

SCHOOL MICROCOSM AS A MIRROR OF STATE CRISES THROUGH SOCIO-CRITICAL DISCOURSE IN FATOU FANNY-CISSE'S *LES NUAGES DU PASSÉ*

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Abstract

This study portrays youth delinquency and violence in Fatou Fanny-Cissé's Les nuages du passé as the consequences of social, institutional, and moral disorientation and highlights the image of the adolescent in a process of interacting with the expectations of the larger community, cultural values, and the unstable, prevalent social conditions. Previous research focused on the larger society in the context of corruption, coercion, and ideological struggle; little attention was paid to the ambiguous nature of youth activism as a means of collective resistance and subaltern expression. This study, therefore, aimed at showing the school setting as a microcosm of the larger society with a view to foregrounding its vices and the ambiguous nature of youth activism. It adopted the Feminist and Postcolonial theoretical frameworks, which emphasize the power dynamics between women and men as well as the historical legacies and the social construction of adolescents within African societies, respectively. Textual analysis was used as a method of data analysis with emphasis on the narrative structure, internal vocalization, aspects of stylistics, and the portrayal of student life. The work situates the youth within a space of confrontation between traditional African values and the pressures of modern society, using aphorisms, proverbs, and psychological introspection to condemn the negative masculinity that normalizes violence and the fragility of social bonds. It concluded by emphasizing the need to restore societal values, civic consciousness, and empathetic education for a better understanding of the interaction between moral decay, institutional failure, and the collective search for positive change.

Keywords: Francophone African literature, youth, socio-criticism, paremiology, violence.

INTRODUCTION

Academic criticism has, throughout the years, been limited to the edges of pedagogical utilitarianism in the field of youth literature in sub-Saharan Africa, and perhaps even more so in Côte d'Ivoire. Adolescent literature, described as a simple supplement to the school institution, or as a means to a kind of moralization from above, has received few of the aesthetic and socio-critical analyses that

have been developed for literature as a whole. But the last thirty years of African writing's aesthetic development show that African writers are taking the plunge into writing for young people to use very acute sociological analysis and engage in the interrogation of the structural mutations of African societies. Fatou Fanny-Cissé is at the centre of this scriptural dynamic. She is a representative of the Ivorian literary world who proposes an uncompromising gaze into the everyday life,

hopes, and failures of young people in the city and school in her novel, *Les nuages du passé*. The author follows the story of Mian, a bright and promising middle school student who is universally liked at school, but who is having trouble with his grades. Mian is driven to escape his situation by his desire to become an airline pilot, who is the perfect role model for the young man on whose future the hope of his people's social mobility depends.

But the linear and bright course that this young hero has in mind soon gets entangled in the folds of a landscape that is defined by tensions in society, injustices in institutions, and pressure from the community. So when Mian joins the Association, a union of schools that openly protests and mobilizes against the government and other constituted authorities, he leaves the private realm of personal aspirations and enters the public realm of collective mobilization, facing the dramatic consequences of his political actions firsthand. Criticism of Fanny-Cissé's *Les nuages du passé* is still in its early stages, and in this review, the school in the novel is examined through the lens of both Fanny-Cissé scholarship and Nigerian socio-critical literature to explore how the school in the novel mirrors the broader Nigerian state crisis. The tale, which is subtitled "violence en milieu scolaire", sees the life of a talented schoolboy, Mian, suspended by rumours of a strike when he becomes involved in a student association, and culminates in an action with lifelong consequences. The school is consequently more than a place of learning; it reflects the chaos, moral decline, and power struggle that define many crisis-ridden states. The individual experience and the critique of society are both present in *Les nuages du passé*, making it a work of social intervention, where the failures of the school are a sign of the failure of the society in its role of guiding the youth morally (Fanny-Cissé, 2018).

In the article written by Obiajulum-Iloh (2021), she can provide useful insights with reference to the criticism of African democracy, electoral malpractice, and authoritarianism by Fanny-Cissé in the novel *Madame la présidente*. While Iloh's piece is not on *Les nuages du passé*, it does allude to a recurring theme in Fanny-Cissé's fiction: the institution, be it school or government, is a microcosm of political and social dysfunction. Similarly, Wende and Oladeji (2025) look at the proverbs and narrative methods in *Les nuages du passé*, and demonstrate how Fanny-Cissé's language is ethically, culturally, and ideologically charged. They suggest that proverbs and didactic discourse are counter-voices to social irresponsibility, and that the symbolic position of the school as a place of moral and civic education is supported by them.

