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Dictatorship, Necropolitics, and the Collapse of Resistance in La Vie et demie by Sony Labou Tansi

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Abstract

This paper explores the strategic deployment of violence by the Guide Providentiel in La Vie et demie by Sony Labou Tansi, revealing how authoritarian regimes weaponize cruelty to dominate, silence dissent, and psychologically dismantle resistance. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's concept of "necropolitics," the analysis shows how the Guide transforms his state into a theatre of horror, where ritualized executions, mutilations, and grotesque spectacles become tools for political control. The novel's depiction of torture, including the use of eating utensils to dismember bodies and force victims' children to consume human flesh, reflects a deliberate aestheticization of violence intended to break not only bodies but spirits. The Guide's totalitarian cruelty is also intergenerational: he eliminates the children of revolutionaries to prevent future resistance. However, the narrative reveals the limits of violence; figures like Chaidana resist intellectually and symbolically, undermining the Guide's authority through subversive acts. The study draws on scholarly works by Mbembe, Sepas, Diop, MacLeod, and Mahala to frame Tansi's portrayal of sovereignty, suffering, and absurdity within postcolonial African contexts. It also considers the ghostly return of Martial and Chaidana's revolutionary sabotage to argue that while violence may suppress the body, it cannot eliminate the will to resist. The Guide's failure to achieve total domination underscores the resilience of oppressed voices and highlights how violence, when pushed to its extremes, becomes self-defeating.

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Introduction

Sony Labou Tansi's *La Vie et demie* presents a striking portrayal of totalitarian cruelty and the systematic imposition of suffering upon individuals by the autocratic figure known as the Guide Providentiel. Through grotesque, symbolic, and often ritualized acts of violence, the Guide becomes a metaphor for post-colonial authoritarianism in Africa, turning his citizens into expendable bodies under his command. The narrative explores the transformation of governance into a theatre of cruelty, where power is maintained through fear, torture, and humiliation. In this fictional state of la Katamalanasie, the Guide exercises unmitigated control over life and death, embodying what Achille Mbembe conceptualizes as "necropolitics" the sovereign's power to dictate who may live and who must die. Inspired by Foucault's notion of biopower, Mbembe argues that modern authoritarian regimes in postcolonial Africa establish their authority through spectacular violence that both terrorizes and dehumanizes (Mbembe, 2001; 2003). Tansi's work has been studied extensively for its allegorical power and absurdist style. Scholars like Sepas (2020) interpret *La Vie et demie* as a political allegory where the grotesque violence functions to expose the absurdity of tyranny and the collapse of ethical governance. Similarly, Chérif Diop (2012) focuses on how the body becomes a site of contestation and suffering, a terrain on which the regime inscribes its brutality. The Guide's use of culinary tools for execution and his orchestration of death as spectacle reveal not only the aestheticization of violence but also a strategic effort to destroy the spirit of revolution among the people. As Newman (2023) argues, the grotesque soundscape and imagery in Tansi's prose deepen the horror and accentuate the psychological impact of state violence.

Furthermore, MacLeod (2020) explains how Tansi's use of obscene excess, cannibalism, bodily dismemberment, and the punishment of children reflects the dictator's desire to annihilate resistance before it can take root. In this context, the Guide's violence is not spontaneous but deliberately inventive, functioning as a form of political theatre meant to crush both the body and the will. Mahala (2016) adds that the absurdist dimension of Tansi's narrative is a powerful device to ridicule the dictator's illusions of omnipotence, exposing the fragility and eventual failure of power founded on terror. This paper will therefore explore how the Guide Providentiel's

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imposition of suffering serves both as a tool of domination and as a window into the psychological mechanisms of authoritarian control. Drawing from these critical frameworks, it will also examine the points where violence fails to suppress dissent, thereby highlighting the resilience of resistance in the face of tyranny.

