

**MAGICAL REALISM AS A NARRATIVE STRATEGY FOR REPRESENTING
TYRANNY IN SELECTED FICTION OF ALAIN MABANCKOU**

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents: Chepkeitany arap Chepchieng and Kobil
Chepkeitany. Your inspiration and love drove me on.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the deployment of magical realism as a trope of narrating political tyranny in Alain Mabanckou's novels namely, *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *Broken Glass*, *Black Bazaar*, *Blue White Red* and *African Psycho*. The study employs qualitative narrative research design where data is drawn from primary and secondary written texts. This entails a close reading and interpretation of the selected texts using Genette Gerard's narratology which provides a systematic approach to narrative enabling the reader appreciate how texts make meaning. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory which examines the ways in which writers from colonised countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonisers has been engaged in the analysis of the texts as postcolonial literature. The findings of this study reveal that Mabanckou engages the opposing ontologies of magical and reality to satirise tyranny, to push and sustain narrative, to entertain readers through humorous fantasy, and to develop central themes of political and social concerns. Additionally, Mabanckou's use of scatology presents filth as a symbol in the narrative of disillusionment in post-colonial Africa. The study highlights Mabanckou's use of magical realism and scatology as literary tropes to interrogate deep-seated postcolonial issues, proving the literary landscape as a vibrant, effective and accessible space for humanistic studies. The research contributes to studies on Mabanckou's fiction and to studies on magical realism in African novels. The study recommends that a comparative study on Mabanckou's work be done vis-a-vis the writings of other emerging African writers so as to expose and extrapolate fully the significance of magical realism as a trope of writing. Postmodernist analyses could also be done in his other novels so as to determine influences in his writing.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This study examines Alain Mabanckou's selected novels with specific focus on how he employs magical realism to satirise political tyranny in post-independence African countries. The primary texts are: *Broken Glass*, *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *Black Bazaar*, *African Psycho* and *Blue-White-Red*. The term magical realism coined in the early 20th century by Franz Roh to describe neo-realistic style in German painting has now evolved into a major literary mode. Roh (1925) describes magical realism as a way to explore mysteries hidden in everyday reality. The term magical realism is also used to describe the prose fiction of Jorge Borges in Argentina, Marquez in Colombia, Issabel Allende in Chile, Gunter Grass in Germany, Italo Calvino in Italy and John Fowles in England who interweave in an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply edged realism in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dream-like elements, as well as materials derived from myths and fairy tales.

In fiction, magical realism designates a narrative technique in which fantastical or supernatural elements are presented within an otherwise realistic framework and treated as ordinary occurrences. As Quayson (2009) observes magical realism challenges Western epistemological hierarchies by placing the real and the magical on equal ontological footing. Rather than disrupting reality, the magical coexists with it, producing an expanded understanding of experience.

Magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvellous seems to grow organically within the ordinary in their cultural contexts blurring the distinction between them. Within a work of magical realism, the world is still grounded in the real world, but fantastical elements are considered normal in this world. Magical elements

could be from talking objects to telepathy, but they are presented as normal within the novel to create a realistic atmosphere that accesses a deeper understanding of reality. Much of the strangeness in magical realism derives from folklore, religious parables, myths, allegories and superstitions.

In magical fiction, places or people exist and events occur in a way that defeats logical reasoning and defies proven scientific laws. There is a depiction of people as though they have extraordinary powers and perform extraordinary things such as being able to change physical form to that of an animal or even a rock. Persons are exaggerated and made quite absurdly larger than life hence at times creating unintended comical effect. Magical realism can also be seen as a mode in which supernatural phenomena like lightning or typhoons are naturalized or linked to human actions delineating them from nature.

Although the term magical realism has in recent decades been associated with the Latin America novel writing, it is not correct to restrict the term to Latin America because magical realism has for many years been employed in African folklore. In certain African communities, for example, lightning is not viewed as a phenomenon resulting from electric charges in the skies but as a being, an arbiter who settles complex scores and delivers justice. A text that depicts a scenario where lightning strikes a thief is viewed to be the dead responding to the prayers of the living by punishing the culprit. In other situations, particularly among the coastal people, cats are said to talk to the living at night especially if the person had made a gross mistake during the day. The mistake could range from hitting a goat grazing by the roadside to sneaking and failing to pay for a meal taken in a restaurant. According to oral tradition, some members of the Luo and Luyha communities living in Western Kenya believe a corpse can refuse to travel to the intended destination until certain rituals are performed. The hearse for

reasons that cannot be logically and scientifically be explained simply stagnates on the spot despite the gears of the automobile's being engaged. A text that depicts bizarre and strange phenomena can be termed as a magical realist text. Therefore, magical realism is a manifestation of the reality of people and their accommodation and integration of beliefs in such extraordinary phenomena like lightning and talking cats into common living.

Magical realism as a narrative style is also evident in the creation and narration of African oral narratives. The legend *Lwanda Magere*, for example, tells the story of an invincible Luo warrior who terrorised and defeated the Kipsigis warriors because spears could not pierce his body and it was a mystery where his energy lay. He would however be killed when it was discovered by his enemies through a wife-spy that his shadow held the mystery. The enemy then struck his shadow with an arrow, and he died and his body turned into a huge stone that still exists today. Hunters from the particular Luo region believe that if they sharpen their spears on the stone, they will inevitably kill some game.

Nyamgondho tells the story of a fisherman who went fishing at night as was the norm but instead of catching the Nile Perch and other types of fish found in the vast Lake Victoria, he caught a beautiful woman in his net. The beautiful woman was akin to the mermaid narrated in European tales. Nyamgondho, the fisherman, took the woman to his home and accommodated her. Magical realism is evident in this tale in that human beings cannot possibly survive in water for long like fish because human beings do not have gills. However, in the narrative the woman was swimming like fish until she was caught by Nyamgondho's fishing net. Jane Nandwa (1990) in *Oral Literature: A Senior Course* narrates the story of Simbi, a selective belle who refused to be married by Murunga and Omumiya. She would, however, fall in love with an ogre who had

disguised himself as a handsome suitor. Nasikufu, a hunchback and Simbi's sister, realised that the handsome suitor was a monster when it opened its mouth and sparks of fire came out. The Ogre and its kin would later swallow plates during a feast. Simbi and other girls were saved when Nasikufu tricked the ogre to go and fetch water at the distant river. When the ogre was away, Nasikufu narrated to the girls what she had seen, and the girls escaped and returned home safely after crossing a river with the help of a frog who swallowed all of them and vomited them at the bank across. The communities from where these narratives originate believe in the reality of these tales. Therefore, magical realism as a branch of fiction helps us to name our world and see our place in it, explore truth, and tries to convey the reality of one or several worldviews that actually exist or have existed.

The term magical realism is a type of realism that presents contemporary subjects, often in cool detachment and sometimes injecting an eerie atmosphere. Juxtapositions of sharply rendered and detailed elements both in the foreground and background are used to develop an air of mystery or ambiguity. They remind us that there are still many mysteries in life. Magical realism tells its stories from the perspective of people who live in our world but experience a different reality from the one we call objective. If there is a ghost, for example, in a story of magical realism, the ghost is not a fantasy element but a manifestation of the reality of people who believe in and have real experiences of ghosts. In other words, magical realism depicts the real world of people whose reality is different from that of the majority at any given time. Magical realism is set in a normal, modern world with authentic description of humans and society. It aims to seize the paradox of the union of opposites, for instance, it challenges binary oppositions like life and death, the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present. In this study, we investigate how magical realism has been employed in the texts

Memoirs of a Porcupine and *African Psycho*. In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, a porcupine narrates details of serial killings to a baobab tree while in *African Psycho*, an assassin communes with the dead, Angouilima to receive instructions on how to murder the next victim. This study investigates elements of magical realism present in the texts and their subsequent significance.

Beyond its aesthetic usage, writers also use magical realism to critique of the society, most notably politics and the elite. In Latin America, for example, where the people were economically oppressed by Western countries, writers use the genre to express their distaste and critique American imperialism, corporate greed and governmental corruption. Toni Morrison (1987) in *Beloved* uses the genre to depict the horrors of racism without openly narrating the cruelty of slavery, racism and the subsequent trauma experienced by victims. Fantasy employed in magical realist writings often acts as a metaphor representing something internal to the protagonist. Indeed, texts that employ magical realism contain implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite. They are subversive texts, revolutionary against socially dominant forces like the narrations of tyranny in magical realist mode in the texts examined in this study.

By defamiliarizing oppressive realities through exaggeration, fantasy and the grotesque distortion, writers can expose authoritarian excesses without direct confrontation. The supernatural becomes a metaphorical language through which unspeakable trauma, corruption and abuse of power are rendered visible. In this sense, magical realism enables both satire and subversion. Within African literature, authors such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2006) in *Wizard of the Crow*, Ben Okri (1991) in *The Famished Road* and Sony Labou Tansi (1987) in *The Antipeople* have employed magical realist techniques to interrogate dictatorship, neo-colonial exploitation and post-independence disillusionment. In these works, fantastical elements do not function as escapism but as

mechanism for revealing absurdity and violence embedded in political systems. Magical realism thus becomes a narrative strategy for critiquing tyranny while preserving artistic ambiguity.

Magical realism has also been employed in Watene's play *Dedan Kimathi* and Ngugi's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. In order to reflect his heroic activities during the struggle for independence through the Mau Mau guerrilla war, Kimathi is described as having the ability to crawl on his belly swiftly for long distances and that he could transform himself into a bird or an aeroplane. Kimathi was said to chat with God one-on-one. They say when he prays, the trees turn colour and bears little flames. In reality, a human being doesn't have these abilities. Notably, Kimathi has been given these superman abilities in order to give him the image of an invincible revolutionary who was certain to lead the people to victory.

A beautiful lady in Tutuola (1952) *The Palm-wine Drinkard* desires to marry a certain fine and complete gentleman whom she spots in the market. Unknown to her, this handsome person had hired body parts to look attractive. She runs into trouble but is saved by the drunkard. Magical realism is employed here to pass the message that what we see with the naked eye may not be the reality. The beautiful but rebellious lady in *The Palm- Wine Drinkard* refuses to marry a man her father had suggested. She soon becomes obsessed with the fine or 'complete gentleman' she finds in the market. In the end, this gentleman turns out to be a terrible creature who had simply hired body parts. She later marries the drunkard who saved her. The price a woman pays for rebelling against custom is exacted. It can be concluded from the aftermath that magical realist writers strive towards incorporating indigenous knowledge in new terms in order to interrogate tradition and to herald change.

Rushdie's (1998) *Satanic Verses* is a classic example of a text which employs magical realism. The *Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies and songs. Rushdie uses metaphor to develop magical realism where he allows the supernatural, the mythical, the bizarre and the grotesque to intrude without explanation or rationalisation. The result is an idiosyncratic, cultural and politically aware form of metafiction where world political events entwine with fantasy to explore issues such as racism, intolerance and other human failings.

Laing (1988) *Woman of Aeroplanes* presents human beings as immortal and machines come to life and have intelligence of their own. Magical realism is used here to demonstrate the culpability of leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Kofi Busia. In the novel, there are inhabitants that are not human but much like the gods given their immortality. The aeroplanes are wonders of modern technology but with their bizarre trailers, they are endowed with magical powers. Bobo constructs a machine which develops a life and intelligence of its own. It exposes the truth about individuals, both the players in the plot and political players in the country. It exposes some hard realities about Korner Mensa vulnerabilities as well as those of Mackie and Pokua herself. Magical realism is cynical about party politics and political leaders and equate both Kofi Busia and Kwame Nkrumah as equally murderous and culpable.

Armah (1978) *The Healers* is a call to revolution because Africa has suffered years of misrule, betrayal and oppression. It is an epic tale of good versus evil, creativity versus destruction and unity versus disunity. It is Armah's contention that Africa and its people have lost their way because fragmentation and disunity have prevailed. To Armah, the African royals have colluded with British to destroy the continent and that the ruling

class are doing everything in their disposal to hold on to their own small spheres of power and influence. In order to reverse the trend, the healers are called to help reclaim their days of unity without resorting to force or their special knowledge to manipulate people. The healers who are traditional indigenous priests are viewed to be having extraordinary powers (a tenet of magical realism) that will slowly bring the desired unity though they warn that it would take many years to bring unity if ideologies based on separation and fragmentation are espoused. The utility of *The Healers* content will bestead in the present study.

Arundhati Roy (1997) in *The God of Small Things* makes use of magical realism in order to represent the reality of the experience of dislocation. Imagination, which is basically magical realism, plays a powerful role both in escaping the cruel realities of gender/racial discrimination and in creating the possibility of overturning those conditions. Arundhati uses magical realism through allegory, symbols, fantasy and the inclusion of oral narrative. The most obvious use of magical realism in the novel is in the twins (Estha and Rahel) telepathy and interconnectedness; one always knew when the other was near and they laughed at each other's funny dreams. In this novel, magical realism is used to tackle the psychic pains of neo-colonization and as an attempt to understand the complex post-colonial situation and the increasingly fantastical quality of life in the modern world as well as a way of portraying the moral decay of the traumatized colonized body. Arundhati's *The God of Small Things* was rendered useful in the analyses of Mabanckou's novels as magical realism is employed in both novels and that characters suffer trauma as a result of oppressive conditions.

In Labou Tansi's (1979) *Life and a Half*, magical realism dominates the first half of the story in that accumulation, amplification and other tropes serve to represent a world in

which the real and the surreal, reality and hallucination, the quotidian and the extraordinary indeed co-exist. Tansi's content in the novel is handy in discussing dictator's tyranny in Mabanckou's texts *Black Bazaar*, *Memoirs of a Porcupine* and *African Psycho*.

Alain Mabanckou's fiction is studied in this broader tradition. His novels frequently feature talking animals, spectral presences, exaggerated characters, embedded narratives and surreal distortions of time and causality. In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, for example, a porcupine narrates acts of violence to a baobab tree; in *African Psycho* the protagonist communes with a dead mentor; in *Black Bazaar*, fragmented narration and hyperbolic characterisation create a carnivalesque critique of social and political decay. These elements are not merely fantastical embellishments but constitute a deliberate aesthetic strategy through which tyranny, moral collapse and post-colonial disillusionment are satirised.

Magical realism is characterised by liminal space, a place that is neither the real place that can be found in any map, nor the space in fantasy of the boundless imagination. It is a space in which the recognizable external world co-exists with what Wilson describes as abnormal, experientially impossible and empirically unverifiable. Magical realism grapples with cultural syncretism and accepts it to a greater or lesser extent. It contests boundaries, seamless unities and ethnic purities and can therefore coexist only very uneasily with cultural nationalism. Magical realist texts encompass and sustain two contradictory and ontological codes, broadly recognizable as 'realist' and 'magical' which do not conform to a fixed hierarchy; the narrative adopts an attitude of acceptance towards magical or supernatural events and plot events exhibit an element of discontinuity.

Magical realism is inspired and politically enriched by local stories, beliefs, tales and wisdom. As well as being potential sources of healing myths, oral traditions, the language of the rhetoric, riddle and double speak, enable the fictional medium to enact its message of opposition. Like other magical realist writers such as Okri and Laing, Mabanckou is a cultural hybrid, who grapples with the demands created by national atrocity and with the attractions inherent in contributing to national pride; these writers inscribe in the narrative guts of their fictions their moral and political uncertainties. Magical realism has therefore gained currency in African fiction as it is a tool that can subtly ridicule and expose evils in the society and is used to control behaviour and offer useful moral lessons as in the case of the woman in Tutuola (1952) *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*.

The instances where magical realism is employed in the texts under study is a result of embedded narratives. The anecdotes / secondary narratives are often full of magical realism elements. The embedded narrative technique can therefore be said to be the springboard through which magical realism is developed. Novelists often employ different narrative techniques in order to achieve diverse results. According to Shlomith Rimmon in *Narrative Fiction, Contemporary poetics*, a narrative is defined as “a representation of one or more events by a narrator”. This therefore means for narration to take place; a narrator and channel must exist. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used and have important roles in the story. Most African writers who use magical realism also employ narrative embedding technique in their fiction. Narrative embedding involves inserting one or more stories within a larger story. In Burton Richard’s *Arabian Nights*, for example, the main story is that of Scheradze who is threatened with execution from her husband. In order for her to survive, she has to narrate a new story to her husband every night. The new stories that

the narrator invents have newer stories embedded. Obiechina (2013) refers to the phenomenon of the story within the story as narrative proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative written literature. Obiechina argues that, “like the use of proverbs, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition- authority and association through which an idea is given validity and being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the store house of collective thinking” (20). In discussing how embedded narratives have been employed in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Obiechina (2013) concludes that, “every embedded narrative brings the total meaning of the novel, some insights to clarify the action, to sharpen characterisation, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action”. Therefore, narrative embedding as a technique through which magical realism is manifested expresses the distinct quality of African fiction. In the present study, the focus is on magical realism, and it is noted that the technique manifests itself in the numerous embedded narratives within the primary text.

Tayeb Salih (1969) *Season of Migration to the North* employs the story within a story technique to make his fiction interesting. The novel tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the novel’s protagonist to the North and deals with the impact of British Colonialism on rural African societies particularly its brutality and how it shaped contemporary Sudanese society. The embedded narratives are told to an unspecified audience by an unnamed narrator “a travelled man” who has returned after spending many years abroad. The narrator is fascinated by the interesting tales of Mustafa Saeed who has had a troubled past in Europe and in particular his love affairs with British women. All his relations with women end in tragedies with three women committing suicide and the fourth being murdered by Mustafa. In the end, Mustafa drowns in the

Nile and his widow Hosna refuses to remarry. When Hosna is forced to marry Wad Rayyes against her will she kills him and then commits suicide and so are buried without funerals. In this polyphonic novel, there are a number of little stories which play a crucial role in progressively turning the narrator into a full-blown character. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe vividly describes Okonkwo's tragic story, an Igbo hero who resists change brought about by European's Education, Christianity and Western culture taking root in the society. Though the novel progressively narrates Okonkwo's story, there are other embedded narratives such as the aetiology on how the tortoise shell got cracked that makes the novel more interesting to read. Elements of oral tradition such as the explanatory story are distinct characteristics of magical realism. Like in *Things Fall Apart*, there are many instances in Mabanckou's novels when embedded narrative employs magical realism to achieve a desired effect.

Bal (2009) *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narratives* sees the narrator's text as primary and the "little stories" narrated by characters within the primary text as the embedded narratives. The primary and secondary texts are distinguished by the novels in the technical sense such that the narrator's text is the primary text and the actor's text secondary (embedded). We used this background knowledge in other fictional works to build on the significance of narrative embedding as a technique which is a springboard through which magical realism is developed. In this research study, we analyse Mabanckou as a socio-political writer and analyse the magical realism technique employed in his five novels.

Alain Mabanckou is a novelist and essayist who has written several novels such as *Black Bazaar*, *Broken Glass*, *African Psycho*, *Blue-White-Red* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* all of which form the scope of this study. Mabanckou's writing is largely influenced by the Colombian novelist Gabriel Marquez particularly the text *One*

Hundred of Solitude (1967) where the sudden shifts in narrative and the omnipresence of ghosts and the premonitions leave the reader with the sense that events cycle through an endless loop. In this text, Marquez uses fantasy to satirize the excesses of the authorities. The evil activities of American soldiers such as the massacre of the natives are not described overtly but through magical descriptions. Mabanckou in *Memoirs of a Porcupine* also satirises killings by the state. This is evident in the narrative of the porcupine to the baobab. Such sensitive and tragic issues may not easily be penned down in dictatorial regimes as is the case in Colombia and Congo. Magical realism comes handy in passing the message discreetly.

Mabanckou employs magical realism widely in his fiction and my basic aims in this study are to explore the importance of magical realism in his selected fiction and its power as a narrative style by describing the characteristics that define, the techniques that enable and the cultural issues that traverse it. In an African context, specific focus that extends and modifies the critical analysis above, the thesis examines to what end and to what effect Mabanckou's writing employs magical realist narrative technique. To achieve this, the thesis subjects five novels to an in-depth close reading from within the theoretical frameworks of narratology, postcolonial, reader response and magical realism theories. The background information on magical realism especially its characteristics and the works cited which employ magical realism provide a road map or a bearing that guides the analysis of the novels under study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Magical realism is the presentation of parallel realities; the commonly held reality and the reality for the initiated few, but which is ingrained as true in the wider community's psyche. It is a fiction genre that affords a blending of the opposing ontologies of the magical and the real. A reading of Mabanckou's writings reveals a sustained use of

magical realism and scatology that requires further scrutiny for literary study. However, most researchers have studied his works in terms of themes and language, but no overarching research has been undertaken on the use and significance of magical realism in the narration of tyranny in the works of Mabanckou and explain its utility in the broader postcolonial perspective.

This study examines the use of magical realism technique as a mode of narrating and satirizing tyranny in Alain Mabanckou's selected texts while exposing decadence in the society. It interrogates the import of magical realism in portraying the trauma that characters in the fiction undergo and examine the correlation between magical realism and scatological writing in the texts. Further, many studies available on Mabanckou's writings have largely been focused on one book at a time, with most of the studies being reviews on literary Journals such as Manirombana's (2010) "*Reconfiguration of several identities in the writing of Alain Mabanckou*". Alinoti (2014) and Kilatu (2014) have focused on *Broken Glass* and *African Psycho* respectively. In this study, we focus on the use of magical realism in five of his works, *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *African Psycho*, *Black Bazaar*, *Broken Glass* and *Blue White Red* to facilitate the study of sustained thought processes across his writing.

In this study, we argue that an understanding of the use of magical realism holds the key to understanding Mabanckou's texts, a phenomenon that has not been adequately explored in existing literature on Mabanckou and to demonstrate the efficacy of magical realism as a narrative technique rather than a genre in its own and its place and validity in the contemporary criticism.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine how and why Mabanckou employs magical realism in his writings.

The specific objectives are to:

- 1 Analyse magical realism as a trope of narrating tyranny in Mabanckou's novels.
- 2 Examine how magical realism enhances scatological writing in the texts.
- 3 Evaluate the relationship between magical realism and the linguistic aesthetics in Mabanckou's fiction.
- 4 Analyse the use of magical realism in depicting trauma experienced by characters in the selected fiction.

1.4 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

1. What is the literary efficacy of magical realism in narrating tyranny in Mabanckou's selected fiction?
2. In what ways has magical realism enhanced the scatological writing in selected fiction?
3. What is the intertwine between the magical realism and linguistic aesthetics in Mabanckou's fiction?
4. How is magical realism used to depict trauma suffered by characters in the selected novels?

1.5 Research Assumptions

This research is based on the following assumptions:

1. That narration of tyranny in the novels is achieved through the use of magical realism.
2. The scatological writing in the novels is realised through the magical realism technique employed.
3. In Mabanckou's fiction, there is relationship between magical realism and linguistic elements in the novels.
4. That traumatic experience suffered by protagonists in Mabanckou's fiction is portrayed through magical realism.

1.6 Justification and Significance for the Study.

Literary criticism has established that a writer reflects the literary tendencies prevalent in his time. We endeavour in this study to focus on magical realism as an aspect employed in Mabanckou's novels and dissect its semiotic significance. Further, this research aims to analyse the significance of magical realism as a technique in narrating the motific theme of tyranny in the selected texts. In addition, scatological writing is explored so as to determine its significance in selected Mabanckou's novels.

This research assumes as Ngara does that:

“--- the critic should both reflect the concerns
and state of art and help to shape and develop it” (Ngara 1985: 7)

African writers who wrote during the colonial and the period soon after colonialism ended were heavily influenced by the colonial system. This group of writers such as Elechi Amadi, Chinua Achebe and others synthesized elements of orality and literacy. In their works, they often employed the story within a story technique which was quite significant in the development of characters, plots and themes.

Modern African writers continue to explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of evaluating ideas. Through this research, we hope to expand what Ojaide notes in “Examining canonisation in Modern African literature” that African literary canon is flexible, fluid and not cast in stone. Without doubt, the study of ways in which contemporary African writers are telling their stories through techniques such as magical realism contribute to literary criticism by providing alternative methods of assessing, evaluating and appreciating literary texts. Literary critics need to be open minded so as to critique new forms of narrating that emerge. This research contributes to the studies already done on Mabanckou’s texts by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of magical realism in selected works to narrate tyranny.

The study presents insights by scrutinising Mabanckou’s writings through the examination of magical realism. A key aim of this study is to find out how magical realism is employed in satirizing political ineptitude in countries under dictatorial regimes. Castigating tyrants overtly often leads to catastrophic results hence magical realism is employed to lampoon within the spaces of poetic licences. Magical realism in the form of surrealism and caricatures or memes can be employed in literary texts to criticize totalitarian regimes. Through texts such as pamphlets, the masses can be educated about the ills perpetuated by a regime. Pamphlets such as *Pambana* served effectively during the glamour for multi-party democracy in Kenya and the call to end detention without trial in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This hopefully will lead to the desired changes such as opening more democratic space for the betterment of the society. Magical realism is therefore a tool that serves the purpose of exposing ills in the society. This exemplifies the role of literature in providing spaces for social examination through aesthetic distancing necessary for difficult realistic political and

social terrains. The intention of this study is to give comprehensive analysis herein outlined in Mabanckou's novels. The resulting findings is hoped to add to the wealth of other critical works to strengthen scholarship in literary studies. This attention on the use of magical realism and its significance in enhancing aspects such as satire, scatological humour, linguistic aesthetics and nature and function of narrative techniques may transform readings of the texts and therefore needs to be adequately addressed. The study attempts to broaden the scope of the study of African literature and that it may help to understand and interpret the contemporary magical realist works of fiction by African authors. The research contributes to the studies done on Mabanckou's work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of magical realism in the selected fiction.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Research.

This study is limited to the interrogation of magical realism in Mabanckou's five novels to grasp the implication of its use. In this research study, we are concerned with magical realism as a trope employed to narrate tyranny and how it enhances scatological humour, linguistic aesthetics and depicts trauma in Mabanckou's novels *Black Bazaar*, *African Psycho*, *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *Broken Glass* and *Blue-White-Red*. The selected texts provide relevant illustrations regarding magical realism. Generally, the study focuses on characters, objects and situations with magical or surreal characteristics. My background readings of Mabanckou's fiction revealed that his two novels *African Psycho* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* largely employ magical realism. By focusing on this dimension, the research aims at providing a deeper insight and detailed study on these perspectives while also making use of time and economic limitations. In this study, we are dealing with translated texts. We acknowledge the inevitable loss of some material in the translation process, but we do not focus on such

loss but the conviction that the five novels under study meet the methodological demands of the study. An intensive library reading on relevant theories, background information and relevant literature on Mabanckou's works was carried out. This study therefore limits itself to establishing magical realism as a technique of narrating tyranny in Mabanckou's selected fiction. The constitution of our corpus is not exhaustive, but it is a useful starting point from which future discussions can be conducted.

1.8 Literature Review

In this section, we review the relevant literature from a number of perspectives which include definitions of magical realism in literary studies, literary employment of magical realism, magical realism and postcolonial African fiction and scatology in postcolonial African writings. Mabanckou's novels have received literary attention in both Francophone and Anglophone countries, however, comprehensive studies on his fiction have been scanty. Before delving into Mabanckou's novels, it is important to consider other literary works that employ the principles of magical realism. This can help us establish some areas of convergence in these works.

According to Venzala (2002) magical realism occurs when extraordinary is presented as if it were part of the daily life. The absence of the element of surprise in part of the characters and the reader is what emerges as an important feature of the genre. The technique has in recent literary studies been used as a tool to explore the experiences related to the post-colonial reality, both on an individual and national level (Bhabha 1995). Warnes (2005) *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* defines magical realism as a mode of narration that naturalises or normalises the supernatural, that is to say, a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural are coherently represented in a state of equivalence and states that writers choose magical realism as a narrative technique to reclaim what has been lost

or stolen, to critique the assumptions of metropolis, to recover and affirm identities and to assert autonomy in the face of hegemony. He notes that magical realism is understood to be a sophisticated aesthetic expression of primitivism that served the yearnings of Latin American writers for identity and cultural emancipation. The magical realism of Carpentier, Asturias, Rulfo and Marquez is shown to develop from an urge to reclaim a space for otherness by appealing to myths of difference.

Cooper (1998) in *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* observes that magical realism thrives on transition, on the process of change, borders and ambiguity. ‘Such zones occur where burgeoning capitalist development mingles with older pre-capitalist modes in post-colonial societies and where there is the syncretizing of cultures as creolized communities are created. At the heart of the emergence of magical realism in the Third World is the fact that these countries encountered western capitalism, technology and education haphazardly. Cities grew wildly from rural origins and families were divided between members who were western educated and those who remained inserted in pre-colonial economies and ways of seeing the world with any number of positions in between these extremes. This social patchwork, dizzying in its cacophony of design, is the cloth from which the fictional carpet is cut, mapping not the limitless vistas of fantasy, but rather the new historical realities of those patchwork societies’. (Cooper Brenda, 1998:15). Cooper’s observation is invaluable in analysing Mabanckou’s novels because it offers an insight on key elements of magical realism as a narrative mode.

Jameson and Anderson (1991) connect the development of capitalism and the rise of magical realism. Jameson posited that “Magical realism emerged in South America from a situation characterized by the co-existence of two epistemological and political systems, whereby, “magical realism as a formal mode is constitutively dependent on a

type of historical raw material in which disfunction is structurally present and depends on the contents which betray the overlap or the co-existence of pre-capitalist with nascent capitalist or technology features.” (311). Magical realism has very often been seen as steeped in beliefs, the point of view of an indigenous, peasant class like the Red Indians of South America or the Aborigines of Australia. Fredric Jameson, for example, describes how the magical realism came to be understood as a kind of narrative raw material derived essentially from peasant society, drawing in sophisticated ways on the world of village or even tribal myth. Within this definition, magical realism is first and foremost, a ‘realism’ as it performs a fundamentally mimetic representation of a given reality such as the postcolonial African societies discussed in the present study.

Cooper (ibid) in the chapter ‘Sacred Names into Profane Spaces’ further observes that magical realist writers have an urge to demonstrate, capture and celebrate ways of being and of seeing that are uncontaminated by European domination. But at the same time, such authors are inevitably a hybrid mixture of which European culture is a fundamental part. In other words, ‘these postcolonial, culturally displaced migrants who write magical realist novels are quite distant from the mass of the poor illiterate peasants and workers that populate their countries of origin. These urban intellectuals who produce the buck of the literature and culture of their countries, share this in common despite their own differences and those of their countries’ histories.’ (Cooper Brenda 1998:18).