This can be understood by using the lens of Socio-Criticism. Duchet (1970) points out that literature reflects social conflicts, and Cros (2002) looks at the connection between literature and society. With this lens, it is possible to interpret the novel Cissé as a miniature version of a crisis-ridden state, where hierarchical, collective, and moral failures all converge. The socio-critical reading of literature is further supported by Nigerian scholars. The Nigerian academics reaffirm the socio-critical reading of literature. Amuta (2021) argues that it is necessary for the African text to question ideologies, social conflicts, and historical contradictions, while Osundare (2020) sees the writer as a 'righter' who writes on ethical and political issues.

The novel's setting is seen by both as a focus for raising moral responsibility and civic awareness. *Les nuages du passé* demonstrates how Fanny-Cissé's language is ethically, culturally, and ideologically charged. They propose that proverbs and didactic discourse have the capacity to be counter-hegemonic to social irresponsibility and that they uphold the

symbolic role of the school as an institution for moral and civic education. *Les nuages du passé's* analysis of strikes, school violence, and decision-making is an extension of a struggle for authority and legitimacy. The Nigerian scholars support the socio-critical reading of literature. The Nigerian scholars reiterate the socio-critical reading of literature. Amuta (2021) argues that it is necessary for the African text to question ideologies, social conflicts, and historical contradictions, while Osundare (2020) sees the writer as a 'righter' who writes on ethical and political issues. The novel's setting is seen by both as a focus for raising moral responsibility and civic awareness. Other scholars like Iwuchukwu (2022) and Onyemelukwe (2023) also address the importance of sociocritical approaches in Francophone literature in Africa and its fictional space representation of society's dysfunctionality.

For Fanny-Cissé, determinism is not biological or hereditary, but rather eminently social, political, and historical. To capture the complexity of this representation, our analysis will be presented in four key areas: The first is to summarize the novel, and the second is to explore how the novel creates the space for youth in violence as a space of vulnerability, where community expectations and environmental structures dominate. The mechanisms of sociopolitical consciousness in the process of collective mobilization and protest are then examined. Third, we examine some of the stylistic strategies and, specifically, the use of paremiological insertion and the internal focalization as tools of the pedagogy of responsibility. Finally, we place the work at the crossroads of significant critical perspectives in the current African literary sociology.

***Les nuages du passé's* summary**

This is deliberately situated by Fatou Fanny-Cissé. The novel is about Mian, a brilliant high-school boy who falls in love with the Student

Association, a student union. Although Mian is academically gifted, his union activities bring about his downfall, and he is unable to pursue his dream of becoming a pilot. He becomes violent and beats a disabled student, and is eventually kicked out of the university. Mian eludes severe punishment with the assistance of his sister, who documents his abominable actions, but forfeits seven years of his life. He lets his parents down and cannot come up with a new objective. In the meantime, his friend Aboubakar deters him from staying away from the union, and he grows to be a successful pharmacist. Aboubakar helps Mian get a job in a pharmaceutical company where he is forced to deal with the repercussions of his actions and square himself with the man he nearly killed. The novel deals with themes of youthful recklessness, the necessity of making informed choices, and the inevitability of the consequences of actions. Fatou Fanny-Cissé, via Mian, speaks to young people that any form of destructive action that can negatively impact them and their future should be avoided. The title *Les nuages du passé* alludes to how a person's past mistakes can cause them to suffer in their life, as well as the need for redemption.

The narrative is a powerful, edifying tale that highlights the importance of responsible behaviour and the potential long-term consequences of reckless actions. Mian's story is a reminder to us that our choices do have consequences, and that it is NEVER too late to seek redemption and forgiveness. The vivid use of language and engaging characters heightens the impact and makes it possible for the reader to relate to Mian's struggles and to consider what they would do. Fatou Fanny-Cissé hopes that, through her story, young people and other readers, including parents, will look at their own conduct and think about how it might affect their own lives and those of their children. The novel makes it clear that we are not our mistakes, and we can overcome them and make better lives for ourselves in the

present. Mian's character is built from the outset as that of the young genius. But this academic prowess, quite unlike a shield, becomes the first of the character's weaknesses. His aspirations of becoming a pilot are not seen by everyone around him as a sign of personal freedom or personal fulfillment, but as an excellent investment move.

