign subject. Contrastingly, money also refers to pleasure (gourmand, erotic and family life) which is the problem with postcolonial political life in Africa. Undoubtedly, foreign interference and the West's continuous political and economic domination hinder complete independence, but it is the will to enjoyment on the part of African rulers that holds responsible for the failure to achieve the dignity that is one of the pillars of the liberation movements (Lincoln 346). This is portrayed by Dieng's extraordinary power to consume, just as his second wife and five children express his indifference to economy. Like all social realist narratives, this novella adopts a critical perspective to modernity and neocolonialism, opposing it to tradition. By portraying the suffering of Dieng and the people he encounters, Sembene sheds light on the broader socio-political issues facing Senegal at the time, including the legacy of colonialism and the challenges of nation building. He focuses on everyday forms of resistance, through a social realist cinema through African lenses, ordinary people, language, religion and women.

7. Xala and the Senegalese Bourgeoisie's Failure

Sembene's satirical novel/film *Xala* (1974) focuses on post-independence struggles or the pitfalls of national consciousness as they are called by Fanon (119). Referring to the film version, Françoise Pfaff writes: "*Xala* . . . is a perfect illustration of . . . Frantz Fanon" (149). It is the finest among his film productions due to the complexity in plot, diversity in characterizations, and rich description. It is one of the most illustrative examples of the way in which African languages can be used as a form of resistance to colonialism and the neocolonialism implemented in postcolonial Senegal with corrupt politicians and the elite as their allies. The story is a fable of impotence, in which the protagonist's *xala*³ epitomises the neo-colonial subjugation of the black African elite.

7.1 Character and Theme Analysis

Xala begins with a group of businessmen celebrating the first-ever governmental election of one of its members as "president of the chamber of commerce and industry", and focus is put on their apparent wealth and power represented by expensive cars, large houses and European suits. It starts on 4 April, day of Senegal's independence, when French statuary is removed from the Chamber of Commerce by a group of Senegalese men, dressed traditionally. Their aim is to "achieve economic independence" (Sembène 2). These, however, would return immediately to give the new black government ministers briefcases full of cash. Among the Senegalese men, there is El Hadji, who announces he is getting married and invites his colleagues to join the evening celebrations. The protagonist, El Hadji Abdoukader Beye, is a polygamous Senegalese businessman who becomes struck by *xala* on his wedding night with his third wife. Searching for a cure, El Hadji visits numerous marabouts⁴, which couldn't cure him, and spends a significant amount of his fortune in his attempts to regain his virility. He also suffers complications in his business and ends up facing expulsion from the Chamber of Commerce after being accused of embezzlement. The curse of *xala* symbolizes the impotence

and corruption of the Senegalese bourgeoisie who had once struggled for freedom but are now interested in acquiring quick wealth and privileged status. Here Sembene entertains us with the satirical account of El Hadji's inability to perform sexually, but he confronts us with the economic and moral impotence of the post-colonial elite who have failed to use their resources to uplift their country. Like the *Money Order*, *Xala* also shows how members of the pseudo-bourgeoisie defraud the illiterate and use their fortunes to spend lavishly in imitation of Western consumerism till they bankrupt themselves.

The novel as well as the film draws a dividing line between the two main classes in Senegal: the new bourgeois or the exploitative native middle class took over the country after the end of colonization. This class, according to Fanon, was underdeveloped because it imitated a contemporary Western bourgeois class in decline; thus, he warned against the dangers of its empowerment because it will decay and become stagnant, clinging to power for the sake of power rather than introducing radical social reforms (148-9). The second class represents the oppressed subject class who discovers that the cycle of delusion goes on. The new bourgeoisie "presents a much more insidious and sinister force than the openly exploitative European colonialists" (Gabriel 170)

El Hadji's three wives in Sembene's *Xala* are Africa's periods of evolution. El Hadji's eldest wife, Awa Adja, symbolizes the traditional Islamic phase of Senegalese history when dignity and devotion preserved marriage; Oumi, the second wife, serves the image of a "modern" Westernized couple in modern Africa whose marriage is controlled abusively by the exchange of money and services; and his third wife, Ngone, to confirm economic success and symbolizes no more than a "*femme objet*" (Pfaff 153). She also highlights the tension between modernity and tradition in post-colonial Senegal.