Objectives

- To examine how the Guide Providentiel uses creative and ritualized violence to impose suffering and assert authoritarian control over individuals in *La Vie et demie*.
- To apply and expand Achille Mbembe's concepts of necropolitics and postcolonial power structures in analyzing the sovereign violence portrayed in the novel.
- To demonstrate that while violence is used as a tool of domination, it ultimately fails to extinguish resistance, as seen in characters like Chaïdana and the legacy of Martial.
- To explore the psychological and symbolic dimensions of violence in the novel, showing how fear, humiliation, and spectacle serve to enforce submission but also inspire revolutionary defiance.

Literature Review

The representation of violence, particularly as it is personalized and ritualized under authoritarian regimes, has become a prominent focus in postcolonial African literature. Sony Labou Tansi's *La Vie et demie* offers a visceral narrative in which the Guide Providentiel imposes intense suffering on individuals to sustain his grip on power. Scholars have explored the intersections of violence, politics, symbolism, and resistance in this novel, foregrounding the body as a site of political

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contestation and ideological control. The following review synthesizes current research that contributes to understanding how individual suffering functions both as a mechanism of domination and a catalyst for resistance in postcolonial settings.

Isaac Bazié (2002) provides a critical entry point into this discussion by analyzing how bodily mutilation becomes a medium for resistance in *La Vie et demie*. His essay, "From a large morsel of meat to passwords-in-flesh," argues that the tortured body operates not merely as a victim of state power but as a text through which resistance is inscribed. Bazié emphasizes the symbolic depth of the violence committed against characters like Martial, showing that the grotesque fragmentation of the body is not only a spectacle of control but also an allegorical representation of postcolonial fragmentation. This aligns with Achille Mbembe's (2003) theory of necropolitics, wherein sovereignty is asserted through the power to decide who may live and who must die.

In a related study, Bazié (2001) further explores the idea of the *corps-signé* or "sign-body," proposing that Labou Tansi constructs an aesthetic of resistance that defies conventional political discourse. In his essay "Corps-signé et esthétique de la résistance chez Sony Labou Tansi," he highlights how bodily suffering is imbued with symbolic power. The mutilated, defiled, and humiliated characters resist subjugation not through direct rebellion but through the semiotics of their suffering; their broken bodies become visual indictments of the regime's brutality. This aesthetic form of resistance resonates with Tansi's absurdist style, where symbolic language, grotesque imagery, and surreal narrative contribute to undermining dictatorial logic. Ifeoma Mabel Onyemelukwe (2009) situates Tansi's work within a broader spectrum of postcolonial African literature that addresses violence as a political tool. Her study, "Violence and politics in postcolonial literature," discusses how post-independence African leaders have reproduced colonial methods of domination. She identifies patterns of systemic violence in literary works, arguing that such depictions are not only critiques of authoritarianism but also calls to moral responsibility and civic consciousness. In this light, *La Vie et demie* becomes a narrative that not only documents suffering but also seeks to awaken resistance through moral outrage.

Alain-Kamal Henry (2012), in his article "Myths and violence in Sony Labou Tansi's novel," explores how myth functions as a narrative strategy for legitimizing or contesting power. He asserts

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that the Guide Providentiel in *La Vie et demie* is mythologized through ritualized violence, effectively elevating his cruelty to divine authority. However, this mythic construction is undercut by the grotesque absurdities of his regime, turning the myth against itself. Henry's analysis helps to clarify the novel's symbolic landscape, where violence, mythology, and political authority interlock to create an unstable structure ripe for collapse.

Finally, Jules Michelet Mambi Magnack (2013) provides a comparative lens in his study on madness and violence across African Francophone and Anglophone novels. He argues that authors like Labou Tansi use madness and extreme cruelty as literary tools to expose the irrationality of power and the desperation of its victims. In *La Vie et demie*, this is visible in the Guide's theatrical and senseless violence, which, while intended to consolidate authority, ultimately reveals its futility and fragility. Magnack's insights highlight how literary portrayals of psychological disintegration frequently mirror the political disintegration of postcolonial states. Together, these studies demonstrate that *La Vie et demie* is not merely a work of fiction but a complex political text that uses the aesthetics of suffering, grotesque symbolism, and narrative absurdity to critique postcolonial despotism. Through varied methodologies, from semiotic to psycho-political to mythic, scholars reveal how the novel transforms the suffering individual into a site of political discourse, exposing the contradictions and ultimate limits of authoritarian control.