Faris (2004) *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical realism and the Remystification of Narrative* suggests that magical realism has five characteristics. First, the texts contain an ‘irreducible element’ of magic, second the description in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world; third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understanding of events; fourth, the narrative merges different realms and finally, magical realism disturbs

received ideas about time, space and identity (Ordinary 7). These five elements are closely related and in practice share considerable overlap but provide a useful itemization of stylistic elements. The first three items on Faris list are fundamental because they refer to the established simultaneous presence of the two ontological codes : the magic element must be ‘irreducible’ because even the slightest possibility of interpreting text’s magical elements as a fantasy, vision or hallucinations on the part of the protagonist automatically excludes it as a magical realist writing and similarly if the magical code of the text is not contradicted by a realist one, then we are reading a work of marvellous or fantasy fiction. Irreducible element of magic suggests something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in Western, empirically based discourse that is according to logic, familiar knowledge or received belief. Therefore, the reader has difficulty marshalling evidence to settle questions about the status of events and characters in such fictions. The narrative voice reports extraordinary magical events which would not normally be reliable by sensory perception, in the same way in which the other ordinary events are recounted. The fourth quality relates to the text’s handling of the two codes it establishes essentially because texts which enact resistance to their ‘merging’ generally belong to the mode of the fantastic; the fifth could be said to be a summary effect of the first, second, third and fourth elements but is certainly a valid common denominator. Faris’s observation is apt when discussing *African Psycho* whereby realistic descriptions create a fictional world that resembles the one we live in but with fantastical / magical elements such as Angouilima conversing with the dead.

Further, as Cooper (1998) has stated “the mysterious, sensuous, unknown and unknowable are not in the subtext as in realist writing but rather shame the fictional space with history”, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to

reconcile two contradictory understanding of events. In magical realism, the narrative merges different realms and disturbs received ideas about time, space and identity. In other words, magical realism expands fictional reality to include events we call magic in realism. Magical realist scenes may seem dream-like, but they are not dreams and the text may both tempt us to co-opt them by categorizing them as dreams and forbid that co-option. In analysing the selected novels by Mabanckou, we strive to discuss these elements of magical realism as depicted in the texts without deviating from the key objective of how magical realism is deployed to narrate tyranny.

Chiampi (1980) points out that magical realism may involve either the ‘denaturalization of the real’ or the ‘naturalization of the marvellous’. Her observations are useful in helping us understand the processes by which the mode functions and also by which criticism attempts to interpret its objects of study. Her ideas are relevant because as we study Mabanckou’s novels, we strive to explicate situations when the unnatural and the unreal are presented. Furthermore, Faris (2004) in *Magical Realism: Theory, History and Community* treats magical realism as an international phenomenon and literary contexts as diverse as Europe, Asia, Caribbean, Africa, America and Australia are brought together under the rubric of the term. From the anthology, Camayd-Freixas sees magical realism as a sophisticated aesthetic expression of primitivism that served the yearnings of Latin American writers for identity and cultural emancipation. The magical realism employed in the works of Garcia Marquez, Asturias and Carpentier is shown to develop from an urge to reclaim a space of otherness by appealing to myths. In a word, Faris seeks to interpret the ‘magic’ that is, the expression of particular belief systems or ways of seeing the world in literary texts. Although Latin American writers have for many years employed magical realism their novels, it should not be taken that the concept began in Latin America. In fact, magical realism has existed since time

immemorial. For instance, Ancient Greek and Roman myths could be considered as literature that employ magical realism. Elliot Goddard (1980) in his analysis of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1497) notes that the story of Daedalus and Icarus uses magical wings as a metaphor for hubris. Similarly, the tragedy of Medusa also relies on magical realism. Once Athena turns Medusa into a snake haired monster, there is no need for further magical intervention, we must merely observe Medusa's estrangement from society and eventual slaughter at the hands of Perseus. Finnegan (1970) in *Oral Literature in Africa* observes that Africans have for many years infused elements of magical realism in their fables and oral narratives. In many trickster and monster narratives magical realism is employed. In ogre tales, you will find a creature with bizarre physical characteristics talking with people and at times even succeeding in marrying the most beautiful girl in the village. It is therefore true to conclude that Africans have always used magical realism in their artistic expressions.

Cooper (1998) in her seminal chapter entitled 'An endless Forest of Terrible Creatures' observes that African writers often adhere to animism, incorporate spirits, ancestors and talking animals in stories, both adapted folktales and newly invented yarns in order to express their passions, their aesthetics and their politics. The stories encompassing a transgression on boundaries lie at the heart of the adaptation of the past. She discusses the deployment of magical realism in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* where a white person with bizarre physical characteristics is described. *The Famished Road* is full of that irreducible magic which frequently disrupts the ordinary logic of cause and effect. Magical realism is used in the text to lampoon the superiority of the white people. The abiku child's life stands for the fractious postcolonial history of Nigeria and has a political relevance. It functions as an allegory of trauma of Nigerian nationhood and is

useful when interpreting the relevance of magical realism in Mabanckou's novels under study.

In the chapter "Intermediate magic and the fiction of Kojou Laing," Cooper (ibid) notes that magical realist writers tend to portray the dissolutions in African nations that is crucially linked to the nationalist project, in its preoccupation with the sickness of the state. The protagonist (Ben Aidoo) is in touch with the spirits, ghosts and ancestors while Loww crosses the border between the living and the dead and observes the ancestors. Adde Adwoa has magical powers bequeathed by her grandmother and occasionally flies over Accra community with the dead as well as the spirits of the living. The farm magically reappears and plants itself alone and brings with it a blue earth. The only way to overcome the menacing power of the land over his body is for Allotey to modernize entirely by way of technology. Laing's discussion in the article is useful when analysing the disillusionment in post independent African nations as portrayed in Mabanckou's novels *Broken Glass* and *Black Bazaar*.

Derek (2008) *Escaping the Tyranny of Magical Realism? A Discussion of the Term in Relation to the Novels of Zakes Mda* observes that Mda employs the narrative strategy of magical realism to treat the subject matter of the struggle to reshape an appealing present infused with contradictory ontologies and burdened by the continued effects of the traumatic past. Mda has muted magical realism in his works especially in the novels *Ways of Dying* (1995), *She Plays with Darkness* (2000) and *The Heart of Redness* (2000) where he combines realism with the fantastic in a manner which does not allow either element a greater element to truth. By incorporating the techniques associated with magical realism in his fiction Mda ensures that everyday day tasks and events are defamiliarized, while the supernatural is familiarised in a process which makes the lives

of the marginalised believable. *Ways of Dying* offer a dynamic combination of allegory, a conventional realism and magical realism which allows the mythic consciousness, by means of individual myths to understand and interpret the world. In *The Heart of Redness*, intractable opposites are jammed together, and it is magical realism which constitutes the narrative glue which enables their seamless co-existence in a single narrative. The text successfully re-narrates historical events such as the cattle killing tragedy of 1856-7 which devastated the Amaxhosa is written in contemporary literary history and is thereby both re-appropriated for modern community and valorised as a memory to be honoured. Mda's employment of the magical realist mode successfully reveals the truth of otherwise incomprehensible and all too-real historical events. Mda employs magical realism whenever the subject matter deals with the extreme and inexplicable inhumanity. This review of Mda's novels is apt when discussing Mabankou's texts that are also concerned with historical events characterised by unexplainable ontological rifts.

Grzeda (2013) in *Magical realism: A Narrative of Celebration or Disillusionment? South African Literature in the Transition Period* argues that magical realism relies heavily on African oral traditions and in so doing, it not only constitutes a point of confluence for black and white writing of the apartheid era, but it also epitomises the reconciliation of Eurocentric-Western rationalism and African tradition. She notes that Zakes Mda and Andre Brink consistently experimented with magical realist forms in a number of their successive works. Indeed, each of the novels integrates what Faris (2004) calls an 'irreducible element of magic' within an objectively verifiable setting that perfectly corresponds to the general demands of realism. In *The First Life of Adamastar*, torn bushes suddenly appear surrounding the camp overnight, a lion provides a tribesman with food and Tkamas penis starts to grow uncontrollably until it

is snapped off by a crocodile and substituted with clay replacement that later turns into flesh. In *Imaginings of Sand*, Kristiens' female ancestors could turn their sheep, lose their shadow and disappear without leaving footprints. *Death Valley* is distinguished by the entire plots' aura of the supernatural. The setting, a remote valley settled by Afrikaners seems rather surreal. The foregrounding of ancestors who continue to intervene actively in the affairs of the present is an inherent component of a distinctly African form of magical realism that is rooted in the long tradition of African oral narrative. The magical realist texts by Brink and Mda blur boundaries between fact and fiction and critically juxtapose the past and the present, the traditional and the modern. Grzeda's analyses are useful when discussing Mabankou's novels especially *African Psycho* where the dead commune with living and direct their actions.

Asayesh (2017) in *Patriarchy and Power in Magical Realism* observes that Bhabha celebrates magical realism as the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world while Faris sees it as a point of convergence between postmodernism and postcolonialism (Bhabha 2000, 7; Faris 2004,2). Generally, magical realism is a mode suited to exploring and transgressing boundaries whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical or generic (Zamora and Faris 1995,2). Asayesh (2017) chooses three female characters from different geographic and culture of England, Latin America and Saudi Arabia. The female characters presented in the novels are empowered with magic. Sycorax in *Indigo* is a shaman, Clara in *The House of the Spirits* is a clairvoyant and Fatma in *Fatma* is a woman-snake. These female characters are subalterns under patriarchy. Asayesh sees magical realism as having the potential to give subalterns the voice to be heard. This content from Asyesh' study is relevant when analysing Mabankou's novel *Broken Glass* where the downtrodden

(subalterns) represented by drunkards voice the tribulations they undergo in a tyrannical regime.

Takolander (2007) in *Catching Butterflies: Bringing Magical Realism to Ground* has carried out an intensive study aimed at grounding magical realist literature through a profound historical and theoretical contextualisation and to draw attention to the myths of realism and reality with which this narrative genre is ultimately concerned. She provides a historical investigation of the development of the magical realist literary genre. Takolander observes that magical realism may be geared for the entertainment of Western readers but its fundamental agenda, as its marginal location and transgressive action suggest, is typically the elucidation of a marginal and transgressive politics. Magical realist fiction thus not only obeys a political imperative but also raises a radical post-structuralist literary and ontological questions. She examines magical realist writings from around the world such as Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and concludes that magical realism which represents the unreal as real, is an inherently ironic narrative and subversive genre which works to expose delusory capacities of realism and deceptive constructions of reality. She concludes that magical realist writings, unlike postmodern fiction, which can be said to revel in post-structuralist uncertainty, can be seen to express a profound ambivalence about representational and ontological skepticism given the political importance of not only deconstructing lies but reconstructing truth. The findings of Takolander (2007) provide hindsight to the present study particularly in analysing the transgressive politics that lead to tyranny portrayed in selected novels. Takolander's observation that magical realism is concerned with correcting the lies of history is an

input that provides a bearing in the present study particularly in analysis of *Black Bazaar*.

Niang (2021) in the article “Biocentrism as Magical Realism, Realism and Hybrid Transculturation” in *Research in African Literatures* examines Diome’s enriching renewal of literary creativity through biocentrism as magical realism and through a hybrid transculturation that transcends continental borders. He argues that Diome carries out this innovative renewal by constructing a fantastic process of memorialization built around *Ketala*’s main female protagonist, Memoria and the lifelike experiences in natural and transnational spaces, as well as her untimely death. A unique cross-fertilisation between biocentrism as magic realism and realism features in this aesthetics of a hybrid transculturation through a narrative orchestrated to add a new layer to identity of sub-Saharan Francophone African literature. She mixes the real and the magical as the main transcultural agents. For Diome, magical realism is synonymous with the biocentric by virtue of her ethnic group’s belief in objects not just as being objects. Diome’s belief in the potential of the objects justifies her magical realist depiction of them and the representation she makes of them displays the inherent physical or spiritual /metaphysical value that her community ascribes to them. The discussion in this article is not about magical realism’s depiction of tyranny; however, it builds on the potential of objects and animals such as the porcupine in Mabanckou’s *Memoirs of a Porcupine* as agents of memory and vehicles of socio-political critique.

Mulliken’s (2017) “*Surviving the Impossible: The Function of Magical Realism in Teresa Prata’s film Terra Sonambula*” analyses the function of magical realism, arguing that the concept serves as a sort of coping mechanism, a way of making sense of the world that allows the narratives’ characters to remain hopeful despite the violence and devastation that surrounds them. Cuoto’s novel *Terra Sonambula* (Sleepwalking

Land), from which the film is adapted, serves as an examination of Mozambique's past and an attempt to understand and reconcile with the past. Magical realism plays an important role in the process for it functions as 'the middle passage between the fantasy and the reality, war and peace and other polarities such as present and the future'. The key function of magical realism as a coping mechanism is apt in analysis of Mabanckou's *Broken Glass* whereby characters engage in drinking spree as a way of coping with the devastation resulting from political tyranny.

Ngom Ousmane (2016) in the research paper entitled "*Magical Realism as Postcolonial Aesthetics in African and Afrodiasporic Literature*" contends that by cutting across the real and the magic, the literary strategy of magical realism is an apt tool for representing the dual natures of post-independence Africa and post-emancipation America. He notes that Ngugi's *Matigari*, Morrison's *Beloved* and Diop's *Doomi Golo* use mythical characters and circumstances to aesthetically reveal the unreal reality of postcolonialism by narrating the unnarratable. The article examines the modalities at play in the writing of magical realism and shows how magical realism is both an interface between history and memory for the reconstruction of the postcolonial past and an instrument for the regeneration of the African identity and culture. The strategy of magical realism used by these writers sheds light on the historical past. Ngom (2016) concludes that magical realism in African and Afrodiasporic literatures with its mythic characters unbound by time and space explores and emphasizes the full potential of oral culture as an alternative to Western mainstream discourses and an effective tool against the erasure of the subaltern voice and the revisionist enterprise of neocolonialism. Although Ousmane Ngom does not discuss tyranny in this article, the observation that magical realism sheds light on historical past is apt in analysis of Mabanckou's selected

novels because the fictional texts under study reflect the history of postcolonial African nation.

Harlin's (2021) research study "*One foot on the other Side: Towards a Periodization of West African Surrealism*" looks at how the contemporary iterations of historical African are invested in magical realism on merging the realms of the living and the dead. She carries out analysis on Chigozie's (2019) novel *An Orchestra of Minorities*, Okri's *The Famished Road*, Tutuola's (1952) *My life in the Bush of Ghosts* and Oyeyemi's (2007) novel *Icarus Girl*. She argues that West African spiritual surrealism and its progenitors have always been concerned with globalization and the West; indeed, the abiku tradition in particular emerged as a response to the to the banditry experienced by Yoruba community during the slave trade. For Tutuola, the 'born to die' child (abiku) is an entirely supernatural and exploitative presence in the family. The abiku do not desire death per se, they simply use it as a means to acquire what they desire. Azaro in *The Famished Road*, a child named from the biblical figure of Lazarus, who has risen from the grave is also an abiku. His spiritual cohort pursues and entices him to return to the spiritual realm but abiku refuses because of his love for his mother. *Icarus Girl* while not suggesting that Jess is suicidal entwines Western discourses of mental health with spirit child narratives. Harlin notes that the spiritual surrealist texts are human focused while revealing the limitations of humanist understanding of the agency. She contends that contemporary diaspora novels in the genre increasingly deploy the Western vocabulary of mental health and illness in order to undermine individualist narratives of healing and of suicide. Harlin's observations in this article come in handy in examining the surrealism in Mabanckou's *African Psycho* particularly in the instances when Gregoire converses with the dead in order to acquire some supernatural powers to murder persons he considers undesirable.

Manirambona Fulgence (2010) in the article '*Reconfiguration of several African identities in the writing of Alain Mabanckou*' observes that there is de-centering in the novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine* and constitute a form of negotiation with the universal environment. Initially, there is a clash in perceptions by ethnologists from the African and western divides. The western ethnologists are curious about certain African cultures and come out to attend the 'seeing of a corpse unearth a wrongdoer'. Similarly, Amedee who represents the black intellectuals and ethnologists is perplexed by the white people's content in books and his education marks a step in change in customs of African societies. Indeed, the African character fed to western culture takes issue against the misrepresentation though strengthening African beliefs. The magical elements highlighted in the article is scrutinised further in the present study to comprehend its meaning and significance.

Hanneken (2008) focuses on *Blue White Red* and describes in detail how Paris has been mystified by immigrants from third world countries. The French city is painted as a blissful paradise, the Canaan where an individual's dreams are fulfilled. Paris is the place of beauty, glory and capital of love where even children dream about in their childhood. In the end, the truth about Paris is revealed through Massala- Massala. Under the tutelage of Charles Moki, Massala-Massala, a young and jobless Congolese travels to Paris hoping to achieve great things. However, his expectations are dashed and in fact jailed at Seine Saint-Denis prison. The harsh conditions of the prison exert a disruptive influence on Masala's identity. The dark solitary cell makes him hallucinate. His shadow keeps on appearing and disappearing, getting up, walking about and sitting down again. Massala -Massala cannot recognize himself in front of a mirror. The social, economic and political conditions in Paris are depicted as having the ability to fragment a person's identity. Magical realism has been employed in the novel to describe the

allure of Paris. Hanneken's study forms a basis for understanding the trauma suffered by Massala-Massala while in custody which the present study explores in detail.

Glissant Eduard (2007) in a review of Mabanckou's novel writing notes that Alain Mabanckou creates a linguistic and stylistic work that is original and symbolic field in African literature. He observes that the novelist who is not a sycophant of classic language, structures this field while inventing his style in novel writing, implementing new forms of writing based on his multiculturalism. Mabanckou exceeds the wonder of strangeness of language for linguistic creativity. Implementation of this writing style translates the different manifestations of his uniqueness while the interlinguistic style and foul language in his novels distances themselves from those styles typically evident in most novels. In this study, we used this background knowledge on linguistic aesthetics to build on the relationship between magical realism and linguistic elements employed in the selected novels and how it helps develop the theme of tyranny.

Robson (2016) focuses on the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser in her examination of *Black Bazaar*, *Broken Glass* and *Blue white Red*. She discusses the use of irony to expose the lifestyle of Sappeurs (a group of flamboyant and flashy youngsters of African origin who live in Paris). She argues that Mabanckou's novels are full of stereotypes against the colonial masters. Her study does not dwell on the aspect of magical realism that is manifested in Mabanckou's fiction, but her work helped the present study in exploring trauma experienced as a result of the tyranny meted on the characters described in the novels.

Kilatu (2014) in his study on *African Psycho* argues that giving characters mythical attributes is a way of sustaining the narrative. He looks in detail at the attributes given to Anguilima by the media who is said to have two copulation organs like a snake and

is therefore able to make love to two women at the same time. However, when he is found dead at the beach, it is realised that he in fact has one very small penis. Here, it is clear that Mabanckou uses myths to show the power of the media in creating impressions on people's minds. Myths are used to criticise reports by the local and international media. African Presidents are given a larger-than-life image. Idi Amin, for example, was a despotic demi-god but who dies like any other small and ordinary person in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Mobutu in his heydays lived a luxurious life represented by the image of Gbadolite but like the mythical Angoulima, he was buried a nondescript at a cemetery in Rabat, Morocco surrounded only by a few family members and die-hard loyalties. This study focuses on how the magical realism technique narrates the motif theme of tyranny and therefore Kilatu's study on myths in *African Psycho* is apt because myths are elements of magical realism.

Defecation, copulation, pomp and extravagance which are highlighted in this novel are classical ingredients in the production of power and there is nothing specifically African about this. Mbembe in *On the post-colony* (2001) observes:

“The obsession with orifices results from the fact that in the post-colony, the commandment is constantly engaged in projecting an image of itself and of the world—a fantasy it presents its subjects as truth beyond dispute, a truth to be instilled into them so that they acquire a habit of discipline and obedience.” (Mbembe: 2001)

Mbembe demonstrates how the grotesque and the obscene are essential characteristics that identify post-colonial regimes and domination as depicted in Mabanckou's novels. Mbembe maintains that grotesque and the obscene are above all the province of ordinary people. He maintains that as a means of resistance to the dominant culture, and as a refuge from it, obscenity and the grotesque are parodies that undermine officialdom by showing how arbitrary and vulnerable is officialese and by turning it all into an object of ridicule. The production of vulgarity needs to be understood as a

deliberately cynical operation. It is political in the sense intended by S. Wilentz when he argues that even polity is governed by Master-fictions' little by little accepted into the domain of the indisputable. The post-colonial polity can only produce 'fables' and stupefy its subjects bringing on delirium when the discourse of power penetrates its targets and drives them into the realms of fantasy and hallucinations. Mbembe's highlights on the significance of vulgarity is handy when we analyse scatology and how it depicts the disillusionment resulting from tyranny.

The "Excremental writing" has been tried by several writers and Mabanckou is not the first writer from Africa to use it. African writers have used filth and dirt as metaphors of exposing moral degradation as well as corruption in the African continent. In Francophone Africa, Sony Labou Tansi and Ibrahima are pioneers in the field. The profusion of excrement in literary texts merely reflects the overcrowding and filthy in African cities and streets. Labou Tansi (1979) used it to denote the endless grabbing of property by the ruling class. This overconsumption is manifested primarily by the amount of waste they reject. Also, to talk of defecation by Presidents is a way of belittling them and an opportunity for their subjects to laugh at them and see them for what they are, beings like others; thus, going against the almost divine image that many African leaders want to give of themselves. According to Mboussa-Mongo, "of all contemporary writers, Sony Labou Tansi is perhaps the one with the most staged body, making a weapon of subversion against the power of tyrants ".²¹⁷ Esty (1999) notes, "what the new currency of scatology in postcolonial cultures suggests is that excremental satire is also the index of national or collective self-involvement in folly or excess" ("*Postcolonialism Excremental*" 34-35). In other words, in a text, filth and excrement communicate a meaning that is both political and social beyond the unhygienic conditions that are literally described with scatological aesthetics. Esty

(1999) posits that excrement in literature has a political interpretation as it represents under-development and wasted energies. It is a symbolic medium for questioning the place of autonomous individual in new postcolonial societies. Esty (1999) stresses that in excremental writing there exists a possibility that victims are blamed for their misfortune. But the reality is that "at the level both of national politics and of individual ethics, excremental writing tends to draw toward complex models of systemic guilt rather than towards the sharp absolutions and resolutions that gold moral expects political binaries" (Esty, "Excremental *Postcolonialism*" 35). One can thus establish a corollary between the scatological writing and anti-colonialist writing. The heroes of the revolution and the fight for decolonization are no more. We are now seeing the exploitation of Africans by other Africans and widespread rush enjoyment.

This thesis argues that magical realism in Mabanckou's selected novels operates as a transgressive narrative mode that destabilises authoritarian discourse and exposes the grotesque logic of political despotism. Through exaggeration, irony, embedded narrative storytelling and supernatural intrusion, Mabanckou constructs a literary space in which power is ridiculed and official narratives are parodied and marginal voices are amplified.

Drawing on narratology, postcolonial and theories of magical realism, the study undertakes close readings of the five selected novels to examine how magical realism shapes narrative structure, character construction, temporality and satire. The central concern is not simply the presence of magical elements but their function: how they enable political commentary, encode trauma, and re-configure representation of authority in post-independence African contexts.

By foregrounding magical realism as a criticism instrument rather than a decorative technique, this thesis demonstrates that Mabanckou transforms fantasy into a powerful vehicle for satirising tyranny and interrogating the unfinished project of postcolonial nationhood. The study further explains the scatological metaphors in Mabanckou's fiction within postcolonial disillusionment.

The literature reviewed has explained the use of magical realism in general and in literary creations by different literary authors, with the focus being on achieving different functions of literature. Although there are a number of studies on Mabanckou's writings such as Hanneken (2008), Robson (2016), Kilatu (2018), such studies have not dealt with magical realism as a key that opens Mabanckou's writings to exhaustive interpretation. This is the gap this study sets to fill. Kilatu (2004), for instance, has focused on *African Psycho* by contrasting it with Easton Ellis *American Psycho*. The study dwells on common thematic issues in the two texts. Alinoti (2014) studied the use of irony as a form of satire in *Broken Glass* to emphasize the disillusionment in Africa. These studies hardly interrogated the deployment of magical realism in the texts. It is out of this realisation that magical realism has not been given the attention it deserves that the study began with the hope that it will contribute to better understanding of the texts.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

1.9.1 Introduction

The importance of theories in research is such that they not only define what may be considered a respectable explanation of a phenomenon that we observe, they also determine what counts as a relevant data in the exploration of a given problem. In literature, theory has a key role in facilitating our social institution and creative process. Several approaches are normally used to increase the critics understanding and scope

of reach in works of literature. The main focus in this research study is the employment of magical realism in Alain Mabanckou's selected novels particularly in bringing out aspects such as tyranny, scatology and trauma. I rely on various theories to achieve my objectives. The theoretical framework developed for undertaking the study comprises relevant issues from postcolonial, narratology and magical realism theories.

1.9.2 Narratological Theory

Narratology as a study of the narrative entails the study of those structures and traits that constitute a narrative. Narratology aims at describing the constants, variables and combinations typical of narrative and to clarify how these characteristics of narrative texts connect within the framework of theoretical models. Like semiotics from which it is derived, narratology is based on the idea of common literary language or universal pattern of codes that operates within a text. It puts under investigation literary pieces of language and yields an understanding of the components it has in its very texture. Tzevan Todorov in Phelan (2006) defines narratology as the theory of the structures of the narrative. Narratology examines what all narratives have in common and what allows them to be narratively different. It is clear from this definition that narratology does not deal with abstract levels of a specific narrative nor with the interpretive dimension of narratives; but it investigates narratives' structure and basic traits which ultimately give shape to what a narrative is and what distinguishes it from other forms. An indispensable notion in narratological studies is the narrative. Fludernik writes, narrative is related to the verb 'narrate' and that narrative is not just confined to novels or historical writings. Narrative is associated with the act of narration and is to be found wherever someone tells us about something: a news reader on the radio, a newspaper columnist or the narrator in a novel. We are all narrators in our daily lives in our conversation with others.

Narratological theory will help answer the questions: Who is telling the story? How is the story packaged? Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An introduction to literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of storytelling” (p222). Narratology theory provides us with a systematic, thorough approach to the mechanism of the narrative and enables the reader to appreciate how texts make meaning. Mabanckou’s writing is characterised by violation of grammatical and literary conventions of writing in French language and the subsequent translations of texts in English. The theory of narratology helps in explaining the significance of such deviation and the overlap between his native language and the borrowed European languages. Genette (1980) focuses not just on the narrative, but how it is told, that is, the process of narrating and has deployed methods of analysing stories’ structure so as to understand its meaning. This is often achieved by building upon the work of a former narratologist and adding some element. In Mabanckou’s fiction, there are a number of embedded narratives in each novel. This having various ‘stories within a story’ is more than a story telling device but part of the narratives’ poetics that one has to fully understand in order to comprehend the narrative. It is imperative that one closely studies the relationship between the primary text and the secondary narratives in order to get the intended meaning. The troping of tyranny through fantasy and scatology springs from the magical realist mode employed in narrating these secondary narratives. Narratology is apt in this study because it entails the analysis of structures that reside in a narrative. It deals with narratives’ traits which ultimately distinguish them from other genres.

1.9.3 Magical Realism Theory

This study also employs magical realism as an analytical tool to understand the motif of tyranny. Amaryll Chanady (1985) proposes in *Magical Realism and the Fantastic* three criteria for defining magical realism in contrast to the fantastic. She notes that the fantastic establishes an antinomy between the natural and the supernatural; it affirms the natural as valid, such that the irruption of the supernatural creates an illogical situation; and it presents a narrator who is reluctant to explain matters and resolve the antinomy. In contrast, magical realism presents as an antinomy two coherent perspectives in conflict, one based on a rational view of reality, and the other one on an acceptance of the supernatural as a normal everyday occurrence. However, according to Chanady, this second coherent (but non-rational) perspective should not be unnecessarily restricted to that of a marginalised ethnic culture but could also be that of an individual psyche (dreams, hallucinations, psychopathology, a child's perspective et cetera) Chanady based her separation of the fantastic and magical realism on cultural basis. For magical realism to function, the reader had to see magical events as supernatural and this presupposed his or her vision coming from Western empiricism. On the other hand, the text had to come from a position which was alien to the implied reader, containing characters who accepted magical events as part of life. For Chanady, if these criteria were not met, then magical effect could not be produced. This study uses Chanady's ideas on magical realism to analyse selected texts. Magical realism is a style that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction. There is usually a presence of phenomenal world in texts that employ magical realism with mystery hidden within the subject matter. It is a type of realism using contemporary subjects, often in cool detachment and sometimes injecting an eerie atmosphere. Magical realism is characterised as a transgressive mechanism that

parodies authority, the establishment and the law. This function is indeed evident in the texts under study. In reading the selected texts, magical realist criticism is a useful tool in its analysis and evaluation.

1.9.4 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is applied to Mabanckou's selected works in order to draw attention to the relevant themes such as tyranny, exploitation and social injustice in his works. Postcolonial theory is a literary or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonising countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. This theory is based on around concepts of otherness and resistance. Typically, the proponent of this theory (Homi Bhabha) examines ways in which writers from colonised countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonisers. He also examines ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetration of images of the colonised as inferior. Literatures that emerge may be written in the style of speech of the inhabitants of a particular colonised area, which language use does not read like standard English and in which literature the standard literary allusions and common metaphors and symbols may be inappropriate or may be replaced by allusions and tropes which are alien to colonisers culture and usage. In *Cultural Studies Reader* (1992), Homi Bhabha observes that postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern order. The postcolonial as a mode of analysis attempts to revise nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third world and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It

forces recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exists on the cusp of these often-opposed political spheres. It insists that cultural and political identity are constructed through a process of alterity. Homi Bhabha in *Location of Culture* (1994) provides useful insights that are applicable to this study. Three conceptualisations: Hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence were relevant to the study.