El Hadji's elder daughter from his first wife, Rama, ardently supports the Wolof language as an embodiment of the future, the reborn Africa, and the struggle for independence from

European culture. While her father talks to her in French, she always replies in Wolof. When he asks her: "why when I talk to you in French you reply in Wolof?" Rama stands up and says, in Wolof: "May you have a peaceful day." Her resistance through language and her refusal to speak in French acquire a climax in a moment in the dialogue. When El Hadji offers her some bottled (Evian) water, Rama replies: "I do not drink imported water." (Sembène 23) Being well educated, she was also vocal about her opposition to polygamy. Her condemnation of the third marriage reflects the conflict between tradition and modernity. The colours of her costume reproduce the national colours and match those of a map behind her in one of the scenes; the posters of anti-colonial heroes in her room, and her concern about her mother reveal her strong connection with her nation and its heritage.

El Hadji is an influential figure in Senegalese society who accumulated wealth and gained power during the colonial period. He is also known of his association with the French colonizers and his exploitation of his fellow countrymen. So, his impotence would fill him with shame and desperation. When he eventually recovers by subjecting himself to the beggars' demands that he strip and be spat upon, everything has gone as stated by Ohaegbu: "... His wives and his children gradually sap his wealth, his business collapses, the banks and his other creditors sell the rest of his property...his second wife, his third one, his membership of the 'Group of Businessmen'..."(124). In that moment, he finds out that his *xala* has resulted from a curse inflicted on him by a Dakar beggar whom he had dispossessed of his land ; it was particularly the leader of the beggars who bewitched him, in retaliation for his illegal imprisonment. The film closes with a freeze frame of his spittle-covered body. They are not the *marabouts*, but the beggars who turn out to be the real healers. Here again Sembene insinuates that the dispossessed can aspire to this power just as can those who are able to lay the claim to nationalism while wresting to themselves all colonial privileges.

The Chamber of Commerce and its members become emblematic of the state and its leaders. The president of the chamber of commerce is believed to be "a caricature of the Senegalese president, who was a short man" (Adesokan 38). The police are shown as the ready tool of the bourgeoisie "to keep the masses away from the fruits of independence, to keep the beggars out of the affluent neighborhood, to deport them from the city, and to arrest the relative El Hadji dispossessed" (Gugler & Diop 150). The beggars stand as the counterpart of the bourgeoisie, and their poverty is in contrast to the consumption of nouveaux riches. They represent the masses that are similarly cheated and defrauded. The beggars have a point of strength: their blind leader has put the xala on El Hadji, and he can take it away. This reflects Fanon's belief in the revolutionary potential of the working classes (*lumpenproletariat*). El Hadji's associates exemplify the greed, opportunism, and moral decay present in the ruling elite. The prostitutes symbolize the exploitation of the masses, and the hypocrisy of the ruling class. The empty slogans of the members of the Chamber of Commerce caricature the discourse of Leopold Senghor, the President of Senegal until 1981. Sembene reveals how the ruling elite, in spite of their nationalist rhetoric, often prioritize personal interest over the welfare of the nation. The character of El Hadji – the main symbol of this betrayal – is more concerned with maintaining his own status and satisfying his desires at the expense of his kin and despite his constant reference to his patriotism.

Sembène also ridicules the ideas of 'Negritude' so closely linked to Senghor, one of the principal founders of the Negritude Movement. One of the guests at the wedding party tells of his last trip to Europe and how he had gone to Switzerland rather than to Spain where there are too many Africans; irony lies in this comment, "la négritude, hé! Ça voyage" 'negritude, hey, it gets around'. The notion of nationalism is challenged through most of the depiction in *Xala*, and many nationalist ideals propagated by the ruling elite are questioned through the way the plot shapes up in the novel to prove to be a mere façade to maintain power.

7.2 Imitativeness and Alienation

The complexities of Senegalese post-independence history are, in part, due to the feeling of living in an unreal society, not one's own, but one that is imitated from another alien society whose meaning and purpose are incompatible with the native one. This is the problematic of imitativeness resulting from the traumatic history of colonialism and its after-effects. Nationalism, as the immediate project in the post-independence phase, is a cultural-political and ideological strategy which is often sustained by the development of an indigenous identity. The limits of this project, at least in its initial stage, leads to the spread of the literature of disillusionment (Gikandi), or what may be called the narratives of internal dissent (Fraser). It is produced to distinguish between real nationalist liberation ideology, which inflamed struggles of decolonization, and the so-called agents of resistance, who legitimized neocolonialism and continued the same modes of exploitation after independence.

The national middle class which often took over power at the end of the colonial era was an underdeveloped class because it imitated and identified with a contemporary Western bourgeois class that was already superficial and in decline. Unable to live up to its historical role, the native national bourgeoisie in many cases became an "empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been" (Fanon 119). It is this imitativeness that leads to the impotence of the present (superficial middle class members like El Hadji), and the return of the repressed (beggars representing the proletariat) To illustrate, at the time when there is drought in Senegal and the population is starving, El Hadji nourishes his imported car and himself with imported mineral water. The chauffeur-driven cars of the ministers proceeding

in a cortège to El Hadji's wedding ceremony together with the blue wedding present for N'Gone are also instances of imitativeness.