“Who Must Die”: Necropolitics and the Instrumentalization of Suffering in *La Vie et demie*

La Vie et demie by Sony Labou Tansi stands out from other post-colonial novels due to its painstaking depiction of the suffering and alienation of the poor masses and its portrayal of power dynamics in post-colonial Africa. The story depicts the sheer inhumanity and barbarous nature of the Guide Providentiel, a leader of a fictional post-colonial nation known as La Katamalanasie, who successfully transforms himself into a demi-god, controlling the lives and destinies of his citizens. In the novel, the Guide regards the lives of his citizens as expendable, demonstrating a ruthless disregard for their existence, particularly when they challenge or resist his policies. During such moments, they are automatically transformed into entities or bodies that can be eliminated or wiped out at his will. Those who resist or try to stand in his way are declared enemies of the regime and mercilessly killed.

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Therefore, we will contend in this paper that the sheer creativity of violence employed by the Guide Providentiel against his citizens is designed to kill the spirit of revolution and dominate the people. Post-colonial scholars, such as Achille Mbembe, have already examined the phenomenon of the ruthlessness and cruelty of post-colonial leaders towards their subjects. For instance, Mbembe discusses in his book titled *On the Postcolony* (2001) how power functions in post-colonial African states and how violence is essential to maintaining power. As Mbembe states: “bodies can be neutered whenever they are thought to be “disfiguring” a public place or are considered a threat to public order (just as demonstrations are crushed in bloodshed) whenever the commandment, wishing to leave imprinted on the minds of its subjects a mark of its enjoyment, sacrifices them to the firing squad” (15). This unregulated exercise and display of power of life and death by the sovereign described as the “Commandment” is what he calls “necropolitics”, in another book titled *Necropolitics* (2019). Inspired by Foucault (1976), notion of “bio-power”, Mbembe proves in this work that sovereignty for post-colonial dictators like the Guide Providentiel, lies in “the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (11). Drawing inspiration from Mbembe's position, I will demonstrate in the following pages how the Guide's brutal killing of people like Martial, the Doctor, his officials, and other subjects enables him to continue to dominate the population and assert control through fear. My aim in this paper is not only to build on Mbembe's position but also to demonstrate the limits of his arguments by revealing instances where the Guide's use of violence fails in his quest to dominate his people and assume total sovereignty. The Guide's resort to a ritualized spectacle in the killing of his victims reveals a calculated strategy to instill fear and dominate, highlighting how cruelty can be transformed into a tool to assert absolute power. In the novel, the Guide doesn't just eliminate his victims, but he prefers to make a spectacle out of these executions. He loves to tie his victims up, like the case of Martial and his family, as well as strip them naked, like the case of the doctor :

Les quatre loques-filles, les trois loques-fils et la loque-mère n'eurent aucun geste, parce qu'on les avait liés comme de la paille, mais aussi et surtout parce que la douleur avait tué leurs nerfs(...) On l'avait emmené à poil devant le Guide Providentiel qui n'eut aucun mal à lui sectionner le « Monsieur » pour le mettre en tenue d'accusé, comme on aimait dire ici. Beaucoup de ses orteils étaient restés dans la chambre de torture. (9, 27)