(1) Hybridity

Hybridity is an important concept in post-colonial theory that refers to the integration or mingling of cultural signs and practices from the colonising and the colonised cultures. The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilisation of cultures can be seen as a positive, enriching and dynamic as well as oppressive. Hybridity helps to break down the false sense that colonised cultures or colonising cultures for that matter are monolithic or have essential, unchanging features. Bhabha (1994) argues that within the post-colonial context, with a particular focus on literary texts, frontiers of knowledge are generally being unsettled and integrated and therefore their interpretation and meaning may change and assume a different form, hence the occurrence of hybridity. In other words, there is no literary work that can be called pure except reproduction of what has been there before. Hybridity refers to the bewildering array of different literary mixing. The concept of hybridity is applicable in this study because newly produced literary materials are not exact replicas of colonial canonical works. All depends on interpretation of knowledge within the colonial sphere. Rather than treat it as a compromising tool, hybridity is a tool against colonial subjectivity. The resulting hybrid modalities challenge the assumption of the pure and the authentic concepts upon which the resistance to imperialism often stands.

(2) Mimicry

Bhabha (1994: 122) describes mimicry as a sign of double articulation, a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which appropriates the other as it visualises power. Mimicry is a partial recognition of the colonial object. The concept fits this study because the texts are situated within the postcolonial perspective and thus a new reflection of the literary creative works of the metropole due to their hybrid nature and therefore have some affinity to them.

(3) Ambivalence

According to Bhabha, the ambivalence of postcolonial literary creations results when there are two competing demands within a literary work whereby one part faithfully reflects the colonial discourse and the other repulses or contradicts such discourse. The concept of ambivalence fits into the context of this study because magical realism in Mabanckou's writings is aimed at interrogating different knowledge frontiers and beliefs which have usually been cherished by western world as dogmas or yardstick in perceiving or understanding the African continent.

The study, therefore, uses postcolonial, narratology and magical realism theories to analyse magical realism as a trope employed to narrate tyranny in Mabanckou's novels. Narratology is used to explain embedded narratives of magical realism to critique the postcolonial condition in Mabanckou's texts.

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Introduction

This section presents the methodology of the study. It looks at the research design, sampling procedures, data collection techniques and data analysis.

1.10.2 Research Design

This study employs qualitative narrative research design where data is drawn from primary and secondary written texts. The secondary sources were documentary reviews from critical works such as books, refereed journals, internet sources, theses and essays which contain processed information were read closely. Narrative research focuses on understanding and analysing the stories and personal narratives shared by individuals. Researchers focus on the structure, content and context of these narratives to gain insights on how individuals construct meanings and make sense of their experiences. In order to put various aspects inherent in the texts into proper perspective, the researcher carried out intensive and extensive reading on the Congo, their literature and its relationship with France. This study is basically concerned with analysing magical realism as a trope of narrating tyranny and ineptitude in postcolonial African countries.

To achieve my objectives, the methodology includes close reading, interpretation and textual analysis of Mabanckou's *African Psycho*, *Blue White Red*, *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *Black Bazaar* and *Broken Glass*. The close reading method has been used to study Mabanckou's texts with an overall objective to reach a better critical understanding of his novels. This close reading helps in identifying instances of magical realism, scatology and other linguistic tropes as per the requirements of the study. A close reading of the texts highlights a deliberate juxtaposition of the fantastic and the mundane to foreground social injustice caused by postcolonial conditions. Both the primary and secondary sources are interrogated on how they treat magical realism using

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theoretical underpinnings as well as Genette's concept of narratology. The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study are informed by the magical realist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the meaning therein the texts. The qualitative research method adopted is one whose information is descriptive in nature, therefore, the information obtained is expressed in non-numeric terms. The research design is therefore governed by the main research purpose which is to analyse magical realism as a trope of narrating tyranny.

1.10.3 Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling technique is employed in this study. In purposive sampling, the researcher targets texts that are relevant to the study. In this study, five novels by Alain Mabanckou are purposively sampled. They are *Blue white Red* (1995), *Broken Glass* (2005), *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2006), *African Psycho* (2007) and *Black Bazaar* (2009). These are the primary texts of the study and they contain the raw data. Critical works based on them were secondary texts. The texts are selected because in the researcher's judgement, they contain elements relevant to the research topic. Therefore, an essay like *Letters to Jimmy* is left out because its content is not relevant to the present study. It is evident that scholars have largely researched on the general area of magical realism and narrative techniques in various texts. However, a gap exists in the area of deployment of magical realism as a trope of narrating tyranny in Mabanckou's work. This study attempts to fill gap by investigating magical realism as a trope of narrating tyranny, examining scatological writing, exploring the inter-linguistic aesthetics and establishing how trauma is depicted in the selected texts.

1.10.4 Data Collection techniques

Information is obtained from analysis of the five novels. The texts are subjected to evaluation and interpretation. The text-based research approach to data analysis is used. Each novel is scrutinised for the application of magical realism in accordance with the research objectives. Practical criticism is used to identify the multiple meanings, irony, paradox, rhetorical figures and other linguistic aspects. The text-oriented approach places emphasis on the internal textual aspects of a literary work. The aspects of form such as diction, syntax, point of view and narrative structure are analysed in the study. Secondary texts especially critical works dealing on Mabanckou's works from different perspectives are reviewed. Literary criticisms on Mabanckou's work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading, I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviate from them based on my research findings.

1.10.5 Data analysis techniques

Analysis of discourse and textual implication is done to establish the form and content of the texts. Descriptive and analytical methods are used to analyse data. The data analysis involves scrutiny of the selected five novels where manifestations of magical realism are identified, analysed and discussed according to the objectives of the study. Textual analysis which is employed in this study is a research method used to interpret and understand texts to uncover deeper meanings, themes and patterns. It involves closely examining a text's language, structure and content. Textual analysis places main emphasis on the internal textual aspects of a literary work. By looking at specific elements such as word choice or symbolism, analysts can understand how a text conveys meaning and connects to a broader social, cultural or political context. It encompasses both the understanding of what is explicitly stated in the text and the implicit messages that remain unstated. Textual analysis attempts to unravel why the

author employed magical realism in his writings which can be said to be to reveal truths in the society in a subtle manner and how it enhances aspects like satire, scatological humour and linguistic aesthetics. The analytic techniques that this study employs include a quick impressionist summary which involves summarizing key findings, explanations, interpretations and drawing conclusions. The other analytic technique employed is systematic content analysis. This involves description and critical reading of the form and content of the texts.

1.11 Thesis Structure

Chapter one introduces the writer Alain Mabanckou and provides a background to the reading for this study. The rationale and objectives of the study are laid bare. This chapter describes what the problem at hand is. On the whole, the methodology, the theoretical framework which guide this study and the labyrinths of scope and limitation of the study are stated in this chapter.

Chapter two discusses magical realism as a mode of satirising political tyranny and ineptitude which Mabanckou has portrayed in the novels *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *Blue White Red*, *Broken Glass*, *Black Bazaar* and *African Psycho*. The excesses of despots and surrogates that are subtly hinted in the fiction works and the subsequent trauma experienced by some characters are explicated.

Chapter three explores Mabanckou's selected fiction as scatological writing. The dark humour herein is considered to be significant in bringing out the message intended by the author that could otherwise not be expressed overtly but through magical realism.

Chapter four looks at the entwine between magical realism and linguistic aesthetics. This is examined in order to conceptualize the autocracy depicted in the novels that is depicted through the use figurative language.

Chapter five concludes by drawing deductions from arguments advanced in the four chapters and provides recommendations on the findings observed in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATING TYRANNY THROUGH MAGICAL REALISM

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the narration and presentation of the motif of tyranny in *African Psycho*, *Broken Glass*, *Black Bazaar*, *Blue White Red* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine*. The common feature in these novels is that Mabanckou ventures into the domain of the surreal. This is because in each novel, the "fantasy" stories are enhanced to better reflect an almost untranslatable reality. Mabanckou employs magical realism to critic the state of the post-colonial African society. This chapter therefore subjects Mabanckou's five novels to an in-depth close reading from within the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial, magical realism and narratology in order to explicate the motif of tyranny. In analysing the texts, we acknowledge the inevitable loss of some material in the translation process.

2.1.1 Psychological Implications of Oppression

African Psycho is a story of Gregory Nakobomayo, a child abandoned by his mother at birth and the state took responsibility for his education by placing him in different host families. By the time the story begins, he has just run away from a family of "very exposed civil servants" and "good manners" after their son attempted to rape him. Once in the street, he takes one man as a role model: Angoulima, the deceased, "the man with twelve fingers" and most famous murderer of his country.

Set in the Congo, *African Psycho* grants the readers insight into the minds of inept murderers as well as the nation's social and political norms through Mabanckou's humour and first-hand experience. In the text, the author gives insight into the state of affairs in Congo including racial tensions and the Congolese knack for inflated journalism. *African Psycho* is a journey into the macabre, the funny, the sad, the

desperate and the disturbing. At the same time, there are great vistas of the absurd. The world Gregoire, the protagonist lives in is not anywhere near where the rest of us lead our lives. The novel is a dark, disturbing and funny diatribe against society by a superb villain, a rectangular headed individual in an unmentioned country but which we can deduce to be Congo. The use of magical realism in this text centres around Angouilima whom Gregoire refers to as the Grand Master. Gregoire is said to have constant communication with Angouilima in his grave so that he can learn tricks to be a serial killer. In a magical realist fashion, though Angouilima is dead, he is said to see everything happening in the land of the living.

Angouilima's physical features are surreal and do not resemble those of human beings. He is said to have two faces and six fingers in each hand. He has two copulation organs that enable him to make love to two women at the same time. Angouilima can change sex such that he can disguise a woman to suit his criminal convenience. He can change to a puppy and has the ability to go to the bottom of the sea, live in graves and on hollows of a baobab tree. Angouilima is able to commit murder and rape without being caught because he has mastered *mpini*, the ability to be invisible achieved when you recite some magic formulae which are effected through dry herbs that he burns and inhales before committing crimes. The herb is a source of magical power, and it is what Angouilima purportedly uses to make himself invisible. Even when Angouilima is dead, he continues to influence the actions of Gregoire who goes to his grave to explain how he has failed in his attempts to be a serial killer. While talking with Angouilima in cemetery, a huge person appears and is called Colossal, Imperial, Powerful and Sublime. This reincarnation or rebirth of a soul in physical life form is magical realism in that such an event does not happen in ordinary life. The 'Resurrected' 'Grand Master' scorns him for being a disgrace to a profession he made the city respect. The surreal

features that Angoulima possesses enable him to execute terror with ease and further makes it difficult for him to be caught so as he can be charged and punished for crimes committed.

In reading *African Psycho*, we contend that Mabanckou enacts a critique of the psychological effects of the Congolese foster care system and adoptive families. While he acknowledges the humanitarian impulse of these institutions, he reveals their hypocrisy and irresponsibility. Instead of rescuing orphans from deprivation and suffering, the systems drive them to vagrancy and juvenile delinquency. Walsh (2011) has in fact pointed out that *African Psycho* offers a critique of the government's social negligence. In *African Psycho*, Gregoire accuses the state of forcefully placing him in foster families which indicates that the rigorous selection process of orphans as residents of He-Who-Drinks-water-Is-An-Idiot is merely a social-economic expedient for in coercing them into foster families, the government abdicates its responsibility to the public. Evidently, the state neither cares to monitor the welfare of the orphans in their foster homes nor the responsibility of the adoptive parents. The negligence ultimately puts orphans and other picked up children at the risk of child abuse in their foster families. Gregoire Nakobomayo, in fact dislikes the whole idea of living with foster families because they treat him like a wild animal who can be subjected to tests like a specimen in a laboratory. Gregoire, for example, is asked several questions in order to determine his intelligence quotient. Cruelly, he is at times made to put on cumbersome and warm clothing during hot weather conditions making him suffocate and sweat very much. In a catechism class, Gregoire is beaten up by a cruel teacher for failure to memorize and remember concepts. He eventually runs away from the family after gouging his adoptive brother's eye while defending himself against the threat of sodomy. Having undergone these psychological and physical abuses, Gregoire vows to

be a menace and bothersome person to the society. *African Psycho* is informed by the understanding of the relationship between a human being and his environment.

Mabanckou's protagonist, Gregoire Nakobomayo, in *African Psycho* is a mass of neuroses, a pathological liar obsessed with Angoulima whose exploits he lovingly recounts and whose approval he seeks in his own acts of violence. Angoulima is a mythical character whom people believe lives everywhere and has the ability to change its form from an old person to teenager and could also change his sex from male to female and vice versa as he finds it appropriate. The ghost of this mysterious character is said to have frequent conversations with Gregory. Gregory is determined to kill his girlfriend, (Germaine) and his mental and physical preparations are interspersed with accounts of troubled childhood and the two murders he has attempted but failed. The dialogues with Angoulima are blackly humorous with the spectre frequently exasperated with Gregoire's incompetence. The author injects humour into the disturbing subject of murder. The narrative voice is compelling; Gregoire bounces back and forth between feelings of inadequacy and narcissism and a very misplaced sense of purpose.

Gregory is fascinated by what people say about Angoulima and firmly believes that he is there. Among other legends, it is said that in his life, Angoulima was master of *Mpini* "this ability to become invisible by reciting formulas unfathomable even for quacks and sorcerers of the country" (*African Psycho* 59). He also had dry grass, burned it to lull the owners of the houses he was stealing from and could turn into a woman, child or white puppy. Angoulima died but Gregory insists that they often engage in conversations particularly in the dead of the night at the public cemetery. When the urge to communicate with his role model comes, he goes to the cemetery, "and there, by magic, the Grand Master of the crime appears". It may be considered that the so-

called talks between Gregoire and Angoulima are mere hallucinations since the replicas of Angoulima are in italics as are also Gregoire's interior monologues. From this reconciliation, we can deduce that the conversation allocated to Angoulima is imagined by Gregory. But the line between real and unreal remains unclear throughout the narrative.

African Psycho unfolds with the announcement of Germaine's murder, a native daughter of the "opposite country," to be held on 29th December without knowing really why "I" wants to kill her except that it is "decided" to do so and that he "believes" that it is in "this state of mind" (11). After a few pages, however, we discover that abandoned from birth by parents he has never seen, having never felt loved and lonely, Gregory wants to kill to get a position in society, to exist. What motivates Gregory is that he craves attention and public recognition. He looks for validation from the media hoping that both the print and electronic media will write long stories describing his horrific deeds. Ironically, his actions are not even mentioned in the media. Regretting the failure of the assassination of "Girl in White; the nurse working at Adophe Cisse Hospital", he exclaims: 'That evening, I was finally going to kill, crush, liquidate, I do not care about words, that I was finally going to exist, that is, I would be someone. I would follow Angoulima's traces, out of the banality of my life, from poor sheet metal worker, from poor body builder with big hands, from good-for-nothing, from one who made the round of refreshment of He-Who-Drinks Water-is-a-Idiot.' (*African Psycho* 44).

Gregory wants to commit murder so as to give meaning to his life. "I kill, therefore I am" could be his motto. Thus, to justify his attempted murder of girls, he gives them the label prostitutes even if they are not always. He attacked a nurse, the "Girl in White" because she was waiting for a taxi in a place frequented by prostitutes. Gregory gave himself the mission to purify his "native corner" of "polluters", especially those who

come from "the opposite country." He considers whores to be 'germs, bacilli' to be weeded out in the society. The 'opposite country' refers to The Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). It is clear that Gregory and other Congo natives suffer from xenophobia: the fear of strangers or foreigners. He hates the prostitutes from Zaire because they offer cheap service thus denying local prostitutes' clients. However, it is clear that his desire of his city's sanitation is intrinsically linked to its existent insecurity as evidenced by the following rant: "I met the woman I took to be a whore to fuck. In fact, she was not one; it felt well, shit so I had to kill her because I had to kill somebody that night "(104). The urgency that comes from this sentence indicates that Gregory is attacking prostitutes for convenience, they are easy scapegoats. What primarily interests him is to kill. This uncontrollable urge to murder can be viewed as a displacement of the deep seethed anger Gregory has towards other people because of the difficult childhood he was subjected to and this subsequently makes him a tyrant in the society.

After the failed attempt to kill the "Girl in White" he decides to murder Germaine, another girl he also met accidentally. Gregory met Germaine at a resort. She was desperate because her jealous friends had robbed her. In her prostitution, Germaine attracted White clients hence she earned a lot of money. Gregory thinks Germaine does prostitution during the night and during the day she works in the restaurant where he found her. Germaine explains that she comes from "the opposite country" and that she has problems with other girls from her country who are jealous of her and stole her money. The immigrant prostitutes bring animosity between the two countries because the whores from Zaire offer their sexual services at a low price. Following their conversation, Gregory invites her to his home and they become a couple. Germaine lives with Gregory, but he did not give up his idea to take her life; his project is "to feed

her for two weeks, three weeks maximum, for her to be in very good health on the day of (the) act" (160). Gregory, in his mind planned meticulously on how to murder her. But Gregory is not going to kill her. The last part of the novel reveals Germaine's murder by another assassin since after all the preparations that should lead to the murder of the prostitute; Gregory is immersed in a kind of sublime sleep: on his sofa, he sees the sky, light, stars; he is carried away and peacefully sleeps. When he awoke, he heard on television the news of the death of Germaine. He thinks he is not responsible for the murder, but he is not sure about it. He wonders if he "has not been manipulated by a spirit to whom (he) lent his hand. After talking to him about his "ascension", to heaven for the last judgment that he plans without major worries - because he has "good lawyers" who "never lost a single trial up there – Angoualima reveals to Gregory that it is the railway employee and Germaine's customer who asked her to bark "real barking of a German Shepherd or that of Bulldog" (145) during their sexual intercourses who stole from Gregory her murder (189). The pot-bellied rail-road worker who was Germaine's main client is responsible for the murder. He is the same railway employee who criticized Germaine for importing prostitute girls from her country. "Germaine was not any other girl. She was a fighter. She was the head of a small prostitution network; brought girls from the neighbouring country. She hid her other side by playing the seductive role in the outdoor restaurant" (190). Just like at the end of a thriller or a detective story where all the intrigues which held spellbound readers find their explanations, Angoualima makes revelations on the murder. The railway employee is not really a railway employee, and contrary to what Germaine had said to Gregory, it was not his girlfriends who stole her money but the fake railway employee. Because of this information, the reader cannot help but ask questions about the nature of the conversations between Gregory and Angoualima. If they are only imaginary, how

should we then interpret the death of Germaine? Questions regarding the identity of the murderer and the causes of the murder would be unanswered. If one however accepts that Angoualima and Gregory did speak, one delves into the field of the illogical, extraordinary and the supernatural which is basically the realm of magical realism.

Similarly, the interview between the journalist and the man who swears that he saw Angoualima "with his own eyes, and it was not a dream" (61) is on all incredible and fanciful points. Despite or perhaps even because of the man's insistence to swear and to ensure that it was not a dream (as Gregory himself does when he states that he converses with Angoualima), we guess he never saw Angoualima. He affirms a covered and flavoured story of "trust me" and "so what". The journalist writes about Angoualima's strangeness: a monster with two faces, two noses, four ears, two penises and so forth. "His face sleeps in a rotating basis", he has two mouths, "one mouth begins a sentence and the other ends" (62). To relieve himself, one part of the body closes then helps him "to pee even for an hour" (63). This extraordinary ability to urinate for one hour is a hyperbole which is an integral element of magical realism. At the end of a very funny dialogue, one reads this: "The day after this memorable interview, we find the head of this man and that of the reporter on the wild side, each with a Cuban cigar screwed between the lips" which is Angoualima's murder sign. In other words, in revenge of the journalist and his guest, Angoualima killed them. By this remark, one is obliged to accept the interview actually took place, although everything points to the contrary, unless we consider the whole story about Angouilima, including idolatry by Gregory, as an extreme push to parody which in essence is the significant function of magical realism employed in this text. The crave to murder is a form of tranny that is catalysed by Gregory's unusual communication with the ghost of his icon, Anguilima. This extraordinary ability to converse with the dead is in itself magical realism. Therefore,

it can be concluded that magical realism narrates tyranny that is manifested through terrorising prostitutes and even killing them.

Mabanckou has not only made Gregory a "loser" to integrate a lot of humour to the story and to attract the reader's sympathy but also to denounce the phenomenon of rumours in Africa taking exaggerated proportions and making information completely diverted. In *African Psycho*, Mabanckou gives insight into the state of affairs in Congo- including racial tensions and the Congolese media knack for inflated journalism. The Congolese journalists like to exaggerate; to amplify issues. Still, by having a fabricated character in the novel that communes with the dead suggests admission that there is no boundary between the real and visible world and that of the spirits. The mention of lawyers in the Day of Judgment and the monstrous comedy that is the part on the interview between the journalist and his guest recalls the satirical tale. But since tyranny as the main theme that interests Mabanckou is rooted in reality and is a problem for many societies, it is close to the magical realists to juxtapose the world of reality and that of unreality. In the heart of the novel is the problem of abandoned children and beings left to themselves without love and hope and who are trying to prove they exist by engaging in tyranny evidenced through the murders they commit. Indeed, in the novel Mabanckou highlights the problem of picked- up children or vagabonds who are left to fend for their own. This is likely as a result of the civil wars in the Congo Basin. These urchins are often transformed into gangster. In Congo streets, twenty percent of bastards are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. These children often fall into prostitution and drug smuggling as a survival strategy. Gregoire, in fact is a former street child who now engages in petty crime.

The title, *African Psycho* echoes the book by Brett Ellison's *American Psycho*. However, Gregory Nakobomayo is not Patrick Bateman, the beautiful and rich yuppie

New York resident who murders women and men with extreme brutality. Gregory was also not the "Little Soldier", the anti-hero of Hermann Ungar's *Children and Murder* where Mabanckou takes the epigraph for his book. Because of this intertextuality and the first sentence: "I decided to kill Germaine on December 29", one approaches Mabanckou's text thinking one has a text about murder on which "I " seems so determined to commit. But it is not. *African Psycho* is not a detective story. At most, Mabanckou offers a parody of the genre. Gregory is a failure as an assassin. At the heart of the novel is that promise of thundering violence and inevitable death that only happens by the act of another. The fundamental question then becomes: why Gregory does not kill? The obvious answer is that he is too nervous to kill. He takes time to gauge the tool which he must use to accomplish his crime and rejects the knife, the pistol, the chainsaw, among other weapons, for the most unexpected and most comical reasons. He dismisses the knife because it is a banal object, too familiar because "anyone can acquire and know more or less to use it." (123) and because 'only the last idiots still operate in this way' (133). On top of that, "men and women of Bembé ethnic group are known for handling the knife in any case" and since he is not from Bembé ethnic group, so he cannot therefore use it. It is not a question of him using a chainsaw because it reminds him of what he saw in a movie at the cinema "well, crime, not of cinema" (134). The pistol and the fire arms should be avoided as interests only the "weak minded, the ones lied upon from the weekend or those who want to commit suicide" (136) and he thinks that "it should be left to the victim an illusion to believe at least that she can escape death" (141); which is not the case when a firearm is used. Thus, having expounded on pages and pages on the weapon to use, he comes to the conclusion that "it is useless to seek the most perfect way to kill Germaine" (143). Given that hesitation in the choice of weapons, the least that can be said is that Gregory is a

disconcerting character, schizophrenic and paranoid. Jean-Marie Kola writes: The originality of Gregory's character and consequently the effect of irony it produces on the reader seems to equally dwell both in the lucid recognition of his failures as in the back-and-forth between what he is and what he believes to be, between objective reality and subjective perception of this reality. The relationship that he maintains with himself seems part of schizophrenia while his relationship with Anguilima can be compared with paranoia. (Kola 166).

If a schizophrenic is one that is subject to delusions and hallucinations, who therefore has difficulty to distinguish between the real world and the imagined world which leads to social mal-adaptation, then Gregory is definitely a schizophrenic. Gregory is delighted with the prospect of killing Germaine because it gives him hope he can "finally leave the shabby place"(125). After the failure of the coup against the "Girl in White", he began to regret the therapy would have been the assassination: "I would forget the little shots of yesteryear, the burst of false brother eye, the skull smashed Master Fernandes Quiroga, stolen cars, the portfolios of disabled elderly, bedridden, I would forget all that because spruced by a sublime gesture, because crowned overnight". The shame, the humiliation of not feeling to exist, is at the heart of psychopath Gregory and that the presence of these emotions allows a psychological reading of the text.

In his book on Dostoevsky, Andre Gide explains the importance that the Russian author grants public confession and humility in a general manner. He recounts an incident that caused him great remorse and made him to go to confess before Turgeniev, with whom he was in very bad terms, apparently to humiliate himself much as he could and washed himself off the shame. After revealing his mood to his enemy, he gets no consolation, no comment from his shocked enemy. Disappointed and humiliated, Dostoevsky would say to Turgeniev before he left: "I deeply despise myself, but I despise you more" (133).

Gide concludes the account of this incident, "and here we see the humility to suddenly place opposite feeling. The man bowed in humility; on the contrary, the fact is humiliation kills. Humility opens the gates of heaven; humiliation, that of hell "(133). In *African Psycho*, the cause of Gregory's irrational behaviour is humiliation. Gregory was born humiliated and raised in humiliation. Abandoned child who knew neither his mother nor his father, Gregory only describes his mother as a "woman who had put me in the world "(19). He describes this morbid image because he sees it in his parent "running around with loincloths soaked with amniotic fluid" (19). Gregory conceives his birth as a misfortune which his mother had to get rid: "we were children picked up then because many mothers, following an unwanted pregnancy, the expected date of delivery to escape fresh maternity leave and to the State the burden of caring for their offspring "(19).

One should first understand that Gregory's humiliation is due to his mother abandoning him. Gregory feels rejected, unwanted, a burden. Humiliated by this unwanted birth and not celebrated, Gregory has, by way of revolt and indignation that hatred and contempt for his mother and by extension for all women. "If I could kill all the women of the earth," he says, "I would start with my mother, for the little that one shows me even now. I would tear her rock heart I would cook in the furnace of my room, and I eat with sweet potatoes licking my fingers over the rest of her body rotting "(19). In this desire where sadism and cannibalism mix, we see irritation and injury of the soul, resulting to humiliation. This humiliation leads him to be a tyrant who derives pleasure by inflicting pain on others. He displaces the pain he feels by causing harm on others particularly women. Throughout the book, the tear and the withering of the soul of Gregory will be accentuated as he faces the banality of his life.

In the beginning therefore of Gregory's psychopathy, there was the shame of the abandoned child who had not seen his mother and who is deeply hurt to the point of being misogynist. What Gide said about the characters of Dostoevsky therefore applies to Gregory: "It happens that some characters that are deeply flawed by the natures of humiliation, find a kind of pleasure, of satisfaction in the deprivation that it involves, so abominable it is "(135). This pleasure, one sees in Gregory when he indulges in eating delicious fantasy of his mother with sweet potatoes. By devouring the heart of his mother, Gregory is also trying to appropriate himself maternal love he lacks but this act only takes place in the field of his imagination (magical realism), he becomes another source of frustration and failure. But Gregory was not only humiliated by his mother and father, but by a system, a society. But as with his mother, he will answer every time to humiliation by the revolt trying as much as possible to reverse the balance of power between him, the humiliated, and those who humiliate him.

African Psycho bears the epigraph 'Am I really a murderer? I killed a man, but it seems that I did not do this myself, ". This is a question the anti-hero asks himself in his prison cell where he is serving a sentence of twenty years for killing a character in Herman Ungar's *Story of a Murder*. This is also a story of humiliation. In this text, murder is intrinsically linked to humiliation. The "little soldier" killed the only person who never treated him like a human being because, as he says himself, he could not bear to suffer the humiliation, especially in front of this foreigner who seemed so well to understand it. After being caught killing kittens, the foreigner wrote a letter to the "little soldier" in which he said: "I do not think you are a murderer, but only a poor, unfortunate and homeless child "(99). Humiliated by the behaviour of a father who has lost all dignity and the entire society that drove this father to go down lower and lower, "the little soldier," whose classmates proudly described, finds life, reborn in jail and considers the

murder that took him there "like a monastic flogging (he did) not for his victim but (him) self" (19). Here is the idea defended by René Girard that violence inflicted on the sacrificial victims is a way to contain and protect us against our own violence whenever one is unable to direct it to the targeted person. In his words, "the unquenchable violence one seeks always finds an alternative victim. A creature that excites his fury, he suddenly substitutes another that has no particular title to incur the wrath of the violent, otherwise he is vulnerable and that crosses his path "(Violence and the sacred 15). Since he cannot go after his father and the whole city, the "little soldier" pours out his bitterness to the foreigner who, by his status, was in a position of marginality. Similarly, Gregory in *African Psycho* attacks the prostitutes, especially those that are from the neighbouring country as a form of displaced aggression. But in both cases, the real enemies of the "little soldier" and Gregory are primarily their parents, and then the city and its inhabitants. The murder has therapeutic value because it allows the "little soldier" to find "serenity, peace and contentment" (19) that the town and his father had robbed him. We also understand that "little soldier" may wonder if he actually committed the murder. This murder, the whole city is guilty, and it may well be that this is why Mabanckou chose this questioning of the "little soldier", this questioning of individual responsibility as an epigraph. Gregory did not kill but even if that were the case it would not have been solely responsible. Like the "little soldier", he might wonder if he is actually guilty. By presenting Gregory as a failure murderer, Mabanckou condones this guilt further. When he learns the death of Germaine, he panics, wonders if there is possibility that he is responsible for the murder. (179). This is surprising attitude for someone who from the beginning of the novel is planning to kill. But throughout the story we see indications that Gregory did not really want to kill; he speaks, writes to exorcise the evil that haunts.

Indeed, just after full assurance declamation that opens the novel: "I decided to kill Germaine on December 29" (11), the language thereafter becomes a little bit more relaxed. The second sentence of the text is: "I think for weeks" (11) and the third sentence is: "I believe now be in that state of mind" (11). On the next page, you can read this prepetition, "the worst would be that this package goes unnoticed. It is clear that I do not consider this humiliating hypothesis" (12). Speaking of Anguilima he says: "He beat me in what I was dreaming like existence" (18). The verb 'killing' in the novel is used in a way to say that everyone kills so that everyone is responsible and therefore an individual is not guilty of the act. When one says something, it does not necessarily mean doing it. Unlike in *American Psycho*, "a murder" in *African Psycho* is full of humour that arises from comical situation, the gap that exists between what Gregory says he wants to do and what he does. He continually debates the crimes he plans to perpetrate, and this on-going debate may be preventing him from committing. The little soldier wrote from prison after the fatal act; Gregory began writing on December 27, two days before the proposed date for the murder of Germaine.