The author does particularly well in conveying the burden of expectations that are never explicitly stated that sit on the shoulders of a middle school boy. If you fail, it's a betrayal of the community, and if you succeed, it's your moral duty. Diallo (2020) seems to have imported the term contemporary performance neurosis from Mel Gibson's film, defining it as the condition in which the young, gifted child is constantly torn between the necessity to comply with the wishes of a gerontocracy in a family that demands security of its finances, and the adolescent's desire for emancipation, amplified by the models and values of the globalized culture. Mian experiences exactly this awful strain. His wish to go to a display, a symbol of his need for elevation and breaking free from the weight of the everyday world, is methodically returned to ground by the material needs and demands for conforming to his surroundings.

This is a fine example of environmental determinism performed by Fanny-Cissé. But here, Mian's school performance isn't sufficient to release him from material constraints; to the contrary, it exposes him to the dysfunctions of the system more violently. As a scholarship boy and relying on unclear and frequently unfair institutional processes, he is even more fragile. From an analysis of the topography of the novel, we notice that the areas in which Mian moves, such as the classroom, school yard, and working-class neighborhood, are closed spaces with strict rules and power relations. The school is supposed to be the arena of freedom of learning, but is actually present as an

ideological 'state-device' in which social inequalities are reproduced. He has been marginalized even in the real circles of power because of his humble background. Vulnerability of the subject, on one hand, is amplified by the visibility of his academic career and reduced by the absence of social and economic capital on the other hand.

MASS CIVIC AWAKENING AND MOBILIZATION

The true dramatic knot of *Les nuages du passé* is tied when the protagonist transitions from the sphere of individual ambitions to that of collective action. This passage from the laborious intimacy of the classroom to the convulsive violence of the public space takes place through the Association. In the novel, this is the school's unions, and it heavily shaped recent political history in Côte d'Ivoire. In this narrative instance, the author explores the mechanisms of indoctrination, politicization, and emancipation of youth. Initially, for Mian, this is not a politically theorized reaction to, but an ethical reaction to the gross injustices that he has witnessed and suffered in the school. This mode of transition to adulthood has been extensively explored in the West African literature (Ouedraogo, 2026). This is the path that is followed by Fanny-Cissé, and for her, the space of protest is the space where pain constructs the identity of the young citizen.

Strikes and demonstrations of the Association tear down the yoke of individual determinism and introduce the character into the system of class and generational solidarity. Yet in the author's mind, there remains a critical and nuanced perspective on this collective mobilization. She supports the right of the youth to revolt against the corrupt system, but she strongly condemns the drift within the movement and its manipulation. The Association is shown as a sort of complicated entity that provides a platform for expression

and dignity for the marginalized, but also embeds in the same entity logics of domination, violence, and fanaticism. Mian is captivated by the seductive illusion of power that comes from group action, led by an ideal purity. He dedicates his very soul and body to the directives of the movement and manages a huge milestone of militancy whose impact and systemic consequences he does not immediately assess. In Fanny-Cissé's novel, that illusion is shattered because the postcolonial state is more likely to respond to school protests with disproportionate violence, making academic demands national security crises.

The novel thus focuses on the phenomenon of transition from childhood to political adolescence via the traumatic experience of responsibility. The Fanny-Cissé fiction theorizes maturity as the ultimate transgression of innocence, as opposed to the idyllic stories of childhood. The emergence of sociopolitical consciousness is unquestionably linked with a sense of guilt; the only way Mian can truly become a man is to take on, standing alone before justice and his family, the trigger finger of the gun that fired. The author demonstrates that when repression hits, the individual is once again left on his own with his tragedy. The process of collective mobilization seems, therefore, to be essential to overcome social alienation but also to be a powerful trap that consumes the best qualities of youth.

Some elements of violence in *Les nuages du passé*

The student's imploring look met the dilated pupils of Mian, whose chest was heaving with fury. Listening only to his rage, Mian grabbed the poor student and beat him until he bled. His accomplices applauded wildly. (p. 99).

This extract presents Mian's violence towards the student and raises many questions about power, domination, and relationships of

violence. In the scene in question, violence is used as a means of domination, emphasizing the role of violence as a means of exerting power and domination over others. Mian is a student attacked by the man, and it acts as a kind of violence that is frequently linked to notions of manhood. Violence is often celebrated in constructions of masculinity, and this is challenged by feminism. This dynamic demonstrates not only that violence is a personal choice, but also that it is an expression of cultural norms that promote the use of violence by men.