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By tying up his victims, stripping them naked, and subjecting them to public degradation before inflicting physical torture, the guide dehumanizes and humiliates his victims, transforming their execution into a ritualized spectacle. His aim is to instil fear in the population and his subordinates through this action, hereby dominating them: “le docteur reconnaissant la fourchette excellente pour avoir maintes fois assisté aux exécutions entre deux bouchées de viande vendue aux Quatre Saisons” (31). This scenario, observed by the doctor who once worked for the Guide, echoes a ritualization of the killing process of the Guide’s victims, specifically designed to instill fear in others. As we discover in the novel, the Guide doesn’t just kill his victims but makes their deaths slow, remarkable, and painful. Cutlery originally designed for eating play a crucial role in the execution of his victims, especially knives and forks: “La fourchette brillait dans la main gauche, elle passerait bientôt dans la main droite, quand la sentence serait prononcée. Bien que déjà hors de la vie, le docteur reconnaissant la fourchette excellente pour avoir maintes fois assisté aux exécutions entre deux bouchées de viande vendue aux Quatre Saisons” (31). The fork in the guide’s hand personifies death, as its appearance during the torture of the Guide’s victims implies imminent death. The guide gives this cutlery a new significance and use, transforming it from a simple eating tool into an instrument of torture, pain, and destruction. All these rituals and ruthlessness are designed to add flair to the killing of his victims, thereby striking fear into the minds of the population and dominating them. Mbembe (2001) confirms our argument on the use of ritualized violence by dictators to maintain authority. According to Mbembe, the “actions that signal sovereignty must be carried through with style and an adequately harsh firmness, otherwise the splendour of those exercising the trappings of authority is diminished” (110). In other words, Mbembe is suggesting that dictators maintain authority not only through the exercise of force alone, but also through aesthetics, rituals, and symbolic gestures. Therefore, power must be exercised with ruthlessness, vigor, and flair, because exercising it while appearing weak will erode the dictator's respect and legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects. Similarly, the Guide’s resort to a ritualized killing of his victims is to add flair to their execution, making it more symbolic and frightening, thereby instilling fear in his subordinates and the population and dominating them psychologically.

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The Guide's use of psychological and physical torture in the execution of Martial reveals his desire to assert total control over his victims, highlighting his sinister nature and dark ingenuity. The Guide's portrayal of Martial in the novel is highly symbolic, given Martial's status as a rebel leader. As a result, he carefully orchestrates the process to make it memorable and devastating. His aim is not only to kill Martial but to break his spirit, make him suffer, and beg for mercy. Therefore, he blends psychological torment with physical pain to leave a lasting impression of control over Martial. Martial's death is so painful that it could even be termed a slaughter, as he is stabbed several times. He goes on to gruesomely tear open Martial's stomach with the same knife and to gouge out his two eyes : "le Guide Providentiel lui ouvrit le ventre du plexus à l'aîne comme on ouvre une chemise à fermeture Éclair, les tripes pendaient, saignées à blanc, ...Le Guide Providentiel enfonça le couteau de table dans l'un puis dans l'autre œil, il en sortit une gelée noirâtre qui coula sur les joues et dont les deux larmes se rejoignirent dans la plaie de la gorge" (10). By dismembering Martial, the Guide objectifies him, asserting dominance over him. His blinding of Martial's eyes in the text is even more notable as it represents the total subjugation of his victim. The Guide's act of smiling to him while stabbing him shows his mastery of the art of blending psychological and physical torture: "le Guide Providentiel eut un sourire très simple avant de venir enfoncer le couteau de table qui lui servait à déchirer un gros morceau de la viande vendue aux Quatre Saisons" (9). By smiling at him before delivering the fatal blow, the Guide mocks his victim's helplessness and demonstrates that he is under his total control. The Guide's decision to tie up Martial's family before him is another calculated act of psychological torture. Martial is subjected to psychological torture as he watches his loved ones tied up and helpless like common criminals while he can't do anything to help them : "Les quatre loques-filles, les trois loques-fils et la loque-mère n'eurent aucun geste, parce qu'on les avait liés comme de la paille, mais aussi et surtout parce que la douleur avait tué leurs nerfs. Le visage de la loque-mère s'était rempli d'éclairs ténébreux, comme celui d'un mort dont on n'a pas fermé les yeux, deux larmes ensanglantées nageaient dans les prunelles" (9). The guide's actions can be interpreted as a desire to totally dominate Martial and strip him of agency. This desire to dominate him is also seen in the way he spits on him: "les dents serrées comme des pinces, et lui cracha au visage" (9). By spitting on

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Martial before the members of his family, the guide humiliates him and demeans him, effectively asserting dominance over him.