2.1.2 Experiences of Authoritarianism, Corruption and Capitalism

In a flexuous world, Gregory responds to sinuosity by behaviour and thought. It is therefore not surprising that he admires and perhaps identifies with the young Roddy comics "that could get out of the most intractable situations" (28). Gregory pretended to learn his catechism just to escape the blows of the sister who beat him anytime he gave a wrong response. He denounces the ridicule, the blindness of Father Matthew (as suggested by his thick glasses) that encouraged him into thinking he educates. He pretends not to understand in school just to taunt his teacher's prejudice against him. However, the school and church are not the only places of resistance. Gregory has a poor opinion of the agents of justice and his country's police. He grants them no respect,

no credibility or authority. Worse, he takes them for fools, feeling sorry for them as their work does not provide enough for them to live on, reversing the balance of power between those on trial and judges. "Sometimes these guardians of the law", he said, "to attribute a villain genius while his act was mathematical evidence and would have happened in any speculation. They have to work, the poor. They are paid for that, and it's a little thanks to people like us they earn their bread "(12). The tone becomes less sarcastic and harder, more contemptuous when speaking specifically of prosecutors:

‘Requisitions of prosecutors in our city make me revolt, they think they are allowed to moralize the accused, taking advantage of the fact that, compared with other judges "sit", they are perched in a corner of the room where the public necessarily notices them. So, they take the big head, engage in figures of speech that make them out to be the most intelligent of the palace. We must have seen them, these people, with their dress and their effects they must handle repeated in the mirror, expecting the approving eyes of their spouse’. (*African Psycho* 13)

Gregory is attacking their authority that acquires only the most superficial power derived from their unusual clothing. Their indictments are merely "vanity numbers" for him (14). He also attacks journalists, the so-called intellectuals and other thinkers. He ridicules the foster family that has failed to give him what he needed: love, tenderness. Thus, he responds to the violence they have done to him by imposing the supposed "civilized" eating, drinking, dressing ways and even burp by exposing their incompetence in their role as parents.

In view of all this, he claims that he learned "not to take into account the opinion of the people" and further said he had "to make (himself) treading the rules of society" (26). Gregoire considers the society as unjust and has a condescending and hostile attitude towards every member of the society he lives in. This judgment leads him to take Angouilima the legendary serial killer as an idol since he too "shit on society" (17). But by having a model he could not keep up with, much less equal to, Gregory falls into the

ridicule. Equally ridiculous is that society which fails to provide its citizens with positive role models.

Mabanckou uses onomastic devices to name places and literal Lingala and Bakongo translations. The "native corner" which Gregory called 'He-Who-Drinks-Water-Is-An-Idiot' is so aptly renamed because it is in this area that there are the greatest numbers of refreshments. The population swears only by beer, red wine or palm wine. There are often drinking contests in the "native corner". Under the prevailing conditions, one who drinks water really is an idiot "(90). The name of the main street of this neighbourhood has gone from "Six-Hundred-Francs-Au-Less" to "Hundred Francs-Only" because, explains Gregory, girls in from the neighbouring countries have "dropped the price of ejaculation "(89). This means the cost of having sex with a prostitute has become cheap and affordable. Gregory lives in a neighbourhood where alcohol and sex have become the last refuge of a population abandoned to itself, without a present or future.

To describe the atmosphere of this place very well, its decadence and its underlying causes, Mabanckou performs a kind of post-colonial "*tanganisation*" of the town. 'Tanganisation' is where the town is zoned so that people of different economic classes occupy specific parts of the town (North and South Tanga). In his indictment against the commitment of the first African writers, Mabanckou lamented about these tendencies of the past to present "cities divided into white part and indigenous part" (Letter to Jimmy 75). This reproach automatically makes one think of Mongo Beti's cruel city where he describes the North Tanga chic town occupied by Whites and South Tanga dirty city occupied by natives. In Nairobi, Kenya's capital, a similar set-up is replicated where the Eastlands is the home of the working class and the poor while the Westlands is largely the abode of the rich and financially endowed. In *African Psycho*, the city is divided in two by a stream called the "Seine". The "Seine" divides the city

into the Left Bank and Right Bank; the inhabitants of the right bank are like the North Tanga successors while those on the Left Bank seem to be the same people of Tanga South. The wind of independence has not appeared to have hit. Gregory says: Our city has that face, with that stream, I mean with the "Seine" which cuts in half. People's Right Bank live on a slightly elevated terrain, while others, including myself, are crammed down, left shore, to where 'Seine' does end with excrement wrapped in bags and come largely Right Bank, while the people who reside there are reputedly very civilized as they are not very far from the city centre ... (96). The elevated terrain symbolises higher income and therefore higher or respectable standing in a capitalist society.

By revisiting this classic representation of the African city, Mabanckou registered his novel in a continuum and shows that things have not changed significantly. Inequality and injustice are always at the heart of the African city, which reads inequality in the geometry of neighbourhoods as well as the vocabulary and grammar used. In the same way that the relief of the right bank is higher than that of the Left Bank, its people are at the top of the social pyramid. While some "live", others are "crowded" at the bottom, as if life was only possible at a certain altitude: the "Seine" goes down to its end. The combination of low with death testifies to the precarious living conditions of those who are relegated there. The active voice - "People's Right Bank live" - thus required for those who can say when the liability is for those who only suffer the onslaught of the other - the people of the left bank "are piled at the bottom." The only difference that can be noted and this is where postcolonial criticism lies, is that this inequality is no longer linked to colonization, domination and exploitation of indigenous by whites: everything happens now among Africans. In the novel, there is a specimen of a resident of the Right Bank in the Master Fernandes Quiroga who was counted among the

Gregory's victims. Gregory describes him as a Métis exercising the profession of notary and realtor, incongruity that inspires this comment: "In our country, all overlapping, even the most incompatible, disturbing no one. Fernandes Quiroga influenced his customers as they came to consult him leave to their descendants, conventionally, a will. A notarial deed was less lucrative for our public official a transaction made in the realtor caps "(35). I do not think that Mabanckou chooses to kill Master Fernandes simply because of his blended skin colour but it is this miscegenation that evokes contempt probably because of underlying cultural issues and attitude. As a lawyer, he is a representative of the state and its authority; he is also supposed to be an advisor and confidant. Therefore, we should see Master Fernandes Quiroga as a type encompassing all cultural *mestizos* by their education. These individuals have taken the place of the colonizers after African independence and are endowed with all the powers and all authorities for their personal success at the expense of people who expected from them guidance and advice. Master Fernandes Quiroga operates with his clients without any scruples.

Three reasons had led Gregory to blame him: First, said he, "he was rolling in a new Mercedes with tinted windows, and I felt offended me by his success, his way of showing off to the rest of the population languishing in extreme poverty "(35). The Mercedes Benz motor vehicle is conventionally considered a symbol of class and opulence. By driving around with this elegant and expensive machine, Quiroga can be seen to be mocking the people in the neighbourhood who can barely meet their basic needs. This un-called for display of opulence is likely to attract a feeling of anger from the down-trodden represented here by Gregoire. Then he slept with a girl from the Left Bank which Gregory is said to be in love with. The act of sexually preying on poor girls by the rich puts suitors from poor financial background at a disadvantage and is bound

to arouse a feeling of envy and dislike. As a result of Quiroga's fling with the girl he desired, Gregoire develops a hostile attitude towards him. Finally, he thought that Master Fernandes kept the money in his office and had it back after killing the notary. Gregoire felt that Master Fernandes had gotten large amounts of the money by pilfering the notary and therefore would serve him right if the money was stolen from him. If we stick to these last two reasons, we can say that Gregory acted out of personal interest. But if you look closer and it is considered the first reason cited, we see that frustration could be shared by the people of the Left Bank. Quiroga taunting with his wealth which illegally acquired is loathed by those who live in the Left Bank. Furthermore, the master of the chic relationships comes from above, a daughter of the Left Bank, so the bottom is quite symbolic. Indeed, these reports cannot be an equal feel and operation. In the same way that people from the Right Bank rob women and money from the people on the Left Bank, they send their waste "packaged" via the stream (96). The packaging of excrement in bags is a way for the author to mock the shallowness and vanity of people downtown "deemed very civilized" (96). The prejudice that it takes the Right Bank to be civilized is undermined by Mabanckou which denounces this mystification. The mayor names the river Seine so that people identify it with Paris. He urges them to recognize that "it was not given to any country of the third world to possess a river that cuts one of its two cities" (96). Combining a critique of demagogic language of politicians and their inability to free themselves mentally, Mabanckou explains by using parody to show how those who have power in Africa prefer sham and buffoonery to useful work.

Although it is not very explicit, I would say that Mabanckou in *African Psycho* criticizes here and there the political powers of Gregory's city located somewhere in the Third World and the title of the book locates it in Africa. Gregory is indignant that the

residents of his district are unpopular in the country but wonders if it is their fault. "Is it-that it is the people themselves who defile this neighbourhood?" (32) The answer is NO. It is the people of the Right Bank who pollute with their "droppings packed'. It further states that if the neighbourhood is what it is, it is because the authorities 'only visit during periods of elections' (33). This is a subtle attack or ridicule of dishonest politicians who only visit the areas during campaign period when they promise goodies and thereafter abandon the voters without a feeling of guilt. Thus, behind the brightness and cleanliness of their homes, the inhabitants of the Right Bank conceal the ideas and the most selfish and most corrupt behaviour. In other words, their cleanliness smells bad and stinks.

Left to themselves and faced with exploitation, the residents of the Left Bank drown their frustration and disappointment in alcohol and sexual promiscuity in an unhealthy environment. Carousal and debauchery become the means to vent and escape the harsh realities of everyday life. Gregory explodes that he had sworn to Anguilima to clean and do good housekeeping to He-Who-Drinks-Water-Is- An- Idiot, to give him dignity, rid of his garbage, his filth, his microbes, his amoeba, his bacilli, his coming bitches across the country, his bitches who make unfair competition to our daughters, because I hate these bitches who sell themselves cheaply. Attributes such as 'tired as used chewing gum' are used in description. He hates the women of easy virtues or harlots because they offer themselves to the desperate poor guys in lack of affection.

African Psycho describes a psychological drama, that of an individual without love and benchmarks which he seeks but cannot meet. It can also be read as a social criticism related to the topic of the abandoned children that Kola Odanipe (1981) described as the "new scourge of African societies". Likewise, it provides a picture of the failure of policies that have not released Africa from under-development. The novel's protagonist

Gregory Nakobomayo is to be viewed as a social and political metaphor of Africa. The text paints the corrupt nature of state officials such as Master Fernandes Quiroga, who, instead of serving the public, use their positions to enrich themselves by using his position as a lawyer to unscrupulously alter wills and content of an insurance policy. In other words, the problem is not that Africans in power do not know how to put into practice what they theorize but they do not actually seek to theorize, they seek only to deceive the people and steal as are the mayor and Quiroga.

To explain the root causes of hysteria, Elaine Showalter (1990:23) wrote: When unhappiness and protest go unheard for a long time, or when it is too dangerous for negative emotions to be openly expressed, people do lose their sense of humour and their powers of self-criticism (...). Anger that has causes is converted to a language of the body; develop people disabling symptoms or may become even violent or suicidal. Similarly, we can say that when parents as well as the state flee their responsibilities and abandon of children and citizens in an existential vacuum without real love or hope, then nothing prevents them, to fill the void their lives, resorting to desperate acts harmful to others or self-annihilators.

2.1.3 Temporal Disruption as Subversion of Authoritarianism

The mythic character Angouilima in *African Psycho* is employed by the narrator to narrate about tyranny that some personalities in Africa are said to enjoy exercising. Some of the dictators wield excessive powers to the extent that they want to be viewed as invincible demigods. In *African Psycho*, Angouilima kills people as he wishes and sends everyone in a panic mode. Angouilima exemplifies the despotic rulers in Africa who are cultic and living a larger-than-life status but in the end are overthrown and buried like dogs. Mobutu Sese Seko, the former president of Zaire, for example, was a feared leader who lived like a king, but when he died in exile, only a few people

attended his funeral and there was no sympathy expressed by the world leaders. (*Newsweek Magazine* September 1997) Ironically, even the United States and France who kept him in power did not send representatives during his funeral. Just like Angouilima, Mobutu's power was deflated in the end and his smallness exposed. Other African tyrants recorded in history books include Jean- Bidel Bokassa, the self-declared emperor of Central African Republic and Idi Amin of Uganda who committed atrocities leading to deaths of thousands of people including children.

Mabanckou employs magical realism in *African Psycho* to satirise unprofessional and unethical news reporting which more often than not spread rumours, untruths and biased stories. Editors engage in this in order to make more sales and profits at the expense of their credibility. The content in Media is akin to that of gutter press where ascertaining of truth is not carried before printing. The newspapers print a picture of Angouilima yet no one has really seen him. This is sale of false information aimed at reeking huge profits because of the many newspapers that will be sold. The sensational reporting seen lacks in factual reporting. As a result of the misleading picture, several people report at the police station that they had sighted Angouilima somewhere with the hope of winning the cash reward offered by the Police Chief. Inefficiency of the security system is also satirised. The police and investigators were trained in Israel but still do shoddy job. Israel is considered the pinnacle in security training and therefore officers trained in Israel should easily capture Angouilima. The Operation Immediate Capture Angouilima turns out to be cash cow because people claimed to have seen Angouilima so as to be given monetary rewards. The Police lack the correct details of Angouilima such that they could not even identify him when he presented himself to the police. The police laughed it off and in fact went on to kick him out of the police station. It is ineptitude on the part of the police to omit important details in their

description of Angouilima. The investigators are not sure who Angouilima is because they have been relying on unconfirmed news reports by the media and in the end the operation to hunt down Angouilima is called off.

The academia is lampooned for being knowledgeable in various theories from various European countries which lack relevance in local environment. In other words, the intellectuals are presented as having a lot of theoretical knowledge which cannot be applied practically when need arises. The professor of criminology gives a litany of theories and examples of criminals in Europe instead of focusing on identifying Angouilima's existence. The scholarship is ridiculed for being far removed from the realities on the ground and therefore lacks relevance and applicability. The education acquired is therefore viewed to be of little use in solving societal problems.

In conclusion, apart from portraying some reality about some dictators in Africa, *African Psycho* highlights the negative portrayal of Western media on Africa. Mabanckou employs the myth of Angouilima to show the powerful influence which the media hold on peoples' minds so much so that they readily believe what is printed in the papers. Mabanckou further criticises the sensational reporting of events in Africa by both the Western and African media by painting of a big picture on problems bedevilling Africa than what actually is in reality.

From a postcolonial view, Mabanckou shows that Gregoire's behaviour is as a result of brutalizing experiences of childhood in He-Who -Drinks -Water-is -An -Idiot and his own misplaced loathe for prostitutes. He desires to kill Germaine and other whores from the neighbouring country of Democratic Republic of Congo in order to restore honour and image of He- Who- Drinks- Water- Is- An- Idiot. He does not like the migrant prostitutes because they offer their services at a low price thereby outcompeting the

locals for clients and also for tarnishing the reputation of the city. The irony in Gregoire's actions is that it is self-evident that he desires to kill his mother whom he suspects for having been a prostitute. Gregoire's actions can directly be attributed to his environment. At the end of the novel, Angoulima's ghost physically abandons Gregoire in its ascension to heaven for judgement. He is cock sure that he will never see his idol again. This ontological severance makes him cry for long hours at his idol's grave. Gregoire undergoes what Peter Widowson describes as a profound sense of ontological uncertainty, disunity and meaninglessness which is typical of characters in postcolonial writings.

2.2 Narrative Experimentation in *Broken Glass*

Broken Glass (2005) tells the story of the bar Broken Glass frequents (Credit Gone West) owned by his friend Stubborn Snail who has given Broken Glass a notebook to jot down comings and goings. This former teacher's thirst for bottled solace is matched by several distressed and disgraced patrons of the bar. The story is a tragic-comedy considering the predicaments of Printer who married a white woman and even became a manager of Paris-Match. He is now penniless and narrates how his wife slept with his son born of a Caribbean woman. The text creates a microcosm of post-colonial African experiences through the tales of sodden bar patrons who highlight more on corrupt and inept governments symbolised by the narrators' failed lives. Mabanckou shifts registers between Rabelaisian excess and the elevated simplicity of a folktale-while sustaining a constant current of manic loquacity. All the secondary narratives are versions of the same story: men brought down by women and booze. The text is primarily a tale of madness and sexual humiliation, physical collapse and moral degradation.

According to Hutcheon in *Poetics of Postmodernism*, postmodernist texts present historical events that are full of ironies. In the novels *Black Bazaar* and *Broken Glass*, blacks desire to be white. Printer's confession that he has deep desire for white women calls to mind Fanon's psychiatric study of the relationship between a Blackman and White woman and in particular, this contention that the black man's desire for whiteness compels him to love a white woman because her love makes him feel like a Whiteman, thereby accessing the white culture which is normally denied him. The irony here is that in the process of desiring to be white, blacks expose their inferiority complex instead of attaining equal status like the white people. At the same time, by Whites denying Blacks equal status, they undermine their collective identity. Printer, a lead character in *Broken Glass* demands his stories to be included in Broken Glass's notebook arguing that he is more important than other patrons of the pub because he has been to France and even married a white woman called Celine. Marrying a white woman was considered an achievement that raised one's status to a higher pedestal. Ironically, Celine's parents disapprove this son-in-law but only tolerate him because he is rich. This demonstrates stereotypes and prejudices founded on racialised (il)logic. Their condescending racial feelings for Printer emerge in their patronizing and derogatory statements about Africa which are informed by ethnopoetics and anthropological discourses written by explorers and early adventurers who wrongly painted a picture of Africa as primitive and barbaric. Racial prejudice makes Celine's father justify French colonization of the Congo. He further celebrates the historical fact of Charles de Gaulle declaring Brazzaville the capital of Free France during the occupation and pronouncing Congo the land of dreams and freedom. The irony here is that France was preoccupied with exploitation of resources to enrich their motherland and in no way aimed at bettering Congo. What is coming out clearly here is

Mabanckou's postmodernist denaturalization of French colonial discourse from within their racial assumptions.

2.2.1 Magical Realism as Political Aesthetic

Magical realism in *Broken Glass* centres around persons who are disillusioned in an unnamed African country. Mouyeke, the witchdoctor, brags that he is not an ordinary person because he can perform miracles at a scale greater than that of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as recorded in The Bible, performed many miracles such as raising the dead Lazarus back to life and feeding five thousand men excluding women and children with only two fish and five loaves of bread. Mouyeke claims that he has the powers to stop rain from falling, control the heat of the Sun, read people's minds and wake up souls from the dead. He even claims that he can turn a cat's piss into red wine. All these things he claims are not possible in reality but are believed to be true in the social milieu in context. Mabanckou employs magical realism to interrogate pertinent issues affecting Africa such as dictatorial and inefficient governments, poverty and superstition with the view of presenting the reader with reality affecting the countries so that they can engage in a dialogue that can alleviate them from the situation.

Stubborn Snail opens a bar because he is following the footsteps of Steppenwolf, a Cameroonian. The bar has never closed since it was opened. The owner monitors business activities taking place in the bar so closely that he is said not to sleep a wink. Even when he is asleep, he has the ability to see and tell customers who have been to the bar. This is magical realism because no human being can be at two places at the same time. His workers at the bar are described with exaggeration. Mompero is said to get so angry at times that only two litres of palm oil, cupful of boa fat and two kilograms of onions can calm his anger. Clearly, hyperbole, which is an aspect of magical realism, is employed to demonstrate the difficulty in calming Mompero once he loses his cool.

The female protagonist, Robinette, is shown as having prowess in pissing. One wonders about the size of her urinary bladder because she could pee for ten minutes non-stop and the urine flows as if someone had opened a public fountain. It is only Casmir who defeats her in a pissing contest. Casmir is able to draw all the continents of the world with his urine. Fault Zero is a sorcerer who can curse people who do not respect him by making their offsprings have the bodily features of a pig. Fault Zero has the power to restore eyesight, give a voice to the dumb, restore the ovaries of a sterile woman, enable a man to regain his erection, ensure a contestant's /aspirant's re-election and even make students pass exams. The empowering of the sorcerer is pure magical realism because what he claims he can do is not possible in a real world where people have to be subjected to treatment to get cured. In ordinary life, students have to work hard in their studies and revise thoroughly in order to pass in examination.

Colour white in *Broken Glass* is given mysterious significance. The colour white is associated with the white-skinned people (Caucasians) who are seen to be better than the black people in all aspects of life. In this way, God is believed to be white. When a black man wears white robes, he does not represent the image of God. When an angel sends Printer another man who has long hair, thick beard, blue eyes, white skin, he feels that he has seen God (p51). Printer, like other characters in the text, suffer from mental inferiority because they see the white people as superior. France, the country that colonised Congo is presented as the place to be. It is a paradise, the land of acculturation. People who have been to France consider themselves more important than the locals who have not travelled there and it is considered a great achievement to reach France. Ironically, the likes of Printer who have been to France are physical and emotional wrecks. Printer has no control of his family. His wife had an illicit affair with his son born of a Caribbean woman. He gets a mental breakdown after catching

his estranged son with Celine in bed, “tangled up in the poor Christ of Bomba position”, that is on top of the other (pp 49-50). The allusion is clearly to Mongo Beti’s *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. Beti’s novel satirises the missionary activities in Cameroon and in using the pretext to develop the themes of incest and adultery, *Broken Glass* joins the critique of French colonialism and Christianity. Printer describes God as “a black man the size of a sculpture made by the Senegalese artist Sembene”, thereby conserving the discourse of race because God has always been described as white. Amusingly, when a large used condom was found, Printer claims that his male organ is equally large. However, the contrary is true.

Mouyeke, the local herbalist and an occasional customer to Credit Gone West criticises racial prejudice in Christianity. He informs his fellow drunkards that Christ’s miracles are completely unverifiable and that the missionaries have used them to completely brainwash Africans for many years. According to him, he wonders why there are no black angels in the Bible and if one appears they are devils or minor characters and there were no blacks among Jesus’ disciples either. Mouyeke’s critique of racism in the Bible exposes the role of Christianity in colonialism. To a large extent, the novel brings to fore the entanglement of both Congolese and French citizens in racialised value systems.

Magical realism in *Broken Glass* is a means of entertaining readers and at the same time, it serves an aesthetic purpose regardless of whether one believes in the exaggerated stories or not. In the course of reading, one is likely to laugh because of the humorous stories narrated. Beneath these amusing stories is the power to satirise so as to expose shortcomings. The humour enables the narrators cope with the difficult situations they find themselves in life. Life has been a painful experience for the majority and so plunging in humour is a way of making life a bit bearable. Furthermore,

magical realism is employed so as to interrogate common beliefs in Congo such as the powers of witchcraft to enable a team to win a football match. Such beliefs have psychological effect on those who believe in them. Witchcraft, through the power of *gris-gris* is however mocked because it does not enable a football team to win a match as is anticipated. Mabanckou employs satire so as to reveal ills, failings of society or individuals in order to scorn or ridicule.

Stubborn Snail's bar in *Broken Glass* is attacked several times by opponents with the hope that it would collapse. The Christians are against the construction of Credit Gone West bar because it poses a threat to the strong faith and spiritual health of their followers who are likely to lapse and return to heathen ways and fail to attend church activities regularly. Various actions were undertaken in a bid to stall the progress of the bar:

It began with the church people who noticing their congregation had dwindled launched a holy war, flinging their Jerusalem Bibles at the floor of the Credit Gone West saying if things went on like this, it would be the end of Sunday Mass... no more crispy black wafers, no more sweet wine, the blood of Christ, no more choir boys, no more pious sisters, no more alms, no more first communion, no more catechism, no more baptism, no anything and everyone would go straight to hell (*Broken Glass* pg. 3)

When it became apparently clear that the verbal attacks have failed to prevent the operations at Credit Gone West, a group of righteous band of brothers set siege at the bar for forty days and forty nights but they do not succeed. Stubborn Snail goes on with his business unabated. Critics of the bar resort to witchcraft but it also fails. Robberies are committed but the proprietor remains unfettered and courageous. A group of thugs fail to bring down Credit Gone West despite being armed with crude weapons:

Iron bars from Zanzibar, clubs and cudgels from Medieval Christendom, poisoned spears from the times of Shaka Zulu, sickles and hammers from the Communist countries, catapults from the Hundred Years War, billhooks, pygmy hoes and left over machetes which were used in the Rwandan genocide (*Broken Glass* 4)

All the weapons fail to stop the enterprise of Stubborn Snail. Indeed, he is stubborn and obstinate. Stubborn Snail becomes a metaphor for Africa who must remain resilient in order to prosper despite the bottlenecks it faces. The stubbornness symbolises Africa's failure to stop Europe from unleashing underdevelopment that has dogged the continent for a long time.

Magical realism is used in *Broken Glass* to satirise communism as a political ideology in the Congo which has failed to deliver. Communism as an economic ideology aims at establishing an order where products and services are allocated to everyone in the society based on need and absence of social class. It is therefore expected that every part of a communist country should be equally developed. Communism is satirised for failing to bring development to the people by providing amenities such as electricity and piped water. Rural areas are left in darkness that is why Broken Glass, the primary school teacher at Trois- Martyrs school in Trois-Cents town, is transferred there as a form of punitive disciplinary action. According to his wife, he was a great teacher who performed his duties with dedication but was a little bit revolutionary. He defied the colonialists by calling his country by the name that existed before the Berlin Conference when European powers partitioned Africa and called regions by new names. He also criticised the lack of vision of its leaders who delight in the colonial legacy. The punitive disciplinary action of transferring Broken Glass to a remote area is a form of tyranny by the colonial government.

2.3 Critiquing Colonialism and Cultural Imperialism in *Black Bazaar*

Black Bazaar is a diary about the experiences of the narrator in Paris. In his diary, he vents vitriol about his girlfriend's betrayal and records gossip from the bar, debates about whether the whites were slavers or saviours, his run-ins with neighbour, memories of his childhood and meditations of corruption in post-colonial Africa. *Black*

Bazaar is filled with wry humour. Everything is taken in stride. The narrator and his friends are always adapting without surrendering their sense of who they are. *Black Bazaar* is an accumulation of anecdotes (embedded narratives) about life of the black community in Paris, about everyday life and the coping of the history of colonization. The narrator in *Black Bazaar* (2012) hails from the Congo- Brazzaville. He gives us a vivid picture of the African emigrant in Paris. Buttologist, the narrator, like all SAPPERS, dresses sharply but lives in a small studio and is trying to come to terms with the fact that Hybrid (Lucien Mitori) has run away with his wife (Original Colour) and daughter. SAPPERS is an acronym for Society of Ambience-Makers and Elegant People where adherents embody elegance in style of dressing, exhibit exuberant flamboyance and copy the manners of colonial predecessors. Events take place in JIPS, an Afro- Cuban bar in les Halles where Buttologist takes Pelfort beer and watches women. The text conducts an ebullient debate about the legacy of white colonialism in Africa: did the Whites ruin Africa or did they introduce social and cultural practices that ultimately made life better there? Were the Whites slavers or saviours? In the novel, Mabanckou is basically describing the African diaspora, the lives of the Congolese immigrants in France and their conflicting opinions on the legacy of colonialism. Mabanckou seems to be saying that Africans should stop blaming the colonists for all the ills and move forward.

Black Bazaar expresses the relationship between the blacks and whites in Paris, France. The narrator in *Black Bazaar* keeps a diary which he is writing in order to deal with the disappointment of being abandoned by his ex-lover whom he nicknames Original Colour. The novel's protagonist, Buttologist, highlights the life of immigrant Africans in the diaspora. While in Europe, the Africans suffer from racial prejudice, alienation and negative perceptions from the Whites. The novel performs a postmodernist critique

by presenting characters that endorse or undermine racial discourses. A Congolese migrant narrator has had a nightmare in which the Pygmies of Gabon are about to sacrifice their daughter called Harriette by cooking her in a pot. In pleading with the pygmies to spare the child, he accuses them of putting humanity to shame instead of showing the world that cannibalism does not exist in Africa. The Europeans had for long believed Africans to be engaging in bizarre acts like cannibalism which they considered a non-human habit and depicted traits that border on being an animal. The narrator's accusation exposes the complicity of Africans in their own racial subjugation. Mabanckou's critique of colonialism implies that much as colonial masters are responsible for impoverishing Africa and other parts of the world, African leaders also contributed a lot to the continent's tribulations. Roger, the French-Ivorian and the narrator expound how African post independence governments have failed to build on the technological benefits of colonialism such as roads, electricity, railway and safe drinking water thereby ushering in underdevelopment and poverty. Roger argues that it is high time for Africans to stop blaming the West for their economic woes:

You have been independent for nearly half a century and you are telling me that there is only one road? What the hell have you been doing all this time? You have got to stop blaming those settlers for everything. The Whites cleared off and they left you everything including colonial homes, electricity, a railway, drinking water, a seaport, Nivaquine, antiseptic and a town centre.
(Black Bazaar 9)

True, when the colonialists left, they left behind a thriving economy and some improved social services, but which have been largely collapsed in many independent African nations due to neglect and lack of maintenance putting them in a dilapidated state.

Mr. Hippocratic, despite being black despises the black race. When he is annoyed, he accuses the narrator of giving refuge to African immigrants whom he calls criminals

and accuses them of printing fake money, selling drugs and getting involved in homosexual orgies with wild animals like the bonobo. The irony is that Mr. Hippocratic is a black immigrant from Martinique in the Caribbean and therefore a victim of the same racial abuse to which he subjects fellow black migrants. It is ironical that Mr. Hippocratic justifies colonialism and condemns the idea that Europe should pay reparations to Africa for attendant ills of colonialism. He views colonialism as a gesture of generosity from civilized people who delivered savages from their primitive life of living in trees and scratching themselves with their toes and engaging in cannibalism. Hippocratic has been brainwashed for believing that colonialists were on a civilising mission and that Africans ought to respect settlers for delivering them from darkness, braving devils, mosquitoes, green mambas, yellow fever and sleeping sickness. He condemns the proposal by Yves, the just Ivorian that Europeans ought to pay reparations to Africa. He argues that people who are intellectually challenged exaggerate the injustices done to Africans and ignore the fact that colonialism came with certain positive aspects. From a postmodernist standpoint, Yves is reversing the binary opposition between Eurocentric and Afrocentric discourses by proposing such radical solution as paying reparations.