El Hadji's world is actually static, inauthentic and repetitive. The dimension of mobility is clear only when he is constantly roaming here and there in his mercedes. However, the car function as a temporary shelter for El hadji, preventing him from realizing that he has no permanent home. When El Hadji and his faithful driver, Modu, travel to the distant village of Sreen mada, they are forced to change the mercedes to a horse-drawn cart. It is a shift from the limits of El hadji's world to an unknown, isolated territory in the forest where El hadji becomes a stranger. Sembène hints at the hospitality of its people, "the village had neither shop nor school nor dispensary; there was nothing at all attractive about it in fact. It was life based on the principles of community interdependence" (64). While El hadji waits for the marabout, he falls asleep and when he gets up, he finds himself wrapped in "complete darkness" (65). In other words, El hadji feels alienated in the world of Sreen mada whose principles of life are not familiar to El hadji's world. Since it is there that his *xala* may be resolved, the irony becomes that El Hadji is already alienated in his own world. This is confirmed when he returns from Sreen mada's village, Modu asks him where he should take him but El hadji realizes that he has no proper home: "he had three villas and three wives, but where was his real *home*?" (69). The *xala* has made El Hadji afraid of visiting his wives' villas because of his sexual incapacity; instead he visits a hotel, owned by a Syrian, where he falls asleep. Sleep here signifies a reflective, static moment in the narrative, unrecognizable within the discourse of El hadji's narrow world. Sembène has learned to make skilful use of the oppressors' tools, but not in a revolutionary sense. Sreen mada's world is completely unattractive to El hadji because it appears as static world of boredom. Despite the attempts to deform and dehumanize it as still and lifeless world, this is going to end in failure. El hadji's present world appears to be progressive as an effect of the national bourgeoisie's betrayal of

its past. It appears to be dynamic; yet it is in reality static and conservative. If the otherness of Sereen mada's world is basically one that appears in the form of still life – a distant and strange place – it possesses the power to disturb the world of El Hadji. Sereen mada's world is a world in which El hadji's xala may be cured.

8. CONCLUSION

Both the Money Order and Xala are scathing critiques of the post-independence society, exposing the greed, hypocrisy and impotence of the ruling class. Sembène, through cinema and literature for the masses, explores the wider themes of power, identity, corruption, class struggle, and the legacy of colonialism in Africa to highlight the complexities and contradictions of the newly formed nations.

His literary aesthetics is dictated by vivid characters, authentic settings, the simplicity of language, the translation of characters' thoughts, and the use of evident satire which is to the taste of peasants, and taking the cue from people to reach a larger Senegalese public. The novel and most of the dialogue in the film are in French, yet the griot sings in Wolof "to sharpen the political message..." (Gugler & Diop 152).

The foundation of Sembene's political philosophy is the Franco-African conflict and its ensuing repercussions. Each of colonialism, neocolonialism, the capitalist system with its bourgeois values, gender dynamics and cultural identity inspired the bulk of his productions and made him an influential voice in the realm of social and political thought.

Sembene's critique of nationalism serves as a commentary on the post-independence African societies, urging a reevaluation of the true meaning and practice of nationalism for the betterment of people. The means for that was to stay at the level of the common man, and shed light on the experiences of the marginalized individuals and communities. Although his

groundbreaking film « Black Girl » addressed issues of racism or blackness, his neorealist approach was rooted in the socio-economic issues of the post-colonial society.

Footprints of Fanon are evident in the unpreparedness and the defeat of the elite class at the decisive moments of most of the novelist's plots, and the rise of the peasants to look for the leadership within them. Most of his discourse is also painful and sad if we recall naive Dieng who was a perpetual victim in *Mandabi*, or ElHadji who was a long time victimizer then he became victimized by "the silent "human rubbish" he cheated on his way to the top" (Lyam 81). However, evil is uprooted either by breaking the silence and raising consciousness or by punishing the evil-doer. This was Sembène's message on the value of traditional Africa where morality and correctness should prevail.

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1 He adapted five of his novels to film, Niaye (1964), Black Girl (1965), Manda bi/ Le Mandat (1968), Xala (1974), and Guelwaar (1992) and kept telling stories through further films.

2 Griotism : “a modern-day griot”, that is, a storyteller, concerned with the telling of African stories for Africans, triggering conscience to better understand the present and future through a critical look back.

3 Xala: a divinely sanctioned curse of impotence/a spell cast on somebody by an enemy.

4 Senegalese traditional healers.