Erasing the Future: Intergenerational Violence and the Politics of Elimination in Sony Labou Tansi's *La Vie et demie*

The Guide Providentiel's brutal use of violence against his people during dissent reveals a calculated strategy of domination, highlighting how authoritarian regimes weaponize brutality to dismantle collective resistance. The masses who disobey or protest against the Guide suffer terribly from his intolerance of opposition. At the slightest sign of revolt or provocation, they are slaughtered in masses. The massacre of the Kha people in the novel is a good example. These people are eliminated because they revolted against the guide's decree that banned the use of "black color", due to its significance as a symbol of revolt in the country. As a result, the Guide's army invaded and destroyed their region. They were rounded up and slaughtered in cold blood while tanks had a field day climbing on their dead bodies: "les chars n'eurent aucun mal à marcher sur le pisé humain de Moando ; quelques jours après le passage des chars, Moando était devenu le quartier des mouches et des chiens. Il n'y eut aucun ramassage puisque les chars étaient passés au petit matin et avaient fait une boue inhumaine de tous les habitants » (34). The Guide displayed creativity in his punishment of the "Kha people" through the total annihilation of their existence, the abandonment of their bodies to rot under the sun and his transformation of their region into a ghost town. The sarcastic expression "une boue inhumaine" reveals total annihilation of the people by the Guide. The metaphor "le quartier des mouches et des chiens" suggests the level of destruction done to their city which makes it abandoned and empty. Even in death, the Kha people were still punished as their corpses were not even given the opportunity of a befitting burial, but rather, they were ground into a disgusting pulp by the tanks. The narrator describes their remains as repelling and nauseating, using the sarcastic and metaphorical expression "une boue inhumaine". Those who were not grounded by the tanks were left to decompose outside, as food for roaming dogs and flies. Ironically, these people were viciously eliminated not just because they disobeyed the ruler's orders, but because they were considered opponents and critics of the government in power. Their status as opponents of the regime made them less desirable,

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transforming them from ordinary citizens who were supposed to be protected by the government into objects and bodies that could be disposed of when considered surplus to requirements. By symbolically exterminating his critics and opposers, the Guide silences any form of opposition from his other subjects and maintains power. This violent use of force to assert control and dominance echoes Mbembe's position that the commandment will resort to any means possible, including violence, to institutionalize itself (112). Similarly, the Guide providentiel makes use of violence to assert autonomy and dismantle resistance.

The Guide's extension of punishment to future generations of his victims reveals his strategic and creative use of violence as a tool not just for control, but for erasing any possibility of future resistance, thereby cementing his absolute power. The Guide understands that children of revolutionaries like Martial would also take up their father's roles and revolt against him in the future, hence he doesn't spare them. He is so malicious that he does not even care about their age or their innocence. For example, he not only captures Martial but also makes sure that his children are tied up and brought with him, even though they did not commit any crime. The Guide makes them watch while he slaughters Martial and cuts him into chunks to be used for cooking. He traumatizes them further by making them eat pastries made from Martial's flesh, while those who refuse are subsequently eliminated :

Jules, l'aîné, ne mangeait pas. Le Guide Providentiel s'était levé, lui avait caressé le menton puis le front, il lui avait même souri gentiment., Alors, mon ange, tu le manges ton pâté?, Je n'ai pas faim. Le Guide Providentiel lui avait simplement planté son couteau de table dans la gorge. Pendant qu'ils mangeaient, le cadavre de Jules se vidait de son sang (14).

The Guide's torture of his victim's family can be described as savage due to his eccentric demeanor while he murders them. By murdering the sons of Martial and imprisoning Chaïdana, the Guide eliminates any symbolic future opposition to his rule. His indifference while he slaughters them reveals his callous and cold-blooded nature, as he continues eating while they bled to death. This portrays him as a remorseless killer ready to sacrifice anybody to maintain his unchallenged domination of the masses and avoid future opposition. The Guide's strategy of eliminating the children of revolutionaries effectively recalls Mbembe's argument that power must be exercised

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ruthlessly to discourage resistance and opposition. This ruthless exercise of power is what Mbembe termed “adequate harsh firmness” (112). However, his strategy of preventing future opposition through the elimination of children of his victims ironically fails, especially in the case of Martial, as Chaïdana escapes. She later initiates a revolution against the Guide, which ultimately costs him dearly and leads to the collapse of his government by the end of the story.