Mabanckou's critique of the destabilising effects of colonialism become clearer when *Broken Glass* and *Black Bazaar* paradoxically allude to postcolonial theoretical intertexts. Take for example, when Printer boasts that, 'he mixed whites with other wretched of the Earth' in his printing company, the allusion is to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. Ironically, by describing others as wretched of the Earth, the printer installs Fanon's critique of colonial racism, but at the same time, subverts the idea that blacks are the only wretched of the earth because some whites are also poor.

Black Bazaar references the Bible with parodic irony as is seen when the narrator reworks the creation story in the book of Genesis. In the Prologue, we read about how God entrusted the Pygmies of Gabon with the keys of the Earth and told them to be fruitful, multiply and fill the Earth. In portraying the Pygmies as the ancestors of humanity, the myth installs the same racial tendencies it seeks to subvert. The text also makes reference to the Bible by rewriting the story of Ham, Noah's son. According to racialized logic, blacks are descendants of Ham who are condemned to eternal servitude for disrespecting their father. The Bible here stands accused. Mouyeke, in fact, wishes the Bible had at least two black angels so that they do not accuse the Almighty of getting their colour wrong. In many Biblical stories, angels are depicted as white beings with white wings flying in the midst of white clouds. This image is reinforced in most Christian literature and pictures where the devil is juxtaposed as Black carrying a trident and out to cause mayhem to souls forever in hell. The blacks demand fair representation in the Bible out of a sense of racial inferiority rather than as an assertion of racial equality, thereby reinforcing the skin colour difference they seek to undermine.

Mouyeke laments:

“Are we supposed to believe that at the time of the Bible soap, there was noblack actor who could play a leading role...but to understand and forgive the poor whites, you can see that they saddled the negroes with the role of bootblack in daily life here below when from up on high you can get the impression negroes don't exist” (*Black Bazaar* 76-77)

The significance of Mouyeke's critique of racial underpinnings of the Bible is that it exposes the role of Christianity in colonisation. Indeed, this comparison of the Bible to a soap opera suggests its constructedness of a system of European discourses that represents blacks as naturally inferior to whites, thereby justifying the colonial subjugation.

Buttoligist, the main character in *Black Bazaar*, highlights the life of Africans in diaspora. Mabanckou employs magical realism in order to expose challenges and difficult situations Africans face abroad. The use of magical realism centres around different characters from different racial backgrounds. As mentioned earlier, magical realism is employed in the description of the Mbuti and Mbenga Pygmies, the native inhabitants of the Congo. The Pygmies are said to be the first people God created and gave them unlimited power to procreate. This unlimited power to procreate by a woman is a hyperbole because in reality, a woman can only give birth to children up to a certain age. They are also presented as savage cannibals. In a dream (dreams are elements of magical realism), Buttologist sees the pygmies prepare to feast on his daughter by boiling her in a huge pot of palm oil. It is only after pleading that she is let go because she was innocent. The image of the pygmies is a metaphor of Africans who are viewed in the novel as savage and primitive people who lived on trees like monkeys and scratched themselves with their toes and are referred to as cannibals who eat human flesh without adding salt.

In *Black Bazaar*, gris-gris or fetishes are believed to have super ordinary powers to make a football team win a match against the opponents. This accounts for the postcolonial theory with regard to Bhabha's (1994) ambivalence which is inherent in the post-colonial subjects. The fetish makes the players very powerful, and this is achieved when the fetish man takes the players to a cemetery and forces them to sleep there. It is believed that the dead would take possession of the living and so there would be a spirit in each player that enables him through extraordinary ability score several goals during the match. Things do not work this way in real life, but it is an approach to dupe the players to believe that they have power to score and so may find themselves playing hard. When a team does not win, the fetish man provides strange excuses like

the player did not open first the right eye when he woke up as guided or he could have touched his genitalia within the twenty-hour prohibited period. At times, they are warned not to greet a woman until the match is over. (*Black Bazaar* page 51). By strange coincidence, Tugen hunters have similar pronouncements whenever they fail to kill game during a hunting expedition. The lead hunter often blames the lack to one of the junior hunters having had carnal knowledge with a woman prior to the hunt: a source of bad luck and failure in pursuits.

A girl's hair is also mystified in that it is believed that it can be turned into love potion when concocted by a traditional witchdoctor. If a boy gives the concoction to a girl, she will fall head- over- heels in love with him even if she had earlier on declined the boy's advances. Similarly, a certain seed is said to have the power to woo a girl back. Placide is told by a witchdoctor to place the seed in water and when it sprouts the wayward girl will automatically come to back him. Girls' sexual organs are given mysterious characteristics. Buttologist recalls that they were not allowed to have intimacy with girls because their sexual organs are believed to be harbouring scorpions which would sting them if they made love. Here, magical realism narrative technique is used to deter casual teen sexual escapades. Exaggeration, an element of magical realism, is used in *Black Bazaar* to describe peoples' physical attributes. Hybrid, the musician who eloped with Original Colour (Buttologist's girlfriend) is said to be extremely ugly. He is shorter than the drum he beats. His eyes are not of the same size, and his brain is smaller than his eye. Given the unique appearance, Buttologist fails to understand how such an ugly man won his girlfriend. Rose, a woman Buttologist picks up at night from a night club called Keur Samba had big behinds and her brassiere made her breasts erect and elegant. The make-up made her face look smooth and very beautiful. She looked young and her skin as soft as sucking babes. The violet light showed her B- side nicely. However, when she

undressed her body had stretch marks and her hair and nails were fake. With the changed physical appearance, Buttologist fails to gain an erection and cannot sexually satisfy her and Rose storms out a disappointed woman.

Mr. Hippocratic has mental illusions and vague memory of Mobutu, the dictator of Zaire. He believes he saw him in recent news bulletin giving a political speech punctuated with imagery to a packed stadium. He proceeds to tell the facts about him and his regime in general, that he is the person who plotted the assassination of Patrice Emery Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of Congo.

“I saw him on the telly giving a speech in a packed stadium where hemurdered Patrice Lumumba. That Mobutu makes his people suffer, he is a villain, he is evil, he is a dictator, we should send the Americans to do a spot of mopping up over there. The man brings shame to your race. It is intolerable....He sells your diamonds; he buys himself fancy homes in Europe. Is that a normal way to behave?” (Black *Bazaar* 32-33)

This passage projects French racism through the country's media and suggests of blacks' complicity. Mr. Hippocratic cites how Mobutu's authoritarianism degrades the black race from the French perspective when he is also black. It is ironical that Mobutu's dictatorship and the murder of Lumumba were influenced by Western powers. Further, the West is responsible for masterminding civil wars in Congo so as to acquire minerals such as diamond. Cobalt and uranium. When Buttologist tells Mr. Hippocratic that Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga long died and could not possibly be featured as a news item, Hippocratic denies with an emphatic No. He simply could not believe Mobutu died long ago. Having mental illusions is characteristic of magical realism. Mr. Hippocratic blames the Congolese living overseas for being accomplices to tyranny because they do nothing to oust despots who cause a lot suffering to the people through their evil schemes. The diaspora is viewed as cowards who do not help in alleviating poverty and stopping conflicts because African men are presented as

always fighting each other and marrying many wives including through inheriting widows. Mr. Hippocratic also draws attention to the rule of Idi Amin Dada who robbed his country progressive democracy by instituting a single party system under a dictatorial military regime. He asserts that Africa is yet to get rid of tyrants because although Amin and Mobutu are now dead, others have emerged and occupied political seats and perpetuated tyranny in a larger scale and intensity. (*Black Bazaar* pp33)

Mabanckou employs magical realism in *Black Bazaar* to satirise cultural imperialism where women have to use make-up to look beautiful. Mabanckou attacks those Africans who use whitening creams like Ambi and other cosmetics in order to look like the white people. Rose, the woman Buttologist spotted at a night club had appealing looks because of the make -up and cloth accessories. Buttologist had been attracted to her because of her firm breasts, but he later discovers that her saggy breasts had been made firm by breast boosters. The skin has to undergo some transformation while fake hair and nails are worn. The girl in Soul Fashion has an exaggerated butt, roundish and shapely because of clothing accessories. Mabanckou ridicules and condemns this apemanship. No wonder the intended fling does not materialise the moment the girl undressed. Buttologist lost interest instantly.

Roger, the French-Ivorian questions the racial privileging of the French language over the Congolese version. Roger accuses the narrator of writing the diary with an accent like other African writers who use this European language and that the French people do not like it. This questioning by Roger is a sign of consciousness by Africans about their linguistic status. Versions of various languages ought to be treated as equal as long as they serve the intended societal purposes.

Society endeavours to keep morals at all times. Sexual promiscuity has since time immemorial been discouraged and frowned upon. Teenagers who wantonly engaged in premarital sex were considered lost and used as bad examples. In order to discourage premarital sex, girls' sexual organs in *Black Bazaar* are said to have scorpions. This magical realism is a means of warding off or prohibiting pre-marital sex. Ordinarily, girls' genitalia do not harbour dangerous creatures like scorpions but in this society such magical tales are narrated to keep sexual purity among youngsters. Similar lust control stories are abound in other African societies. In one community, boys are warned to keep off from girls because a girl's vagina has the ability of swallowing them whole. In another community, tales are told of premarital sex leading to partners getting stuck in their illicit act. The undesirability of casual sex between boys and girls is condemned through such exaggerated stories. The girls' vaginas become a means of social control.

Africa is presented as a dark continent in *Black Bazaar*. The text highlights ways on how to deal with the dictators and civil strife in Africa "...dictators sucking the continent dry and inciting different ethnic groups to tear each other's guts out before the cameras of the International Community" (*Black Bazaar* p199). Here, Mabanckou desires to trigger a debate that can eventually show the truth about Africa devoid of the biases that have been propagated. An ensuing discussion would lead to finding solutions to the challenges bedevilling Africa. As things are today, most African countries have stagnated in development since the colonialists left. The narrator and his friend suggest that Africans should be responsible for their own problems and must work hard to improve their economic condition. The Arab in *Black Bazaar* urges Africans to stop being lazy and uses tom-tom, a drum, as a symbol of luxury and fun which makes Africans poor because they allegedly like enjoying themselves instead of working hard to improve their economic status. To the Arab, the African loves dancing the whole day

to the beats and rhythms of the drum. “We hear those tomtoms from morning to night to the point of leading happily settled women astray” (*Black Bazaar* p 120)

Roger, French-Ivorian views orality as a form of communication as being less complex than writing. In the context of their debate, orality is largely used by black people while writing is used by whites. It can therefore be deduced that he opines that black people are equally less complex just like their preferred form of communication.

Roger confronts the narrator about the diary in this manner:

These (Europeans) are smarter people and you can only see them on telly...this is what they were born to do, they were brought up with it, but when it comes to the negroes, well then writing is not our thing. With us, it is the oral tradition of our ancestors, we are tales of from the bush and forest the adventures of Leuk-the-hare told to children around a fire crackling to the beat of the tom-tom. Our problem is that we did not invent the printing press or the ball point pen and we will always sit at the back of the classroom fantasizing about how to write the history of the dark continent with our spears. (*Black Bazaar* 7)

Roger is clearly racially biased from the way he views the superiority of writing over orality or verbal communication. According to him, the Europeans are more intelligent than Africans whom he sees as primitive simply because they are adept to writing. Mabanckou, however, argues that African literature is always influenced by orality and other forms of oral traditions. Roger’s fixation with the superiority of the White race is evident in the novel when he engages in a heated argument with Yves. Roger constantly reminds Yves that Africans benefitted from the French colonialism and that if he were the Minister for Immigration and National Identity, he would have revoked his identity card for being ungrateful. Roger and the narrator expound how African post-independence governments have failed to build on technological benefits of colonialism such as roads, electricity, railways and safe drinking water thereby ushering in poverty. The infrastructure that was left by colonialists is now worn out and in-operational due to neglect and lack of maintenance. Evidently, Roger fails to see the dynamism in

infrastructural evolution because advancements in technology have rendered the old infrastructure obsolete. The old metre gauge railway, for example, has now been replaced by electronic railroad that enables trains travel at near supersonic speed. What is coming out clearly is that the French education system is responsible for reinforcing the myth of white supremacy. The books read in the education system perpetuate this myth. Racial bias is so entrenched that Original Colour quotes from those history books written by whites about colonial expeditions narrating pejoratively how Africans lived in beaten earth huts, practised black magic and suffered from poverty as evidenced by children with visibly distended bellies.

To augment the deep seethed racial prejudices is the story of Original Colour who was born Nancy but is alienated from her Congolese roots. She is given the moniker Original Colour because of her black skin. In Congo, people believe that blacks born in France are less black. The contrary is however true:

There are some people when you see them, they are black as manganese or tar, so you figure that they have roasted under the tropical Sun but when they tell you that they were born in France....I insist they show me the identity card on the spot... and if they are right I get frustrated (*Black Bazaar* 60)

What is emerging is that the Congolese define their identity in relation to its closeness to French whiteness; the blacks born in France are supposed to be less black than those born in Africa. This explains why the narrator nicknames his ex-girlfriend Original Colour. By doing so, he reinforces the racial discourse that tends to portray the colour black as result of harsh weather conditions of the tropics. The focus on skin pigmentation undermines the fact that he benefits from the trans-culture as a Congolese migrant. In a nutshell, what *Black Bazaar* exposes is the systematic propagation of racial prejudice by the French education system and the mass media, for example, when

the national television station announces that Congolese people suffer from disease, famine, have many wives and are always fighting.

Religion in *Black Bazaar* is a crucial factor that influences people's identity. Djamal, an African-Arab who manages a shop near the narrator's apartment calls the narrator "African Brother" because they come from the same continent as proclaimed by the Enlightened Guide, Muammar Gaddafi and profess the same faith. Djamal argues that the first man to occupy the Earth was an African and it therefore follows that all other races are immigrants here on Earth and insists that Europe belongs to Africans. However, he contradicts himself when he argues that North Africa and Sub-Sahara are strangers to one another and denying the fact that Arabs were involved in slave trade. According to him, only the West was involved in Slave trade (The Trans-Atlantic slave trade). The truth, however, as told by Mr. Hippocratic is that Africans and Arabs colluded with Whites during the slave trade. From history, Arab merchants such as Tippu Tip and Sayed Barghash bought thousands of slaves from slave markets in East Africa's coast at places like Zanzibar, Bagamoyo and Wasini. The slaves were captured in deep hinterland in places as far as Rungwa and Ujiji in Western Tanganyika.

In *Black Bazaar*, African and Western history are shaped by colonial encounter which has continued to determine construction of identity. The text highlights racial bias when Roger comments on Tintin adventure in the Congo. In confronting the narrator over the writing of the diary, he claims that Tintin came to the dark and ghostly Africa as part of the civilising mission and for that reason, he does not harbour a grudge against the settlers. What is ironic about Rogers' claim is that although the instalment of the comic strip in question is indeed set in the Congo, it depicts Tintin as an explorer, not as a colonialist, while still drawing on racial stereotypes in its description of the

Congolese people who are said to be having “big, fat pink lips” which advances the wrong theory as taught in history books that Africans are still undergoing the process of evolution from monkeys and they are yet to be full human beings. Despite the scathing humour in the novel *Black Bazaar*, therein is a social and political commentary which reveals the effects of Western colonialism. In conclusion, Mabanckou in *Black Bazaar* and *Broken Glass* employs an ambivalent position from which he simultaneously inscribes and subverts the racial assumptions of Eurocentric and Afrocentric discourses.

2.4 Memoirs of a Porcupine

According to Congolese beliefs, everyone has an animal alter ego. *Memoirs of a Porcupine* explores the notion that every man and his alter ego share inter-woven destinies, no matter how well they get along. A porcupine, the animal counterpart to a treacherous village artisan in the Congo, rebels against his alter ego by informing the entire village of his criminal deeds. Full of bizarre myths, there were elaborate rituals performed to make a corpse reveal its killer, but this can be prevented by concealing a palm-nut in the rectum of the killer. In this text, Mabanckou brings a new power to magic realism. The totem that acts as a double to power is no longer protected by taboo, there is a breach in the wall of prohibitions. In transgressing taboos and constraints, citizens stress their preference for ‘conviviality’, they unpack officialdom and its protective taboos and often unwittingly tear apart the gods that African autocrats aspire to be. *Memoirs of a Porcupine* is about the ills of post-independence Africa with its kleptocratic dictators and fratricidal wars where Mabanckou sugars the pill of criticism with humour that veers from gentle irony to bawdy language use. At the outset, magical realist techniques expose the fundamentally excessive facets of everyday life under a dictatorship. The narrative approach is particularly effective in the description of the

dictator's megalomaniac spectacle, his perverse sexuality and his physical forms of domination. In this novel, magical realism allows for a providential, historical and epistemological rupture which reinscribes and challenges the persistent dichotomy in the representation of Africa that are barbarism and civilisation.

In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, Mabanckou weaves his story slowly and anthroponomy carriers in Congolese languages form the identity of the author. It portrays events taking place from North to South, Mosaka to Sekepembe and more so in the vicinity of Louboulou. The novel is an allegorical tale narrated by porcupine; a double protector, born on the same day as Kibandi which still some Congolese believe in. The porcupine is now forty – two years old and narrates to baobab two days after the death of Kibandi all that transpired since he was joined with the boy at the age of ten. Mabanckou in the novel brings a new power to magic realism. Mabanckou employs exuberant satire to expose the ills of post-independence Africa with its megalomaniac dictators and frequent inter-ethnic fights.

In the novel *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, Mabanckou brings a new power to magical realism. *Memoirs of a Porcupine* possess several elements of magical realism which according to Cuddon (2008) include the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic, convoluted and labyrinthine narratives and the use of myths, dreams and fairy tales. An example of magical realism in the novel is the description of a corpse having the ability to identify to the mourners the person who caused the death. When the dead person is asked the question, the coffin suddenly starts to move, the four strong bearers get dragged into a devilish sort of a dance, they no longer feel the weight of the corpse, they run left and right, often the casket drags them way to the bush...they plunge into water but do not drown, they pass through the bush fires but they do not burn. After the ritual, the culprit responsible for causing the death is identified. *Memoirs of a*

Porcupine raises various social issues key among is selfish desires that leads to harming others.

2.4.1 Mystification of Kibandi as a Metaphor of Tyranny

The narrator is a porcupine named Ngoumba who is transformed to be Kibandi's harmful double after a ritual involving the taking of Mayavumbi (liquor that is used in rituals). Ngoumba narrates to the baobab tree the many engagements he has had with Kibandi who is now dead. The use of fantasy, which is an element of magical realism, acts as a camouflage so as to reveal the fratricidal killings by those in political power represented in the novel by Papa and Young Kibandi. Papa Kibandi and his double, a rat, is involved in killing relatives and villagers arising from his jealousy and sinister character. The power to kill is comparable to witchcraft where one acquires supernatural powers after taking mayavumbi, a drink that makes one invincible and attracts a double that he is expected to work with. Papa Kibandi's double is a rat while that of his son is a porcupine. That Mayavumbi has the potency and power to attract a wild animal and give ability to kill is magical. This mythic drink also has the power to make someone know how to read without being taught. Before going on a mission, Kibandi has to go through the ritual of drinking this initiatory drink called mayavumbi.

This is how it is administered:

Papa Kibandi shook the gourd several times and then poured the mayavumbi into the cup, took a gulp himself, clicked his tongue, then held the vessel to his son who shrank back you have got to drink the potion.

A few mouthfuls were enough, it worked straight away, little Kibandi began to feel dizzy, fell to the ground, got up, swayed, his eyes were shut, the liquid tasted like palm wine, the potion burned his throat and when he opened his eyes, my young master saw a child who looked exactly like him before he vanished between bushes...no illusion my boy, and you are a man now. I am happy you are going to follow the path I received from my father...at last his father could breathe again, he had waited for so long for this moment of liberation when the duty of transmission would finally be fulfilled (*Memoires of a Porcupine* 53)

After killing many people, guilt weighs on Kibandi and he makes confessions to a baobab tree that patiently listens to the porcupine's recounts. The Porcupine is now forty-two years old and narrates to baobab two days after the death of Kibandi all that transpired since he was joined with the boy at the age of ten. The porcupine explains at length its role as a double to Young Kibandi during the killing missions. It claims that "I was a master's third eye, his third nostril, his third ear, which means that whatever he did not see or smell or hear, I transmitted to him in his dreams and if ever he did not reply to my messages, I would appear to him as the people of Sekempe were going out to the fields" (p5). The text is an allegorical tale full of bizarre myths. The Kibandi's family legacy is that of eating or murdering people and Papa Kibandi have killed many. Through witchcraft, Kibandi kills successful people in the society. Marapari is killed because he had bought himself an electric saw that makes do his work efficiently and easily. Envy made Kibandi kill Loubanda who was successful with women. Any woman he seduced fell in love with him. He kills his sister simply because he was opposed to a marital union between a Southerner and a Northerner. Matuomona is killed because she refuses to marry Kibandi who is double her age. She dies when corn soup goes through the trachea in her throat. Senga, the skilled brick maker is killed because he refused to work for Kibandi. Loupiala, the nurse is accused of being talkative and is subsequently killed while Nkele is killed because of his success in farming. Kibandi with the help of the porcupine kills using sharp quills. It is clear from the examples that Kibandi and his double, the porcupine, attack neighbours who cross their path even for slight reasons and it becomes impossible to establish connection with the killings. Since the porcupine is a harmful double, its activities are destructive. In fact, it says it is meant to serve humanity not for better but for worse, the very worst. This can be interpreted to mean its readiness to cause harm or even death to anyone who dares to cross his path

or oppose his propositions. Kibandi uses the porcupine to act out his grizzly compulsions. Owing to the numerous executions committed by Kibandi including the killing of his niece (Niangui Boussina), his sister (Etaleli) takes Papa Kibandi to a famous witchdoctor called Lekana at Tembe Essouka. She wishes the witchdoctor to expose the powers of Kibandi and perhaps neutralise his powers. However, Kibandi knows that it will not be easy for him to be implicated because he has used magic that will render the witchdoctor clueless. There is something that shields Kibandi from being identified which is a palm nut inserted in his anus. This is magical realism because in reality a nut is just a seed and has no known power. Interestingly, the journey backfires on Etaleli in that her husband (Nkouyou Matete) is accused by the witchdoctor for killing his own daughter. Papa Kibandi's powers are however neutralised when the hideout of his double, a rat, is identified by the witchdoctor. Men in the village gathered and killed the harmful creature and by strange coincidence, when they return to the village, they realise Kibandi too is dead. (MP p69). Because Kibandi was an enemy of the people, no one attends his funeral. His rotting body is left to young Kibandi and Mama Kibandi to bury. As the two prepared to bury Kibandi, a mysterious obnoxious smell of Kibandi's fart billows and lasts for thirty days and thirty nights. The smell implies the presence of Papa Kibandi who directs his son not to abandon the acquired practice which he has been initiated to. The two later leave Mossaka village for Sekempe for they felt ostracised and unwanted. After the death of his mother, Young Kibandi, following the footsteps of his father, begins to kill people. His first victim is Kiminou, a beautiful girl who refused to marry him. He kills her in the pretext that Papa Loubota (her father) did not attend the funeral of his mother and therefore he is a bad man who deserves revenge and this should be carried out by killing his daughter, the object of his pride. He did the killing by shooting a quill to the right temple and this

turned fatal. “I drew a deep breath, took one of my shortest quills and threw it straight at her right temple. Before she realised what was happening, then a second. She shuddered in vain, she struggled and she was paralysed” (p93). In this community, a corpse is believed to have the power to identify and reveal the causes of death before it is buried. Kibandi is however not identified by the corpse during the funeral because he had stuck a palm nut in his rectum. Instead, another innocent person is accused and buried alive with the deceased. Young Kibandi’s next victim is Amedee, an educated person who had travelled overseas. Kibandi hated him for his debauchery and intellectual arrogance. Amedee was a sexual bandit who had casual sex with many women in the village. Amedee’s family, however, did not pursue the process of asking a corpse to identify Amedee’s killers because they had converted to the Christian faith. Later, Kibandi kills an infant (Youala’s child) because Youala owed Kibandi money. In the end, Kibandi loses the power to kill when he attempted to kill some twins which have extraordinary powers. The twins are described as having unusual powers because they can scratch, cough, fart, cry and fall at the same time. This is magical realism in that it is virtually impossible in reality for human beings to perform such same activities simultaneously. The twins (Kete and Kotty) and baby Youala fight Kibandi to his death. In this society, in the people’s belief system, it was an abomination to kill twins. Ghosts haunt young Kibandi for this and his double, the porcupine, could do nothing to save him. The existence of ghosts is illusionary. In the world we live in, ghosts have never been seen and verified. The dead are believed to come back to life. In fact, they sit by the roadside bar and have a chat as they partake a drink, usually a glass of palm wine. They are said to come and even settle debts (MP pg. 60). This is magical realism because the dead actually do not resurrect as we know it in the world we live in. It is an aspect of faith among believers. The description of the sorcerer, Lekana at Tembe

Essouka is surreal. He has unnatural and grotesque appearance. He was born blind, he never washes because he believes washing takes away his powers, he can control rain, sun and wind and can tell exactly details of a person's date and place of birth or even the names of someone's parents. This supernatural ability is a characteristic of magical realism and has the effect of mystifying Lekana who eventually succeeds in neutralising the capabilities of Papa Kibandi.

2.4.2 Magical realism as an Allegory of Political Satire

Magical realism serves an allegorical purpose in *Memoirs of a Porcupine*. It is used to teach morals and satirise political excesses. Mabanckou in the novel uses the legend of Kibandi and the porcupine to teach a moral lesson that justice may be delayed but eventually it will be served. Papa Kibandi is at the end killed by the powers of Lekana of Tembe Essouka after killing thirty-nine innocent souls. Kibandi is equated to unjust political systems in Africa headed by corrupt and manipulative politicians who misuse their power forgetting that their end will come. The porcupine admits to the baobab that he could do nothing to save him (Kibandi) from death when the ghosts of the twins attacked. When Youala and the twins bring Kibandi to his knees and in a desperate state begging for mercy, it implies that the masses who look harmless, can overcome dictators only if they unite. Kibandi and his son instilled fear to control the people. Dictators or tyrants symbolised by Kibandi lose popularity and respect once they are out of office and they die in misery and are soon forgotten. In fact, there are recorded cases in history when the populace deface and uproot statues and other monuments that had been built in celebration of dictators. Africa has numerous examples of such dictators. Dictators in Africa are represented by Papa Kibandi and young Kibandi who kill people at the slightest provocation. Old Otchombe, for example, is mysteriously killed by Young Kibandi because he opposed his candidature for the village council seat. The

Kibandis have zero tolerance for any form of criticism levelled against them which is similar to the attitude of many autocrats in Africa:

Young Abeba we ate him because he teased my Master for being thin.
 We ate Asalaka because he called Master a sorcerer...
 We ate Loumouanou because she rejected my
 Master's advances in public...
 We ate Mabele because
 of spreading lies about my Master'' (Memoirs of a Porcupine pp 27)

It is evident that these victims were killed because they criticised Young Kibandi. Dictators, the world over dislike any form of opposition to their rule and often resort to eliminating those who criticise them. The handing over of killing power from old Kibandi to young Kibandi is similar to power transitions in Africa: New regime is as repressive as old. Kibandi in *Memoirs of a Porcupine* is a metaphor of Joseph Desire Mobutu Seseseko of Zaire. During his long rule in Zaire, Mobutu was intolerable to criticism. Those who opposed him were either killed or disappeared from the face of the public. He assassinated high profile personalities like Patrice Lumumba and massacred innocent civilians as depicted by the porcupine and his master Kibandi. The porcupine represents agents of dictators who kill their opponents at the slightest provocation such as having a divergent opinion. The porcupine commits crimes on behalf of the master and therefore becoming difficult to corner the masters for the crimes they perpetrate. Clearly, the novel's moral lesson is an emphasis to the adage that we should do unto others what we would like them to do unto us.

The powerful herb, mayavumbi, acquires a symbolic status to connote power and authority that is abused. In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, power corrupts the possessor. Mabankou cautions those who abuse power given to them because if they do, the day of reckoning is beckoning. Young Kibandi epitomises tyrants in power and their imminent fall. When the twins (Kete and Kotty) and young Youala bring Kibandi to his downfall, it implies that the masses who look harmless can overcome dictators if only

they unite. The ghosts of the twins and young Youala incessantly attacked Kibandi with spears until he died. At the time of being killed, Kibandi had lost his magical powers and could be attacked easily because he lacked any form of formidable defence. In fact, the porcupine watched helplessly and in desperation as Youala and the twins (Kotty and Kete) attacked Kibandi mercilessly.

“ Youala, together with his bodyguards had captured my Master’s other self, it was painful to watch, it was as though Kibandi’s other self did not even have the strength of a scarecrow, he was passive like a puppet, like a clown, like a marionette stuffed with cotton, rags, spongy.....My Master’s legs could not hold, his head flopped down his chest and his arms dangled down by his legs...My Master tried to throw a spear but his hands were so heavy that the weapon fell on his feet and eventually Kibandi collapsed on the ground like an old tree felled with a single blow” (*Memoirs of a Porcupine* page 140)

These arbitrary killings in *Memoirs of a Porcupine* symbolize the rampant fratricidal wars rampant in Africa and the wanton assassinations by kleptocratic dictators. The porcupine in Mabanckou’s *Memoirs of a Porcupine* can be interpreted to represent tyrants or despots who kill their opponents at the slightest provocation or divergent in opinion. *Memoirs of a Porcupine* draws oral lore and parables in its sly criticism of those who use traditional beliefs as a pretext for violence. Kibandi is harmful because of lack of esteem. He feels inadequate, skinny and of inferior complex.