The violence is supported by Mian's allies, who cheered for the violence, emphasizing the normalization of the culture of violence in a group. A culture of violence promotes a climate of impunity and a reinforcement of violent behaviors. The novel via the author uses feminism, though is a range of socio-political movement and ideologies dedicated to achieving political, economic, personal and social equity of the sexes, that is fundamentally about equality, not female supremacy which the goal is to create more just and inclusive society where no individual is disadvantaged because of their gender and it identifies the importance of unpacking such norms to encourage models of behaviour that emphasize compassion and respect. The consequences of the violence exerted by Mian have repercussions not only on the student but also on the entire community.

The passage is questioning how violence affects interpersonal relations and the psychological effects of violence. Mian's violence is a factor in creating a climate of fear in the community. Those who witness it are dissuaded from challenging such action because they are afraid of being displeased. Postcolonialism can be used to examine the history of power dynamics that frequently manifest as violence against the other to secure control, and can generate an atmosphere of oppression that can be felt in modern interactions. Violence is also part of the

cultural norms in the selection, which emphasizes the effect of historical precedents on violent behavior. In the way Mian behaves, the legacy of the patriarch can be seen as a reflection of power and aggression in the socialization he has endured. Historical narratives and patriarchal norms establish a context in which violence is seen as a means of conflict resolution.

Feminism calls into question those legacies to enable an evolution to more respectful and equal relationships. The violence that comes out of Mian can also be interpreted as a recopying of patterns of violence that have been learned. In contexts where strength is valued, individuals are inclined to reproduce these behaviors, thus perpetuating a cycle of violence. The violence against the student is described in the passage, and it illustrates issues related to domination, cultural norms, and the consequences of violence. A breakdown of norms that glorify violence and domination, and the development of models of behavior that support respect and understanding, is critical.

The struggle against violence must be a collective effort to establish safe and inclusive spaces for everyone, where more equity and more solidarity between communities can be built.

The student was moaning and asking Mian for forgiveness. His pleas only multiplied his tormentor's rage. Driven by disproportionate anger, Mian kicked the unfortunate student in the ribs. His anger only subsided when he realized that the young man was no longer moving. He then stopped beating him and left with his group, leaving him for dead. (p. 99)

In the above extract, Mian and the student demonstrate dynamics of violence that are embedded in society. The scene in which Mian is beating the student clearly shows an expression of violence to assert power, which is representative of the utilization of violence as a tool to establish domination. Mian's behavior is

regarded as "toxic masculinity" because he is beating the student, which is a type of masculinity that values strength and aggression. This glorification of violence is one thing that is criticized by feminism, as it is regarded as a legitimate means of solving conflicts.

A student who is a victim of such violence experiences issues related to self-esteem and post-traumatic stress disorder. Feminism says that the victims of violence are not only physically assaulted, but also emotionally assaulted. A culture of fear towards violence produces a state of insecurity. Witnesses of the aggression might be reluctant to report it for fear of retaliation by the aggressor. This collective fear is destructive to social cohesion and prevents solidarity between communities. Post-colonialism investigates how the past of domination contributes to this fear and oppression. In analyzing Mian's actions as an indicator of her legacy as a patriarch, the significance of domination and strength in the norms of patriarchalism is observed. Postcolonialism also focuses on the fact that these norms are not just personal but also embedded within a larger social structure that has historically excluded the voices of women and oppressed groups.

This phenomenon results in a cycle of violence that can be seen as a reactionary response to confrontation or defiance. Mian's violence towards the student is not the only violence that is being reproduced, as can be seen in the reproduction of violence patterns around Mian's violence towards the student. Feminism emphasizes that these behaviors need to be questioned and peaceful means of resolving conflicts should be encouraged. Values of unity, kindness, and dialogue should be fostered to foster safe and respectful settings. Violence is a problem that needs a people's response to create communities in which everyone is valued and respected and can experience social change.