Moments When Violence Fails

However, the novel presents moments that challenge the notion of violence as a reliable tool of domination through the portrayal of instances where it repeatedly fails to quench the fire of revolution, ultimately suggesting that oppressive force will only reinforce the will to resist. For example, the Guide’s brutal killing of critics and opponents in *La Katamalanasie* paradoxically fuels an unrelenting cycle of resistance, ultimately eroding his government's legitimacy and authority. The Guide falsely believed that by employing creative punishments and eliminating opposers, he could dominate the spirit of his people through fear. This strategy proves to be only effective temporarily as opposition against him increases throughout his regime. Ironically, eliminating his opposers and critics leads to more radical ones taking their place, like Chaidana and the children of his other victims, who organize physical resistance against him. For instance, Chaïdana employs her sexuality as a weapon to silently resist the Guide’s oppressive policies and sabotage his government. She realizes her ambition through the seduction and elimination of his ministers and other high-ranking members of his regime : “ Chaïdana avait terminé sa distribution de mort au champagne à la grande majorité des membres les plus influents de la dictature katamalanasienne, si bien qu’à l’époque de la mort du ministre de l’Intérieur, chargé de la sécurité, il y eut des obsèques nationales pour trente-six des cinquante ministres et secrétaires à la République que comptait la Katamalanasie” (37). By using her body as a weapon, Chaïdana demonstrates her willingness to subvert and destroy the unjust structures of the Guide's dictatorial regime that dehumanized her through subtle means. The pattern of assassination of these high-ranking officials is distinctive and remarkable. Death is presented as fused with the champagne drink that she serves them: “mort au champagne”, hereby revealing the drink’s deadly and mortal nature. Chaidana’s distribution of this deadly poison to the unsuspecting officials can be termed a

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situational irony, as the men are only interested in fulfilling their present fantasies and are not aware of the consequences of their sexual adventure. However, their unbridled desires result in their imminent death and ruin. This development reveals the moral decadence and sexual perversion of the Guide's regime, as many of them fell into her trap and paid dearly with their lives. While the Guide struggles with mounting opposition from the people, the spirit of the slain revolutionary leader, Martial hunts him, making his existence miserable: "le Guide Providentiel n'avait pas fermé l'œil une seule nuit, le haut du corps de Martial venait toujours à côté de lui, noircissant les draps qu'on devait maintenant brûler et changer tous les jours" (15). The guide's constant psychological torture from the spirit of martial echoes the limit of violence and the impossibility of totally suppressing the spirit of revolution as the spirit of revolutionaries live on while the constant stain on the guide's bed which never leaves unless burnt suggests a stain on the Guide's authority that cannot be washed away. Martial's ghost's punishment of the Guide is, in fact, poetic justice in the novel, revealing the fact that the wicked will always be punished and revolution cannot be quenched by violence. The Guide's use of violence to dominate his people in the story does not lead to peace or stability but rather to a cyclical retaliatory cycle of violence and resistance by the children of the victims, which finally culminates in the destruction of the regime.

The people's resort to intellectual forms of resistance during moments of extreme pressure from the Guide reveals the failure of violence to undermine the spirit of revolution, suggesting that revolution can endure through the autonomy of the mind. Due to the Guide's constant use of force and creative punishment to quell opposition and dissent, the people are forced to seek intellectual resistance as an alternative means of reclaiming autonomy in the novel. For example, Chaidana resists intellectually against the guide's government by buying some black ink and encouraging children to write the phrase "je ne veux pas mourir cette mort"(34), on the doors of the Guide providentiel's palace and that of his high ranking officials : "Elle recruta trois mille garçons chargés d'écrire pour la nuit de Noël à toutes les portes de Yourma la célèbre phrase de son père: « Je ne veux pas mourir cette mort. » ... ils avaient pu écrire la phrase jusqu'au troisième portail des murs du palais excellentiel. Certains d'entre eux, les plus audacieux sans doute, avaient réussi à écrire la phrase sur le corps de quelques responsables militaires tels que le général Yang, le