2.5 Blue White Red: An Allusion of a Pipe Dream.

Alain Mabanckou in *Blue White Red* has crafted a plot that projects fraudulent immigrant Africans who live in Paris. Each character has a dream of succeeding in France. Arriving in Paris, it dawns on one (as represented by the experience of Massala-

Massala) that the visiting status will soon expire and he will be in an irregular situation, become a “sans-papiers”, one who has no proper immigration papers to stay on in a foreign country. The text can be summed as narrating the tribulations of immigrants in Paris whose initial high hopes of achieving economic emancipation are dashed at the end. The individual’s dreams and aspirations are thus shattered having come into contact with the reality that the Parisian world has been shut at them. Mabanckou tells the readers through the mouth of the first- person narrator, Massala-Massala that these African immigrants make effort even fraudulently to penetrate and survive in Paris. Moki, for example, deals in clothes and sells the wears two times costlier than what he paid for them in the suburb of Paris where he actually bought them while pretending to have travelled to buy them in Milan or Naples, Italy. The African immigrants have to contend with racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination unleashed on them in France. Getting a decent job is out of question for them. Therefore, they do odd jobs not minding how dishonest it is, as the end justifies the means. Perhaps what matters to them is their being economically empowered. These African immigrants in Paris constitute the flipside society. More than a dozen of them stays together in one room of a dilapidated building destined to be destroyed. They sleep on the floor wrapped in blankets. They eat and drink like paupers. They return to their ramshackle abode very late at night and leave very early to hustle to survive in Paris.

The novel *Blue White Red* is part of the literature of immigration that reflects the nature of relationship that exists between France and Africa. If during the colonial period, young Africans went to France to deepen their knowledge of the language and culture of the colonial master, the post-colonial Africans continue to go there for the purpose of their education or to escape poverty. Hence, literature of immigration is particularly about underdevelopment of Africa and the resilience of its people who are struggling

to get out of economic destitution. It is also about addressing the psychological vestiges of centuries of enslavement that has left a mark in the manner Africans perceive themselves and also discussing the economic and political dependence on former colonial masters that African governments are struggling to come out of sixty years after independence.

Blue White Red is an allusion of the colours of the French flag, a country which epitomises success for migrants from formerly colonised territories such as Congo, Brazzaville. The novel details the experiences of Massala-Massala, a high school dropout who migrates to Paris from the Congolese city of Pointe –Noire in order to liberate his family from poverty under the tutelage of his compatriot and former schoolmate, Charles Moki. The novel is also the story of Moki who has returned home from Paris and has managed to build a home for his father. His affluent lifestyle suggests that he is financially successful. Massala-Massala is influenced by Moki and he begins a struggle to travel to Paris, a city he believes is the gateway to success and beauty. Sadly, in the end he is disappointed because his dreams and expectations do not materialise.

2.5.1 Fragmented Subjectivity in *Blue White Red*

Magical realism is used to build the image of Paris. It is presented as paradise, a place for special people. Paris, France is made to look like it is out of reach for common people. Massala-Massala thinks France is for those people that are often called the go-getters like Moki who accentuates the myth of Paris as the epitome of success through an aura which he creates when he comes back for a visit to his homeland. Charles Moki creates an image of France as a haven of success and urges everyone who has not been there to make an effort of travelling there urgently. He says:

I cannot imagine another country like France. I do not see it. So it is unpardonable sin not to go there. To go there means to accept from that moment on never living without France again (BWR 56)

This description of a paradise on Earth makes the narrator seek clarification from Moki about the people who travelled to Paris and suffered immensely because of unemployment and lacked decent places to sleep. Moki dismisses the information terming it as a falsehood and alleges that such information is propagated by peasants and not Parisians. To Charles Moki, peasants are those who are not polished and have not been lucky in pursuing their wealth pursuits in Paris. He dismisses a peasant as, “one who does not know to knot a tie in a few seconds; has a very dark skin and does not cut his hair regularly”. Moki is certainly immersed in the lifestyles of Parisians and considers any other as wanting and sub- standard.

People who make it to Paris are viewed as successful because of the aura they create when they come back home. When Moki is at home, he attracts a huge gathering who seek his audience because they want to scrounge and get some monetary reward. (BWR page 34). Moki patiently listens to their financial problems and satisfies their needs by gifting them because the people believe Paris is the pinnacle of financial success. Some close relatives such as Dupont and Dupond derived power by associating with Moki which they used to hook girls. The girls were ready to drop everything to have a date within them. Moki’s manner of dressing, walking and elegance plus his skin colour make everyone admire him especially the girls:

The elegance disconcerted the young girls in the neighbourhood. They spoke of nothing but the Parisian. They flocked together at the main street to watch him go by, offering him a timid and reverent hello. They spied on him, followed his comings and goings, guessing what he did with his time.

(BWR 39)

Moki exaggerates his sense of importance by describing the huge mansion he has in Paris and the designer clothing and shoes he wears. He is said to wear Weston shoes

made of crocodile skin which cost the equivalent of a minister's salary. The food that Moki eats is not the local food which he grew up eating but bread to match the Parisian status he has now acquired. Moki creates an image of opulence by revealing that he owns an apartment in Paris with several unoccupied rooms in it. This is in fact what motivates Massala-Massala to hasten the travel to Paris because he was guaranteed of accommodation. Moki speaks in hyperbolic language about his popularity in Paris:

Everyone in Paris knows me and everyone calls me by name when I pass
by in the street; Charles Moki. Paris is in my pocket. (BWR 49)

The luxurious lifestyle that Moki lives makes Massala- Massala yearn to reach Paris. While attempting to convince Massala-Massala to make up his mind about travelling to Paris, Moki reassures him that he will get a job in France and that soon he will be owning a Mercedes Benz like that of a Member of Parliament. Convinced that he will surely succeed at Paris, Massala-Massala begins to form some mental pictures of his successful future:

I will demolish our house made of old boards and build a permanent home.
A magnificent villa. I would also buy cars. My parents would use them for
business. My mother would stop humiliating herself behind a stall at the big
market selling peanuts. I would also need a general store. This store would
be managed by father. My sister would be the cashier. (*Blue White Red* 70)

Captivated by the magical Paris, Massala -Masala seeks consent from his father to travel abroad. Although he is not convinced, the old man gives consent but warns his son about evil spirits which could ambush him at night and take away his passport or erase the annotations in his passport. The belief in the existence of evil spirits and its powers by the old man is a substance or principle of magical realism. During another visit to the village, Moki is described as having gained weight, his eyes were blue and had bleached his skin. He had the look of a bourgeoisie. To the villagers, such a physical appearance suggested success. Everyone wanted to emulate Charles Moki. This is what psyched Massala Massala so much so that he could not wait to travel to Paris. His heart,

in fact, pounded as he boarded the plane bound for Paris. Eventually, when Massala-Massala makes it to Paris, he realises that the magical city that had so obsessed him was nothing but a myth, a mirage, a pipe dream and a non-existent city. Later, Massala-Massala learns that Moki had been applying hydroquinone to his entire body and that he took periacin which made him become fat hence in good physical condition. Moki had used exaggeration, an element in magical realism to describe Paris city. He had lied and was not explicit thereby obstructing accurate decision making. At Paris, Massala-Massala is utterly shocked and disillusioned when he learns that Moki has no mansion. In fact, the room at the eighth floor cannot be accessed by lift, it is poorly lit and smells mildew. It was a deserted building about to be demolished by the Municipal authorities.

At Paris, Massala -Massala had to work like a slave to make ends meet. It was the norm to work for long hours. More often than not, they worked until 2.00 a.m. and woke up at 5.00 a.m. They all slept on the floor in an overcrowded room where gesticulating and farting were kept to the minimum. Hurt and desiring to express bitterness, Massala-Massala decides to sleep the whole day but is soon criticised by Moki and friends for being lazy. Later, Massala -Massala learns that Moki and his friend Prefet are criminals who sell forged train tickets to passengers. He learns the true colours of Moki. In an effort to survive, he is recruited into crime when he is issued with a new identity card with the name Bonaventure Marcel and he is said to have been born in Guadeloupe, a place Massala-Massala has never heard about since he was born. Now, Massala-Massala learns that Paris is 'a big boy' meaning, Paris is not easy; you have to work hard and long in order to survive. Owing to his criminal activities, he is soon caught up by the law and is jailed in Seine Saint-Denis prison. After serving the sentence, he is repatriated to Congo, penniless. Despite the fear of being a laughingstock, he considers it better to be a laughingstock at home rather than being an illegal immigrant with no

job to sustain a living. Massala-Massala is therefore a victim of harsh social and economic conditions which is a form of tyranny.

Blue White Red demonstrates Mabanckou's political ambivalence towards French immigration policies and the economic mismanagement of African Governments. Migration of postcolonial subjects en masse to Western countries can be traced to the disillusionment, poverty and oppression that was witnessed after independence in most African countries. Emigration then became supreme desire for citizens of impoverished or repressive former colonies. It is in this context of disillusionment and poverty that Congolese migration to France should be understood. The lack of opportunities in their home country force Africans to migrate to Europe in pursuit of greener pastures and because many do not have the requisite skills for formal employment, they resort to crime in order to survive. This is how Massala-Massala was arrested and imprisoned. His crime was that he stole cheque books and used them to buy transit passes and reselling them at a profit in the black market of Chateau-Rouge. Although the venture is illegal, it is encouraged by the French policy of assimilation which grants citizenship rights to the country's former colonial subjects, only to treat them harshly as illegal migrants once they arrive there. Ironically, the corrupt police perpetuate crime by aiding illegal immigrants to escape the surveillance machinery. This incriminating paradox comes out clearly when Massala-Massala discloses to Prefet that he will never go to prison again because he knows some policemen and has influence. Massala-Massala observes that the French police are not very satisfied with bribes and even betray their trusted accomplices like Prefet when it is convenient to do so. (BWR 107). The novel exposes the corrupt tendencies of the French police, who, despite their visceral xenophobic attitude, collude with African migrants in illegal activities.

In conclusion, *Blue White Red* is a critique of the psychological effects of modern urban conditions in France and post-colonial Congo. Persons end up committing crime in order to gain a coherent sense of self, but which leads to fragmentation beyond self-recognition. Mabanckou's depiction of the acrimonious and brutal realities of Paris in *Blue White Red* acts as a sensitization campaign to discourage young Africans dreaming of migrating to the West. He at the same time exposes and condemns the fraudulent activities of African immigrants in Paris and denounces the marginalization of these African immigrants by French authorities and calling for positive intervention in the lives of African immigrants in France.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the manifestation of tyranny in line with the first objective of the study. It has also presented various reasons behind the deployment of magical realism in the selected novels by Mabanckou. That magical realism of characters and objects are intended to achieve different literary ends such as to show cultural values and show reality about some phenomena. It is clear that Alain Mabanckou employs magical realism to critique complicity of African leaders in form of tyranny. The employment of magical realism in *African Psycho*, *Broken Glass*, *Black Bazaar*, *Memoires of a Porcupine* and *Blue White Red* is not accidental but deliberately employed by the author to expose ills of tyranny in postcolonial African nations. Magical realism has become quite effective in examining dictatorship that has bedevilled the African continent. Mabanckou attacks vehemently this deeply entrenched vice within Africa. With this trope, Mabanckou provides description such as how tyrants fall out of grace in the course of their political tenure where they might have assumed a larger-than-life- status.

CHAPTER THREE

SCATOLOGICAL WRITING IN MABANCKOU'S SELECTED FICTION.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the employment of scatology as a technique in Mabanckou's selected novels. This study argues that scatology is an aesthetic deployed by Mabanckou in his novels to depict moral decadence, degradation and abuse of position that oozes in every part of the country. Scatological writing applies to the description of dirt and borders on overt explanation of sexual activities and filth without the benefit of employing euphemistic language and involves the usage of obscenities. According to Obiechina (1976), scatology is adopted by the writers in order to prick the bubble of false respectability held by a vast of the African elite. Following narratological theories as espoused by Gerard (1980), this research study demonstrates that scatology is an appropriate technique that can expose false gentility, philistinism masquerading as civilization, and hedonism and voluptuousness disguised as good living. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines scatological writing as connected with human waste from the body in an unpleasant way. Scatology refers to writings or stories dealing with faeces designed to elicit either laughter or disgust. The Collins Corbulid Advanced English dictionary states: if you describe something as vulgar, you think it is in bad taste or of poor artistic quality; they refer to sex or parts of the body in a rude way that one finds unpleasant. In literature, scatology is a term to denote the literary trope of the grotesque body. It is used to describe works that make particular reference to excretion or excrement as well as toilet humour. Scatology is the treatment of obscene matters especially in literature. In light of this definition, one will find Mabanckou's novels very vulgar and lewd because very often he refers to sex or parts of the body in a rude way that one may find repugnant. The irony is that the scatology

adds to the artistic and aesthetic quality of the novels. The lewd language is deliberately crafted to serve as an electroconvulsive tool to deliberately alarm the reader and draw his or her attention to the decadence that Mabanckou reveals and denounces in his novels. In other words, it is intended to shock the reader and draw his or her attention to repulsive issues like moral decadence and abuse of power in the society so as to effect change. The vulgar language therefore serves an artistic purpose and helps in the interpretation of decadence in Congo and among the diaspora immigrants. The profusion of excrement merely reflects the overcrowding and filthy in African cities and streets and the physical rot that we encounter in the selected texts becomes a symbol of the decay of societal consciousness and values that should be urgently addressed.

In his analysis of scatological imagery in postcolonial fiction, Esty (1999), observes that the use of excremental language is an index of moral and political outrage in the newly independent African states bedevilled by greed and bureaucratic corruption. Excesses in the body as a result of overeating leads to a dis-eased state which is then transformed into a metaphor of the body of the corrupt dictator. The images of faecal and dirt are used to develop the themes of corruption and squalor. Esty stresses that in excremental writing there exists a possibility that victims are blamed for their misfortune. That is, the victims have a share of responsibility for the tragedy that happens to them. In *Broken Glass*, for example, Pampers and Broken Glass, the two main characters associated with excrement, participated in their own predicament. Pampers left his wife to rejoin prostitutes (smalls) and in revenge, the wife accused him of raping their daughter (Amelia). For this, he is jailed and later sodomised in Makala prison. Broken Glass on the other hand lands into trouble because of his alcoholism and being an irritant to the State. Therefore, had Broken Glass and Pampers retained a little more, bridled their drives for sex and alcohol, perhaps their fates would be different.

Esty (1999) further argues that the main element that has not been taken into account in the different interpretations of the excremental writing is that she carries "a secret load of self-involvement" ("Excremental Postcolonialism" 34). In other words, in practicing the excremental writing, writers recognize their own involvement in ethical failure, aesthetic and / or political in Africa, that failure cannot be attributed solely to the West. Excrement symbolism marks the boundary between inside and outside, between the self and the not-self. In this reading: 'shit is the first extension of the self and the first instancing of the other'. It makes sense in this light that shit figures complicate moral and political binaries by diffusing guilt and shame. ("Excremental Postcolonialism" 34). Recent studies on the politics of dirt, such as Newell (2018), depart from the traditional understanding of the aesthetics of dirt and unhook the political knots long attached to it and other associated terms in African contexts. They observe that the attitudes towards dirt have diverse histories in different parts of the continent. For his part, Kayode (2004) analyses scatology in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and notes that scatology is used as device to depict that every part of Ghana oozes corruption of various forms and dimensions. Kim (2023) observes that scatology should not be relegated to the realm of humour and juvenile but argues for faeces as a figure of radical equality- a literary object and a reflection of literature itself- without which literary studies is impoverished and sterile. Kim turns excrement into a force of democracy. Fecality becomes a site of a more durable emancipation by exploiting fecality's capability to enable the assimilation of the inassimilable fact of mortality.

3.1.1 Excreta as a Metaphor of Institutional and Moral Decadence

The filth that characterizes the neighbourhood Gregory lives in *African Psycho* is an expression of the failure of government economic policy of his country. Hundred-

Franc-Only- Street has a mountain of garbage at the edge of the plots while at Fat-Head-Street, the black inhabitants defecate everywhere day and night leading to contamination of every part of the urban area as evidenced by the rot and stench oozing from every corner. This defecation quite often happens in full view of idle residents because of absence of latrines. The lack of basic infrastructure such as toilets depicts utter neglect by the responsible ministry or evidence of extreme poverty among the people that is as a result of misgovernance. Evoking the pervasive filth, Mabanckou describes a reality and blames a society, particularly its leaders who have failed to manage the state machinery efficiently to allow their citizens to live in a healthy environment. Physical dirt just like its corollary is fouling minds. As Obiechina (2013) said, "you cannot produce good men out of physical squalor and dirt" (127). This hence disposes me to conceive dirt or waste as cumbersome and a symbol of the decay of conscience especially those of politicians and bureaucrats who are responsible for the operation of the state machine that was to fulfil the promise of equal development held in the aftermath of independence amid nationalist discourse. Instead of equality, people who expected an improvement in their living conditions have seen an increase in inequality. Scatology and untidiness therefore become a means for Mabanckou to tell the disillusionment that followed independence. Shit has a political vocation, draws focus to the failures of government to spur development, to the un-kept promises not only during colonial times but also in modern times when African nations have achieved self- rule. The filth and waste that is found all over is a symbol of endemic corruption perpetuated by those in power.

In *African Psycho* (2003) Gregoire Nakobomayo, the protagonist with a decayed childhood as a picked-up child swears to commit murder but is, however, unable to execute this intrinsic burning desire. He badly wants to resemble Angoulima, a mythical

serial killer from the Congo (DRC). In the novel, there is a lot of emphasis on orifices and protuberances. Mabanckou openly describes nocturnal activities such as forcing a blow - job on an unconscious girl, macabre methods of arousing a penile-shaft suffering a breakdown, calling prostitution 'a paid for ejaculation' and vividly describing skeletal dogs fornicating. All these emphases ought to be understood in relation to two factors. Mbembe (ibid) notes that the first derives from the commandment in the postcolony having a marked taste for lecherous living. Festivities and celebrations are two key vehicles for indulging this taste, but the idiom of its organization and its symbolism focus above all on the mouth, the belly and the phallus. Every reference to these three parts is consequently a discourse on the world and on death, a means of auto-interpretation and the forces that may shape it. In *African Psycho*, the narrative voice is compelling, Gregoire bounces back and forth between feelings of inadequacy and narcissism, impotence and power and a very misplaced sense of purpose.

Mabanckou has a penchant for describing sexual intercourses using graphic language which would be considered obscene in the family situation or when an audience is made up of people from different age groups. One of Germaine's clients suffers from erectile dysfunction. The author calls this situation 'a breakdown that can only be corrected by using saliva to arouse 'or by "watching skeletal dogs fornicate." (*African Psycho* 43). The erectile dysfunction of the client is a metaphor for the dysfunctional political leadership in most postcolonial African nations. The political system has always never worked correctly or properly in African nations so that citizens are always lamenting about the ineptitude of those in power. Political leaders have literally failed to rise to the occasion and meet the citizens' demands. For the element of using saliva to correct the persistent erectile dysfunction, it emerges that the governance in most African nations is rather dysfunctional and political leaders are busy devising improvised

political methods to deal with the non-functional situation. Ironically, the methods are not sustainable for they only fix the problem temporarily and the dysfunction is certain to recur. He terms prostitution as 'paid for ejaculations' (*African Psycho* 47). This can be inferred to mean that residents have to pay for every service provided for by the government even those that are supposed to be provided free-of -charge such as issuance of birth certificates, burial permits and identity cards. It intimates that corruption pervades in every government department. Angoulima is fond of raping women and at one point sedated a family, raped the wife and burnt her cunt with cigar. The raping here implies that leaders force citizens to enjoy their leadership. The political leaders force the residents with ideas or programmes without elaborate consultation. Such programmes could be health insurance scheme or housing projects that in the end benefit only a select few individuals. The raping could also mean the wanton plundering of resources by those in political power and continual destruction of functional institutions and thereafter go to the extreme of brutalising core organs of the government by using excessive force. During sexual intercourse, the railway worker forces a girl to bark like a bulldog. Ordinarily, human beings are not equipped with the vocal cords to bark. This forceful act to bark can be interpreted to mean demanding the near impossible from the people by those in power. Gregoire Nakobomayo, who suffers from mental disorder experiences masturbation at the thought of Fernandez's girlfriend who is often forced to give a blow job. Another prostitute is said to have had sex with a man endowed with big penile shaft that left the strategic spot gaping for months because the natural fibres were wrecked. The unfortunate and precarious situation the prostitute finds herself in is equated to when political leaders forcefully penetrate the socio-economic and political space of citizens that leaves the citizens in economic quagmire. The resultant economic ruin is like being shafted with a big penile shaft. In

a typical case of voyeurism, Gregoire inspects Germaine's handbag and finds high heeled shoes, wigs, Vaseline lubricants, artificial nails, dildoes and other tools that prostitutes find necessary in their trade. The fact that Gregoire peeks at Germaine's handbag suggests that the peoples' privacy is rudely infiltrated. The people are watched fulltime by the State so that they cannot hide anything from the government. Gregory is perceptibly ugly or facially very unattractive which might explain some of his problems. He says, "I love vulgarity. I claim it loud and clear. I love it because it says what we are without the hideous masks we wear by nature...quality I couldn't care less about". Mabanckou has a particular fondness for scatological images that meshes well with his chosen message. Through the conscious piling up of scatological imagery, we are repelled from the system that exudes such decay. Therefore, Mabanckou uses scatological devices to bring to light ills in the society such as poverty, prostitution, xenophobia, inequality and also reveals his dissatisfaction against his people.

3.1.2 Injustice and Inequality as Symbols of Political Tyranny

Nikola Kovač defines the novel as "exposure of the workings of politics, beyond the pragmatism and the partiality of a party". He sees every novel to be having underlying political elements, but it is the policy more than politics that interests the author more. The policy is the "social scene where conflicting interests confront each other" while politics concerns "the struggle for the conquest of power" (The political novel 23). The political novel reflects "the distress imposed on the individual and explores the drama of this situation" (The novel policy 56). It is equipped with this definition that we say *Broken Glass* is the most political novel Mabanckou has ever written to date. And if like Kovač said, the starting point of the political novel is "the individual struggling with abuse of (a) system" (The political novel 48), in *Broken Glass* we are in the

presence of individual victims of dictatorial ideologies who are struggling to overcome the abuses of the system.

Broken Glass takes place in real Congolese space. Though the novel is a work of fiction, the reader can easily identify several specific signs of Congolese lifestyle, some of which have a direct link to the author's life. Mabanckou, just like the novel's protagonist has his roots in Louboulou. He also lived in Pointe-Noire where he operates "Credit Travel" a well-known Congolese bar. The red wine Sovinco, (Wines Society of Congo), which engages all customers of this bar is also clued to recognize the Congolese identity of the author in the narrative. Humour in the text is used in the most tragic and vulgar circumstances. Situations of vulgarity are noted when people cheer a pissing contest between bar patrons and when an incestuous couple performs a macabre sex position in public. *Broken Glass* endures ribald tales by unsavoury regulars such as Pampers who lands in jail only to be sexually abused by the inmates. Printer narrates how he married a white woman who moved to a Paris suburb so as to be away from Negroes and then later discovers his wife was sleeping with his visiting son.

Broken Glass is the result of the testimony of the eponymous character in the novel that chronicles his tragic history and that of his drinking buddies in Credit Gone West bar. In the early chapters of his "book", Broken Glass tells how Stubborn Snail, owner of the "Credit Gone West" could keep his bar open despite the harassment of "church people", the guardians of traditional morality "(13-14). The attempt to demolish Stubborn Snail's bar by those who consider themselves puritans is aimed at motivating the readers never to give up in their pursuits even when there are many obstacles along the way. Stubborn Snail was always determined and was never discouraged when others thought his idea of setting up a bar was far-fetched and impossible to implement:

He needed cash, the Stubborn snail was determined, he emptied his piggy bank, borrowed money wherever he could but everyone laughed at him when he talked about his plan...the Stubborn Snail resisted, he hid in his own snail spit, like a true gastropod and it all blew over, the hurricanes, the tornadoes and the cyclones all subsided,.. Stubborn Snail did not break

(*Broken Glass* pg. 20)

Eventually his business, Credit Gone West, thrives. The bar is aptly named so because it suggests that whatever an African does well, the success (credit) is linked to the West. The story is therefore connected to the story of African countries. Stubborn Snail may be interpreted as an epitome of African countries that initiate development programmes with the intent of overcoming poverty but are discouraged by the West through Multinational Financial institutions who view economic plans as unfeasible, unsustainable and untenable.

Broken Glass, the novel's protagonist has been asked by the bar's proprietor to record ribald tales by unsavoury regulars for posterity. This former teacher's thirst for bottled solace is matched by several distressed and disgraced patrons of the bar. Each person wants to make sure his story is written that will reflect their exciting and dynamic lives. Broken Glass drowns his sorrows in red wine and riffs on the great books of Africa and the West. *Broken Glass* is a mocking satire of artistic integrity.

After the story of the Stubborn Snail, he relates that of the "guy in Pampers". This "guy" is wearing pampers diapers because one day he returned from one of his trips among prostitutes and found that his wife had changed the lock on the door. He called the police, but the lawyers soon discover that his wife had accused him of paedophilia against his own daughter, Amelie. Outraged, they handcuffed him and led him to the police station and then to Makala, "the place most feared by the thugs of the City" (49). After staying there for two and a half years and having suffered all kinds of torture, especially that of "crossing the middle", penetration through the anus, he told Broken

Glass, "these people have screwed up in Makala I swear, I can show you my backside even two hands gathered can enter without problem, I do not lie to you, I did not have right to trial in this country of shit "(50). The police and the judicial system hurriedly gaoled Pampers before they heard his side of the story. When the man got up to go, Broken Glass has this comment: I then saw behind his bulging meadows by the four thick layers of Pampers that were superimposed, one behind wet, there were flies buzzing around, and saw fit to tell me 'do not worry flies, it's always like that, Broken Glass, flies became my most faithful friends, I do not even cast out because they eventually find me wherever I am. '(50-51). From the description of the difficult challenges faced by the guy in pampers while at Makala prison, it is clear that innocent persons at times become victims of circumstances they have got no idea about. The guy in Pampers is a victim of tyranny expressed through injudicious system which orders his incarceration without verifying whether he actually defiled his daughter or not. Pampers had been falsely accused by his wife and the Courts act on rumours instead of relying on sufficient evidence so as to prove his guilt beyond any reasonable doubt. The loss of bodily control means Pampers cannot control his destiny. He is powerless before the flies that stigmatizes him as a social waste and has to beg for food. The scatology employed in narrating the tribulations of Pampers in jail expose subtly and in detail the abuse of power by the political class. Mabanckou wants to expose the scandal of injustice that prevails at all levels of the judicial system in many African countries.

There is clearly no justice in this unnamed fantasy land but that seems to be somewhere in Africa, because of the reference in local languages like Lingala and Bembé. Even if the Judge was biased, the man had the right to a fair trial. But as soon as the accusation of paedophilia was worded, " police officer of feminine nationality" who had "fisherman muscles and hair cut short like a police man" (48) began to bully 'the guy

in pampers' verbally before informing him that he did not deserve a fair trial and that he would be "making a great honour", in the process of executing the law. The manner in which Pampers is prosecuted is evident that the law is not honoured and that the trial process is made unnecessarily complicated leading to injustice. What is coming out clearly is that in this system one is guilty until proven innocent. The guy in Pampers lands in jail despite not committing the offence he is accused of. He is a victim of a trap set by his wife, but the judicial system fails to listen to his side of the story and quickly incarcerate him when they hear without proving the accusations made against him. The guy in pampers had illicit sexual affairs with other women and this made his wife to falsely accuse him of sexually abusing their daughter. The false accusation arising out of envy and desire to punish her cheating husband eventually landed Pampers in Makala prison. This, therefore, shows that the wheels of justice do not work normally in the country because sufficient and watertight evidence is not provided in the courts.

The story of Mouyeke exposes the subjective trial in the court process. Mouyeké is a charlatan-scammer who has been swindling his clients for he claims that he can make fetishes for them such that their businesses can improve hence their lives. When he is discovered to be a swindler, he is sentenced to a six-month incarceration because what he has been telling his customers is a lie. The judge sentences him to six months imprisonment with no chance of parole and a fine of four million Congolese francs plus a five-year deprivation of civil rights. He is found to be a crook, a conman who swindled honest folk with phony charms before being caught and now spends his time in the bar. The day of his trial he tries to convince the judge that he can make him rich and enable him to know the truth in. Despite his proposal, the judge replied: Sir, I do not need your services and moreover I will demonstrate to you now because I, the crooks of your brood, I send to the hole to discuss ancient philosophy with the rats, I do not even ask

to deliberate on your case, I am personally responsible because the law is me. (104). When he eventually comes out of prison, he is completely wasted, a destitute in rags. Broken Glass satirises him that he would have asked his fetishes to make a new suit for him to appear smart.

Evidently, Mouyeke is guilty of an offence but glaringly, the due process of law is not followed in determining the verdict. The judge takes the law unto his hands confirming what the lawyer informed Mouyeke that impartiality is the least of his worries. His role is not to administer the law but punishing a person he deems guilty. Taking his subjectivity as a guide, the judge ignores any judicial procedure and demonstrates utter arrogance. In a word, neither the police who arrested the guy in Pampers and Mouyeke nor the judge have found it useful to follow the rules of justice that an accused has the right to be heard before being sentenced. We will say that through these two examples, Mabanckou wanted to expose the scandal of injustice that prevails at all levels in the judicial system in many African countries. The text is a tale about corrupt and inept government systems. The little stories that portray failed lives are an allusion to the failure by the government.

It also seems that through the description of police who threw himself first on the guy in Pampers as "female police nationality", Mabanckou blames feminism which is about the struggle for equality between men and women. However, by not subjecting the man in Pampers to a fair trial, feminism ceases to be liberating but becomes an alienation factor. She is quick to punish the husband as fast and as hard as possible without following the due process that could prove his innocence. Therefore, the police have hijacked feminism from its original purpose: instead of equality and justice, it leads to injustice. The aggressiveness of the women and men of law and lack of respect for the law produced only the excremental "crap" that defines and describes the country and

dripping behind the type of the Pampers. He has even lost control of his body as he seems to lose control of his destiny. He is powerless before the flies that stigmatizes him as a social waste and has to beg for food. Makala people and police that led to it, the legal system of his country has not only damaged her past but also its future. Described at the beginning of the story as "a father" (36), Broken Glass refers to him towards the end as "a rag oozing buttocks" (105). He also predicts that the guy in Pampers will end up "flipping out" and kill someone. What makes him write this reflection: "I do not know how people make to kill, life is an essential thing, my mother had often repeated to me, and even though she's been dead, I will be far from this line of conduct ' (51). This sentence full of tragic irony when you think of the wasted life without anyone protesting and when we remember that his mother repeated to him that sentence before drowning in the waters of a river in a mysterious way; probably victim, too, of the wrath of the one who had killed his father with his black magic. Contrary to what he says in this sentence, Broken Glass will not follow the words of his mother to the end, he will end his days diving also in the waters of the river Tchinouka that swallowed his mother. Broken Glass was abandoned by his Jazz- loving father when he was young only to be orphaned when his mother drowned in the nearby Tchinouka River. In fact, the river rather than the bar exerts an increasing pull on Broken Glass as his writing project slowly draws to a close. More and more of his solipsistic ramblings are centred around an urge to abandon his unruly text and reunite with his mother beneath Tchinouka. So, more than any other element in the novel, the sentence testifies to the tragic fate of the Broken Glass. He could not escape the fate of his parents. The drama that brought him into the bar seems to be the same one which led to his misfortune despite the diversity of situations. His characteristic, however, is that he had

the talent to write and tell the lives of the sodden bar patrons either as individuals or what they shared in common.