The young girl, in tears, called the firefighters, detailing what had just happened on campus. The firefighters were quick to intervene. They transported the very badly injured young man to the hospital and were able to notify his parents thanks to his sister. (p. 100)

Mian's anger, manifested as violent blows, is an example of how violence can be used as a way of affirming oneself. This glorification of aggression is criticized by feminism because it is seen as a form of power and control. By inflicting harm on the student, Mian has been trying to make himself feel better than the student, reinforcing a model of toxic masculinity that emphasizes physical power. The dehumanization of the victim, the student's pleas, which only fan Mian's rage, further the theme that violence is often linked with the dehumanization of the victim. The student is no longer seen as a person with feelings and rights, but as an object around which Mian can vent his rage. This phenomenon is at the core of feminist analyses, which have focused on the fact that violence is often targeted at those deemed to be inferior or devalued. The psychological effect of the violence he has inflicted on the victim is felt not just by the victim, but also by the aggressor and the group of people around the aggressor. The student is left for dead with both psychological and physical trauma.

This violence can have long-lasting effects, not only on his physical health but also on his mental health. Feminism argues that the significance of these effects should be acknowledged and that "victimization" can have harmful impacts after the physical injuries have healed. This collective violence is thus legitimized, and a climate of impunity is established, making it hard to denounce collective violence. Cultural norms and gender roles in Mian's violent behaviors condition their interactions. The norms of the patriarchy and Mian's conduct fall under a patriarchal structure

that emphasizes male dominance and female submission. These norms are highlighted by womanizing the idea of violence and domination; as stereotypes are installed, where men are considered the figures of authority. As a male, Mian is entitled to display his violence towards the helpless woman, as it is part and parcel of the image of the man.

The place of social reactions

Social reactions to what is observed in Mian's behavior and the behavior of his group illustrate one way in which social validation reinforces violence. Postcolonialism can be used to investigate the nature of such power imbalances and how they are often perpetuated by past structures of domination, in which violence is used to control populations, especially marginalized groups. Mian's violence is a testament to the horrific effects of a culture that encourages aggression and domination. The values of solidarity, feeling for others, and responsibility must be promoted in order to create environments where everyone feels safe and respected.

It's the most effective means of struggle we have found. Indeed, it is not the ideal way, but you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. To have a better future, the end justifies the means; better to suffer now to be happy later. Do you understand me?" asked André. (p. 62-63).

In this excerpt, André's comments highlight a moral and strategic dilemma concerning the fight for a better future. He says, 'It's the best way of fighting we've found out there,' suggesting his intent to fight for change, regardless of the methods used, which may create an ethical dilemma. André's reasoning revolves around the concept that the end justifies the means. He believes that some sacrifices and controversial things must be done to attain a higher objective, and he believes this is the way to do it. Questions that arise here are how far someone will go to get what he or she

wants. It is a motivational, but also harmful, idea, because it allows for morally dubious behavior to be justified. André also reminds me of the idea of sacrifice and believes that it's better to endure suffering now to be happy later.

From this point of view, the present suffering is a requirement for the happiness that is to come. It is a sign of strength in adversity, yet also of tolerance for the current inequities in the hope for a future that is better. Do you understand me? is his question, which points out the importance of sharing and empathy in this kind of conversation. André wants to connect with his interlocutor in the sense that understanding is necessary to advance together in the struggle. The aesthetic originality of Fatou Fanny-Cissé resides in the fact that she combines a message that is extremely hard to read politically and extremely structured narrative-wise, too, both from a Western as well as an African traditional point of view, using structures of African oral discourse.

A stylistic analysis of the text shows that, in the face of this didactic scope, the author adopts precise textual strategies to guide the reader through the text and highlight the didactic objective of her narration without ever resorting to dogmatic sermonizing. A very remarkable process in the novel is the use of proverbs and popular maxims, which is so intensive and strategic. In a recent stylistic study, Ojo and Oladeji (2021) showed that such practice is not merely about ornamentation or a local cultural colour, but rather a dynamic force that produces a distinct style.

Paremiological insertion in Fatou Fanny-Cissé's work

It is a very peculiar quality of the average African writer - his structural armature: proverbs. The proverbs that are sprinkled among the mouths of the older characters or in the voice of the narrator are not meant to make the past unchanging, but rather to provide a

dialectical link between traditional wisdom and the crises of urban modernity. This may be broken down into several sentences:

One must strike the iron when it is hot. P.16 LNDP

This proverb highlights the need to do things at the right time. The imagery of striking iron while it's hot gives the sense of urgency: opportunities are few, and they won't last long, and they are only available until they become cold or they go away. It promotes decisiveness, promptness, and keenness in the circumstances. In a socio-critical reading of *Les nuages du passé* by Fatou Fanny Cissé, this saying is uttered in a context of missed opportunities, both in the personal and collective realm. In the school context, it implies that there is a need for reform, discipline, or education to take place in a timely fashion before crises can grow. It condemns political apathy at the state level, warning that inaction on issues of political turmoil, social disintegration, or corruption has long-lasting consequences. So, the proverb is applicable as a motivational maxim and as a socio-political indictment: it reminds individuals and institutions to make a decision when it is opportune; otherwise, the opportunity may never come again to be able to make progress.

One cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. P.62 LNDP

There is no such thing as making an omelet without breaking eggs. Better to suffer now and be happy later. This proverb is a synthesis of two related concepts. In the first, one must sacrifice or disrupt to get something good, which is the idea that you just can't get something without giving something up. To progress, it is often necessary to break up the old or to suffer for a while. Better to suffer now to be happy later teaches a lesson of delayed gratification: that it's okay to experience hardship in the present for potential happiness or success in the future. It could be used in a

sociocritical lens for education, governance, or personal growth. For example, in the case of a school or a discipline, if it changes, it will be uncomfortable, and afterward, it will be stable and prosperous. In Fatou Fanny Cissé's *Les nuages du passé*, this seems to be the tone of the story; the struggle of the collective. Hardship faced by characters and institutions is portrayed as a step in the process of eventual renewal, but it is also pointed out that the suffering required is just or fairly distributed. So the proverb is made to serve both as a justification for endurance and a condemnation of the price of systemic crises.

The end justifies the means **P.63 LNDP**

In this proverb, we find a combination of two moral concepts. End justifies the means: the first part implies that harsh or difficult acts are justified if they bring a desirable conclusion. The second half better to suffer now than to be happy later focuses on patience, sacrifice, and endurance in the present, for a better now and future. It may be interpreted as a warning and as a justification in socio-critical contexts. In education, it fosters resilience and perseverance, while in work or personal development, it promotes perseverance. In education, it means resilience and perseverance; in work or personal development, it means perseverance. On the other hand, it poses moral issues: does every end justify the means, or is it too high a price to pay? A proverb like this can be perfectly linked to the theme of collective struggle: The difficulties faced by individuals or institutions can be described as steps towards future stability and happiness, but the story can also pose questions about how the sacrifices are shared or whether they are worth the sacrifice.

Lost time is never found again. **P.53 LNDP**

This is a universal cautionary proverb on procrastination and neglect, since once time goes by, it's gone. A quotation like this is frequently used in socio-critical discourse as a

reminder of accountability in daily life, in learning, and in governance, which reminds us that there are long-term implications for delays and mismanagement. "Time once gone, is a lost time." (Proverbs) It serves as a moral and practical admonition: when opportunity is lost, it's never coming back. Such a maxim is usually a cautionary tale against neglect, mismanagement, or procrastination in literature and socio-critical discourse. It's this concept that comes through in Fatou Fanny Cissé's film *Les nuages du passé*, in which the delay in action to solve a systemic problem leads to damage that can never be repaired. The proverb is at once a personal warning and an indictment of the wastage of opportunities in the context of national challenges, whose mobilization is triggered by the characters in moments of crisis or decision-making.

A man, tired of finding no solution, let himself slip into the arms of Morpheus. **P.89LNDP**

The use of Morpheus, the god of dreams, turns this sentence into a proverb-like comment on human limitations. It means that if reason and effort aren't enough, one goes to sleep, a symbol of resignation and escape. This sleep is not a mere sleep but a metaphor for surrendering to the unconscious, in which dreams can offer comfort or symbolic answers that are not offered in reality. The proverb is a philosophical statement about the conflict between perseverance and acceptance. It cautions against perpetual conflict without resolution, which can result in an exhaustion syndrome that can cause the person to withdraw from the problem-solving process. In the Greek mind, however, the image of Morpheus also double-intends: dreams can be a haven, but they can also be misleading hallucinations, giving comfort without solutions. In a socio-critical lens, such imagery is connected to situations, such as Fatou Fanny-Cissé's *Les nuages du passé*, where there is either an individual or institutional crisis, and where, instead of

confrontation, avoidance may be the preferred option.