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colonel Obaltana, le lieutenant-colonel Fursia et bien d'autres. Amedandio disait avoir écrit la phrase sur mille quatre-vingt-dix uniformes"(33). Writing Martial's revolutionary phrase, « Je ne veux pas mourir cette mort,» on the walls is significant as it represents Chaidana's way of making a bold statement that the spirit of revolution will never die despite the death of revolutionary leaders like Martial. Her use of children for the mission is even more symbolic, as it was a way to sow the seeds of revolution and revolt in them, since they are the future leaders of the revolution. The writing of the phrase on the bodies of the high-ranking officials and in front of their palaces is sarcastic and serves to mock them. It is also ironic because despite their powers and security, they are not safe from the reach of the intruders.

Future Research

The present analysis focuses on the aesthetic, political, and psychological dimensions of sovereign violence in *La Vie et demie*. Still, there remains significant room for further exploration across intersecting themes and disciplines. One promising avenue is the interrogation of how spiritual and supernatural paradigms of power overlap with political authority in postcolonial African literature. Ehigie's (2025) study, *"Fearing the Familiar: Witchcraft, God, and the Politics of Supernatural Power,"* examines how the fear of supernatural elements, often rooted in religion or mythology, is strategically weaponized in African societies. This framework can be extended to Tansi's *Guide Providentiel*, whose mythic and god-like self-representation suggests a manipulation of spiritual fear to assert political dominance. Similarly, in *Divine Authority and Occult Threats*, Ehigie (2025) further explores how religious and occult narratives are mobilized to reinforce authoritarian control. Future research may use this lens to analyze the Guide's symbolic actions, his ritualized killings, and divine posturing as a reflection of how spiritual symbolism is co-opted into the logic of dictatorship.

Another compelling trajectory for future investigation lies in the gendered nature of resistance and the symbolic role of women in authoritarian contexts. Igbinovia, Ehigie, and Onomejoh's (2025) work on *Une Si Longue Lettre* offers a critical entry point into analyzing feminist narratives and their translatability across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Their insights could inform a comparative study of Chaidana's resistance strategies in *La Vie et demie*,

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particularly her subversive use of sexuality and her symbolic connection to intergenerational trauma and revolution. Additionally, studies focusing on the psychological impact of violence and repression can shed light on underexplored dimensions of Tansi's work. Igbinovia, Braimoh, and Ehigie (2023) employ a multidisciplinary lens to examine guilt and denial in Maupassant's *La Petite Roque*, revealing mechanisms of psychological evasion in the face of trauma. This framework could enrich future explorations of the Guide's psychological unraveling and Martial's spectral revenge, offering a psychoanalytic reading of trauma in postcolonial dictatorship.

Finally, Onomejoh et al. (2024) provide a foundation for analyzing how cultural sensitivity and communication influence the global reception of violent narratives. Their research opens the door to investigating how Tansi's grotesque imagery and political satire can be translated or lost in non-Francophone contexts, especially when conveying culturally specific forms of violence and resistance. Together, these studies suggest new interdisciplinary possibilities for expanding the discourse on violence, symbolism, gender, and memory in *La Vie et demie* and other African literary texts grappling with authoritarian legacies.

Conclusion

As this analysis has demonstrated, the novel *La Vie et Demie* reveals that the resort to extreme and creative violence by the Guide Providentiel is an attempt to dominate the people and extinguish the spirit of resistance. Through the examination of instances where the Guide eliminates his victims, such as Martial, the Kha People, the doctor, and Martial's family, we see how the novel reveals the use of violence as a strategy to assert sovereignty and maintain constant surveillance over the people. Ultimately, this argument shows how power works in post-colonial societies affected by dictatorship. By understanding how the Guide uses violence to maintain control, we gain valuable insights into the complex power structure and political situation in post-colonial African countries ruled by military juntas where power is not predicated on the constitution but on the ability of the dictator to repress, suppress and keep the people under physical and psychological domination through creative violence. However, it also opens our eyes to the inherent limitations of the use of violence as a tool for governance. This is because, despite

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the force and creativity of the Guide's use of violence in the novel, it did not extinguish the people's desire for freedom and justice.

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