All that is known of the character at the beginning of the novel is that he is called by the operator of the "Credit Traveled" to preserve the memory of the bar in a notebook. The first part of the novel is devoted to the history of different customers that frequent the bar. The last part tells the story of Broken Glass. He explains his decision to tell is to illuminate "the inquisitive reader" that is sure to say, "it's good to talk about others ... but what happened to you, Broken Glass, tell me about you tell me everything, not turning around, confess thyself "(127). His revelations will be closer to a charge of a confession but wants the reader to be informed of the reason he "fell so low without a parachute" (127). Falling without a parachute implies that he fell with a thud and did not have a soft landing. It is tantamount to falling from grace to grass.

3.1.3 Demystification of Postcolonial Subjects and Realities

Broken Glass is a man of 64 years old when he wrote his book. He presents himself as a "fossil" that frequents the bar to drink, have a long story and engage in pastime chats with other disillusioned bar patrons. Broken Glass is married to Angelica whom he renamed Diabolique (satanic) because of her incessant rants against his alcoholism and thinks he started drinking after the death of his mother. But Broken Glass claims that his wife is mistaken, he had stopped drinking during the period of mourning out of respect for his mother and had resumed his "full activity" when he was sure that the body of his mother "had rotted and her soul had finally arrived at the Garden of Eden "(149). His fate swung in reality the day he was removed from teaching. It was during that year that he became "one of the most loyal customers of Crédit Traveled" (156). This suggests that he frequented the bar and most likely spent several hours boozing with friends and other regular bar patrons. Broken Glass was officially disbarred

because of his alcoholism, but he maintains that alcohol was a "mobile" (155). If he was expelled from the school, it was because he was a good teacher who had trained himself despite what the trainer who accused him of not being gifted and evil towards France (154). According to the testimony of his wife, he was an exemplary teacher and a little too revolutionary. One of the reasons that made the authorities dismiss Broken Glass from the teaching service at Trois - Martyrs primary school was asking his students to ignore the grammatical rules in the French language. He confesses as follows:

“I would tell the students what mattered in the French language was not the rules but the exception of the rules, I would tell them if they could understand and memorize all the exceptions in this language, which was changeable as the weather, the rules would automatically become apparent, they would be obvious from first principles...and when they were grown up, they would see the French language is not a long quiet river but a river to be diverted” (*Broken Glass* pp 122)

Broken Glass is viewed as a radical who undermines the French language by engaging in unauthorised revision, mispronunciation and subversion of grammatical rules and is transferred to a remote place. Another reason that earned him the forceful and punitive transfer is that he called his country by the original name and not the name given by the colonisers. “.. the borders inherited when Whites shared their colonial cake in Berlin, so the country does not even exist. This is a Reserve with cattle dying of famine ”(143). ‘Reserve’ in historical context, are areas where natives were pushed to so as to create space for European Settlers to occupy and engage in highly profitable commercial ventures such as farming in large scale. By using the traditional name and refusing to regard the modern state as a country, makes Broken Glass’ action as a form of resistance and he criticizes the lack of vision of its leaders who delight in the colonial legacy they

do not seek to revise. Such reading of the situation in his country could obviously get him into trouble. Broken Glass was removed from his post because he also hampered the campaign against alcoholism thus making others "to lose the next appointments" (141). Then the governor asked that he be transferred to the bush, but Broken Glass refused to leave. 'Bush' here refers to far flung rural areas that lack infrastructure such as electricity. He was therefore dismissed on the grounds that alcohol prevented him from doing his job. Credit Travelled has since become the first outbreak of Broken Glass. Simple drinker, he turned into a drunkard who urinates and defecates in his clothing (129). The harassment and mistreatment of Broken Glass is an illustration of the extent tyranny is meted on the subjects at every level. The vocal teacher is forcefully transferred to distant and least developed parts of the country because of expressing radical views which cause discomfort to the authoritarians in power.

Comic situations in the novel are presented in the most tragic and vulgar circumstances. Vulgarity is evidenced by the open pissing contest between patrons: Casmir and Robinette. Broken Glass writes: 'I no longer left Credit Travelled, I was awake, should there be rain or sun shine, I did not leave that place of adoption, I did not imagine somewhere else out there and then at midnight, I was napping on the stool after eating kebabs an old woman who came from Benin sold at the entrance of the bar before the kingdom of our Bald Soprano, Mama Mfoa, that was the good life, it is especially necessary that I legibly write here I am proud of these old times, let no one say I was broke, I was bored, that I regretted the departure of Evil, I covered sourness' (157). Just before this recall, however, Broken Glass evokes memories of difficult times: I always hung out under my tree. I was relaxing by telling him my wondering story and the tree was crying listening to me, because, whatever anyone says, the trees also shed tears, and I happened to insult *Diabolique* (satanic) before this tree and in these difficult times

this tree alone understood me, then moved her arms in sign of acquiescence and told me in a whisper that I was a poor nice guy, it was the society that did not understand me, then, between this tree and I stood long as like a Negro in his admiration to whom he brings coffee water, I promised my reincarnated leafy tree when God would call me (156- 157)

According to this memory, it would be fair to say that during his lifetime, drunkard Broken Glass was well known for what he calls "the good life" and "difficult times". In this narrative, however, the days of the good life seem far away. Indeed, Broken Glass began to write his own story a few days after telling the story of the guy with Pampers and other bar patrons. To begin his story, he evokes the sad feeling that animates and wonders if he is not writing a will. Then he talks about his dream, the dream that "allows us to cling to this villainous life" (96). A few pages later, he relates his previous day and how he had approached a mango tree to attend natural needs when a local resident accosted him and asked him to pick up his droppings. So Broken Glass dipped his hands into his faeces. Even when he later travelled to Credit Gone West, he still stank of shit and flies followed him. What inspires him this comment, "there has never been a feeling of disgust when picking up his own shit, the shit of others unbearable to us, so I dipped my hands in my faeces, the guy who lives next to the river vomited because he could not bear this scatological scene, I laughed without stopping "(112-113). The fact that Broken Glass was spotted by a local resident when he wanted to defecate implies that the government or its agents are always watching. This means that the people's right to privacy is compromised or is non-existent.

As with the guy in Pampers, Mabanckou uses faeces as a ground to speak of the disintegration of individuals. The combination of excrements, symbol of the residue in some of his characters suggest that they have undergone a transformation in the heart

of which is the tyranny of arbitrary. What degeneration can indeed be greater for a father than to be forced to permanently wear diapers like a baby. Even with the pampers, flies are always oozing around him such that Broken Glass describes him as “a rag oozing buttocks”. The loss of bodily control suggests that Pampers can neither control his life nor destiny. Similarly, it is only in a deregulated world that a man of sixty-four is admonished by a young person, especially in Africa where the elderly are regarded as the embodiment of wisdom. Thus, the extravagant behaviour of a character like Broken Glass or the guy in Pampers reflects the disorder of a society where law enforcement officers, justice and the entire administrative machinery as well as those who are in charge of moral conduct in society, never consider the public interests and do not bother with questions of ethics or professional conduct.

Taken into anarchy and tyranny of such a system, the weak that do not have the stamina, or the tenacity of Stubborn Snail dislocate and break in disarming anonymity of widespread madness without hope of being rehabilitated. Broken Glass discusses the importance of plural nouns to one of his students so as to understand that "life is a trivial singular plural history and who fight every day, who love, who hate each other but are condemned to live together "(144). In this on-going struggle between the singular and the plural, its name evokes a crack and tear of being defeated. Mabanckou is a master in the art of creating names and phrases that give nicknames. The apportioning of names is a whole program in his works. If already the name “Stubborn” reflects the strength of character and the degree of persistence of the character, then "Broken Glass" rather indicates fragility. When his family takes the view of the charlatan Zero Fault who was cured of his alcoholism, he rebels and tries to resist their pressure but in vain. Exasperated, he asked: "Did we ever see a broken glass being repaired?" (134). Only with the prospect that he will soon join her mother in the afterlife he hopes a recovery:

in a moment I'll finally be alone with my mother, it was in less than two hours now we talk for a long time and, at midnight, I'll dive into the depths of these narrow waters, just me cross the bridge, it will immediately be an adventure, I'll be happy because I will come to my mother, and the next day there will be no more of Broken Glass at Credit travelled, and for the first time, a broken glass has been repaired by the good God, and then, from the other world, a smile, I could finally whisper 'mission completed'. (200). It is clear from the utterances of Broken Glass that he yearns to die and join his mother. It appears he is disillusioned by the encumbrances of everyday's life, and he is unable to cope up with the prevailing situation. The challenges of life are as a result of punitive measures meted on him because he rebelled against those in higher authority who were tyrannical. He is forcefully transferred to teach at a school in remote parts without amenities because of insisting the country be called by its original name. Obviously, Broken Glass has made no grave mistake to warrant such punitive measures, but the action serves to show the terror executed by those who abuse authority.

3.1.4 Abjection and Politics of the Marginal Body

Broken Glass and the guy in Pampers live in solitude; as marginalized beings that have only their fellow unfortunates and flies as companions in a description of the villain country and "shitty country". Gathered in the bar of the Stubborn Snail, regulars of Credit Travelled find entertaining ways to measure their condition such as the organization of peeing competitions. In a scene which occupies nearly a dozen pages, Broken Glass refers the pissing contest held between Robinette and Casimir-High-Life. Robinette is a regular Credit Travelled and "the queen of piss" (78). She drinks "like the barrels of Adelaide" without being drunk and prefers to urinate behind the bar to the bathroom. "And when she pees," says Broken Glass, "it puts at least ten minutes to

urinate all the time, it flows and still flowing as if someone had opened a public fountain (...) all the guys who have tried to compete with her were defeated, crushed, ridiculed "(78-79). Casimir arrives at "Credit travelled" for the first time on the contest day. He is described as a charming, dressed as a solicitor with relaxed hair that was closer a little more to that of the white race. He was a pretentious drunkard leading the high life (81). Robinette defies Casimir to be able to urinate for long. She promises to sleep with him, at any time, any place at no cost if he wins the bet. This was concluded as the terms of the duel. The adjustment of her clothes reveals in passing that Robinette is 'well-endowed by Mother Nature', meaning she is bootylicious and has wide and curvy hips while Casimir has "an elementary particle" (87). His small penis makes the audience laugh convinced beforehand that Robinette would win the fight, but the burps and farts set in. The exaggerated description of Robinette's pissing provides humour especially the way she prepares herself for the pissing competition with Casimir. Hyperbole is a literary technique that has been employed in this text not only to achieve comic relief but also to symbolise the state generating abject subjects who also in return tell more about the tyrannical system.

"Robinette took off her bodice wrap, then she lifted her skirt wrap to just below the waist so that we could see her great behind...her huge plump thighs like those of a woman in naive Haitian painting, her calves like bottles of primus beer.... she wore no panties because perhaps no panties exist large enough to contain her mountainous check...then she parted the twin towers of her buttocks we saw her sex and all applauded and curiously all other witnesses at once got huge erections" (*Broken Glass* 60). Robinette and Casmir had pissing contest but it is enough to say that the bar patrons laughing in public or in their sleeves in the marques of privacy are not necessarily

deriding the state's willingness to ignore their plight; it is simply trying to attest, sometimes without realizing it.

The description of Robinette provides a powerful visual imagery to the readers who see a determined woman, physically huge and sexually appealing. Through the description of the urine competition, Mabanckou portrays a society whose moral fibre is completely eroded and moral decadence is pervasive and consuming. The pissing contest suggests that postcolonial nations are busy engaging in vulgar contests or those in power competing on who corrupts more. The writer uses the obscene words to offend the readers sense of decay thereby drawing his attention to the very things he satirically and strongly condemns in society. Robinette and ilk have been forced by the vicissitudes of life to expose her nudity without a feeling of guilt or embarrassment. Life's upheavals and other challenges have made her lose taste for humanity. Circumstances have degraded her being to the extent that she feels nothing when a crowd watch her as she does an unusual act like pissing in full glare of the public in the name of competition. This degradation is compounded by her offer to Casimir to have casual sex with her at no fee, anywhere, anytime if he defeats her in the pissing contest. Casimir is a newcomer who reveals the most talented and most enduring pissing. "In his urinary zigzags" writes Broken Glass, "Casimir leading the high life with talent had drawn the map of France, his orthodox urine falling in the heart of the city of Paris" and he boasted that he could also "draw the map of China and piss in a specific street in the city of Beijing" (87). The vivid description of Robinette's pissing contest with Casimir may appear disgusting and even embarrassing but the action indicates that when people are forced by circumstances to live in this degradation, nothing seems to be left of their humanity. It could also mean that the postcolonial nations are busy engaging in vulgar contests or those in power competing on who corrupts more, that is, they are engaged in a thieving

contest. In some slums in African cities, cases of dwellers watching live pornography and actually cheering the actors in the arena have been reported. The events in slums can be compared to the pissing contest where spectators laud Robinette's physique to the extent of having an erection. If we compare this scene with the description of Pampers' diapers, faeces of all evocations (a street is called the Street of Cacas (faeces), vomit and dirt in the novel, we realize that the scatological is a literary device which Mabanckou uses in *Broken Glass* as he had done in *African Psycho*. Amid want, deprivation and injustice come survival relative to the dissonant social incongruities which themselves accentuate the marginal life of the people and the troubled lives of the characters in the text. Also reinforcing these social anomalies in the narrative consistent with the scatological significance above is the motif of faeces, filth and the repulsive and the obscene which are the strings that hold up the story of the abject conditions. Mabanckou's language is vulgar, lewd, provoking, and shocking for a purpose. The use of what would ordinarily be offensive language in Mabanckou's novels is meant to shock the reader out of the deceptive slumber of normalcy. The vulgar language is an overwhelming indignation towards the repugnant behaviours of the people in the society he wrote about. Mabanckou's use of obscene language in his novels is aimed at revolutionarily transforming a society that is so decadent. He uses the bawdy language to supplement content particularly to criticise moral decadence and abuse of power. Through the use of vulgar language, seen to be a scatological device, Mabanckou has been able to map out the ills prevalent in the society and capture ugliness in the society.

3.1.5 The Grotesque Body as Allegory of Politics

In terms of "fraternal oppression," we have already had a glimpse through the malfunction of the judicial system and authoritarian behaviour of state officials (the

public administrator and the Minister who returned Broken Glass and the police who brutalized the guy in Pampers). However, it is especially at the earlier part of the novel that Mabanckou attacks the grotesque and destructive absurdity of the rulers. Right from the beginning of *Broken Glass*, Mabanckou takes the opportunity of the opening events of the bar (Stubborn Snail) to dismantle the mechanisms by which the rulers seized power and engaged exclusively for their own benefit.

In his book *On the Postcolony* (2001), specifically the chapter titled "Aesthetics of vulgarity," Mbembe discusses "the banality of power in postcolony" (140). By banality, he says, it is especially necessary to hear "this element of obscenity, vulgarity and grotesque as Mikhail Bakhtin seems to find only in the unofficial cultures, but which in reality is constitutive of both all regime of domination and its deconstruction of any term or its ratification" (140). Mbembe indeed performs a review of Bakhtinian's modification of carnival concept by applying it to the way of working of African States. Bakhtin (1984) examines the interaction between the social and the literary, as well as the meaning of the body. He argues that in the grotesque body, emphasis is placed on the open, the penetrative and the lower stratum. The open (vagina, anus, mouth) and the penetrative (penis) allow exchange between the body and the world (through sex and eating) but also to produce degrading material (urine, faeces etcetera). The lower stratum (belly) is the place where renewal happens, where new life is forged, thus connecting degradation and renewal. The grotesque body is one of unashamed, excess, anathema to authority and pious austerity. Bakhtin's views are fundamental in this study which focuses on scatology in Mabanckou's novels as it allows perception of vulgarity and leads to a nuanced understanding of the issues addressed in the novels. At home, the carnival is not only localized in the lower class but is directed to the same principle of operation of the all-powerful state machinery. In other words, the African state is

obscene, grotesque and vulgar. It seems that in *Broken Glass*, Mabanckou is in the same perspective of analysis as Mbembe and illustrates what it literally says in its subtly theoretical language.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader falls on the grotesque. The various groups that oppose opening the bar by Stubborn Snail and their arguments are listed. Those arguments overlap with each other, forming a jumble of exaggerated complaints to the limit of the unbelievable. The reader is tempted to smile at the scale that makes this decision a priori so ordinary and simple, opening a bar. But obviously nothing is insignificant to the government of this country that will create the case of The Credit Travelled. This banal story for some became a national fact that the government has discussed. The Council of Ministers and some leaders of the country have called for the immediate and unconditional closure of the establishment, but others opposed it with arguments hardly more convincing. Suddenly the country was divided into two for this little quarrel lizards (16). So, "the Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Small and Medium Enterprises" made a speech that remained "as one of the best political speeches of all time" simply because on several occasions he said, "I accuse "(16). "I accuse, I do not want to be an accomplice of a climate as moribund as ours, I do not condone this manhunt by my membership in the government I accuse the insipidity retrograde actions (...)." The 'I accuse Speech' was given by the Minister for Agriculture in defense of the Credit Gone West in the town of Trois -Cents. The bar has lured wives from their husbands and congregation from the churches. It is clear that all the controversy around the "Credit Travelled" is a caricature of the "Dreyfus Affair" and the juxtaposition of the two "Business Premises" amplifies the grotesque and the coarseness of The Credit Travelled. Furthermore, if the Minister's speech, which is a

full of cynicism, is one of the finest speeches of all time, one can get an idea of the scandal of the other speeches that history has not accepted!

However, Mabanckou does not stop there. In a very good way, the comedy continues when the President Adrien Lokouta Eleki Mingi joins the trance and becomes jealous of the formula of his Minister of Agriculture who, according to the head of government has the potential to remain "in seed" (16). To counteract the rise in popularity of the formula of the Minister, the Head of State instructs his staff to find him a more powerful formula. The President gets intensely jealous of the Minister's quote and orders the Cabinet to think of an equally memorable quote. The Cabinet think of phrase by Vladimir Lenin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Martin Luther, Blaise Pascal and Paul Biya. After endless cogitations and vigils, a counsellor will find the competitive formula. It is Sunday best and at noon, when the people take lunch, the President goes on television and radio to proclaim his formula. As an introduction, he attacks the European countries that still practice their domination of African countries despite independence, then he attacks capitalism and intellectual employees, promises the revolution, welcomed for its stubborn snail initiative and finally the "open arms as if he hugged a redwood, he repeated 'I understand you' which was originally used by Charles de Gaulle. The Minister for Agriculture would be made Minister for Culture by crossing out the first four letters. (28). Broken Glass informs the reader that the President got what he wanted, his formula is as famous as that of his Minister and this mainly because "here, a joke, we of the common people often say that 'the Minister accuses the President and he understands it'" (Broken *Glass* 28). By delving into the dictator's quoting long passages in his fight against western imperialism, Mabanckou shows that Marxism was trans-cultured into social realism by the first generation of African leaders and writers for nationalist and decolonisation purposes. At the same time, Mabanckou exposes the

tendency of African leaders to use Marxist slogans as convenient cover ups for dictatorship and corruption, thereby reinforcing western imperialism in its current phase of neo-colonialism and general global capitalism.

This story is a representation of high buffoonery and cynicism that can describe some African leaders. They reduce statecraft to the art of magic formula. However, if we are to believe the analysis of Mbembe which draws his examples of lived reality, the exaggeration which Mabanckou uses to make its fabulous characters is the same technique that is used by leaders in Africa to invent fables to make them remain in power. He explains: the work of power is also to go into a trance in order to produce fables. Now it is no fable without a particular organization of vocabulary, verbal agreements marked the corner of extravagance and vanity, figures of excess whose function is to dress up the silliness of a mask of nobility and majesty. In short, there is no postcolony in fable without the imaginary capture devices, a Gulliverianna vision acts of command, that is to say, a way to magnify what is small, disfiguring things familiar and seemingly most trivial gestures: a stylistic excess and disproportion (163). The wonder or "capture the imagination" plays an important role in the functioning of government because it is a way to lull the people to distract them and to prevent them from asking the right questions. The people are monopolized already with nicely packaged trivialities mystifying the political leaders and those in power.

In *Broken Glass*, the exposure of this policy fables frames the stories of the first part. After the Minister's performance and his President, Mabanckou uses that of Casimir the alien at "Crédit Travelled" who beat "the queen of the piss" in drawing a map of France with his urine. A contest of piss is what is most futile and Mabanckou devotes nearly ten pages, as already noted. The name "Casimir" evokes the money and luxury. So, one could argue that by his name, his clothing, his arrogance and his alien status in the mid

of drunkards, Casimir embodies the class of leaders. This means that during the pee competition we witness the wonder of the people, represented here by the drunkards of "Credit Travelled," and the representative face of power is Casimir. Small in stature and described as having "an insignificant thing," "his paltry member" takes extraordinary dimensions thanks to the mastery of the art "to magnify what is small." After five minutes in the game, "his elementary particle had doubled or even tripled in size to the point that we rubbed our eyes in disbelief," writes Broken Glass (86). He continued that "Casimir leading the high life operated a turning point, a miracle that deserved a papal beatification, we all rushed to see it very closely, should never miss the miracles" (86). His magic performed, the audience "enthralled by the miracle" applaud and give him the nickname Casimir, the geographer. Exhilarated by the attention he receives, the enchanting promises to exhaust Robinette "and applauded more and more as the map of France was expanding all its regions" until "a witness misled by the art Casimir made asked the stuff that was next; "This is Corsica, fool," said the artist without stopping to pee, and "we applauded for Corsica, and some even had discovered for the first time the name Corsica " (88). The show ends with the resignation of Robinette and the choice of a place of appointments where the winner may enjoy his prize. So theatrically, Casimir dazzles the audience and entertains, in both senses of the word. Casimir-High-Life who in this context represents those in power is desecrated and the sacredness of power is undressed using the debased language of scatology.

The scene of the novel reminds what Mbembe designates as "promiscuous report" (*On the Postcolony* 142) between the post-colonial power and its subjects. If according to Bakhtin, the obscene and the grotesque are the result of that the dominated use as their way of undermining the official power in mimicking and ridiculing, Mbembe sees no

special note of the resistance in the performance of the vulgarity in postcolony. The dominant as the dominated are able to play the card of obscenity. Moreover, postcolonial relationship is not only a report stresses, "but also colluded par excellence" (*On the Postcolony* 174). Postcolonial relationship indicates Mbembe is a ratio of promiscuity, that is to say, "a friendly tension between command and targets" (142). This is because there is familiarity and sharing domesticity that is not necessarily resistance or antagonism between the two parties but rather "mutual zombification" between the dominant and those they are supposed to dominate. It is what leads them to each other and to be unforced hang in collusion, that is to say, in the powerlessness "(142). The regulars of the bar laughed at Casimir at the beginning but at the end they had nothing but admiration for him. Robinette and Casimir had pee contest, but it is enough to say that the people laughing in public or in their sleeves in the marquis of privacy are not necessarily trying to belittle the power to turn into derision or resist against the state willingness to ignore or blur its origins. It is simply trying to attest, sometimes without realizing it.

It is clear that the population mocks its rulers when Broken Glass says that the formula of the Minister and the President are famous because "a joke, we of the common people often say, 'the Minister accuses, and the President understands'" (28). It is consciously and not inadvertently as Mbembe argues that popular laughing faces the vision of the state and the world that seek to impose dominants.

In conclusion, we can say that the author spares no one in his text. While the common people do not manifest desires of magnitude that would make him a partner in power, he takes the share of responsibility incumbent upon him in his misfortune. The State and its agents themselves erect the grotesque and obscene power management technique and make the questioning of individual rights administrative principle. The

novel reflects the mismanagement of the postcolonial state, disappointment and "zombification" of populations; that inaction always grows a little more to forfeiture. If Mabanckou mocks the "nostalgic Senegalese soldiers who shoot to kill and maim the activists even those who did not want" and a Negro who speaks of birch, stone, dust, winter, snow, rose or simply of beauty for beauty" (*Broken Glass* 163), then he did not spend two hundred pages to talk of beauty but to show the ugliness of tragicomic oppression. The novel is indeed a tragic -comedy considering the story of Printer who married a White woman and even became a manager in Paris –Match. He is now penniless and narrates how his wife slept with his son born of a Caribbean woman. Although in his novel he refuses to take a stand and is limited to an exhibition of "what it is" behind the squeaky laugh it causes in the reader already an aspiration to see "what it should be." The text is a tale of madness and sexual humiliation, physical collapse and moral degradation. The use of what ordinarily would be offensive language and presentation is meant to shock the reader out of the deceptive slumber of normalcy.

3.2 Trauma in Mabanckou's fiction

This section explains the physical and mental wound left by trauma. In literary studies, reflections on representation of traumatic memories and effects are believed to produce some of the most significant and far-reaching insights about the human condition. Trauma is about the wounds that result from a harrowing experience. It represents the suffering and pain one underwent. In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth explains the term trauma as wound of overwhelming violent experience that people suffer through unexpected and uncontrolled circumstances. Trauma is therefore a result of violent acts. Initially, the violence infects upon the body, which in its turn affects the minds whether the survivors' minds or other people who listen to and read about survivors' stories. It is

significant to show the effect of the wound of the mind on individuals and communities. The mental wound which comes later as a response to the violent events or mistreatment is un-healable and unbearable. This means, the wound of the mind is harsher than the wound of the body.

Richard Mollica (2011) observes that trauma story is everywhere around us, “shared by our spouses, relatives, friends, workmates, the media and from the pulpit of our religious institutions”. He proposes four defining features of the trauma story: First, the story recounts factually what happened, communicating the series of events that triggered the trauma. Secondly, the story communicates broader social cultural elements, portraying the history, traditions and values that underlie the narrative. Thirdly, the story involves the survivor looking behind the curtain of daily life and reflecting on the deeper (personal and societal) implication of their suffering. Lastly, the trauma story involves building a relationship with a listener- public testimony is healing not only for those who share their stories, but also for those who listen. In view of Mollica’s thoughts, I read the narratives by some characters in the selected novels as traumatic. I briefly interrogate how the characters narrate the stories that create a sorrowful and moving story. This study demonstrates that there is no complete panacea for a traumatised character who suffers from the mental wound.

In *African Psycho*, Mabanckou focuses on how Gregory’s traumatic upbringing in the Congolese foster care system forces him to perform Angoulima’s criminal activities. As soon as he turns eighteen, Gregory begins to attend court sessions in order to learn how to perform criminality. He readily identifies with murderers because the country’s judicial system treats them as hopeless products of deprived childhood. Although the city’s prejudices compel Gregory to associate with fellow social pariahs, this association is what fragments his identity. By having multiple criminal doubles, he

subjects he subjects to a constant identity crisis. Throughout the novel, Gregory identifies with his idol's ghost as a role model. He even perceives Angoulima as a parent therefore visits his ghost at the Dead-Who-Are-Not-Allowed-to-Sleep cemetery claiming that his suicide leaves him an orphan. *African Psycho* is about the traumatic legacy of on-going civil war and strife in the Congo region. Achille Mbembe contends that the only means of accurately representing the immediate present of Africa is not through standard realism but through a mode that is excessive, grotesque, cartoonistic and hallucinatory.

Although Gregory is lucky to get an education unlike other adopted orphans, he is sent to 'people's school', a public establishment for the poor, which is located near his home. In contrast, his adoptive brother attends a private school which the children of European aid workers go. His adoptive brother, acting on an insensitive disclosure from his parents that he is an orphan, whips him for personal amusement whenever they are alone. As a result of this traumatic childhood, Gregoire grows up determined to recuperate the lost dignity of the city and passes for a dutiful crusader against crime and moral decadence. He shocks the reader, however, by stating that he naturally hates He-Who-Drinks -Water -Is -An-Idiot and that he will continue unleashing terror on it, probably for subjecting him and his idol, Angoulima, to childhood trauma. Gregoire is therefore a guardian and menace to his own city for he safeguards and attacks it at the same time.

Broken Glass is about the myriad customers at Credit Gone West and their hilariously rendered traumatic original stories. Each individual who pesters Broken Glass to tell his/her story has been born again from an old life full of middle-class banality, having passed through absurd hardship into sordid conditions in this haven of the spectacularly fallen. Pampers for example, has incontinence due to sodomy in prison. He had been

jailed for doing obscene things to his daughter. As he is molested in prison, he is verbally abused with words like 'a tart, a vegetable from Tipotipo market, a cockroach, moth, rotten fruit of the breadfruit tree''. There is a pissing contest (urinal combat) between the voluptuous Robinette, and an annoying interloper called Casmir-High-Life that occurs in full view of the mostly male patrons who watch in erotic awe this literal battle of sexes. Robinette had promised to allow him 'shag' her anytime, at any place, free of charge if he pissed for longer. These bizarre events that characters engage in, is a form of cushioning the tough life lived. Many people in the novel are traumatised by the vicissitudes of life to the extent that they have no qualms watching a pissing contest. Printer, one of the drunkards in *Credit Gone West* owned a printing company in France before being deported back to Congo and was married to a French woman called Celine. He is traumatised by what he witnessed when he lived in France. His wife made love with his son whom he sired with a Caribbean woman. *Broken Glass* is a book interested in bar fights, bar talk and ultimately booze, blood, urine, shit, semen, sweat and water, all of which feature throughout. This book is interested in tangible life and its fluid components, and its narrator demands that this is a story of people real life, real people. The protagonist, Broken Glass represents mankind. The nature of our addiction whether to alcohol or facile narratives that explain our lives depends on two factors: the presence of a substance to consume or a person to consume it with abandon. It is a text about the way we understand and mediate our collective histories, especially the histories of those who fall outside of mainstream national narratives.