The proverb is the description of the weakness of man; man is too weak to bear truth, and so prefers the short respite of dreams. Time, sacrifice, and urgency are the key principles of the proverbs. Time lost can never be regained, which means there will always be missed opportunities; the end justifies the means, and one cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, implying that there must be some suffering to achieve happiness in the future. Strike the iron when it is hot highlights the need to act while it is hot, while slipping into Morpheus' arms emphasizes that, when solutions are not possible, it is too late. They show together tensions between perseverance, urgency, and surrender.

The author therefore effects a significant stylistic hybridism, employing the form of the memory of oral tradition to illuminate the very contemporary decisions of schooled and urbanized youth. To restore the psychological depth of the adolescent and to take into consideration the turmoil of its inner life, Fanny-Cissé often forgoes omniscient and distanced narration, preferring instead to narrate from the internal voice of Mian. In Lassina (2024), however, the author has abandoned the usual didactic detachment, taking the reader straight into the young hero's stream of consciousness, thus exploring the aesthetic implications of this narrative strategy. This immersive device works well when creating moments of contemplation within the film before it becomes violent. The text shows the young man's conflicted mind, wanting to do what his parents said, not wanting to do anything that would hurt his school career, and wanting to do what would be good for his fellow fighters. In this way, Fanny-Cissé bestows a real literary dignity upon youth as thinking, complex subjects that inhabit a tragic

freedom, rather than being an object of study or a statistical category.

CRITICAL APPROACHES AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON JUVENILE CONDITION

However, capturing the thematic richness of *Les nuances du passé* requires it to be embedded in the main currents of modern African literary criticism. The five years of academic research have fundamentally changed the methodological instruments used to this fiction, revealing three key critical approaches from which to map the stakes of this fiction. *Les nuances du passé* is not simply a story of an Ivorian middle school scholar but of the deep dynamics of the governance crisis rocking West Africa. Mian's is the story of a whole generation of young people who were sacrificed on the altar of structural adjustments and the adult power struggle. The critical humanist view of the novel by Mensah (2024) provides a positive outlook to the novel as opposed to a radical negative one that would lead to the complete annihilation of the subject by social determinism.

However, Mian's moral corrosion and destructive cynicism are avoided in the end tragedy. The novel is not a surrender; it's a redemption through conscience. Mian assumes his responsibility for his deeds, and he gives up the pretended omnipotence of the collective, thus taking up a genuine dignity of being. The strength of young people lies in their ability to convert social failures into their own moral success. The work is not a final rendition of a lost battle, but rather a tentative beginning, a modest attempt to form a new self on firmer ground, his clouds of history gone, his subject now ready to start anew. The novel is very sensitive in demonstrating the dual injunctions of virility that are imposed on the young men of the Ivory Coast and Africa in general. Mian has

to be the submissive son, the best son, the leader of the Association because he has to be a charming young man, the man of the future, and the man who will be able to come out of the trouble his family is in. This exaggerated investment of the masculine symbol engenders a particular kind of psychological vulnerability, and it is the protagonist's anxiety attacks and concealed doubts that give the reader a glimpse of this. Fatou Fanny-Cissé challenges the traditional image of the virile and solid boy, thereby making a significant contribution to the sociology of childhood and boyhood in an African context.

CONCLUSION

In the final evaluation, it seems clear that *Les nuages du passé* by Fatou Fanny-Cissé is not just confined to the narrow genre of youth literature, but is certainly a great novel of pedagogical value, didactic essence, and a beautiful artistic tool for social criticism. The author has succeeded in creating a complex space of representation through the tragic and luminous presence of Mian; the representation of contemporary African youth is painted without concession or romantic idealism. The work does not have any easy solutions: the highest form of individual excellence and talent is not enough; it is tragically not enough, without a solid comprehension of the political mechanisms and the social determinisms that rule the city.

Mian's shift from academia to the realm of collective protest becomes the painful process of awakening a citizen's conscience that does not intend to be alienated. In her arduous yet imaginative and impressive writing, Fatou Fanny-Cissé connects the axiological depth of traditional paremiology with the immersion of modern psychology to make a great literary and civic move. She provides an honest reflection of the joys and challenges, fragilities, and great promise of the youth of Ivory Coast and Africa.

By elevating this youth to the role of a central player in the social reconfiguration, *Les nuages du passé* becomes an essential work for anyone who wants to learn about the human, political, and aesthetic dynamics that flow through sub-Saharan Africa at the start of the 21st century.

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