3.2.1 Psychological Fragmentation Resulting from Oppressive Legislation

Blue White Red evinces Mabanckou's political ambivalence towards the draconian French immigration laws and the economic mismanagement of African governments. Poverty and disillusionment are responsible for Congolese migration to France. The

lack of local socio-economic opportunities forces sub-Saharan Africa youth to migrate to Europe where, being unqualified for formal employment they resort to crime in order to survive. While in Paris, the narrator of *Blue White Red* highlights the Congolese spatial framework notably through the framework of 'Undermining' and 'Parisian' identifications, which the characters in this novel will meet once they return to their native country. He mentions in particular the return of illegal immigrants in their native country where they pose, by their look, their lifestyle and statement of successful immigration to hide the life of fraud, moral and physical misery they lead in France. In this spatial shift of the novel, the Parisian universe is in close contact with the Congolese landscape.

At the beginning of *Blue White Red*, we meet a traumatised Massala-Massala in French prison called Seine Saint-Denis jailed for his involvement in stealing cheque books, using them to buy transit passes and reselling them for a profit at the black market of Chateau Rouge. In order to do the crime without being easily detected, Prefet, his accomplice, secures two false identity cards for Massala-Massala by aligning his photos with the details of two Frenchmen (Bonaventure Marcel and Jocelyn George). All the time, Massala-Massala knows that his double exists somewhere in the Paris metropolis. In other words, there are three Massala-Massalas who are similar yet different. When Massala -Masssala is forced to use the names Marcel Bonaventure and Eric George to enable him to obtain fake residency permits, it nevertheless emphasises the fragmented nature of his subjectivity. The loss of original identity triggers internal conflict and a disconnect to his selfhood and the result is a serious identity crisis. Massala -Masssala then becomes an alienated person, first from Africa and from his initial identity. Massala-Massala seemingly does not know himself anymore. The performance of many identities splinters his selfhood to such an extent that here are many Massala-Massala.

This becomes clear when he looks at himself in the apartment's broken mirror. Massala-Massala cannot recognise himself:

Dismembered and fragmented image of himself with one big eye, two mouths, overlapping teeth, four arched eyebrows and three nostrils and admits not knowing himself anymore. (BWR 113)

Although these physical distortions are as a result of the broken mirror, they however represent his inner fragmentation. Paris therefore does not offer opportunities for social and economic growth, and this forces immigrants to engage in crime. The criminal activities Massala -Massala engages in order to survive fragments his sense of self. The reality hits hard at Massala -Massala when he learns what Moki and other Congolese diaspora do in order to earn a living. He learns that Moki and Prefet are criminals who earn their living by selling to passengers forged train tickets. In fact, the people Moki associates with have uncouth and questionable character:

I found people with multiple faces. Complicated people I tried to grasp. The masks they wore during the day miraculously concealed their nocturnal behaviour and obliterated any natural urge for self-reflection which could torment ordinary mortals. They were unpredictable individuals- capable of the best and the worst. In a novel, they would be dressed modestly in the clothes of the anti-heroes (BWR 96)

In a word, Mabankou deals with the question of identity in the phenomenon of duplication of his characters where the original identity grafts that of the host country. Thus, in *Blue White Red*, each 'Parisian' has a nickname associated with his business: Moki is called 'The Italian', Bulu calls himself 'Real Estate Agent', Sote is known as 'The Digger', Prefet, who is baptised 'Saviour of all' did not even know original identity of his comrades. Similarly, the narrator says, "The name is the first element of identification, the author gives his protagonists several identities". It is the transformation of the characters in *Blue White Red* as a result of otherness to which they are confronted by.

The French assimilation policy is to a large extent the root cause of the challenges facing immigrants. In this policy, citizenship is to be granted to the former colonies subjects. However, when they arrive in France, they are treated as illegal immigrants. Those who make it to France are encumbered by stiff travel and residency documentation, subjection to refugee status and having to live clandestinely. It is these difficult conditions in Paris that drive Massala-Massala to a traumatic situation. The hall of residence is a shanty without a bed and is terribly overcrowded by other illegal immigrants. In fact, there is little room to stretch in the room. The trauma of poor housing is compounded by the long working hours. Quite often, Massala-Massala and Moki have to work up to 2.00 a.m at night. Despite the oppressive nature of immigration legislation, Africans are to blame also for their criminal activities because they do not abide by the residency rules laid down by France. Ironically, it is the French legislation policy which is responsible for corruption and racism. Laws are changed so frequently by the political class to suit their campaign agenda. The laws are changed to woo the French voters. It therefore becomes very difficult for the police and other law enforcing agents to know which laws to follow. Such discrepancy in the end leads to racial profiling, detention and deportation. Looking at the laws closely, it is clear that they are premised on a xenophobic framework. Massala-Massala is deported after serving his eighteen –month jail sentence. He is deported without achieving his ‘Blue White Red dream’ which had been so beautifully painted by Charles Moki back at home. While Massala-Massala’s deportation underscores the strictness of the French immigration legislation, the certainty of this return unveils corrupt loopholes in the system. Massala-Massala’s desire to return to Paris aggravates his lack of self- mastery because he is bound to resume illegal residency and activities that will lead him to perpetual imprisonment and deportation. Massala -Massala is traumatised when he imagines the

reality of going back home empty handed because he knows that he will be the laughingstock of Pointre -Noire. In the end, Massala-Massala is at catch -22 situation. He is not even sure that he is awake. Massala-Massala's selfhood is so disintegrated that he can barely comprehend his own thought process and desires. The posture he takes in the cell where he is squatting with his palm in cheek points to extreme trauma. While Mabanckou problematises the disorienting effects of solitary confinement, he suggests that Massala-Massala's desire to escape compounds his fragmentation. The more he feels like escaping back to the criminal world, the more he feels bound to his prison cell.

In *Blue White Red*, Mabanckou enunciates the psychological effects of French immigration legislation which lead Massala-Massala to display a conflicting personality and unstable self- perception. The social and economic conditions in France force Massala -Massala to commit crime in order to gain a coherent sense of self and yet in the process, he ends up fragmenting himself beyond recognition. This self-contradiction foregrounds Mabanckou's use of postmodernist aesthetic in his novel. He localises the postmodernism interrogation of bias by suggesting that the instability of the narrator is a result of the contradictory nature of French immigration policies which exert disorienting influence on migrants instead of upholding their intended humanitarian pursuits. *Blue White Red* shows the effects of draconian French immigration policies and the mismanagement of Africa's economy. When African countries gained independence, many citizens hoped for better lives. People had great expectations but with time they became disillusioned. Due to impoverishment, locals began emigrating to the cities of former colonial masters hoping for a better reward. However, they are oppressed more. They then return home a traumatised lot as evidenced by Massala-Massala situation. The study shows that the selected novels have

the aim of depicting the mental and physical wounds of certain characters in order to reveal the truth and affect the audience.

This section has demonstrated how social, political and economic conditions in France and postcolonial Congo fragment the subjectivities of protagonists. What the French immigration policy and the Congolese foster care system have in common is their destabilising effect on the selfhood and subjectivity of Massala-Massala and Gregoire in the sense that they force the two protagonists to adopt conflicting personalities in order to survive and to navigate existential bearings in the brutalising conditions of their respective milieus.

3.3 Chapter's Conclusion.

Mabanckou's language in his novels *Broken Glass*, *African Psycho*, *Memoires of a Porcupine*, *Black Bazaar* and *Blue White Red* is lewd, vulgar, provoking and shocking for a purpose. The language is deliberately mobilised to highlight the mangled dreams of a people in whose nations things are falling apart. The stories eloquently testify to the fractured humanity and a bold statement of the dysfunctional leadership in most African nations. In his novels, excrement is leitmotif, a metaphor that signifies the dehumanisation and repugnant conditions in post-colonial African nations. He uses vulgar language to supplement content particularly to criticize moral decadence, tyranny and abuse of power. His vulgarity becomes a perfect weapon to induce the seizures for the best therapeutic effect to cure society of the disorder and despair. In a nutshell, it is possible to understand society by simply analysing the way dirt and filth is handled. As a matter of fact, dirt becomes a site laden with layers upon layers of meanings.

CHAPTER FOUR

LINGUISTIC AESTHETICS IN ALAIN MABANCKOU'S NOVELS

4.1 Introduction

When European Nations held a Conference dubbed “The Scramble and Partition of Africa” in Berlin in 1884, they in effect colonised Africa and imposed their languages on Africans. This is true in Francophone Africa as it is in Lusophone and Anglophone African countries. The Arabs too exerted their linguistic influence in East African Coast during the many years they engaged the coastal people in trade. In recent years, the Chinese have had closer links with many African countries, and the Sino influences are already being felt in many spheres including language. As a result of having mastery in two languages, most writers end up writing with accents which is to say, they write in a European language but greatly influenced by native tongue. In other words, Africans localised the acquired foreign language. In the end, linguistic purity is affected but at the same time reinforced their complex reciprocity. Mabanckou in his novel writing creates his own interlanguage by making French language an individual expression open to all manipulations within limits of legibility. The linguistic choices he makes are not only noticeable by use of familiar and popular language but also by the coexistence of French language with other Congolese languages like Bembe, Manituba, Bambuti, Tshiluba, Lingala and Bakongo, Mabanckou's mother tongue. Alain Mabanckou's novels constitute a privileged field of this interaction of languages and customs to such an extent that we could say that they produce a “narrative language”.

This concert of inter language is defined by Dominique Maingueneau (2004 :140):

“The writer is not confronted by the language, but by an interaction of languages and customs which can be called inter languages. By this, we not only hear relation in a given situation between varieties of the same languages but also between this language and other past or

contemporary languages. By playing this art of heteroglossia, this form of dialogism can establish a work of art”.

In his writing, Mabanckou creates a language of his own, an inter language from French/English language to which he uses morphological variance, syntactic and lexical expressions. It embodies his identity and voice of Franco-Congolese novelist located in and out of French culture. The fictional work of Mabanckou under study highlights this interlinguistics situation through use of popular and familiar language, mixture of languages, lexical and syntactic creolisation and neologism.

4.1.1 Significance of ‘Relexification’

Alain Mabanckou’s novels rely on varying degrees in colloquial language, slang and even popular languages. These language forms allow the writer to reconcile in a neo-French/English written language and the spoken language. Characters in Mabanckou’s texts express themselves without cluttering their lexical and syntactic constraints of words yet with unprecedented rhetorical-stylistic amenities that punctuate their stories. Godard (1985:57) defines popular languages as the languages we naturally use in all environments in everyday conversation even in writing, but we avoid it in situations with superiors, official situations and books that are meant to be serious. This is, in essence, a form of intimacy characterised by a familiar vocabulary, even rude and relaxed syntax. On the lexical level, Alain Mabanckou’s narratives are devoid of any complexity towards French language (translated to English) which he has mastered, manipulates the languages of Voltaire in details of its finesse and its resources by imposing a language to his characters befitting their status. Under certain stories, Mabanckou is not only unique to the lexicon of privacy but also appealed to uses of ‘low’ language and above all spontaneity of expression of the actors.

Zabus (2007) *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of language in the West African European Novel* calls indigenization, 'relexification'. By relexification, Zabus means the forging of a new register of communication out of an alien lexicon and other related linguistic features like morphology, semantics, syntax and phonetics within the same context. Zabus argues that in a text in which English or French has been relexified what appears on the page is an unfamiliar European language that constantly suggests an indigenous tongue. Postmodernist writing in Sub-Saharan Africa deploys the strategy of dealing with the tyranny of colonial languages by blending with the local languages so that they carry the burden of Africa Cultures. Kenzo argues that African postcolonial writing breaks the rules of European languages in order to create indigenous rhythms and expressions of orality although he associates this experimentation with the formal deconstructive strategies of postmodernism rather than with an ideological critique of colonialism and post-independence disillusionment. The fusion between French/English and Congolese language enacts a postmodernist critique of linguistic imperialism in the African postcolonial context.

In Mabanckou's novels *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *Broken Glass* and *African Psycho*, the reader accustomed to novel respectful standards of French/English finds popular words, colloquialisms and sometimes slang. Mabanckou often pours into slang with an even language bordering on rudeness. When characters express obscene scenes, it is slang that dominates the narrative. There is the case of the narrator who talks about nakedness of Robinette...." her netherlands was now at zero metres from us" (Mabanckou 2005:101) or when Robinette told Casimir ,“ if you pee longer than me, then I will allow you to climb me whenever you want and wherever you want without paying anything”(Mabanckou 2005:94-95) or when Broken Glass asks a prostitute “how much is a shot”. In another situation, Broken Glass shouts at a drunken patron “shut up and

piss, fat hen” (Mabanckou, 2005:103) Thus, when the characters express obscene scenes, it is slang that dominates the narrative. Indeed, the whole narrative is peppered with words borrowed from street vocabulary and obscenity and the narrator himself wishes to caution the reader in a metalinguistic note, “ I can take a language some call correct and dive at any time in the most shocking vulgarity, especially when I start talking to myself before or after my dangerous acts” (Mabanckou 2003:34). The narrator’s mission is to pursue all the girls of the opposite country (Zaire) describing the things which they do to their daughters using the disrespectful language of morals and “written language”.

“No foreigner could walk around with his stumps half naked in the vicinity without incurring the wrath of our girls.....the cost of the shot was not within the reach of every budget. Our girls to us have ways to be taken seriously and to consider their thing there as the cave of Ali Baba. They want to be seduced, just to convince themselves that they are not whores in the sense that people wish” Mabanckou 2003:102). Names like the ‘stumps’, ‘shot’, ‘that thing there’ or ‘seduce’ are examples from a single passage of the novel *African Psycho* that keeps this stylistic allure which incidentally contributes to making this novel comical despite the inherent serial killer crimes.

In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, we have the use of words and expressions of popular and familiar forms when the porcupine said, “I came out post-haste from the den’, (2006:33) “she did not appreciate too much that we forced him a virgin (2006:118), “my master carpenter broke her piggy bank”. Use of popular and familiar vocabulary keeps the author between oral and written language. This art of expression allows Mabanckou to break free from lexical and semantic constraints of written French/English to approach a more connoted lexicon like the oral, which is already for the Congolese writer, long marked by ‘schoolteacher style’, an expression linked to his uniqueness.

Blue White Red introduces the popular lexicon or slang to refer to certain realities. Thus, its specific focus on the phenomenon of ‘undermining’ with its *‘fire’* and *‘parisian’* allows Mabanckou to develop his own language to these ‘adventurers’ who, in the story is shown by use of italics. Thus we find names such as *‘a false brother’*(pp27) to mean traitor, *‘to fuck’*(pp37) which means to do something *‘job for the blues’*(pp26) to mean ‘scam beginners’ , *‘the boiling pot’*(pp36) to mean ‘people who manoeuvre their way in carrying out scams’, *‘posers’*(pp66) to mean ‘people who impress the middle class by their actions’, *‘true swing’*(pp75) denoting ‘dynamic people,’ *the kid’*(pp105) meaning ‘a child’. The use of these familiar or everyday vocabulary keeps the author between oral and written language.

In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, use of local languages which can be noticed in some areas of the narrative, demonstrates linguistic diversity. When Moudiangui insults Kibandi, he calls him names in Bembe language “people like you are crappy, maniongi, ngebés, Ngoubas ya ko pola”. Linguistic aesthetics in writing of Alain Mabanckou novel shows an ardent sexual attitude. Mayavumbi is a drink which is given to people during initiation rites. Anthroponyms such as Kong-dia-Mama, Moukila Masengo, Mamsoko, Tata Nzambi, Nzambi ya Mpoungou are further indications of interlanguage. Phrases and terms such as mami watta (geniuses of the river), falafala (public transport), nganda (small), pountcha (a flared bottom), saka saka moukalou (a local dish made from cassava leaves and smoked fish) are significant from an interlinguistic point of view. Mabanckou complies with minimum French /English language rules which still provides communication between him and English/French speaking reader. In one hand, French/ English is a language whose history is marked by a continuation of interlinguistic enrichment, and on the other hand has a potential for transformation. Mabanckou therefore seeks to exploit the flexibility of shaking up the colonial

languages more or less radically. To some extent, the use of vocabulary borrowed from local languages constraints because the reader must sometimes use his insight to guess the meaning of expressions. However, the author has ensured that context is sufficient to guess the meaning of a foreign word and the reader engages in a more active decryption of the text's meaning. This creative innovation owes its significant force in Mabanckou's dynamics of invention.

4.1.2 The Art of Subversion

Fictional work of Mabanckou is also marked by the violation of punctuation, including resorting to variation related to flexibility and spontaneity of spoken word which is often transcribed. It is this variation which we look at where direct questions without inversion of subject and interrogation expression violate the order of the written interrogative sentence. For example, in the phrase "why are you looking at me, Broken Glass, do you want my picture or anything (2005:41). The prose in *Broken Glass* is written without full stops, only commas and sometimes opening and closing inverted commas when someone is talking. The novel is so confabulated that its central characters can comment on its construction to the point that it appears to be written as it is read. The disorder in the writing resembles insightful thoughts in the alcoholic mind. This style of writing without commas reflects the lives of men it records in its uneven texture and lack of structure, but it too often succumbs to disarray. *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* present Mabanckou's experimentation with punctuation particularly his subversive use of run-on commas. During an interview with Wainana Binyavanga in 2010, Mabanckou explains that he uses the comma, throughout for two reasons. Firstly, the colonial imposition of French as the official language in his native country of Congo ruled out possibility of learning literature in local languages and as a result, when he became a writer, he could not write polished fiction that respects the

roles of French academy. Secondly, he is inspired by the French writer Louis Celine who demonstrated that it is possible to break the rules of the French Academy in order to create narrative effects. One such effect is the rhythm of the prose in both *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* which is 'like Congolese way of speaking, a grammatical violation which Mabanckou celebrates as a way of dealing with French.

In a 2012 interview with Helen Stevenson, Mabankou says that he uses commas but not full stops in *Broken Glass* in order to capture the narrator's continuous drunken state. His assumption seems to be that a drunkard speaks non-stop and fast and that the narrative representation of this rhythm could not have been possible with full stops. In *African Psycho*, Gregoire Nabomakoyo talks non-stop when angry and in the pages he does this, his train of thought is punctuated only by commas. In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, the surrogate author recounts his regrettable life of magic to a baobab tree but not in drunken mood though his narrative is also punctuated by run-on commas. In the novel, the disorienting function of run-on commas and their subversive effect unfolds both in the porcupine's awareness of French (English) grammar and in his intentional violation of these rules. A telling instance is when he apologises to the baobab tree for having learnt to speak in a rambling and digressive manner from Sekepembe people who talk non-stop as in opening brackets but never closing them. However, what is ironic here is that instead of abiding by the grammatical rules he endorses, Ngoumba continues to speak with fast-paced Congolese accent which subverts standard French (and English) altogether. It is in this broad sense of writing back to the colonial empire using relexified forms of French (and English) that Mabanckou's *Memoirs of a Porcupine* localises in the African postcolonial context the idea that postmodernism works within conventions which it seeks to subvert. *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* deploy subversive

punctuation in order to reinstate the accent of Congolese languages thereby undermining the linguistic imperialism of French and English from within.

Mabanckou's critique of linguistic imperialism through subversive punctuation intensifies towards the end of *Broken Glass* especially when the narrator hands over the completed handbook to the Stubborn Snail which makes him complain that the book has no full stops and commas. What is clear is that the non-native speakers of French and English create their own indigenous grammar so as to circumvent the cultural assumptions within such languages. In *Broken Glass*, the run-on commas perform a relexification function, that is, they initiate a continuous ontological tension between written English and the spoken rhythm of Congolese language. As an avid reader and a former primary school teacher, Broken Glass is fully aware of the grammatical and literary rules, but he intentionally breaks them in order to critique the colonial subjugation of indigenous Congolese languages.

4.1.3 The Politics of Space

Mabanckou's block paragraphs in *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* violate the familiar and predictable paragraphing format while blank spaces expose the unorthodox spacing-out of extremely short and irregular paragraphs separated by wide bands of white space. In *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, the manipulation of space involves the extra strategy of unusual indentation of some paragraphs' openings. Taken together, these experimental strategies result in what McHale describes as shaped typography or concrete prose in which shapes imitate shapes of processes of objects of the world.

A true creolization of French/English takes place in Mabanckou's fiction. There is a lot of mother-tongue influence in Mabanckou's writing. In *African Psycho*, a street child brought to a host family is referred to as ``collected child''. The wooden stick that

Gregory used to hit the 'Girl in white' is called 'dead tree'. These courses draw their aesthetic interlinguistic meaning in Alain Mabanckou's novel writing in the literal translation of natural language structure of the author. They also mark the creative freedom of the author. Rather than being viewed as a 'deviation' his writing appears as a form of reconciliation of 'normative French or good French'

African Psycho demonstrates its ductile syntax by introducing words without specific syntactic role in writing. While the narrator of this novel is talking to himself, he said ``perhaps, he should not have said it like that'' (Mabanckou 2003:126). The demonstrative pronoun 'that' which is redundant in sequences where oral tradition is very strong has a major role in conversation. Similarly, presence of the break of demonstrative adjective in the narrative syntax makes one think about the storyteller as in this example from the novel `` I arrived at the cemetery of the Dead-Who-Have-No-Right-To-Sleep an hour later, yes that's right and this time the guards would say they were dreaming (Mabanckou 2003: 131). Mabanckou diverts French/ English language from its syntactic and lexical rules. New or renewed tricks which he uses do not interfere with his unique style, but he employs them in orality that is common in African languages.

In *Blue White Red*, unconventional French/ English syntax has been influenced greatly by the mother tongue of the author. These 'foreign' creations are transcribed in italics. Thus, in *Blue White Red*, expressions like '*straight from Paris*' (pp48), '*unhappily married women*'(pp90), '*a rope in the neck*'(pp131) or '*I would have stolen his understanding*'(pp147) are syntactically constructed by reference to the situation of bilingual and bicultural character-speaker or even the author himself.

4.1.4 Critiquing Linguistic Imperialism

Vocabulary creation/neologism plays with the formation of words, the invention of forms of verbal nominalizations whose literature begins to reflect and set in writing. Mabanckou's neologism in *Broken Glass* and *African Psycho* reveal creation of an expressive vocabulary of transgression of normative French/English. The noun 'Camerouinuses' (Mabanckou 2005:140) referring to Cameroon girls who ruin their lovers' is an example that illustrates this linguistic creation demonstrated by this Congolese author. He likes to create new words by deformation of those that already exist in French/English language. In this way, the author contributes to lexical enrichment. This is a lexicalization whose intention is the renewal of language. In *African Psycho*, Mabanckou (2003:16) makes a breath-taking juggling onomastics. He calls the neighbourhood 'He-Who-Drink-Water-is-an-Idiot' and the university 'I-Know-it-all-because-you-don't-understand-nothing' (Mabanckou 2003:81). The name of a group of Musicians is called 'It is always the same-people-who-feasts -in-this-country-of-shit'. In this text, Alain Mabanckou uses this lexical fantasy characterized by nominalization sentence patterns which contribute to the author's interlanguage. Mabanckou is good at manipulating, inventing and borrowing from the street. A new language and form of writing evolves in the process. Mabanckou's block paragraphs in *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* violate the familiar and predictable paragraphing format while blank spaces expose the unorthodox spacing-out of extremely short and irregular paragraphs separated by wide bands of white space both of which are typical experimental techniques of postmodernist writing. What we see in the texts is fiction written in European language but its concrete structures deriving from the ungrammatical use of run-on commas and the post realist inscription of blank spaces and block paragraphs resemble the indigenous vernacular accent. This

experimentation with neologism, run-on commas, block paragraphs and blank spaces in *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* presents a critique of linguistic imperialism. Mabanckou in *Blue White Red* employs extended monologues and flashbacks. For instance, Massala-Massala recounts his experiences before and after his fortune-seeking migration to France. However, these monologues and flashbacks reveal the innermost desires of Massala-Massala and an irreconcilable conflict between those desires and their fulfilment in that the more the protagonist asserts a certain personality the more he contradicts himself. This self-contradiction foregrounds Mabanckou's use of postmodernist aesthetic in his novel *Blue White Red*.

In conclusion, Mabanckou joins other contemporary writers in creating a linguistic and stylistic work which creates an original symbolic field in African literature. Mabanckou deals with the linguistic problem by using and abusing the literary and grammatical conventions of French (and English) in ways that simultaneously install and undermine literacy and orality. The novelist who is not a sycophant of classic language, structures this field while inventing his style in novel writing, implementing new forms of writing based on his multiculturalism and multilingualism. Rather than dwell lamenting *diglossic* conditions and impossibility, Mabanckou chose to exceed the wonder of strangeness of the language for singular linguistic creativity. There is no doubt proof of his mastery of this writing language. Mabanckou ably manipulates the French language to manifest his uniqueness which coincides with socio-referential immigration officials. Mabanckou's texts by their inter-linguistic style, magical realism and scatology, therefore, distance themselves from those styles typically proposed in most textbooks. Mabanckou deliberately violates French (and English) grammatical and realist conventions in order to reinstate the marginalised Congolese accent thereby subverting linguistic imperialism from within.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

The study established that Mabanckou employs magical realism in his novels by presenting mystic characters such as the legends of Kibandi in *Memoirs of a Porcupine* who has the extraordinary power to kill victims through their doubles: a rat and a porcupine. Magical realist situations are also evident through Mabanckou's own imagination where he often exaggerates a situation or creates an aura greater-than-life with a literary objective to achieve. Mabanckou employs magical realism to critique political excesses in a language that both conceals the intended reality but effectively brings out tyranny and filth. Political greats symbolised by Kibandi fall from their glory and pay for their crimes at the end. Here magical realism is used to teach moral lesson. Kibandi in *Memoirs of a Porcupine* stands out as allegory that teaches people to respect others including their right to life and the freedom to express issues and thoughts. Those in power need to execute authority cautiously because in the end they will pay for their crime of tyranny Kibandi, who symbolises tyrants who abuse power, in the end falls with a thud. Similarly, the mythic character Angoulima in *African Psycho*, who has been elevated to a demi-god exemplifies the many tyrants and despots who are cultic in nature and who appear larger-than-life figures but whose actual dimensions are revealed when they are ousted out of power. The security personnel are presented as unprofessional and inept. In *Broken Glass*, communism is satirised for not bringing desired development to all people to the extent that basic amenities such electricity and piped water are not available for rural dwellers. Through Rose and Moki in *Black Bazaar* and *Blue White Red* respectively, Mabanckou satirises cultural imperialism whereby Africans blindly ape Western lifestyles. Women and men apply bleaching

chemicals in order to look like White people and some end up suffering from allergies, red spots and having blood clots in their faces. The study affirms that surreal situations are deliberately presented by the author to satirise people and events. Magical realism makes Mabanckou's writings baffling and effective as it exposes issues affecting post-colonial African continent.

In this study, I have also explored the use of narratology in Mabanckou's novels *Broken Glass*, *Black Bazaar*, *Memoirs of a Porcupine*, *African Psycho* and *Blue White Red*. What we encounter in Mabanckou's writing is the deployment of narratological techniques in the post-colonial context in order to address post-colonial realities which are as a result of the colonial encounter. Clearly, the novels criticise both the West and Africans for the challenges currently facing African countries. Most of the problems faced in Africa today can be traced to slave trade, colonialism and capitalism. Mabanckou's novels deploy strategies that critique African leaders in the form of dictatorship, tyranny and corruption. *Broken Glass* and *Black Bazaar* serve a political function; they in fact expose how western imperialism led to the construction of Eurocentric and Afrocentric discourses. Magical realism is used to critique the psychological effects of modern urban conditions in France and Congo. Massala-Massala and Gregoire in *Blue White Red* and *African Psycho* respectively commit crimes in order to gain a coherent sense of self. By focusing on the fragmentation of Massala-Massala and Gregory, I have demonstrated that protagonists display and perform conflicting identities and so their ontological status and indeed their self-perception is always in process of perpetual deferment, uncertainty, instability and indeterminacy. Ironically, the more they engage in crime in order to gain a coherent sense of self, the more they fragment themselves even beyond their own self

recognition. The novels expose the complexities that arose as a result of colonial encounter.

Mabanckou employs experimental techniques of run on commas, blank spaces, block paragraphs and concrete prose in *Broken Glass* and *Memoirs of a Porcupine* as a critique of cultural imperialism. The translated works we are dealing with in this study still evince the destabilising interference of the fast-paced accent of Congolese languages. The effect of this is that though the reader sees English words on the pages, he or she constantly perceives fictional projection of phonetic and syntactical traces of Congolese languages. Mabanckou in a way is using and at times abusing the grammatical conventions of French and English in ways that install and undermine literacy and orality.

5.2 Recommendation for Further Study

In this study, we have looked at magical realism in Mabanckou's five novels: *African Psycho*, *Memoires of a Porcupine*, *Black Bazaar*, *Broken Glass* and *Blue White Red* but we cannot claim to have fully exhausted on the issue. We recommend that a comparative study on Mabanckou's work be done vis-a-vis the writings of other emerging African writers so as to expose and extrapolate fully the significance of magical realism as a trope in writing. Postmodernist analyses could also be done in his other novels so as to determine influences in his writings.

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APPENDIX

A1: Mabanckou's Profile

Alain Mabanckou was born in 1966 in Congo - Brazzaville. After preliminary law classes at The Marian Ngorabi University in Brazzaville, he received scholarship to go and study in France at the age of 22. Mabanckou is a journalist, novelist, poet and an academic and is currently a Professor of Literature at The University of Columbia, Los Angeles (UCLA). He is best known for his novels and his non-fiction writing depicting the experiences of contemporary Africa and the African diaspora in France. His writing, influenced by Louis- Ferdinand Celine or by Latin American novelists like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, makes Mabanckou one of the jewels of contemporary French Literature. His *Memoirs of a Porcupine* won the Prix-Renaudot, one of the highest distinctions of French Literature. The book is a magic realism inspired reworking of a folktale into a psychological portrait of Kibandi, a young Congolese descent into violence. He has in his talks opined that Africans bear responsibility for their own misfortunes. He further contends that categories such as nation, race and territory fall short of encapsulating reality and urges writers to create works that deal with issues beyond these subjects.

In this study, we are dealing with novels which were originally written in French but later translated into English where we notice Mabanckou creates his own interlanguage by making French language an individual expression open to all manipulations within limits of legibility. In this subversion, the linguistic choice he makes is not only noticeable by use of familiar and popular language but also by the coexistence of French language with other languages, particularly Bakongo, the writer's first language.

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